

California Department of Transportation

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April 26, 2024

1-HUM-101-McKinleyville
Town Center Re-Zone
SCH# 2024031111

Jacob Dunn
Planning and Building Department
County of Humboldt
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Mr. Dunn:

Thank you for giving Caltrans the opportunity to review the McKinleyville Town Center Re-Zone Notice of Preparation, which would establish mixed use zoning, relocate the town center, enable new development capacity of up to 2,655 new multi-family residential units and allow 1,387,822 square feet of new commercial development. The project is located between Heartwood Drive on the south, Railroad Drive on the north, and extending from McKinleyville Avenue on the west to the eastern edge of Pierson Park, in the unincorporated community of McKinleyville. We have reviewed the proposal and offer the following comments:

California's transportation sector accounts for more than half of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced statewide. In order to meet the State's ambitious goals to improve air quality and combat climate change, those entrusted with the planning, design and building of the State's transportation infrastructure must do more to tackle climate change. As land use establishes where trip origins and destinations will be created, new development affects both the number of trips made and the length of each trip. By assessing vehicle miles traveled for new development, the County can do its part to build an equitable and sustainable transportation system for residents and visitors.

One tool that is being used to estimate the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) for site-specific development in some of the larger population centers in the State is the Green TRIP Connect tool (<https://connect.greentrip.org/>). Green TRIP Connect helps to instantly calculate how smart location, affordable homes and traffic reduction strategies can reduce driving and greenhouse gas emissions from residential development. It also calculates how much money and space can be saved from

right-sized parking. We suggest that the County consider this among other tools to consider VMT generated from new housing development.

The McKinleyville Town Center Re-zone Notice of Preparation was missing a Location Map and a Proposed Town Center Zoning Map.

Project Objectives #1-13, p.3:

- We recommend that Bullet #6 be reworded to clarify what is meant by “ease ped/bike traffic” on Central Ave. We believe the plan/project objective should be re-written to promote the use of design alternatives capable of reducing the level of traffic stress (LTS) for bicycle/pedestrian users as a means to increase use by non-motorized modes of transportation.
- Bullet #11 identifies conceptual elements for inclusion that would improve ped and bike movement and connectivity to commercial uses and to transit stops. An additional recommendation to better incorporate transit service into the Town Center plan could include a McKinleyville Transit Center. A transit center would help to establish a Transit-Oriented Development and serve as a hub for transit network connectivity in the community.
- The project objectives do not identify commercial or public office space among the mixed use or (retail) commercial designations. Retaining commercial office space within the Town Center would allow for more living wage jobs to be established in the community, which would address the jobs/housing imbalance and support small, local businesses that cater to office workers.

Page 9, Transportation paragraph could identify a greater range of transportation types for review of the system network, circulation, and supporting infrastructure.

Town Center NOP could include policies and objectives related to planning for broadband and zero emission charging infrastructure for transit and how this will be integrated in the Town Center rezone (transit, parking, goods unloading, access).

Rezone NOP design, codes/ standards. There is an opportunity for design codes and standards to integrate land uses with transit, motorized and active transportation, and to be consistent with regional and state transportation, mobility, and climate plans.

Mixed Use. This section could include the possibility of a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the mixed-use objectives and project description for the Town Center. Transit, the Transit Center hub and its link to land use, local bike/ped and regional connectivity could be stronger and made its own bullet objectives.

We recommend that more references to transit (and zero emission charging infrastructure) be integrated in the NOP objectives and relevant sections (elements) and more on a future TOD transit hub in the EIR.

Town Center Rezone EIR Transportation-Land Use Sections

1. Rezone EIR NOP (and codes) should be consistent with key grant projects:

- 2023 McKinleyville Multimodal Connections Project.
The McKinleyville Town Center Rezone Project and EIR should be consistent with the planning objectives, projects, policies, and recommendations in the 2023 McKinleyville Multimodal Connections Project, Humboldt County's 20/21 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant project. In particular, the Rezone EIR should address the planning objectives and recommendations relating to: Project Area Focus Corridors, especially Central Avenue; Transit Access Improvements; connectivity; future planning and engineering design; underserved community benefits; and Next Steps.
- Humboldt Multimodal & Vibrant Neighborhoods Planning.
This planning effort proposes to develop multimodal, walk/bike friendly neighborhood planning (with transit). The Town Center Plan EIR could consider findings and principles that result from this planning grant effort.
- HCAOG's Dan Burden Walkability Audits (July 2023). This audit should be reviewed for any standards that could be used for how to design ped friendly environments: <https://www.hcaog.net/documents/dan-burden-walkability-audits-and-presentations>.

