

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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*Making Conservation
a California Way of Life*

July 22, 2024

Marco Espinoza
San Dimas Planning Division
245 E. Bonita Avenue
San Dimas, CA 91733

RE: City of San Dimas Downtown
Specific Plan – Draft Environmental
Impact Report (DEIR)
SCH #2022110018
GTS #07-LA-2022-04547
Vic. LA 57 PM 10.761

Dear Marco Espinoza,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process for the above referenced project. The proposed Downtown Specific Plan (DTSP) would establish a planning and zoning framework for encouraging transit-oriented development in the greater downtown area while preserving the character of the historic commercial district. The DTSP will encourage compact development near the new Metro "A" Line transit station to decrease automobile dependency, reduce both local and regional traffic congestion and related greenhouse gas emissions, and provide additional guidance and plans to increase multimodal access to and from the historic Downtown area. The DTSP Area includes several opportunity sites for new development providing significant potential for infill development and adaptive reuse of existing underutilized downtown properties within walking distance of the transit station. The DTSP is also proposed to establish the zoning for the development of additional housing identified in the City's Housing Element. The Project would increase the development potential in downtown San Dimas in compliance with the vision of the City. The proposed DTSP would allow new housing, retail commercial, employment, and hospitality uses within the DTSP Area. The potential maximum development capacity of 3,687 dwelling units is analyzed in the Draft EIR. For the purposes of analysis, the development is assumed to occur over a 20-year period. In addition to approval of the DTSP, associated actions proposed include approval of a General Plan Amendment, Zone Change, and a Municipal Code Text Amendment.

After reviewing the DEIR, Caltrans has the following comments:

The DTSP Project is evaluated to be consistent with the City of San Dimas General Plan and policies relating to bicycle or transit infrastructure, and it is consistent with SCAG's 2020-2045 RTP/SCS objectives relating to walking and biking trips, and its goals and guiding principles. Overall, the project is evaluated to have a less than significant impact with a program, policy, plan or ordinance relating to bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and transit improvements. The DTSP will include strategies to support transit-oriented development, upgrade the bus shelters/stops, and prepare for the Metro A Line extension via first/last mile connections. The bicycle facility improvements consist mostly of Class III bike lanes. Caltrans recommends the City of San Dimas to limit the usage of Class III on high-speed streets, as paint is not infrastructure. Implementing bike-friendly intersections will greatly increase the safety of your local riders. Caltrans recommends the NACTO guides and publications for examples of intersection design. It is also recommended to choose the most functional bike parking/rack designs for ease of use throughout the plan area to further reduce barriers to choosing alternative modes. Furthermore, Caltrans supports the pedestrian improvement recommendations as they are adequate and necessary for improving safety and awareness.

Caltrans acknowledges and supports mixed-use, infill development that prioritizes walking, biking, and transit. The Project's objective to provide more compact development within preexisting neighborhoods, thereby maximizing existing transit infrastructure and proximity to destinations, is in alignment with State-level sustainable transportation policy goals which seek to reduce the number of trips made by driving, reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, and encourage alternative modes of travel. Caltrans' Strategic Management Plan has set targets of tripling trips made by bicycle and doubling trips made by walking and public transit, as well as achieving a reduction in statewide, per capita, vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

The scope and nature of this Specific Plan provides a valuable opportunity to apply proven policies that improve walkability, reduce automobile dependence, and provide a path to housing affordability. In addition to the Goals and Objectives already proposed, Caltrans recommends:

1. **Eliminating Car Parking Requirements:** Caltrans encourages the lead agency to seriously consider completely eliminating car parking requirements, or even implementing car parking maximums. Research looking at the relationship between land-use, parking, and transportation indicates that the amount of car

parking supplied can undermine a project's ability to encourage public transit and active modes of transportation. There is sufficient justification to consider eliminating parking requirements to promote affordability and achieve the project's goals. Caltrans also recommends that at least one long-term bicycle parking space be provided per residential unit, allowing residents to take advantage of the Plan's proposed multi-modal improvements and more easily choose the bicycle as their mode of travel. Long-term bicycle parking should be located onsite, indoors, on the ground floor, and within 200 feet of primary pedestrian entrances.

2. **Preparing for adaptive reuse:** Consider adopting Form-Based Codes (FBCs) as an alternative to use-based zoning. FBCs allow for a community's vision to be created and maintained through form, mass, and streetscape requirements, while allowing tremendous flexibility for adaptive reuse into the future. This reduces wasteful demolition of single-use developments and improves the public realm for residents and visitors alike. Removing car parking minimums would also greatly improve the ability to adaptively reuse existing buildings, as many historic structures were built with little or no car parking.
3. **Protecting vulnerable road users:** The most effective methods to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to vehicles is through physical design and geometrics. These methods include the construction of physically separated facilities such as Class IV bike lanes, wide sidewalks, pedestrian refuge islands, landscaping, street furniture, and reductions in crossing distances through roadway narrowing.

Please note that an encroachment permit will be required for any project work proposed adjacent to Caltrans Right of Way and all environmental concerns must be adequately addressed. Any modifications to the State facilities will be subject to additional review by the Office of Permits prior to issuance of the permit. Any projects impacting State ROW will need to contact the Caltrans Office of Permits when project documents are finalized, and the applicant is ready to submit a permit application package.

Finally, 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. If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov and refer to GTS #07-LA-2022-04547.

Marco Espinoza
July 22, 2024
Page 4

Sincerely,

Anthony Higgins

Anthony Higgins
Acting LDR Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse