California Department of Transportation

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October 8, 2025

11-SD-78
PM 82.413
Rams Hill Specific Plan Amendment
NOP/SCH# 1986082702

Ms. Daniella Hofreiter
Land Use/Environmental Planning Manager
County of San Diego - Planning and Development Services
5510 Overland Ave, Suite 110
San Diego, CA 92123

Dear Ms. Hofreiter:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Notice of Preparation of a Draft EIR (NOP) for the Rams Hill Specific Plan Amendment located near State Route 78 (SR-78). The mission of Caltrans is to provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment. The Local Development Review (LDR) Program reviews land use projects and plans to ensure consistency with our mission and state planning priorities.

Safety is one of Caltrans' strategic goals. Caltrans strives to make the year 2050 the first year without a single death or serious injury on California's roads. We are striving for more equitable outcomes for the transportation network's diverse users. To achieve these ambitious goals, we will pursue meaningful collaboration with our partners. We encourage the implementation of new technologies, innovations, and best practices that will enhance the safety on the transportation network. These pursuits are both ambitious and urgent, and their accomplishment involves a focused departure from the status quo as we continue to institutionalize safety in all our work.

Caltrans is committed to prioritizing projects that are equitable and provide meaningful benefits to historically underserved communities, to ultimately improve transportation accessibility and quality of life for people in the communities we serve.

We look forward to working with County of San Diego in areas where the County 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:

Traffic Impact Study

- A Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) based Traffic Impact Study (TIS) should be provided for this project. Please use the Governor's Office of Planning and Research Guidance to identify VMT related impacts.[1] Or please provide justification on VMT Exemption.

- The TIS may also need to identify the proposed project's near-term and long-term safety or operational issues, on or adjacent any existing or proposed State facilities.

- For Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) please reference the Caltrans "Local Development Review (LDR) Safety Review Practitioner's Guidance" https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/safety-programs/documents/202402-ldr-safety-review-practitioners-guidance-a11y.pdf to determine if the project meets both of the screening criteria. If both screening criteria are not met, then a safety review will be needed.

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

We encourage the County to utilize strategies that will help the County achieve conformance with State GHG emission and VMT reduction goals. Potential measures to reduce VMT include, but are not limited to:

- Improve or increase access to transit.
- Increase access to common goods and services, such as groceries, schools, and daycare.
- Incorporate affordable housing into the project.
- Incorporate neighborhood electric vehicle network.
- Orient the project toward transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.
- Improve pedestrian or bicycle networks, or transit service.
- Provide traffic calming measures and strategies.
- Provide bicycle parking.
- Limit or eliminate parking supply.
- Implement or provide access to a commute reduction program.
- Provide car-sharing, bike sharing, and ride-sharing programs.
- Provide transit passes.
- Shifting single occupancy vehicle trips to carpooling or vanpooling, for example providing ride-matching services.
- Providing telework options.
- Providing incentives or subsidies that increase the use of modes other than single-occupancy vehicle.

[1] California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) 2018. "Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA." https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20190122-743_Technical_Advisory.pdf

- Providing on-site amenities at places of work, such as priority parking for carpools and vanpools, secure bike parking, and showers and locker rooms.
- Providing employee transportation coordinators at employment sites.
- Providing a guaranteed ride home service to users of non-auto modes.

ISOAP

Mitigation measures for proposed intersection modifications are subject to the Caltrans Intersection Safety and Operational Assessment Policy (ISOAP). Alternative intersection design(s) will need to be considered in accordance with the ISOAP policy. Please refer to the policy for more information and requirements (https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/isoap).

Multimodal System Planning

- Several planning documents frequently utilized by the Caltrans System Planning branch discuss the importance of land use planning and connectivity. These documents may provide further background on state and regional planning in relation to the Rams Hill Specific Plan Amendment. Below are several examples that may be utilized.
    - California Transportation Plan 2050
    - Smart Mobility Framework 2010: Please see the section on Rural and Agricultural Lands (Page 40).

- Other Proposed Improvements:
    - Please consider reaching out to the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) to suggest appropriate bus shelter and signage for the bus stop north of the Rams Hill Specific Plan Amendment project. In reference to the Borrego Springs Community Plan, there is a need for alternative automotive transportation. This could help improve transit ridership for MTS Bus Routes 891 and 892 located on Yaqui Pass Road.
    - Please consider implementing the continuation of the Class II Bike Lane on Yaqui Pass Road which stops near Rams Hill Road where the Rams Hill Specific Plan Amendment project is located.
    - Please review the SANDAG 2021 Regional Plan and see Appendix Q: Transportation Security and Safety. These documents may provide further background on state and regional planning in relation to Intelligent Transportation Safety and Evacuations.

Complete Streets and Mobility Network

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 network. 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 promotes a complete and integrated

transportation network. Early coordination with Caltrans, in locations that may affect both Caltrans and the County of San Diego, is encouraged.

To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve California's Climate Change target, 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 County to evaluate potential Complete Streets projects.

Bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit access during construction is important. Mitigation to maintain bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit access during construction is in accordance with Caltrans' goals and policies.

Land Use and Smart Growth

Caltrans recognizes there is a strong link between transportation and land use. Development can have a significant impact on traffic and congestion on State transportation facilities. In particular, the pattern of land use can affect both local vehicle miles traveled and the number of trips. Caltrans supports collaboration with local agencies to work towards a safe, functional, interconnected, multi-modal transportation network integrated through applicable "smart growth" type land use planning and policies.

The County should continue to coordinate with Caltrans to implement necessary improvements at intersections and interchanges where the agencies have joint jurisdiction.

Hauling

Caltrans has discretionary authority with respect to highways under its jurisdiction and may, upon application and if good cause appears, issue a special permit to operate or move a vehicle or combination of vehicles or special mobile equipment of a size or weight of vehicle or load exceeding the maximum limitations specified in the California Vehicle Code. The Caltrans Transportation Permits Issuance Branch is responsible for the issuance of these special transportation permits for oversize/overweight vehicles on the State Highway network. Additional information is provided online at: https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/transportation-permits

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 Document 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, 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 draft Environmental Document.

Broadband

Caltrans recognizes that teleworking and remote learning lessen the impacts of traffic on our roadways and surrounding communities. This reduces the amount of VMT and decreases the amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and other pollutants. The availability of affordable and reliable, high-speed broadband is a key component in supporting travel demand management and reaching the state's transportation and climate action goals.

Mitigation

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

Mitigation measures to State facilities should be included in TIS/TIA. 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' standards and concepts.

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 visiting the website at https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep. Projects with the following:

- require a Caltrans Encroachment Permit
- have completed the Caltrans Local Development Review (LDR) process
- have an approved environmental document

need to have documents submitted for Quality Management Assessment Process (QMAP) process via email to D11.QMAP.Permits@dot.ca.gov. Early coordination with Caltrans is strongly advised for all encroachment permits.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Charlie Lecourtois, LDR Coordinator, at (619) 985-4766 or by e-mail sent to charlie.lecourtois@dot.ca.gov

Sincerely,

Kimberly D. Dodson

KIMBERLY D. DODSON, GISP
Branch Chief
Local Development Review