

California Department of Transportation

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June 9, 2025

Mr. Paul Garcia
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City of San Juan Capistrano
32400 Paseo Adelanto
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

File: LDR/CEQA
SCH: 2023100025
12-ORA-2021-02804
SR 74, PM 0
I-5, PM 9.383

Dear Mr. Garcia,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the El Camino Specific Plan Amendment for City of San Juan Capistrano (City). The mission of Caltrans is improving lives and communities through transportation.

The proposed project involves expanding the specific plan area to develop two proposed developments, a mixed-use project and a performing arts center. Regional access to the site is provided by Interstate 5 (I-5) and State Route 1 (SR 1). Caltrans is a commenting agency on this project and has the following comments:

1. 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, including mixed use developments such as the El Camino Specific Plan proposal.

Additionally, Caltrans supports the City's progress in meeting its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation, and we encourage the City to promote the development of housing units for a variety of income levels.

2. Caltrans supports the design of Complete Streets that include high-quality pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities that are safe and comfortable for users of all ages and abilities. Improvements may include providing secure bicycle

parking, pedestrian-oriented LED lighting, wayfinding signage, and comfortable connections to nearby active transportation and/or transit facilities. Complete Streets improvements also promote regional connectivity, improve air quality, reduce congestion, promote improved first-/last-mile connections, and increase safety for all modes of transportation. Continue to incorporate Complete Streets in project development.

3. Provide adequate wayfinding signage and related amenities for transit stops where needed within the project vicinity.
4. Caltrans also recommends following bicycle parking best practices described in the "Essentials of Bike Parking" guide created by the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (link to online PDF: <https://www.apbp.org/Publications>).

Bike parking should be installed a minimum of 24" away from walls and other objects (e.g., trash cans, plants, etc.). With the growing popularity of electric bikes and cargo/utility bikes (which tend to be bigger and heavier), Caltrans also recommends that bicycle storage facilities be designed to accommodate a range of bicycle styles, sizes, and weights.

5. Caltrans Traffic Operations Southwest agrees with the Traffic Delay HCM Method of Analysis and the Synchro Traffic Operations Method of Analysis. However, the Synchro Analysis was not performed on all intersections. We recommend including all intersections especially close by and consecutive intersections by the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) method. The existing software is not considering storage length (left turn storage bay overflow), taper length, queuing length, closely space intersection, etc.
6. Based on the Caltrans Annual Average Daily Truck Traffic, I-5/SR 74 (Ortega Highway) has a 7% truck percentage. However, the truck percentage used in the analysis is 2%. Caltrans recommends using 7% truck percentage for ramps and any segments of Ortega Highway.

Annual Average Daily Truck Traffic data can be found at the following link to the Caltrans Traffic Census Program: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/census>

7. The intersection of El Camino Real and Ortega Highway (SR 74) is mentioned throughout the Traffic Impact Analysis Report. However, as noted on Page 4.15-1 of the Draft Environmental Impact Report, Ortega Highway ends before the

intersection of Del Obispo Street. Please replace all text with "intersection of El Camino Real at Old Mission Road instead.

8. In the Traffic Impact Analysis Report, please confirm whether the existing street parking along NB El Camino Real will be removed to provide an additional lane for left or right turn lane at the signalized intersection of El Camino Real and Old Mission Road.

If street parking were to be removed, Caltrans would like to review the Synchro Analysis for this signal with the Build-out alternative, where the restriction for the WB Forster Lane left-turn at Del Obispo St.

9. On Section 10.1.2.3 and 10.1.2.4, which show the Existing Plus Project plus Cumulative (Year 2028) Traffic Conditions with and without Forster, the statement that El Camino Real at Old Mission Road would be the same as Existing Plus Project is misleading. On Table 8.3, the delay time is 101.5 and 134.1 s/v. Table 8.4 displays a delay time of 97.8 and 127.5 s/v.
10. The Traffic Impact Analysis Report explains that intersection (#2) of El Camino Real and Old Mission Road would modify existing signal using the north-south split phase to eliminate the pedestrian conflict with the left turn vehicles. However, the project is adding more volumes for the right-turn lane. As such, Caltrans would like to review the Synchro Analysis for this intersection.
11. On Figure 2-3 of the Traffic Impact Analysis Report, consider adding labels on all streets.
12. The Draft EIR does not include a freight compatibility analysis that screens proposed land uses for potential conflicts with existing or future goods movement operations, particularly near I-5 and Camino Capistrano.

Given the proximity to regional freight corridors, it is essential to assess whether the mix of residential, commercial, and cultural uses could create land use conflicts or constraints on truck movement.

13. The Draft EIR lacks detail on how trucks, including delivery vehicles or service trucks, will access commercial uses (e.g., the 4,294 SF restaurant and 3,100 SF fitness center) or the Performing Arts Center. This raises concern about unplanned curbside loading or conflicts with pedestrian-oriented design elements. Include a truck circulation plan with designated loading zones, off-street access, and turning templates. Ensure commercial and service access points do not disrupt bicycle or pedestrian circulation.

14. The proposed expansion includes residential and park-oriented development within close proximity to Camino Capistrano and El Camino Real—both of which serve as regional connectors with potential freight significance. Placing high-sensitivity uses (e.g., residential, performing arts center, historic sites) adjacent to freight routes may create long-term land use incompatibility or pressure to restrict freight operations. Apply freight-compatible buffer strategies such as increased setbacks, landscape buffers, noise/vibration barriers, or site design orientation to reduce exposure of sensitive uses to freight-related externalities (noise, vibration, emissions).
15. The Draft EIR's cumulative impacts section does not evaluate potential compounded effects on freight circulation or access from adjacent development, especially as the downtown San Juan Capistrano area intensifies. Assess whether cumulative buildout of the Specific Plan area and nearby projects could degrade freight travel time reliability, intersection LOS for trucks, or access to regional highway ramps (especially I-5 and SR-74).
16. The EIR does not address consistency with SCAG's Goods Movement strategies in Connect SoCal (2024). Local planning efforts should acknowledge how mixed-use intensification near regional corridors can support or hinder long-term freight movement goals. Include a policy consistency analysis referencing SCAG's regional freight policies and Caltrans Freight Mobility Plan 2020. Identify mitigation or design considerations that preserve freight throughput while enabling complete community development.

Please continue to coordinate with Caltrans for any future developments that could potentially impact State transportation facilities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Joseph Jamoralin at Joseph.Jamoralin@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



[Scott Shelley \(Jun 9, 2025 15:50 PDT\)](#)

Scott Shelley
Branch Chief, Local Development Review-Climate Change-Transit Grants
Caltrans, District 12