

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 4
OFFICE OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
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November 20, 2024

SCH #: 2023020166
GTS #: 04-SON-2023-00941
GTS ID: 28882
Co/Rt/Pm: SON/VAR/VAR

Amy Nicholson, Supervising Planner
City of Santa Rosa
100 Santa Rosa Avenue, Room 3
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Re: Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 – Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Dear Amy Nicholson:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 Project. 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 October 2024 DEIR.

Please note this correspondence does not indicate an official position by Caltrans on this project and is for informational purposes only.

Project Understanding

The proposed project will include revisions to the policies and land use map of the existing General Plan. The overall purpose is to create a policy framework that articulates a vision for the long-term physical form and development of Santa Rosa, while preserving and enhancing the quality of life for Santa Rosa residents. The proposed project will add new and expanded policy topics to address the current requirements of State law, modernize the City's policy framework, and address land use mapping issues and inconsistencies. Zoning and/or land use changes supporting additional development capacity will be concentrated in select areas only. Changes to the city's transportation infrastructure will include new pedestrian and bicycle connections across U.S. 101 and State Route (SR) 12, road diets, and roadway widenings.

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 Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis for land use projects, please review Caltrans' Transportation Impact Study Guide ([link](#)).

The project 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 and unavoidable VMT impact. Caltrans acknowledges that the General Plan has identified Action 3-1.1, Action 3-1.2, and Action 3-1.3 to help mitigate future developments' potential VMT impact. We commend the City for working with Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) and other local and regional partners to explore developing a VMT mitigation bank alternative which would help further reduce VMT.

Additionally, given that City of Santa Rosa is a large growing city that may see substantial developments in the future, the City should continue to research and explore funding opportunities for investing the appropriate local transit system based on the City's future needs, particularly for the east-west axis. A strong reliance on U.S. 101 and Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) would concentrate growth and investments in the north-south direction, which might result in increased VMT compared to a similar-sized city with various axes of importance. We encourage the City to consider strategies to further improve east-west connections that would create a complete, interconnected transportation network that helps advance the General Plan's goals.

Multimodal Transportation Planning

Please review and include the reference to the *Caltrans District 4 Pedestrian Plan* (2021) in the DEIR. This plan studies existing conditions for walking along and across the State Transportation Network (STN) in the nine-county Bay Area and developed a list of location-based and prioritized needs.

Please note that any Complete Streets reference should be updated to reflect Caltrans Director's Policy 37 ([link](#)) that highlights the importance of addressing the needs of non-motorists and prioritizing space-efficient forms of mobility, while also facilitating goods movement in a manner with the least environmental and social impacts. This supersedes Deputy Directive 64-R1, and further builds upon its goals of focusing on the movement of people and goods.

Equity and Public Engagement

We will achieve equity when everyone has access to what they need to thrive no matter their race, socioeconomic status, identity, where they live, or how they travel.

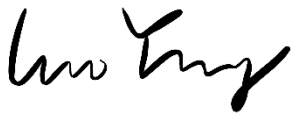
Caltrans is committed to advancing equity and livability in all communities. We look forward to collaborating with the City to prioritize projects that are equitable and provide meaningful benefits to historically underserved communities.

Caltrans encourages the City to foster meaningful, equitable and ongoing public engagement in the General Plan development process to ensure future transportation decisions and investments reflect community interests and values. The public engagement process should include community-sensitive and equity-focused approaches seeking out the needs of individuals from underserved, Tribal, and low-income communities, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Melissa Hernandez, Associate Transportation Planner, via LDR-D4@dot.ca.gov.

For future early coordination opportunities or project referrals, please visit Caltrans LDR website ([link](#)) or contact LDR-D4@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



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

c: State Clearinghouse