

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 11

4050 TAYLOR STREET, MS-240

SAN DIEGO, CA 92110

PHONE (619) 688-3137

FAX (619) 688-4299

TTY 711

www.dot.ca.gov

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Governor's Office of Planning &amp; Research

**Jun 29 2020**

June 29, 2020

**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

11-SD-8

PM 2.21

Riverwalk

DEIR/SCH#2018041028

Ms. Elizabeth Shearer-Nguyen

City of San Diego

1222 First Avenue, MS 501

San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Ms. Shearer-Nguyen:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Riverwalk project located near Interstate 8 (I-8) and State Route 163 (SR-163). The mission of Caltrans is to provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system to enhance California's economy and livability. The Local Development-Intergovernmental Review (LD-IGR) Program reviews land use projects and plans to ensure consistency with our mission and state planning priorities.

Caltrans has the following comments:

SANDAG is starting the process for a Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan (CMCP) for I-8.

**Traffic Impact Study**

- Caltrans District 11 will not approve the additional intersection leg opposite the westbound Interstate 8 (I-8) exit ramp at Hotel Circle North as proposed in the Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) document for any of the alternatives. Caltrans will not entertain intersection modifications that lack improvement to the existing geometry and operation of the westbound I-8 ramps/Hotel Circle intersection. The proposal adds volume, movement configurations, and impacts the operations of the intersection.

- Caltrans would welcome a different proposal as mitigation for this project.
- Federal Highway (FHWA) approval will be required to add a north/south connecting street as the north side of the hook ramps should have access control per the Caltrans' Highway Design Manual (HDM).
- Any modifications to the access control will need both Caltrans and FHWA approval. This is an important standard to maintain on the Interstate System and it would need very strong justification if it were to be granted.
- The access control standard is in Chapter 500 of the Highway Design Manual: Index 504.8 Access Control.

### **Design**

1. Comments associated with Project Development Procedures Manual, Chapter 27--Access Control Modifications:
  - a. Clarify if potential access control modifications been identified and evaluated.
  - b. Clarify if interchange spacing requirements been evaluated in respect to Chapter 27 policies and in respect to interchange spacing design standards in the Highway Design Manual.
2. Verify if design alternatives that involve improvements within Caltrans Right-of-Way (R/W) comply with the standards in the Highway Design Manual.

### **Hydrology and Drainage Studies**

The Riverwalk project significantly alters San Diego River by proposing:

- Significant grading alterations in the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) defined Floodplain and Floodway.
- Creation of a canal and manufactured lake separate of the river on the southern edge of the San Diego River bank.
- Raising Fashion Valley Road to accommodate the 10 to 15 year storm event.

These proposed project features can significantly alter the FEMA defined Floodplain and associated water surface elevations through the project area and have potential adverse impacts to the California Department of the Transportation (Department) Interstate 8 (I-8) facility adjacent to the proposed

project. The Department requests that the City of San Diego, acting as the Local FEMA Administrator, include the Department in reviews of all submittals to the Development Services Department regarding floodplain administration and allow for the Department to comment prior to the Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) application or the Permit issue, to assure that I-8 is not adversely impacted by any change in the water surface elevation resulting from this project. In addition, the Department requests that a formal notification be sent when the City of San Diego approves the permit to alter the floodplain and/or when the Developer applies for the CLOMR and Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) under 44 CFR §65.12.

Upon review of the "Draft EIR" the Hydraulics Branch has the following specific comments:

1. § 1.5.7 states that the project has processed a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR), which FEMA has approved. This implies that 100% construction plans have been submitted to the Local FEMA Administrator and to FEMA itself and that the project will be entering the construction phase. However, the provided Preliminary Drainage Report states that the Hydraulics Studies performed were to determine if the project concepts are feasible and the project is in the Draft EIR stage. How was a CLOMR obtained from FEMA with only a feasibility Hydraulics study and without the appropriate finalized EIR certification and permits in place?
2. §3.7.2 states that the project anticipates LOMR issuance with project approval and EIR certification. As a LOMR is only issued after a project has been constructed how will the project obtain the LOMR prior to construction of the project?
3. What is the expected time frame between EIR certification and project approval?
4. The project proposes a dedication of public streets "J" and "U". Are these proposed public streets included in the Floodplain/Floodway analysis for the project area? If not, who will perform the Floodplain/Floodway analysis and determine the impacts for these streets?
5. The potential impacts to I-8 are not addressed in this document and therefore any impacts to the Department facilities remained unknown and unaddressed.

Upon review of the "Preliminary Drainage Report for Riverwalk - Vesting Tentative Map No. 2046680 (PTS No 581984)" dated December 6, 2019 the Hydraulics Branch has the following specific comments:

6. The report states that the FEMA FIS flow rates were used. When were these flow rates established? Do these flow rates accurately represent the expected flow rates given the amount of development that has occurred in the San Diego River Hydrologic Basin?
7. The feasibility study conducted compared existing condition water surface elevation to proposed water surface elevations. However, another required comparison is to compare the effective model water surface elevations to the proposed water surface elevations. The effective model water surface elevations were not provided; therefore, it is undetermined what the overall impact is to I-8 at this time.
8. Identify Effective Study cross sections as labeled in the FEMA FIRM mapping.
9. Identify I-8 on the HEC-RAS work map.
10. Show the following on the HEC-RAS work map:
  - a. Effective 100-yr Floodplain boundaries.
  - b. Effective 100-yr Floodway boundaries.
  - c. Existing 100-yr Floodplain boundaries.
  - d. Existing 100-yr Floodway boundaries.