2. Transit considerations:

We recommend that the plan involve participation from local area transit agencies, particularly Humboldt Transit Authority and HCAOG, on the Rezone EIR to ensure consistency with Transit, Humboldt County regional transportation plans and policies. We recommend that the NOP and Rezone EIR consider:

- McKinleyville Transit Study (2021)
- Consistency with Transit and Humboldt region STP grant projects
- First/last mile connectivity, mobility-on-demand, microtransit, Paratransit.
- Future McKinleyville Transit Center hub, transit facilities.
- Consistency with HTA transit service and plans. Consider how McKinleyville connects to region/interregional transit service and communities
- Tribal Transit Service
- Access, circulation, and facilities for transit, in design, codes

- ZE charging infrastructure needs and codes
 - Review if the Rezone EIR and design codes will include transit, land use and bike/ped network needs and facilities to meet state transportation goals to increase transit ridership 4 to 6 times above current ridership levels
3. Design: NOP of EIR could benefit from a combined analysis of land use/housing, transit and active transportation facilities to assess how well the Town Center rezone (codes, standards) would meet regional and state goals for transportation (reduced GHG, VMT), increased transit ridership, safe bike/bike use (lower level of stress), connectivity and climate goals.
4. RTP, Regional Plans: Humboldt County's 2022-42 Regional Transportation Plan, *Variety in Rural Options of Mobility (VROOM)*. The NOP of Rezone EIR should review the RTP's transportation/circulation element goals, policies, and implementation measures for (and not limited to):
- Land Use-Transportation; Tribal Transportation; Public Transportation; Goods Movement (parking, unloading)
 - Complete Streets, and Commuter Trails
 - Global Climate, and engagement and equity considerations (underserved communities)
- <https://www.hcaog.net/documents/regional-transportation-plan-vroom-2022-2042>.
5. Caltrans District Plans
- Caltrans District Active Transportation Plan
 - Humboldt Regional Bicycle Plan
 - Humboldt County Regional Trails, and Pedestrian, Master Plans
 - HCAOG Transit Development Plan Update. TDA Unmet Transit Needs.
6. State Plans
- Design codes and standards should be consistent with goals and objectives of state transportation and climate plans and programs including:
- CTP 2050
 - Smart Mobility Framework
 - Caltrans Strategic Plan
 - Modal Plans (CA State Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, State Transit Plan)
 - CAPTI
 - Master Plan for Aging

We concur with the statement from the NOP, that complete streets will be considered: "Proposed modifications to adjacent roadways as identified in the Q-Zone regulations

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will be reviewed for their feasibility and effect on traffic operations and bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity, as will the proposed road network identified in the Q-Zone regulations." This switch to mixed-use zoning will be an overall benefit for the community and a move in the right direction for a more multimodal community.

Please consider impacts to water quality, stormwater, and impacts to existing stormwater conveyance facilities such as ditches and culverts. If runoff from new development will ultimately be conveyed through Caltrans systems, please provide water quality treatment plan, calculations for increase in runoff, and capacity analysis of the Caltrans systems that would be impacted. If Caltrans' existing facilities are not adequate to convey the increased flows, this project may be required to upsize Caltrans culverts to accommodate the impacts of the new development.

Please contact me with questions or for further assistance with the comments provided at (707) 684-6879 or by email: <jesse.robertson@dot.ca.gov>.

Sincerely,

Jesse G. Robertson

JESSE ROBERTSON
System Planning Branch Chief
Caltrans District 1

e-copy: Beth Burks, Executive Director, Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG)
Greg Pratt, General Manager, Humboldt Transit Authority