

California Department of Transportation

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February 20, 2024

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

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STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

11-IMP-Var
SR-78, SR-86, SR-111
Lithium Valley Specific Plan
NOP SCH#2023120104

Ms. Diana Robinson
Imperial County Planning
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

Dear Ms. Robinson:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process of the Lithium Valley Specific Plan Notice of Preparation (NOP) document. The mission of Caltrans is to provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment. The Local Development Review (LDR) Program reviews land use projects and plans to ensure consistency with our mission and state planning priorities.

Safety is one of Caltrans' strategic goals. Caltrans strives to make the year 2050 the first year without a single death or serious injury on California's roads. We are striving for more equitable outcomes for the transportation network's diverse users. To achieve these ambitious goals, we will pursue meaningful collaboration with our partners. We encourage the implementation of new technologies, innovations, and best practices that will enhance the safety on the transportation network. These pursuits are both ambitious and urgent, and their accomplishment involves a focused departure from the status quo as we continue to institutionalize safety in all our work.

Caltrans has the following comments:

Traffic Analysis

A Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) based Traffic Impact Study (TIS) should be provided for this project. Please use the Governor's Office of Planning and Research Guidance to identify VMT related impacts.¹

¹ California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) 2018. "Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA." https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20190122-743_Technical_Advisory.pdf

The TIS may also need to identify the proposed project's near-term and long-term safety or operational issues, on or adjacent to any existing or proposed State facilities.

Highway Access

Any access onto Caltrans property or facilities will require a discretionary review and encroachment permit application.

Hydrology

Caltrans generally does not allow development projects to impact hydraulics within the State's Right-of-Way (R/W). Any modification to the existing Caltrans drainage and/or increase in runoff to State facilities will not be permitted.

Freight

California's goods movement system is a complex, decentralized, and dynamic mixture of public and private infrastructure and one that involves private carriers and shippers, government planning authorities, Federal and State regulatory agencies that interact on a global, national, regional, and local scales.

The proposed Lithium Valley Specific Plan project aims at facilitating the existing and future renewable energy development in the Imperial Valley, and with that a significant impact to the existing freight movement in the region. Please consider coordination and reference with Caltrans' Office of Strategic Freight Planning as this project evolves.

Caltrans Office of Strategic Freight Planning (OSFP)

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/transportation-planning/division-of-transportation-planning/strategic-freight-planning>

Hauling

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has discretionary authority with respect to highways under its jurisdiction and may, upon application and if good cause appears, issue a special permit to operate or move a vehicle or combination of vehicles or special mobile equipment of a size or weight of vehicle or load exceeding the maximum limitations specified in the California Vehicle Code. The Caltrans Transportation Permits Issuance Branch is responsible for the issuance of these special transportation permits for oversize/overweight vehicles on the State Highway network. Additional information is provided online at:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/permits/index.html>

Noise

The applicant must be informed that in accordance with 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 772, Caltrans is not responsible for existing or future traffic noise impacts associated with the existing configuration of SR-86, SR-78 and SR-111.

Sustainability

Caltrans recommends collaboration between our agency and Imperial County on the proposed transportation related topics including adaptation strategies to help improve the County's resilience to potential climate change impacts and strategies to reduce VMT, and off-road and on-road greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Caltrans recognizes that transportation is a leading contributor to GHG emissions in the region and is dedicated to reducing and mitigating transportation related emissions. We recommend collaborating with Caltrans on the following measures brought up by this plan increasing the use of zero emission vehicles, installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, identifying right-of-way areas to be used for carbon sequestration, and complete streets.

The existing climate hazards discussed in this document will have an impact of the transportation system. We recommend working with Caltrans on determining the preventative strategies the Caltrans can take to keep roadways operational and ensure their longevity against climate stressors such as increased temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, wildfire, and flooding. Caltrans recognizes the central role that transportation planning plays in safety and ensuring that when these natural hazards do occur, citizens have a reliable evacuation route.

Right-of-Way

Per Business and Profession Code 8771, perpetuation of survey monuments by a licensed land surveyor is required, if they are being destroyed by any construction.

Any work performed within Caltrans' R/W will require discretionary review and approval by Caltrans and an encroachment permit will be required for any work within Caltrans' R/W prior to construction. As part of the encroachment permit process, the applicant must provide approved final environmental documents for this project, corresponding technical studies, and necessary regulatory and resource agency permits, specifically, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determination or exemption.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Roger Sanchez, LDR Coordinator, at (619) 987-1043 or by e-mail sent to roger.sanchez-rangel@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Kimberly D. Dodson

Kimberly D. Dodson, G.I.S.P.
Acting Branch Chief
Local Development Review