

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 12
1750 East 4th Street, Suite 100 | SANTA ANA, CA 92705
(657) 328-6000 | FAX (657) 328-6522 TTY 711
<https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-12>



February 13, 2026

Ms. Shaveta Sharma
Senior Planner
City of Laguna Beach
505 Forest Ave
Laguna Beach, CA. 92651

File: LDR/CEQA
SCH: 2026010462
12-ORA-2026-03020
SR-1; PM: 6.505

Dear Ms. Sharma,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Aliso Creek Estuary Plan. The proposed Project would restore the Aliso Creek Estuary by removing artificial fill, widening the channelized watercourse, creating new functional wetland habitats, improving water quality, and returning the estuary to its natural "intermittently open" condition. These proposed restoration activities would include the demolition of the existing beach overflow parking lot, construction of a new multi-modal facilities, installation of landscaping, and reconstruction of the play area and tot lot. The proposed Project would restore the Aliso Creek Estuary from its current condition to a healthy, functional ecosystem. In its existing state the estuary is a degraded lagoon, which stores urban runoff and provides no significant value as a natural habitat for native plants, fish, or wildlife. The proposed Project would restore a portion of the wetland habitat that historically occupied the Project site, by removing the existing surface parking lot and associated artificial fill, widening the channelized watercourse, and restoring the estuary's natural connection to the ocean. The Restoration Site Plan proposes new, upgraded park facilities designed to provide public opportunities to experience the restored ecosystem in a wilderness park setting. These features include an interpretive loop trail around the restored estuary with seating and viewing areas, a pedestrian bridge over the restored wetland habitat, and an overlook area suitable for guided educational visits. The Public Access Plan emphasizes enhanced access to the site via multiple modes of transportation through a multi-modal mobility hub, consistent with citywide visitor mobility strategies.

The project site is situated at the mouth of Aliso Creek in southern Laguna Beach, near the intersection of Country Club Drive and Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), also known as State Route 1 (SR-1). This section of SR-1 is owned and operated by

Caltrans, which serves as a commenting agency on this project. Consequently, Caltrans has provided the following comments:

1. 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.
2. Caltrans supports the inclusion of bicycle storage facilities pursuant to CALGreen code. 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 supports the inclusion of bicycle storage facilities be designed to accommodate a range of bicycle styles, sizes, and weights.
3. Any work performed within Caltrans right-of-way (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. Prior to submitting to Caltrans Permit's branch, applicant should fill out Applicant's Checklist to Determine Applicable Review Process (QMAP List) Form TR-0416 to determine if project oversight/coordination with Caltrans Project Manager is needed. Applicant must submit a signed Standard Encroachment Permit application form TR-0100 along with a deposit payable to Caltrans. Deposit amount will be dependent on when the application is submitted. Public corporations are legally exempt from encroachment permit fees. However, contractors working for public corporations are not exempt from fees. Please note that all utility work should be disclosed prior to permit submittal, and utility companies are to apply for separate permits for their corresponding work.
4. Project plans and traffic control plans must be stamped and signed by a licensed engineer. For all plans, including traffic control plans, Caltrans R/W lines should be clearly labeled, which include existing and proposed (if there are any changes to Caltrans R/W), the north arrow, the edge of pavement, and edge of the sidewalk, if applicable. When submitting the application,

please include final Environmental Clearance Documentation, relevant design details including design exception approvals and construction and drainage plans, traffic control plans, traffic management plan and traffic impact study if proposed traffic delay of 30 minutes above normal recurring traffic delay is anticipated, any Caltrans R/W certifications if needed, maintenance agreement as needed, shoring plans for any excavation 5-feet or more, ADA certification, and any letter of authorizations.

5. Please submit all applications and associated documents/plans via email to D12.Permits@dot.ca.gov until further notice. Caltrans Encroachment Permits will be transitioning to an online web portal base for all applications in Fall 2023. Further details to be announced on the Caltrans Encroachment Permits homepage. Additional information regarding encroachment permits may be obtained by contacting the Caltrans Permits Office at (657) 328-6246. For specific details on Caltrans Encroachment Permits procedure and any future updates regarding the application process and permit rates, please visit the Caltrans Encroachment Permits homepage at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep>.

Caltrans' mission is to improve lives and communities through transportation. 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 Julie Lugaro at julie.lugaro@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



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