

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 4
OFFICE OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
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April 13, 2026

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Rendell Bustos, Senior Planner
City of San Carlos
600 Elm Street
San Carlos, CA 94070-3085

Re: San Carlos Northeast Area Specific Plan – Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Dear Rendell Bustos:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the San Carlos Northeast Area Specific Plan (NEASP). The Local Development Review (LDR) Program reviews land use projects and plans to ensure consistency with our mission and state planning priorities. The following comments are based on our review of the March 2026 DEIR.

Please note this correspondence does not indicate an official position by Caltrans on this project and is for informational purposes only.

Project Understanding

The proposed project is to develop the NEASP, which will guide new development within the approximately 145-acre Plan area. The NEASP would be built out over an approximate 20-year period and would allow for a net increase of 1,890 residential units in the Plan area, where no residential units currently exist, as well as increase the net square footage of existing non-residential land uses. The Plan also proposes multi-modal transportation improvements. The Plan area is located between U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101) and State Route 82 (SR 82) and is bound by U.S. 101 on its eastern side.

Travel Demand Analysis

With the enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 743, Caltrans is focused on maximizing efficient development patterns, innovative travel demand reduction strategies, and multimodal improvements. For more information on how Caltrans assesses Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis for land use projects, please review Caltrans' Transportation Impact Study Guide ([link](#)).

The project's VMT analysis and significance determination are undertaken in a manner consistent with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation's (LCI) Technical Advisory or the City's adopted VMT policy. Per the DEIR, this project is found to have a less than significant VMT impact.

Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

Please keep the Caltrans District 4 Climate Change Planning team informed of Sea Level Rise (SLR) and flooding considerations within the project area. Caltrans participates as a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) member for the ongoing Redwood Shores SLR Protection Project and is particularly interested in continued discussions regarding resilience along both Belmont Creek and Pulgas Creek. Evidence indicates that, by 2100, flooding and associated flows may overtop U.S. 101 and extend to areas west of the highway. Caltrans also partners with OneShoreline to address flooding concerns affecting U.S. 101 along and near Belmont Creek.

Given the project's intent to address flooding and SLR through resilience improvements along Belmont Creek (such as green stormwater infrastructure), Caltrans requests regular updates on proposed and implemented measures. Since the project area borders U.S. 101 and Belmont Creek could convey flooding, stormwater, and tidal influence toward the State's Right-of-Way (ROW), changes within the creek corridor and watershed may directly affect US-101 conditions downstream. Please keep Caltrans updated on planned improvements, design assumptions, and any monitoring results related to Belmont Creek resilience efforts. Please reach out to the Climate Change Branch at D4_ClimateResilience@dot.ca.gov for any questions or concerns.

Hydrology

The developments proposed within the plan may impact the existing drainage systems along southbound U.S. 101. As part of the encroach permit application, please submit plan views, profiles, cross sections, and detailed drawings of all drainage facilities, along with hydrologic calculations comparing pre and post development conditions at this location.

The Office of Hydraulics would like to ensure that no surface runoff from the developments within this plan directly enters the roadside ditch located between the project site and southbound U.S. 101. Additionally, that discharge from the new developments does not adversely affect the existing U.S. 101 drainage system, particularly during the rainy season.

Aeronautics

Given the program-level nature of the NEASP, the Office of Aeronautics would like to reiterate their previous comments to ensure these considerations are carried forward during plan implementation. As noted previously, one of the goals of the Caltrans

Aeronautics Program, is to assist cities, counties, and Airport Land Use Commissions or their equivalent (ALUC), to understand and comply with the State Aeronautics Act pursuant to the California Public Utilities Code (PUC), Section 21001 et seq.

The proposed project is in Safety Zone 6 (Traffic Pattern Zone), with a portion of the Project site in Safety Zone 3 (Inner Turning Zone) of the San Carlos Airport, established by the San Mateo County ALUC pursuant to Section 21675(c). Therefore, the proposed Project shall adhere to the safety and land use criteria and restrictions defined in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) formed by the ALUC pursuant to the PUC Section 21674 and Section 21676 and may be subject to review authority by the ALUC.

