

California Department of Transportation

DISTRICT 12
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February 25, 2026

Ms. Kate Kazama
Associate Planner
City of Laguna Beach
505 Forest Avenue
Laguna Beach, CA. 92651

File: LDR/CEQA
SCH: 2026010840
12-ORA-2026-03030
SR-133 PM: 0.290

Dear Ms. Kazama,

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 (DEIR) for the Downtown Specific Plan Phase II EIR. The proposed project involves the Laguna Beach Downtown Specific Plan Phase II Update. In 2019, the City Council directed the completion of a comprehensive update to the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) in two phases. The Phase I Update, which was adopted in 2020 and implemented in 2022, included streamlining the business permitting process and establishing new parking standards for nonresidential uses. The Phase II Update, which focuses on the Specific Plan housing provisions, building height and parcel merger components of the DSP Update was divided, to be addressed separately and in coordination with the Housing Element Update. The Housing Element Update was completed and certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development in February 2023

The project covers approximately 115 acres along Laguna Canyon Road to Main Beach, near Cliff Drive, east along Coast Highway, and into Downtown around Forest and Ocean Avenues. It borders State Routes 1 and 133, while also crossing a small section of State Route 73. State Routes 1, 133, and 73 are under the ownership and operation of Caltrans, which acts as a commenting agency for this project. Accordingly, Caltrans has provided the following feedback:

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.

2. Caltrans supports opportunities for affordable housing, and the state mandates that cities must plan for housing needs of future residents of all incomes. Please provide an analysis and discussion that would assist in accommodating the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation per the California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD).
3. Caltrans recognizes our responsibility to assist communities of color and under-served communities by removing barriers to provide a more equitable transportation system for all. The Department firmly embraces racial equity, inclusion, and diversity. These values are foundational to achieving our vision of a cleaner, safer, and more accessible and more connected transportation system.
4. 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.
5. The project is located near several bike lanes, including but not limited to the Class III bike lanes on North Coast Highway and Broadway Street. Consider specifically referencing these and other bike lanes in the EIR and any other relevant documents. As a starting reference point, for most existing or planned bicycle facilities in Orange County, please see OCTA's Orange County Bikeways Map (online link: <https://www.octa.net/getting-around/active/oc-bike/bikeways-planning/overview>).

6. The project is located near several existing and planned bicycle facilities. With these features in mind, Caltrans recommends the inclusion of secure and functional short-term bike parking. Short-term bike parking at public locations should be placed in visible areas that are close to main destinations and should be installed at least 24" away from walls and other objects (e.g. trash cans, plants, etc.). With the increasing popularity of electric bikes and cargo/utility bikes, bike parking should also be designed to accommodate different styles, sizes, and weights of bikes (e.g. cargo bike, bike with trailer, adult tricycle, etc.).
 - o For additional guidance on bicycle parking best practices, see the "Essentials of Bike Parking" guidance created by the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (link to online PDF: <https://www.apbp.org/Publications>).
7. During future construction, please ensure appropriate detours, signage, and safety measures are planned that prioritize and ensure the safety and mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
8. Ensure that truck parking, ingress and egress, and staging will not interfere with vehicle parking, pedestrian paths, or bicycle lanes/bicycle parking. Work with community representatives to mitigate any truck traffic routing onto residential streets or conflicting with other road users, including and especially bicyclists and pedestrians.
9. When considering future projects, please identify the existing transit services for local and regional bus services including the connectivity to rail services from the nearest train stations provided by Metrolink and/or Amtrak Pacific Surfliner. Also, please provide adequate wayfinding signage to transit stops within all the project vicinity and local roadways.
10. 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. If coordination is not required, please submit an encroachment permit application package (EPAP) through the Caltrans Encroachment Permit System (CEPS - <https://ceps.dot.ca.gov/>). EPAP should include application, PE signed and stamped site-specific traffic control plan,

insurance, letter of authorizations as needed, and any other relevant documents. EPAP should be submitted as early as possible to avoid any delays.

11. 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 includes 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.

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,


Scott Shelley (Feb 24, 2026 13:57:29 PST)

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