

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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*Making Conservation
a California Way of Life*

September 18, 2024

Dana Grudem, Senior Program Manager
Long Beach Unified School District
2425 Webster Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90810

RE: Washington Middle School
Transformation Project– Draft
Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)
SCH #2024020305
GTS #07-LA-2024-04600
LA 1/PM 6.574

Dear Dana Grudem,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced project. The Project proposes the renovation and expansion of Washington Middle School's Administration/Classroom Building 1000, which will be expanded by 27,000 square feet, and the construction of three new permanent buildings: (1) a two-story, 19,200 square-foot gymnasium; (2) a one-story, 12,000 square-foot Cafetorium; and (3) a 29,000 square-foot two-story classroom building. New site improvements include a student drop-off, semi-subterranean parking structure, artificial turf soccer field, synthetic track, basketball courts, pickleball court, lunch shelter, planting, irrigation, and outdoor learning environments. Entrance to the underground parking garage will be accessed via W. 15th St. between Pacific Avenue and Cedar Avenue.

After reviewing the Draft EIR, Caltrans has the following comments:

As stated in the Initial Study, the Project proposes a semi-subterranean parking structure which would be expected to induce higher rates of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) trips from automotive vehicles. Figure 4: Project Alternative 1 Site 1 of the Initial Study depicts a plan for a 300' by 150' soccer field with underground parking and storage below, approximately 1,100 parking spaces. For any project to help the State of California

achieve its goals to improve health and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG), it is recommended to reduce vehicle miles traveled through the implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies as an alternative to building an excessive amount of parking. When implementing a TDM plan, Caltrans recommends programmatic elements such as transportation allowance for regional transit passes of the employees' choice, and programs that reward students and employees for opting to carpool.

The Proposed Project will include a student drop-off lane with its entrance and exit on Cedar Avenue. The drop-off lane has an estimated capacity of 40 vehicles at a time if both lanes are used. Measures should be implemented to ensure the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians when project-generated cars and trucks interact with students.

Caltrans concurs with the inclusion of a prospective Class IV bikeway along Pacific Avenue in the DEIR. By upgrading the existing Class III bike route to a Class IV separated bikeway, this design element ensures the safety of cyclists within the vicinity and provides a measure of safety for all road users. To maintain the Project's consistency with the City of Long Beach Climate Action Plan, Caltrans requests further details regarding the number of proposed new bicycle parking and storage areas in Section 5.7 Transportation. It is recommended that the Lead Agency install more than the minimum requirement of one (1) space for each ten thousand (10,000) square feet of industrial building area, per the City of Long Beach Municipal Code § 21.45.400.

Yellow ladder-style crosswalks are present at the intersections of W. 14th St. with Cedar Avenue and Pacific Avenue, and at the intersection of Pacific Avenue and W. 16th St. Yellow line-style crosswalks are at the intersections of Cedar Avenue and W. 15th St. and Pacific Avenue and W. 15th St. Caltrans recommends that the Project upgrade all its adjacent crosswalks to high-visibility yellow ladder crosswalks. To best supplement pedestrian facilities, Caltrans recommends installing proper bus shelters to protect students and visitors from inclement weather (extreme heat or rain) and the addition of more benches at bus stops along Pacific Avenue for transit riders. Lastly, the School District should coordinate Project activities with the City of Long Beach's planned improvements to the adjacent 14th Street Park, to ensure appropriate pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the school campus and park.

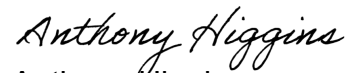
Any transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials that requires the use of oversized transport vehicles on State Highways will require a Caltrans transportation permit. Caltrans recommends limiting construction traffic to off-peak periods to minimize the potential impact on State facilities. If construction traffic is expected to cause issues on any State facilities, please submit a construction traffic control plan detailing these issues for Caltrans' review. Construction work notices, such as temporary lane closures and appropriate detours, can help parents and students plan accordingly for their safety. We look forward to the coordination of our efforts to ensure potential impacts to

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the highway facilities and traveling public are discussed and addressed before work begins.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Frances Duong, at frances.duong@dot.ca.gov and refer to GTS #07-LA-2024-04600.

Sincerely,



Anthony Higgins
Acting LDR/CEQA Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse