

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 7, REGIONAL PLANNING

IGR/CEQA BRANCH

100 MAIN STREET, MS # 16

LOS ANGELES, CA 90012-3606

PHONE: (213) 897-6696

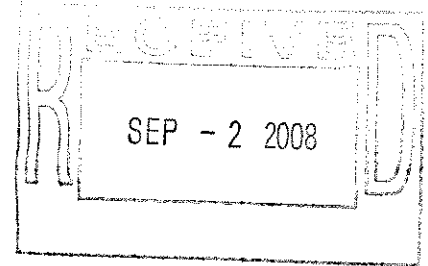
FAX: (213) 897-1337

*Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!*

IGR/CEQA No. 080733AL, NOP
One Valley One Vision
County Project No. R2007-01226
Vic. LA-05/126/14
SCH # 2008071119

August 28, 2008

Mr. Mitch Glaser
Department of Regional Planning
Los Angeles County
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Dear Mr. Glaser:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced project. The One Valley One Vision, OVOV, project is a comprehensive update to the Santa Clarita Valley wide Area Plan to establish common guidelines for new development that will lead to greater cooperation and an enhanced quality of life for residents of Santa Clarita Valley.

The OVOV is a joint effort between the County of Los Angeles, City of Santa Clarita, and Santa Clarita Valley residents and businesses to create a single vision and guidelines for the future growth of the Valley and the preservation of natural resources. The result of the work effort will require the County to adopt a new Area Plan to replace the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and prepare its own Environmental Impact Report, EIR, while the County will adopt a new General Plan and EIR.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) as the State agency responsible for planning, operations, and maintenance of State highways, shares similar transportation goals with the both County of Los Angeles and City of Santa Clarita. We are pleased with the comprehensive planning approach both local government agencies are pursuing and present the following comments:

"Caltrans is particularly interested in the transportation planning roles of local general plans and suggests that the following areas be emphasized.

- Coordination of planning efforts between local agencies and Caltrans.
- Preservation of transportation corridors for future system improvements; and
- Development of coordinated transportation system management plans that achieve the maximum use of present and proposed infrastructure."

Circulation Element

It is widely known that Southern California highways are heavily congested especially during morning and evening peak periods. We realize that to improve mobility there is the need for capacity enhancing improvements as well as other innovative alternatives. The State highway facilities that provide regional access to the subject Santa Clarita Valley Area and are therefore likely to be impacted by future development activity are Interstate 5 (I-5), State Route 14 (SR-14), and State Route 126 (SR-126).

Interstate 5

- The Golden State Gateway Coalition website (<http://www.goldenstategateway.org/?p=7#q6>) provides the following information:

“...In the northern Los Angeles County, the I-5 currently carries more than 200,000 vehicles every day. This includes more than 19,000 trucks. These daily numbers add up to a staggering 73 Million vehicles – including 7 Million trucks – every year. As commerce and population growth occur in Southern California, these numbers will increase....”

“...The I-5 freeway is already nearly at capacity, with Los Angeles County’s population expected to grow by 3 million in the next 2 decades, it would soon be beyond its capacity without major improvements. Traffic is projected to increase by 65% in the next 10 years and 114% in the next 20 years. Airport passenger and cargo traffic in the Los Angeles-southern Kern County region is expected to double in the next 2 decades, while seaport traffic is expected to triple....”

State Route 14

- Existing daily traffic volumes along the SR 14 corridor range from 137,000 ADT (between I-5 to San Fernando Rd.) to 30,900 ADT (between Avenue I and Kern County Line) (Caltrans District 7, SR 14 Transportation Concept Report, September 2003).
- Currently, an operating deficiency exists on SR14 between I-5 and SR 126. The level of service on this segment is F0 during the AM peak period on the southbound side of the route and F0 during the PM peak period on the northbound side of the route (Caltrans District 7, SR 14 Transportation Concept Report, September 2003).
- SR 14 is designated as a Super Truck Route (STR). SR 14 is also part of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) truck network, which provides freeway access for oversized trucks. Regional truck traffic is expected to increase by 40% by 2020, with virtually no capacity available to handle this additional volume (Caltrans District 7, SR 14 Transportation Concept Report, September 2003).