A portion of the project site is also in the 60 decibel (dB) community noise level contour (CNEL) of the Future Conditions (2035) Aircraft Noise Contours for the San Carlos Airport per the ALUCP. Development in this area would be subject to the noise compatibility policies of the ALUCP. Of note, multi-family residential development in the 60 dB CNEL contour is conditionally compatible and must be capable of attenuating exterior noise levels to an interior noise level of CNEL 45 dB or lower.

PUC Section 21659 prohibits structural hazards near airports. Structures should not be at a height that will result in penetration of the airport imaginary surfaces. In accordance with Federal Aviation Regulation, Part 77 "Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace" a Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration (Form 7460-1) may be required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). For further information or a copy of Form 7460-1, please refer to the FAA website ([link](#)).

Lastly, in accordance with PUC Section 21676 et seq., prior to the amendment of a general plan or specific plan, or the adoption or approval of a zoning ordinance or building regulation within the planning boundary established by the ALUC, the local agency shall first refer the proposed action to the ALUC. If the commission determines that the proposed action is inconsistent with the commission's plan, the referring agency shall be notified.

These comments reflect the areas of review by Caltrans Aeronautics with respect to airport-related noise, safety, and land use planning issues. Caltrans Aeronautics appreciates the opportunity to comment. Should you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact aeronautics-planning@dot.ca.gov.

Construction-Related Impacts

Project work that requires movement of oversized or excessive load vehicles on State roadways requires a transportation permit that is issued by Caltrans. To apply, please visit Caltrans Transportation Permits ([link](#)).

Prior to construction, coordination may be required with Caltrans to develop a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to reduce construction traffic impacts to the State Transportation Network (STN).

Equitable Access

If any Caltrans facilities are impacted by the project, those facilities must meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards after project completion. As well, the project must maintain bicycle and pedestrian access during construction. These access considerations support Caltrans' equity mission to provide a safe, sustainable, and equitable transportation network for all users.

Equity and Public Engagement

We will achieve equity when everyone has access to what they need to thrive no matter their race, socioeconomic status, identity, where they live, or how they travel. Caltrans is committed to advancing equity and livability in all communities. We look forward to collaborating with the City to prioritize projects that are equitable and provide meaningful benefits to historically underserved communities.

Caltrans encourages the City to foster meaningful, equitable and ongoing public engagement in the NEASP development process to ensure future transportation decisions and investments reflect community interests and values. The public engagement process should include community-sensitive and equity-focused approaches seeking out the needs of individuals from underserved, Tribal, and low-income communities, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.

Encroachment Permit

Please be advised that any temporary or permanent work including traffic control that encroaches in, under, or over any portion of the State highway ROW requires a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit.

The Office of Encroachment Permits requires 100% complete design plans and supporting documents to review and circulate the permit application package. The review and approval of encroachment projects is managed through the Encroachment Permits Office Process (EPOP) or the Project Delivery Quality Management Assessment Process (QMAP), depending on project scope, complexity, and completeness of the application. Please use the following resources to determine the appropriate review process:

- TR-0416 Applicant's Checklist ([link](#))
- Caltrans Encroachment Projects Processes – Information Video ([link](#))

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- Flowchart, Figure 1.2 in Section 108, Overview of the Encroachment Review Process, of Chapter 100 – The Permit Function, Caltrans Encroachment Permit Manual ([link](#))

The permit approval typically takes less than 60 days, but may take longer depending on the project scope, size, complexity, completeness, compliance with applicable laws, standards, policies, and quality of the permit package submitted. Projects requiring exceptions to design standards, exceptions to encroachment policies, or external agency approvals may need more time to process.

To obtain more information and download the permit application, please visit Caltrans Encroachment Permits ([link](#)).

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mary McGee, Transportation Planner, via LDR-D4@dot.ca.gov. For future early coordination opportunities or project referrals, please visit Caltrans LDR website ([link](#)) or contact LDR-D4@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



YUNSHENG LUO

Branch Chief, Local Development Review
Office of Regional and Community Planning

c: State Clearinghouse