California Department of Transportation

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November 23, 2026

Ms. So Kim
Community Development Director
City of Aliso Viejo
12 Journey Suite 100
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

File: LDR/CEQA
SCH: 2026110022
12-ORA-2026-03274
SR 73, PM 14.729

Dear Ms. Kim,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Polaris Place Residential Development Project for the City of Aliso Viejo. The mission of Caltrans is improving lives and communities through transportation.

The project proposes the demolition of existing office buildings to redevelop approximately 22.5 acres and construct a 405-unit townhome community. Regional access to the site is provided by State Route 73 (SR 73). 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. 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. The MND identified OCTA Transit Routes 177 and 90 as the primary routes serving the project area. Please consider discussing how the project could encourage a shift of residents from single-occupancy vehicles to alternative transportation modes by improving multimodal connectivity. Specifically, given the proposed perimeter trail and internal pedestrian walkways, consider evaluating how these

improvements could connect to the City's existing bicycle and pedestrian network and facilitate first-mile/last-mile connections to nearby transit services, including OCTA Routes 177 and 90. Strengthening these connections could help promote active transportation, improve transit accessibility, and reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.

3. OCTA Route 90 received service frequency improvements in August 2025 as part of OCTA's Making Better Connections Plan, making transit a more viable transportation alternative and further highlighting the importance of providing convenient bicycle and pedestrian connections to nearby transit services.

   For more information, please follow the link to OCTA's OC Bus Making Better Connections Project Website:
   https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/727fc1832dca445e84cd6fd24c628d79

4. As part of the State's goals to increase active transportation and reduce VMT, Caltrans recommends the inclusion of functional on-site bike parking. Bike parking should be placed in visible locations that are close to main entrances and should be designed to accommodate different types of bikes (e.g. cargo bike, bike with trailer, adult tricycle, etc.). For people to easily utilize bike racks, they should be installed at least 24" away from walls and other objects (e.g. trash cans, plants, etc.).

   - For additional guidance on providing functional bike parking, see the attached "Essentials of Bike Parking" guidance created by the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (link to online PDF: https://www.apbp.org/Publications).

5. Caltrans encourages 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, 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.

6. Please consider the addition of high visibility crosswalks and ADA curb ramps on intersections in or adjacent to the project location that currently lack one or both.

7. Caltrans recommends providing sufficient on-site staging, loading, unloading, and turnaround space. Truck queuing, staging, and parking should be prohibited on Aliso Viejo Parkway, public streets, bicycle lanes, shoulders, and SR 73 ramps.

8. Consider providing turning templates for the largest anticipated construction vehicles demonstrating that trucks can safely enter, circulate within, and exit the site without backing onto Aliso Viejo Parkway or encroaching into opposing lanes, pedestrian areas, bicycle facilities, or adjacent properties.

9. Please ensure that all ingress/egress driveways and internal circulation routes are designed to accommodate the turning radii and maneuvering needs of large trucks and trailers, consistent with Caltrans and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards.

10. Confirm that internal roads and parking areas are designed for safe truck circulation, including adequate width, turning radii, and clear signage. Emergency access routes should be maintained and not obstructed by truck parking or event staging.

11. Assess potential conflict points between delivery vehicles and non-motorized users at site entrances, internal walkways, and adjacent sidewalks. Incorporate design features such as clear signage, marked crosswalks, and sight distance improvements to enhance safety for all users.

12. There is an existing Class II bicycle facility on Aliso Viejo Parkway. During construction, please ensure that appropriate detours and safety measures are in place that prioritize the mobility, access, and safety of bicyclists. If sidewalks or bike lanes need to be closed during construction, please ensure that closures detours are clearly signed.

    Please also evaluate how construction may alter wayfinding, transit signage and multimodal circulation in the immediate project area and surrounding vicinity. Given the site's proximity to nearby rail and bus service, the project should consider both temporary construction-period access and long-term access for future users, including opportunities to support transit use.

13. Should any existing bike lanes need to be closed during construction, we recommend the use of "May Use Full Lane (MUTCD R4-11)" signage rather than "Share the Road (W16-1P)" signage to more clearly indicate to both drivers and bicyclists that bicyclists may ride in the center of the travel lane while the bike lane is closed.

14. All construction haul vehicles accessing the State Highway System must use routes approved by Caltrans. Any transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials which requires use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways will require a Caltrans transportation permit. We recommend large-size truck trips be limited to off-peak commute periods for the construction and operation phases. Construction truck loads should be covered with a tarpaulin cover.

15. The applicant shall ensure that construction-related traffic does not adversely impact operations on the State Highway System. All temporary traffic control within or affecting state highways state highways shall comply with the most current edition of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) and Caltrans standards. The applicant shall ensure that public safety and mobility are maintained during construction.

16. 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.

17. 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.

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 (Nov 23, 2026 13:55:51 PST)

Scott Shelley
Branch Chief, Local Development Review/Climate Resiliency
Caltrans, District 12