

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 4
OFFICE OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
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Jeff Beiswenger, Planning and Building Services Director
Town of Fairfax
142 Bolinas Road
Fairfax, CA 94930

Re: Town of Fairfax 2023-2031 General Plan Housing Element Update – Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Dear Jeff Beiswenger:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the General Plan Housing Element Update. We are committed to ensuring that impacts to the State's multimodal transportation system and to our natural environment are identified and mitigated to support a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system.

The Local Development Review (LDR) Program reviews land use projects and plans to ensure consistency with our mission and state planning priorities. The following comments are based on our review of the September 2023 DEIR.

Project Understanding

The proposed project evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed General Plan Housing Element Update in the Town of Fairfax. The Proposed Project is both a policy document and an implementation tool for implementing the Town's General Plan.

Travel Demand Analysis

With the enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 743, Caltrans is focused on maximizing efficient development patterns, innovative travel demand reduction strategies, and multimodal improvements. For more information on how Caltrans assesses Transportation Impact Studies, please review Caltrans' Transportation Impact Study Guide ([link](#)).

The project's Vehicle Mileage Traveled (VMT) analysis and significance determination are undertaken in a manner consistent with the Office of Planning and Research's (OPR) Technical Advisory. Per the DEIR, this project is found to have a significant VMT impact.

Caltrans commends the Lead Agency in exploring the effectiveness and feasibility of varying measures to mitigate the VMT impact. Please consider the upcoming General Plan update as a potential opportunity to add Transportation Demand Management (TDM) requirements and TDM ordinance implementation in the General Plan for future new developments, which could reinforce the Town's legal authority to further reduce VMT.

Mitigation Strategies

Location efficiency factors, including community design and regional accessibility, influence a project's impact on the environment. Using Caltrans' Smart Mobility Framework Guide 2020 ([link](#)), the proposed project site is identified as a Rural-Suburban Town where community design impacts effectiveness of the transportation network and regional accessibility helps to increase that effectiveness.

The measures listed below have been quantified by California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) and shown to have different efficiencies reducing regional VMT:

Plan-based community strategies:

- Participation/Formation in/of a Transportation Management Association (TMA) in partnership with other developments in the area
- VMT Banking and/or Exchange program

Suburban and Rural strategies:

- Increased mixed-use development
- Increased transit accessibility
- Integration of affordable housing
- Orientation of Project towards non-auto corridor
- Location of project near bicycle network
- Pedestrian network improvements
- Provide local shuttles to increase transit outreach
- Partnership with Transit Agency (Marin Transit) to increase transit service frequency through the Town, provide discounted transit programs

Employment and/or Institution-based strategies:

- Employer-based vanpool
- School pool program
- Telecommuting programs and alternative work schedules

Integrated Transportation and Land Use Planning

Transportation and housing are integrally connected. The Housing Element Update process provides a mechanism to reflect current transportation and land use policy and adopt efficient land-use strategies such as transit-oriented, infill and mixed-use developments that can potentially reduce vehicle miles traveled and address climate change.

Please review and include the reference to the current California Transportation Plan (CTP) in the DEIR. CTP 2050 envisions that the majority of new housing located near existing housing, jobs, and transit, and in close proximity to one another will reduce vehicle travel and GHG emissions, and be accessible and affordable for all Californians, including disadvantaged and low-income communities. The location, density, and affordability of future housing will dictate much of our future travel patterns, and our ability to achieve the vision outlined in CTP 2050. Caltrans encourages the Town to consider and explore the potential of excess state-owned property for affordable housing development, per Executive Order N-06-19.

Caltrans supports collaboration with local agencies to work towards a safe, functional, interconnected, multi-modal transportation network integrated through efficient and equitable land use planning and policies. The Town should also continue to coordinate with Caltrans to identify and implement necessary network improvements and impact mitigation.

Lead Agency

As the Lead Agency, the Town of Fairfax is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the State Transportation Network (STN). The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.

Jeff Beiswenger, Planning and Building Services Director

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Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Fredrick Schermer, Associate Transportation Planner, via LDR-D4@dot.ca.gov. For future early coordination opportunities or project referrals, please contact LDR-D4@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luo Yunsheng". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Luo" and last name "Yunsheng" clearly distinguishable.

YUNSHENG LUO

Branch Chief, Local Development Review
Office of Regional and Community Planning

c: State Clearinghouse