

California Department of Transportation

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
50 HIGUERA STREET | SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401-5415
(805) 549-3101 | FAX (805) 549-3329 TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov



Governor's Office of Planning & Research

April 15, 2024

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SB SR 246
SCH: 2023060448

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Rafael Castillo, Planning and Building Manager
City of Solvang
411 2nd Street
Solvang, CA 93463
Via Email: plansolvang@cityofsolvang.com

RE: Caltrans Comments on City of Solvang's Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Dear Rafael Castillo:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the City of Solvang's General Plan Update and Rezoning. Caltrans offers the following comments:

General Comments:

Caltrans supports local development that is consistent with State planning priorities that promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety. We accomplish this by working with local jurisdictions to achieve a shared vision of how the transportation system should and can accommodate interregional and local travel and development. Projects that support smart growth principles which include improvements to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure (or other key Transportation Demand Strategies) are supported by Caltrans and are consistent with our mission, vision, and goals.

As a result of Senate Bill (SB) 743, effective July 2020 Caltrans replaced vehicle level of service (LOS) with vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the primary metric for identifying transportation impacts from local development. Additionally, the Caltrans Transportation Impact Study Guide (TISG) replaces the Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies (Caltrans, 2002) and is for use with local land use projects. The focus now will be on how projects are expected to influence the overall amount of automobile use instead of traffic congestion as a significant impact.

Employing VMT as the metric of transportation impact Statewide will help to promote Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reductions consistent with SB 375 and can be achieved through influencing on-the-ground development. Implementation of this change will rely, in part, on local land use decisions to reduce GHG emissions associated with the

transportation sector, both at the project level, and in long-term plans (including general plans, climate action plans, specific plans, and transportation plans) and supporting Sustainable Community Strategies developed under SB 375. In addition to any site-specific access or safety concerns attributed to future development projects occurring as part of the City's general plan vision, it is likely that the Caltrans correspondence will focus attention on meeting overall VMT reducing goals.

Caltrans encourages integration of Transportation Demand Strategies (TDM) strategies into long range planning to increase the efficiency of the transportation system by providing options for users other than driving alone, or by shifting travel away from peak periods to help lower VMT. Examples include: locating higher density projects near transit, incorporating Complete Streets and transit, mixed-use developments, mobility hubs, and traffic calming measures to enhance walkability.

Caltrans would like to acknowledge the City of Solvang for the thorough VMT analysis provided in the DEIR and for including policies to help reduce future VMT, including but not limited to, a bicycle master plan, pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements, complete streets guidelines, and transportation demand (TDM) strategies.

Furthermore, SB 1000 (2016) required local jurisdictions to identify communities that are disproportionately burdened by environmental justice issues within their boundaries and address environmental justice in their general plans. This includes developing goals and policies to reduce pollution exposure, reduce unique or compounded health risks, promote safe and sanitary homes, and prioritize the needs of disadvantaged communities, among other focus areas. Caltrans appreciates the discussion around environmental justice and supports the policies aimed at addressing equity, especially as they relate to transit mobility and accessibility, as put forth in the DEIR.

To further support complete streets and active transportation enhancements, the Caltrans District 5 Active Transportation Plan is now available. The plan identifies bicycle and pedestrian needs on, across, and parallel to the State Highway System (SHS) throughout California's Central Coast. Partnership with transportation stakeholders and the public are critical to supporting a safe transportation network and encouraging healthy communities. The main deliverable of the plan is the prioritized list of Location Based Needs (LBN's) (available [here](#)). This prioritized list could be utilized to identify needs for the General Plan Update.

Specific Comments:

For analyzing freight infrastructure, Caltrans suggests referring to the California Central Coast Sustainable Freight Study, rather than the Commercial Flows Study. This new Study is expected to be completed in July 2024. The California Freight Mobility Plan can also be referenced in identifying the City's freight needs.

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Caltrans requests to continue to be included in any future public noticing regarding this project to allow us to prepare for and participate in the public process.

We look forward to continued coordination with the City of Solvang on this effort. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, or need further clarification on items discussed above, please contact me at (805) 903-3395 or Shelby.Fredrick@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Shelby Fredrick

Shelby Fredrick
Local Development Review Coordinator
Caltrans, District 5

Cc:
State Clearinghouse
Veronica Lezama, Caltrans D5 Branch Chief for Regional Planning and Local
Development Review