### **Complete Streets and Mobility Network**

Coordinate early and often with Caltrans for studies, approvals, and encroachment permits. The project team should plan to coordinate early in the project development process with Caltrans District 11 Planning to navigate the Caltrans encroachment permit process for the pedestrian and bicycle network projects that require Caltrans approval.

Furthermore, the following Caltrans documents should be utilized to design pedestrian and bicycle facilities through Caltrans R/W.

- Caltrans Highway Design Manual (HDM):  
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/manuals/hdm.html>
- California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD):  
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/camutcd/camutcd2014rev3.html>

- Caltrans Design Information Bulletin (DIB) 82-06 Pedestrian Accessibility Guidance for Highway Projects  
<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/design/documents/dib82-06-all.pdf>
- Caltrans Design Information Bulletin (DIB) 89-01 Class IV Bikeway Guidance:  
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/stp/dib/dib89-01.pdf>

Caltrans views all transportation improvements as opportunities to improve safety, access and mobility for all travelers in California and recognizes bicycle, pedestrian and transit modes as integral elements of the transportation system. Caltrans supports improved transit accommodation through the provision of Park and Ride facilities, improved bicycle and pedestrian access and safety improvements, signal prioritization for transit, bus on shoulders, ramp improvements, or other enhancements that promote a complete and integrated transportation system. Early coordination with Caltrans, in locations that may affect both Caltrans and the City of San Diego, is encouraged.

To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve California's Climate Change targets, Caltrans is implementing Complete Streets and Climate Change policies into State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP) projects to meet multi-modal mobility needs. Caltrans looks forward to working with the City to evaluate potential Complete Streets projects.

### **Noise**

The applicant must be informed that in accordance with 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 772, the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is not responsible for existing or future traffic noise impacts associated with the existing configuration of I-8 and State Route 163 (SR-163).

### **Environmental**

Caltrans welcomes the opportunity to be a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as we have some discretionary authority of a portion of the project that is in Caltrans' 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 for our R/W. We would appreciate meeting with you to discuss the elements of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that Caltrans will use for our subsequent environmental compliance.

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, California Environmental Quality Act (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 (highways/roadways/on- and off-ramps) and appurtenant features (including but not limited to lighting/signs/guardrail).

### **Mitigation**

Caltrans endeavors that any direct and cumulative impacts to the State Highway System be eliminated or reduced to a level of insignificance pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.

Future interstate highway projects proposed for mitigation will need to be approved by the Federal Highway Administration based on the type of project.

Caltrans would welcome a different proposal as mitigation for this project than the mitigation identified in the DEIR. One suggestion would be to propose a new freeway interchange at Via Las Cumbres that would include a bridge overcrossing, entrance and exit ramps for both eastbound and westbound directions of I-8 with the inclusion of the proposed City of San Diego's One Directional Couplet. Such proposal would remove the ramp locations along I-8 at Taylor Street/Hotel Circle North and South, plus the westbound I-8 ramps at Hotel Circle North, and eastbound I-8 ramps at Hotel Circle South.

Mitigation identified in the traffic study, subsequent environmental documents, and mitigation monitoring reports, should be coordinated with Caltrans to identify and implement the appropriate mitigation. This includes the actual implementation and collection of any “fair share” monies, as well as the appropriate timing of the mitigation. Mitigation improvements should be compatible with Caltrans concepts.

Mitigation measures for proposed intersection modifications are subject to the Caltrans Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) policy (Traffic Operation Policy Directive 13-02). Alternative intersection design(s) will need to be considered in accordance with the ICE policy. Please refer to the policy for more information and requirements (<http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/ice.html>).

Mitigation conditioned as part of a local agency's development approval for improvements to State facilities can be implemented either through a Cooperative Agreement between Caltrans and the lead agency, or by the project proponent entering into an agreement directly with Caltrans for the mitigation. When that occurs, Caltrans will negotiate and execute a Traffic Mitigation Agreement.

### **Right-of-Way**

- Per Business and Profession Code 8771, perpetuation of survey monuments by a licensed land surveyor is required, if they are being destroyed by any construction.
- Any work performed within Caltrans R/W will require discretionary review and approval by Caltrans and an encroachment permit will be required for any work within the Caltrans R/W prior to construction.

Additional information regarding encroachment permits may be obtained by contacting the Caltrans Permits Office at (619) 688-6158 or by visiting the website at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/ep/index.html>. Early coordination with Caltrans is strongly advised for all encroachment permits.

Ms. Elizabeth Shearer-Nguyen  
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If you have any questions, please contact Kimberly Dodson, of the Caltrans Development Review Branch, at (619) 688-2510 or by e-mail sent to [Kimberly.Dodson@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Dodson@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

**electronically signed by**

MAURICE EATON, Branch Chief  
Local Development and Intergovernmental Review