

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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October 28, 2008

SCH#: 2007121001

Carl Holm
 County of Monterey, Resource Management Agency
 168 West Alisal Street, 2nd Floor
 Salinas, CA 93901-2680

RE: 2007 MONTEREY COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Dear Mr. Holm:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 5, has reviewed the 2007 General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report and offers the following comments.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Caltrans supports the county's adoption of the Regional Development Impact Fee Program that originated from the Transportation Agency for Monterey County's 2005 Nexus Study, and its use for the mitigation of cumulative regional traffic impacts in Monterey County. The program is consistent with both California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines and Caltrans objectives, assuming that project-specific impacts will continue to be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine appropriate mitigation. Impacts to mainline transportation facilities must be considered in addition to access points. | 1
2. Caltrans supports local development that is consistent with State planning priorities intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety. We accomplish this by working with local jurisdictions to achieve a shared vision of how the transportation system should and can accommodate interregional and local travel and development. | 2
3. Because Caltrans is responsible for the safety, operations, and maintenance of the State transportation system, our Level of Service (LOS) standards are used to determine the significance of the project's impact. We endeavor to maintain a target LOS *at the transition between LOS C and LOS D* on all State transportation facilities. In cases where a State facility is already operating at an unacceptable LOS, the Department would consider additional trips to be a potentially significant cumulative traffic impact, and they should be addressed. The methodologies used to calculate the LOS should be consistent with the methods in the current version of the *Highway Capacity Manual*. Also, some of the general assumptions that may have been used to calculate LOS for this report may be suitable for | 3

- planning purposes, but should not be used for design and operations decisions (assumptions may include an average shoulder width, average frequency of driveways or turn lanes, etc.). | 3
4. The Transportation Agency for Monterey County conducts traffic counts in April and August each year, and may be coordinating their counts with the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, the Council of San Benito County Governments, and the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). This type of data is valuable for AMBAG's regional travel demand model. If it has not already been done, AMBAG should be contacted to discuss coordinated count efforts with the County of Monterey. | 4
5. The network of Amtrak thruway buses that pass through Monterey County and connect to the intercity rail lines should be mentioned, along with their impact on regional traffic. | 5
6. We support the conclusions in the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) alternative, noting that funding for the second and third tier (Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail) will be difficult to obtain. Furthermore, it should be noted that lower frequency and lower quality service is unlikely to yield successful TOD. The assumptions about transit system characteristics must be reviewed thoroughly before any conclusions can be drawn about regional impacts on either traffic or land development. | 6

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

1. The definition of archaeology should not be limited to prehistoric resources, and archaeological resources can be older than 10,000 years (4.10.2). | 7
2. Please include a discussion of the Salinan Indians, whose main territory is Monterey County (4.10.2.2). | 8
3. The citation of "California Register of Historic Places" should actually be "California Register of Historical Resources" (4.10.3.1). | 9
4. The second sentence of the Open Space and Conservation Element has one unclear clause: "on such matters archaeological resources." Also, the term "Native American descendants" should be replaced with "Native Americans" (4.10-17). | 10
5. Please include the proposed bicycle bridge over the Salinas River (Spreckels Boulevard/Reservation Road Bicycle Path and Bridge). | 11
6. On page 4.6-39, there is a statement suggesting that an increase in county truck volume from 12,600 to 18,600 per day would be insignificant in terms of capacity-related impacts. The potential significant impacts of such a change should be considered, noting that there are very few north-south and east-west shipping corridors in the region, and that impacts may be regional in nature. | 12

2007 Monterey County General Plan
 October 28, 2008
 Page 3

7. In reference to the above comment, we suggest a policy that encourages placement of agricultural processing, industrial and manufacturing oriented land uses adjacent to existing or probable railroad spurs, yards, and sidings. There is no discussion of the possibility of an intermodal transfer facility for freight containers on trains. Planning strategies today that align shipping modes in future years will provide opportunities to growers and shippers when the economics of increased rail use (as a business framework) and the economics of climate change and air quality requirements (in a regulatory framework) set the conditions to compel rail use. The environmental benefits of transferring freight from truck to rail can be substantial, with one full freight train eliminating 280 trucks or 1100 cars from regional roadways. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Freight-Rail Bottom Line Report*, which provides the source figure of 4 to 5 trucks per rail car, may be found at <http://freight.transportation.org> or <http://www.go21.org>.

13

District 5 staff will continue to be committed to working closely with you to achieve a shared vision of how the transportation system should and can accommodate interregional and local travel.

If you have any questions, or need further clarification on items discussed above, please do not hesitate to contact David Kuperman at (805) 549-3131 or david_kuperman@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



DAVID MURRAY, Chief
 District 5 North Region

cc: Nick Papadakis (AMBAG)
 Debbie Hale (TAMC)

2007 Monterey County General Plan
October 28, 2008
Page 4

Bcc: Steve Price
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