

## California Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT 10 PLANNING  
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August 11, 2025

Mr. Tyler Summersett  
Community Development Director  
City of Sonora  
94 N. Washington St.  
Sonora, CA 95370

**City of Sonora-General  
Plan Update- Housing &  
Safety Element  
Update/Initial Study  
SCH 2025070498**

Mr. Summersett,

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the City of Sonora-General Plan Update- Housing & Safety Element Update/Initial Study (IS).

### **Caltrans has the following comments:**

Caltrans suggests that the Tuolumne County continue to coordinate with Caltrans in identifying and addressing potential pedestrian safety and cumulative transportation impacts from this project and other developments near this location. This will assist Caltrans in ensuring that pedestrian, traffic safety, and quality standards are maintained for the traveling public on existing and future state transportation facilities in Tuolumne County.

### **Resiliency and Adaptation**

Caltrans supports local land use development that is consistent with State planning priorities which is intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety (Government Code § 65041 .1). These priorities inherently include achieving sustainable land use development patterns that accommodate a sufficient supply of adequate housing in and near population and job centers. Projects that support smart growth principles and include improvements to pedestrian, bicycling, and public transit infrastructure are supported by Caltrans and are consistent with State Transportation plans. State housing element law requires housing elements to be updated regularly to reflect a community's changing housing needs, including preparation of a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) plan (Government Code Section 65584[a]). The City of Sonora RHNA rose above of what is required and Caltrans commends the City for the additional 152 surplus housing units for Very Low and Low income residents.

As noted in the IS, the City of Sonora has been identified to be in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). With the growing concerns of climate change, wildfires have become a prevalent concern for all jurisdictions, as climate change increasingly affects other hazards such as severe weather, flooding, wildfires, diseases, extreme heat, and drought. Caltrans recommends creating defensible space as a buffer between buildings and vegetation surrounding it. This space slows or stops the spread of wildfire and additionally protects the buildings from reactive heat impacts. In addition, fire-resistant landscaping may prevent fire ignition, and slow or stop the spread of an existing wildfire. Lastly, hardening of ember and heat-resistant materials may assist in preventing ignition and damage to buildings and assets. Additional information regarding the potential for expected vehicle volumes that would result from the development should be provided to Caltrans for discussion of possible additional strain to the highway network during an emergency. Such data could assist to determine the need for ensuring safety of the traveling public during wildfire or other emergency requiring evacuation, including when preparing environmental review documents for future developments.

The IS has identified that the City of Sonora is at risk of flooding caused by an overflow of Woods Creek, which is located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency 100-year flood zone. The areas adjacent to Woods Creek and Sonora Creek are at risk of flooding in the event of extreme precipitation, Caltrans ask that any flooding that effects the state highway system (SHS) through City of Sonora be identified so we can explore coordination with any traffic improvements in the area.

While Caltrans applauds the additional housing units for the Housing Element Update, there is a greater opportunity to include measures in the Safety Element such as active transportation options, and multi-modal options to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and enhance carbon sequestration that would assist the City and Caltrans initiatives to achieve alignment with state greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% reduction levels by 2050.

Additionally, any future developments from the City of Sonora that may impact the State highway system shall be reviewed by Caltrans District 10.

### **System Planning and Goods Movement**

We are pleased with the initiative and commitment on the part of City of Sonora (City) on updating General Plan Housing and Safety Elements to align with other General Plan Elements, as required by state law. We support any local development that is consistent with system planning priorities intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety. This is accomplished by working together with the local jurisdiction to achieve a shared vision of how the transportation system can accommodate interregional and local

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travel and development. We look forward to work with the City on any continued development that may have an impact on its state highway system.

At this time, no specific work has been proposed nor any actual development of parcels have been indicated. When these projects are ready for implementation, the City may consider submitting a request identifying the need for the proposed improvement to Caltrans. At that time, we will review and evaluate the proposed improvement to determine the consistency with Caltrans policies, practices, and any unique highway operations or safety considerations.

**Traffic Operations**

Any projects that are within the State ROW and in the Sonora General Plan update should be submitted for Caltrans D10 review during the developmental stages.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dariana Villamil (209) 986-5762 (email: [dariana.villamil@dot.ca.gov](mailto:dariana.villamil@dot.ca.gov)) or me at (209) 639 -8832 (email: [Gregoria.ponce@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Gregoria.ponce@dot.ca.gov)).

Sincerely,

*Gregoria Ponce'*

Gregoria Ponce', Chief  
Office of Rural Planning

cc: State Clearinghouse