

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 4
OFFICE OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
P.O. BOX 23660, MS-10D | OAKLAND, CA 94623-0660
www.dot.ca.gov



Governor's Office of Planning & Research

October 2, 2023

October 2 2023

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

SCH #: 2023080717

GTS #: 04-MRN-2023-00298

GTS ID: 30707

Co/Rt/Pm: MRN/101/R22.00

Brett Walker, Senior Planner
Novato
922 Machin Ave
Novato, CA 94945

Re: Valley Oaks Project – Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)

Dear Brett Walker:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Valley Oaks Project. 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 August Draft MND.

Project Understanding

The proposed project is a residential development with a total of 126 residential units on a 38.1-acre site in Novato, located adjacent to US-101 and near a Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) station.

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](#)).

This project meets all the thresholds for the screening criteria in the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Technical Advisory for being near a transit station and therefore is exempt from CEQA Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis. Caltrans commends the development of this transit-oriented residential project with affordable housing components, which supports the State's VMT reduction goals.

Construction-Related Impacts

Potential impacts to the State Right-of-Way (ROW) from project-related temporary access points should be analyzed. Mitigation for significant impacts due to construction and noise should be identified. Project work that requires movement of oversized or excessive load vehicles on State roadways requires a transportation permit that is issued by Caltrans. To apply, please visit Caltrans Transportation Permits ([link](#)).

Prior to construction, coordination may be required with Caltrans to develop a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to reduce construction traffic impacts to the State Transportation Network (STN).

Lead Agency

Mitigation Measure AQ-2 on page 13 states that the closest sensitive receptors are located more than 1,000 feet from the project site. Please consider revising this statement as Verandah at Valley Oaks is located within 1,000 feet of the project site.

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

Equitable Access

If any Caltrans facilities are impacted by the project, those facilities must meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards after project completion. As well, the project must maintain bicycle and pedestrian access during construction. These access considerations support Caltrans' equity mission to provide a safe, sustainable, and equitable transportation network for all users.

Encroachment Permit

Please be advised that any permanent work or temporary traffic control that encroaches onto Caltrans' ROW requires a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit. As part of the encroachment permit submittal process, you may be asked by the Office of Encroachment Permits to submit a completed encroachment permit application package, digital set of plans clearly delineating Caltrans' ROW, digital copy of signed, dated and stamped (include stamp expiration date) traffic control plans, this comment letter, your response to the comment letter, and where applicable, the

Brett Walker, Senior Planner
October 2, 2023
Page 3

following items: new or amended Maintenance Agreement (MA), approved Design Standard Decision Document (DSDD), approved encroachment exception request, and/or airspace lease agreement. Your application package may be emailed to D4Permits@dot.ca.gov.

To obtain information about the most current encroachment permit process and to download the permit application, please visit Caltrans Encroachment Permits ([link](#)).

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" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Yunsheng".

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

c: State Clearinghouse