

## California Department of Transportation

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July 18, 2024

11-SD-5, 56, 805  
PM VAR

San Diego-Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo  
(LOSSAN) Rail Realignment (SDLRR) Project  
NOP/SCH#2024060038

Mr. Keith Greer  
Deputy Director  
SANDAG  
401 B Street, Suite 800  
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Greer:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the San Diego-Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Realignment (SCH#2023060038). Caltrans supports this very important project that will provide a reliable fast and frequent service in the Interstate 5 (I-5) Corridor, which is a key priority of the state's rail plan. Adding capacity and addressing climate resiliency in this segment is an important step in creating a competitive option to I-5 and meeting the state's Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) goals.

Caltrans and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) have a long history of working in partnership on projects such as the Tier 1 Three County LOSSAN environmental document that Caltrans lead. Development of items such as the Joint Use and Maintenance Agreement (JUMA) demonstrates the commitment of these agencies to work in partnership to provide an efficient and cost effective multimodal, multiagency transportation corridor.

Caltrans also appreciates the collaborative effort for previous project teams in this corridor. As the project development process continues, we encourage close collaboration with Caltrans to minimize rework and to ensure a timely approval of a JUMA and encroachment permit if either are needed. It should be noted that Caltrans will rely upon information from the SANDAG environmental document for any future encroachment permit. As such, it is important this environmental document be inclusive of the avoidance and minimization analysis and mitigation measures consistent with the requirements necessary for the issuance of any encroachment permit.

We look forward to working with SANDAG in areas where SANDAG and Caltrans have joint jurisdiction to improve the transportation network and connections between various modes of travel, with the goal of improving the experience of those who use the transportation system.

Caltrans has the following comments:

Please consider the following key factors in selecting project alternatives:

- Construction impacts to I-5, Interstate 805 (I-805) and State Route 56 (SR-56) such as maintaining traffic, bike and pedestrian accessibility.
- Impacts to the bridges, foundations, and geology associated with the existing I-5, I-5/SR-56 and I-5/I-805 merge area.
- Overall rail travel time and accessibility to stations should be key factors in developing alternatives.
- Please explain how proposed alternatives affect other future improvements planned in the corridor.
- Consider the 2007 LOSSAN Programmatic EIR-EIS (Section 2.3.2 LOSSAN Corridor Rail Improvements Consider and Eliminated)
  - Options eliminated in strategic plan and screening evaluation (2003)
  - Summary of Reasons for Elimination of the Inland Bypass Alternative
- Consider the 2007 LOSSAN Programmatic EIR-EIS (2.5.1 LOSSAN Rail Improvements Alternative Carried Forward)

Please address the following potential impacts for the overall project:

- Project should be analyzed for consistency and the need for potential amendments with the Caltrans North Coast Corridor (NCC) Public Works Plan and the Resource Enhancement Mitigation Program (REMP).
- Operational and safety analysis for potential impacts such as access from state R/W for rail maintenance and operational impacts to I-5, SR-56 and I-805 during proposed project construction.
- The San Dieguito Lagoon Restoration project was important mitigation for several regional projects, including I-5. Please address any impacts that may occur to the San Dieguito Lagoon.
- The San Diego Regional Transportation Plan identifies four managed lanes for I-5 from SR-52 to SR-56, and from Via de La Valle to La Costa.

### **System Planning**

The Caltrans projects listed below fall adjacent to the proposed project areas along I-5 (PM 30.0-36.0):

- EA 11-43123 Los Penasquitos Lagoon Restoration FCO (PM 30.4-32.70 at I-5): In San Diego County on I-5 from I-5/I-805 separation to I-5/SR-56 separation and on route SR-56 from I-5/SR-56 sediment, freshwater management, and salt marsh restoration.
- EA 11-2E090 Mitigation Banked Sorrento Valley - Torrey Pines (PM 30.8 at I-5): in San Diego County in San Diego west of I-5/I-805 merge, adjacent to Flintkote Ave, within the Torrey mitigation site preservation.
- EA 11-42651 Biological Monitoring For 42650 (PM 32.7 at I-5): In San Diego County at Carmel Valley creek undercrossing. Biological monitoring for parent project (11-42650).
- EA 11-17790 I-5/SR-56 missing connection (PM 32.70/34.8 along I-5) with Phase 1 to construct SR-56 HOV median lanes from El Camino Real undercrossing to 0.3 miles west of Carmel Valley road overcrossing.

