

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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December 18, 2024

Brenda Magana, Planning Manager
Economic and Community Development Department
Planning Division
City of Palmdale
38250 Sierra Highway
Palmdale, CA 93550

RE: Quail Valley Project-Tentative Tract Map
65813 and Planned Development 18-001
SCH # 2024100065
Vic. LA-14/PM R58.187
GTS # LA-2024-04683-DEIR

Dear Ms. Magana,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Quail Valley Project. The proposed project will construct 730 single-family residential lots, a 3.6-acre amenity center, a 23-acre greenbelt and trail system, and 395 acres of open space on vacant land adjacent to Avenue S and Tovey Avenue, approximately 1.2 miles west of State Route 14. Caltrans has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), particularly **Section 4.17: Transportation and Traffic**, and appreciates the effort that has gone into identifying and addressing potential impacts. We offer the following recommendations to further enhance the project's compliance with CEQA and alignment with regional transportation goals.

The Quail Valley Project presents a unique opportunity to enhance transit connectivity in the area. While Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA) bus routes serve key regional corridors, extending transit service closer to the project site would significantly improve accessibility for future residents. We recommend exploring partnerships with AVTA to extend existing routes along State Route 14 and Avenue S, allowing for direct service to the project area. The addition of accessible, shaded, and well-lit bus stops at or near primary access points will further encourage transit use and support multimodal connectivity.

The project area also has great potential to improve pedestrian infrastructure and create a safer, more walkable environment. Constructing continuous, ADA-compliant sidewalks along Avenue S and internal streets will establish a safe and connected pedestrian network. High-visibility crossings and pedestrian signals at key intersections will enhance safety while also extending the proposed greenbelt/trail system further, integrating with local streets and amenities, and promoting active transportation and walkability within the development.

Bicycle infrastructure represents another opportunity for improvement. By assessing the surrounding area for bike lane connectivity and adding Class II or Class IV bike lanes along Avenue S and Tovey Avenue, the project can provide safe and convenient cycling routes for residents. Additionally, incorporating bike-sharing stations, secure bicycle parking, and repair facilities at the HOA amenity center and trailheads will encourage cycling as a viable and sustainable alternative to driving.

The proposed greenbelt and trail system is a key strength of the project and provides an excellent opportunity to link residential areas to regional active transportation networks. Caltrans recommends coordinating with local and regional planning agencies to integrate the project's trail system with existing and planned infrastructure in Palmdale and Los Angeles County. Wayfinding signage can help guide pedestrians and cyclists between the development, regional transit hubs, and nearby amenities, further improving connectivity.

Addressing VMT impacts remains a critical component of the project. The DEIR identifies VMT as a significant and unavoidable impact due to the suburban context and project density. However, additional strategies can be explored to further reduce VMT. Enhancing transit-oriented infrastructure, supporting carpool and vanpool programs, and strengthening regional transit partnerships are effective measures. Additionally, promoting a better balance between housing and employment opportunities can help mitigate commuting distances. The current residential density of 1.6 dwelling units per acre is below the national average of 9.1 units per acre, which limits the ability to create compact, walkable communities. Caltrans encourages incorporating mixed-use zoning or localized services that reduce the need for long commutes and align housing opportunities with nearby employment centers.

Safety improvements at the project's primary access points, particularly along Avenue S, will enhance roadway efficiency and minimize conflicts when the additional project traffic utilize the public roadway. Evaluating turn pocket lengths, optimizing signal timing, and addressing sight distance constraints in compliance with the Caltrans Highway Design Manual will help improve safety and transportation flow for all road users, especially on the State facilities.

The construction phase provides another opportunity to proactively mitigate transportation impacts. Developing a comprehensive Transportation Management Plan (TMP) that schedules heavy truck trips during off-peak hours, ensures proper oversized vehicle permit coordination with Caltrans, and minimizes debris spillage onto highways, reducing construction-related impacts. Maintaining clear and continuous emergency access routes during construction is also essential.

Caltrans appreciates the inclusion of basic Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies in the project design and recommends incorporating additional measures to maximize their effectiveness. Examples include providing subsidized transit passes, enhancing broadband infrastructure to support telecommuting, offering financial incentives for carpooling and vanpooling, and installing real-time transit scheduling hubs with wayfinding signage. Enhancing multimodal infrastructure through shaded pedestrian pathways, protected bike lanes, and dedicated carpool/vanpool parking will further encourage sustainable transportation choices.

We also encourage exploring the use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to optimize transportation network performance. For additional TDM options, please refer to the Federal Highway Administration's *Integrating Demand Management into the Transportation Planning Process: A Desk Reference* (Chapter 8), available at

<http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop12035/fhwahop12035.pdf>.

All work (off-site improvement) within the State Right-of-Way will require an **Encroachment Permit** from Caltrans and must meet all mandatory design standards and specifications.

By implementing these recommendations, the Quail Valley Project can significantly enhance regional connectivity, improve safety for all users, reduce VMT, and support sustainable transportation choices. To ensure the long-term success of these measures, we recommend that the City of Palmdale prepare a post-development VMT analysis. This analysis will help validate the effectiveness of the proposed TDM strategies and provide valuable data for future planning efforts.

Please contact Mr. Alan Lin at (213) 269-1124 for any questions or additional coordination. Reference GTS #: LA-2024-04683-DEIR in all communications.

Sincerely,


ANTHONY HIGGINS
Acting LDR Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse