

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**DISTRICT 7**

100 S. MAIN STREET, MS 16
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012
PHONE (213) 897- 0673
FAX (213) 897-1337
TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov



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June 10, 2024

Mitzi Alvarado, Planner
City of Lancaster
44933 Fern Avenue
Lancaster, CA 93534

RE: Conditional Use Permit 23-020 –
Mitigated Negative Declaration
(MND)
SCH #2024050687
GTS #07-LA-2024-04537
LA-14/R 65.62

Dear Mitzi Alvarado,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced project. The Proposed Project consists of the development of a 3.72-acre site into a commercial center which includes a 2,900 square-foot fast food drive-thru pad, a 3,600 square-foot car wash facility and an electrical vehicle (EV) charging facility. The EV charging facility would provide a total of 40 EV charging stations. The center would also include landscaped areas, trash enclosures for each use, and parking lot improvements.

After reviewing the MND, Caltrans has the following comments:

Per the City of Lancaster's guidelines, projects such as locally serving retail (commercial developments of 50,000 square feet or smaller) screen out from Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Analysis. Although the Project is exempt from further VMT analysis, the context of the project indicates that the three auto-oriented uses will induce VMT and new trips to the area. These uses encourage idling from passenger vehicles, which contributes to air pollution-related harm that affects the health of at-risk community members. Page 15 of the Initial Study notes that sensitive receptors, such as the elderly and children, are located in apartments and a Kaiser Permanente to the northeast, and the church situated immediately to the west. As proposed, the car wash and fast food drive-thru uses will create at minimum five lanes of idling vehicles on the site, and compound the amount of harmful gases and particle pollution released into the air.

If these heavy auto-oriented uses are implemented, Caltrans recommends reducing the amount of car parking supplied as research indicates that removing excess car parking is a proven method of reducing trip demand and encouraging active modes of transportation. According to the Conceptual Site Plan in the Initial Study, an additional 11 spaces for car parking is provided than what is determined to be sufficient. Additionally, we recommend substituting one or more of the auto-oriented uses for an alternative land use with a lower environmental footprint; or, situating buildings against the sidewalk and moving auto-infrastructure away from 10th Street West and Avenue L to improve walkability and safety. Lastly, reducing the proposed amount of curb cuts will minimize conflict points with all road users, including people who walk and bike.

As a reminder, Senate Bill 743 (2013) has codified into CEQA law and mandated that CEQA review of transportation impacts of proposed development be modified by using VMT as the primary metric in identifying transportation impacts for all future development projects. Caltrans' targets of tripling trips made by bicycle, doubling trips made by walking and public transit, and a 15% reduction in statewide VMT can be achieved through collaborative improvements to the state-wide transportation network.

Any transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials that requires the use of oversized transport vehicles on State Highways will need a Caltrans transportation permit. Caltrans advises that the Project limit 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.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Frances Duong, at frances.duong@dot.ca.gov and refer to GTS #07-LA-2024-04537.

Sincerely,



Anthony Higgins
Acting LDR/CEQA Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse