

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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May 1, 2025

Bryan Ramos Fernandez, AICP, CEQA Project Manager
Los Angeles Unified School District
Office of Environmental Health and Safety
333 South Beaudry Avenue, 21st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

RE: Sylmar Charter High School
Modernization Project – Notice of
Preparation (NOP)
SCH# 2025040524
GTS #07-LA-2025-04791
Vic. LA 210 PM R3.69

Dear Bryan Ramos Fernandez,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process for the above referenced project. LA Unified proposes to complete a major modernization project at the Sylmar Charter HS Campus to provide facilities that are safe, secure, and aligned with the instructional program (proposed Project or Project). The Project would demolish up to four permanent buildings (Multipurpose Building/Food Services including Lunch Pavilion and shelter, Student Store, and two Classroom Buildings) and six portable classroom buildings. To replace the structures, the Project would construct one permanent building to replace the core facilities demolished. The Project's space program proposes to accommodate building spaces for performing arts, library/media center, career center, special education, and 10 new classrooms. The Project also includes utility upgrades, parking reconfiguration, accessibility upgrades, painting of exterior buildings, landscaping, and hardscaping including outdoor learning areas. The Project would also include the installation of interim facilities to allow the school to remain operational during construction. The Project would not increase student enrollment or capacity, and total number of standard-sized classrooms would decrease by approximately two.

After reviewing the NOP, Caltrans has the following comments:

"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment."

Currently, the project proposes a net increase of 20 to 30 car parking spaces. While there is no change in overall enrollment, increasing car parking encourages use of low occupancy private vehicles and induces additional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). The Lead Agency is encouraged to integrate transportation and land uses in a way that reduces VMT and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by facilitating non-motorized travel and transit use. Caltrans recommends the following to more effectively address the potentially significant VMT impact that this project could create as currently proposed:

Reduce the amount of car parking whenever possible, as abundant car parking enables and encourages driving. Research looking at the relationship between land-use, parking, and transportation indicates that the amount of car parking supplied can undermine a project's ability to encourage public transit and active modes of transportation. For any project to better promote public transit and reduce vehicle miles traveled, we recommend the implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies as an alternative to building too much parking.

Provide an on-site transit stop and work with local transit operators to provide high quality service to the stop.

Require safer infrastructure for people walking, riding bikes, and taking transit throughout the Project area. The most effective methods to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to cars and trucks is through physical design and geometrics. These methods include the construction of physically separated facilities such as Class IV bike lanes, wide sidewalks, pedestrian refuge islands, landscaping, street furniture, and reductions in crossing distances through roadway narrowing.

We would also like to see if a midblock crossing across Astoria, to accommodate foot traffic from the neighborhood towards pedestrian access 3 has been considered. There is no sidewalk on the residential side that pedestrians can use. Additionally, formal pedestrian crossings, including high-visibility striping and pedestrian refuge islands, should be considered for the Borden Ave intersections at Berg St and Dyer St.

The intersections of Dronfield/Raven and Borden/Astoria should have all crossing legs upgraded to high-visibility yellow ladder style to improve visibility and indicate a school zone. All nearby intersections should also be inspected to verify that all corners include ADA compliant curb ramps.

Strava Metro data indicates high bike use on the perimeter of the school. It may be worth exploring additional bicycle parking near Pedestrian Access 4, eliminating the need for cyclists east of the school to circumvent the perimeter.

Finally, construction of the proposed project would involve deliveries of materials, components, and supplies to the various sites, and will involve oversized trucks. As a result, prior to issuance of building or grading permits for the project site, the applicant shall prepare a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) for review and approval by Lead Agency staff to reduce any impacts to less than significant levels. The CTMP needs to specify the duration of construction period and provide construction analysis on significant impacts due to increase in construction truck traffic on highways not designated as truck routes. It should also specify any work that would affect the freeways and its facilities, and that Caltrans has the jurisdiction for review and approval. Transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials, which requires the use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways, will require a transportation permit from Caltrans.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov and refer to GTS #07-LA-2025-04791.

Sincerely,



Miya Edmonson
LDR Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse