**California Department of Transportation**

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October 9, 2024

11-SD-52, 67
PM VAR
Santee Town Center Specific Plan Update
DEIR/SCH# 2023090032

Mr. Michael Coyne
Principal Planner
City of Santee
Department of Development Services
10601 Magnolia Avenue
Santee, CA 92701

Dear Mr. Coyne:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Town Center Specific Plan (TCSP) Update, located near State Routes 52 (SR-52) and 67 (SR-67), in the city of Santee. 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 Caltrans' 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 the City of Santee in areas where the City 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 Engineering and Analysis**

- The Draft Environmental Impact Report should include language that proposed developments may require a safety review that follows the Caltrans "Local Development Review (LDR) Safety Review Practitioner's Guidance". Please see attached.
- The Draft EIR shows that this Santee Town Center Specific Plan update does exceed the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Significance Thresholds:
  - The Residential Uses VMT/Capita exceed the threshold. Therefore, would have a significant VMT Impact.
  - The TCSP Area and Housing Elements Sites 20A and 20B: "While MM-TRA-1 would minimize VMT impacts associated with future development, impacts would not be fully mitigated. Therefore, impacts associated with VMT would remain significant and unavoidable."
  - "Development of Housing Element sites 16A, 16B, 20A, and 20B may require improvements to the existing roadway network at the time plans are prepared for their development."
  - "Which could affect emergency access."
- The Santee TCSP Update property developments 20A and 20B are approximately one-half mile away from the SR-67 ramps at Woodside Avenue and the property developments 16A and 16B are approximately 2 miles away from the SR-67 ramps at Woodside Ave. Therefore, once these properties developments begin a VMT analysis will be required to check for impacts at the SR-67 ramps, such as queueing during peak hours and the safety impacts these will create on SR-67 mainlines.
- There is a City of Santee approved 2017 Capital Improvement Program that included the Roundabout project at Woodside Avenue and SR-67 southbound exit ramp designed by the City of Santee.
- The "City of Santee Mobility Element" report that states "Policy 3.5: The City shall encourage the use of innovative methods for traffic control (such as roundabouts, curb extensions, and traffic circles) where appropriate that add character, slow vehicle speeds, and create opportunity for improved aesthetics while effectively managing traffic."
- There was a Cooperative Agreement 11-8446 and Permit Engineering Evaluation Report (PEER) document with Caltrans and the City of Santee for the proposed Roundabout project at Woodside Avenue and SR-67 southbound exit ramp

designed by the City of Santee. Caltrans recommends this project be included in the Santee TCSP Update DEIR and part of the VMT mitigation.

- Section 4.16.6.3 Significance After Mitigation, indicates: "At a program level of review with no specific development proposals available for review, it is not guaranteed that each individual project would be able to fully mitigate the potential impacts. While MM-TRA-1 would minimize VMT impacts associated with future development, impacts would not be fully mitigated. Therefore, impacts associated with VMT would remain significant and unavoidable." Future development projects should be required to fully mitigate VMT impacts. A potential option would be to have a fee system for situations that cannot be fully mitigated by VMT reduction measures, similar to the City of San Diego.

Potential measures to reduce VMT may include the following:

- Improve or increase access to transit.
- Increase access to common goods and services, such as grocery stores, 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.
- 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.

**System Planning**

*Santee Town Center Specific Plan Update DEIR and Town Center Specific Plan Draft*

- Caltrans System Planning recommends that language within the Santee TCSP Update DEIR and the TCSP Draft be updated from "Green Line Trolley" to "Copper Line Trolley". The Copper Line Trolley replaces the Green Line Trolley past the El Cajon Transit Center, which serves the Santee community. The Copper Line commenced on September 29, 2024 (MTS Copper Line).
- In the TCSP Draft, there is no discussion of electric vehicles or charging facilities. The Santee TCSP Update DEIR includes information under several Housing Element Sites sections on the increased use of electric vehicles and strategies related to electric vehicle charging. This information also appears in Appendix E of the Santee TCSP Update DEIR.
- Please consider including the emerging technology for autonomous vehicles and how this will be implemented in the transportation element of the community.

SANDAG Draft Proposed 2025 Regional Plan

- A conceptual draft version of the SANDAG 2025 Regional Plan is available for review; please see the following proposed projects and feedback:

    - Rapid 880: El Cajon to UC San Diego.
    - SR-52 Managed Lanes includes the addition of a truck climbing lane.
    - On-Street and Off-Street Bikeway Central and East County Recurring Feedback and Impact.

**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 City of Santee, 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.

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

**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' 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 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.

Should future projects based upon the changes enacted from the General Plan have elements and/or mitigation measures that affect Caltrans' R/W, Caltrans would welcome the opportunity to be a Responsible Agency under CEQA.

**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.

**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.

are to submit documents 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 Mark McCumsey, LDR Coordinator, at (619) 985-4957 or by e-mail sent to mark.mccumsey@dot.ca.gov .

Sincerely,

*Kimberly D. Dodson*

KIMBERLY D. DODSON, GISP
Branch Chief
Local Development Review

Attachments: Local Development Review (LDR) Safety Review Practitioner's Guidance