- EA 11-2E154 San Dieguito Lagoon Restoration (PM 34.70-36.30 at I-5): In San Diego County in SD from 0.6 mile north of Del Mar Heights Road overcrossing to Villa de La Valle undercrossing. To lower existing elevations at the San Dieguito lagoon (w-19) restoration site.
- EA 11-41750 I-5 Detention Basins (34.90/35.10 at I-5): In San Diego County in San Diego from 0.8 to 1.0 mile north of Del Mar Heights Road overcrossing enhancements to detention basin and bio infiltration treatment device.
- EA 11-2E003 Mitigation I-5 Coast Dean Family Trust (MP 35): Purchase and restore environmental mitigation parcels in Del Mar for Dean family trust parcel in San Diego County.

CAPTI:

- Project fits within the CAPTI Investment Framework: "Building toward an integrated, statewide rail and transit network, centered around the existing California State Rail Plan..." and the project's NOP cites the 2018 California State Rail Plan.
- The project is conducting public outreach and engagement that fits within the CAPTI Implementation Strategies & Actions.
- S5. Supports climate resilience through Transportation System Improvements and Protections for Natural and Working Lands.

**Hydrology and Drainage Studies**

The project proposed alternatives need to address impacts of alternatives on hydrology/drainage within the state highway.

**Environmental**

Caltrans welcomes the opportunity to be a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as we have some discretionary authority on a portion of the project that is in Caltrans' Right-of-Way(R/W) through the form of an encroachment permit process. We look forward to the coordination of our efforts to ensure that Caltrans can adopt the alternative and/or mitigation measure within our R/W.

An encroachment permit will be required for any work within the 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, CEQA determination or exemption. The supporting documents must address all environmental impacts within the Caltrans' R/W and address any impacts from avoidance and/or mitigation measures.

We recommend that this project specifically identifies and assesses potential impacts caused by the project or impacts from mitigation efforts that occur within Caltrans' R/W that includes impacts to the natural environment, infrastructure including but not limited to highways, roadways, structures, intelligent transportation systems elements, on-ramps and off-ramps, and appurtenant features including but not limited to fencing, lighting, signage, drainage, guardrail, slopes and landscaping. Caltrans is interested in any additional mitigation measures identified for the project's Final Environmental Document.

It is our understanding that a National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) will also be needed for this project. Though the NOP has the project objectives stated (as per CEQA Guidelines § 15082; Public Resources Code § 21080.4), the need for the project is not clearly stated. "Need" is a NEPA requirement, so clarification is advised sooner rather than later. The project need should provide the factual foundation for the statement of project purpose. This description of need should describe the problems that the proposed action is intended to address and, to the extent possible, explain the underlying causes of those problems.

NOPs are required to provide information about probable environmental effects of the projects as well as Salient environmental issues. This NOP does address/comment upon sea level rise related environmental concerns, but neglects to address anything further.

Please confirm if the following have been identified: potential environmental issues, constraints, assumptions, and/or risks that will need to be considered in the later phases of project development.

We will continue to partner with SANDAG as this project moves forward into the NEPA process. We would appreciate meeting with you to discuss the elements of the Environmental Document that Caltrans will use for our subsequent environmental compliance.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Shannon Aston, LDR Coordinator, at (619) 992-0628 or by e-mail sent to [Shannon.Aston@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Shannon.Aston@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M. S.', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

ALLAN KOSUP  
North County Corridor Director