State Route 126

SR-126 functions as a terminal access route to the national network for the Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) for trucks. Truck volume in 2001 ranged from 4% to 30% of ADT in Los Angeles County, and 4.5% to 10% of ADT in Ventura County (Caltrans District 7, SR 126 Transportation Concept Report, November 2004).

New development will increase use of local and regional roadways and the circulation element can identify strategies the County and the City will pursue to maintain good levels of service. We understand that mitigating cumulative traffic impacts may present some challenges. Given that the Los Angeles County's Congestion Management Program debit and credit system has been suspended, we recommend the County consider an alternate local funding plan towards regional transportation improvements. Local funding efforts may include a region or community wide traffic impact program. We request the County consider implementing a funding program to contribute to improvements on the State highway system, including impacted I-5, SR-14, SR-126, and on/off ramps. When local matching funds are offered, public funds may become available and improvements may be streamlined and/or expedited. County of Los Angeles and City of Santa Clarita may take this opportunity to include policies that allow it to procure funds towards regional transportation improvements such as additional mixed flow lanes, High Occupancy Lanes (HOV), and truck lanes on I-5; as well as modifications to I-5/SR-14 interchange.

Procuring funds toward freeway segments, freeway interchanges, freeway on/off-ramps, as well as for bus and rail transit facilities should also be in the goals of the local government agencies. A local funding strategy may provide a fair and predictable mechanism for individual developments to address their individual and cumulative transportation impacts to State facilities and satisfactory comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Other traffic mitigation alternatives may include vehicular demand reducing strategies, such as incentives for commuters to use transit i.e. park-and-ride lots, discounts on monthly bus and rail passes, vanpools, etc.

Caltrans requests inclusion in the environmental review process of land use projects within County and City General Plan areas and in all projects that have the potential to significantly impact traffic conditions on State highways. To avoid delays and any misunderstandings in the traffic impact analysis, we request to be involved in its development. We may provide assistance in our areas of expertise such as transportation modeling, mainline freeway analysis, system and corridor planning, environmental and community impact assessment, as well as identifying critical operational deficiencies affecting freeway congestion, speed, and delay.

For State thresholds and guidance on the preparation of acceptable traffic studies, please refer to the Statewide Guide for the preparation of Traffic Impact Studies at:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/developserv/operationalsystems/reports/tisguide.pdf>

If significant impacts were anticipated on the State highway system, Caltrans would work with the local governments to identify appropriate traffic mitigation measures.

We remind you that traffic impact studies that are in compliance with Los Angeles County's Congestion Management Program (Metro's CMP), are not necessary satisfactory to Caltrans, the agency with jurisdiction over State highway facilities. The thresholds for significance on State highway facilities may be different than those applied in the CMP.

Land Use Element and Other Elements

As you are aware, there is a critical relationship between land use and transportation. The quality of the State transportation system operation can affect the quality of the local circulation system operation. The Circulation Element of the General Plan needs to be consistent with the Land-Use and Housing Elements of the General Plan. During the past couple decades, population and economic growth has been strong in Los Angeles County. Projections show that this growth will continue.

We recommend that special attention be given to the jobs-and-housing balance concept. Communities with predominantly residential allocations should be encouraged to set aside areas for office, commercial/retail, and open space uses. Benefits of balanced communities include: reduction of long morning and evening commutes on State highways, shorter trips which in turn would reduce the consumption of fuel and air pollutants. It may also change direction of trips. Instead of most traffic traveling in one direction during peak periods, some trips may be diverted in the opposite direction. Other land use strategies may include Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs).

- We encouraged the application of the State Regional Blueprint Program's and SCAG's Compass Blueprint Program's land use and transportation planning principles in their General Plan update:

- **California Regional Blueprint Planning Program (<http://calblueprint.dot.ca.gov>)**

The Regional Blueprint Planning Program is intended to better inform regional and local decision-making, through pro-active engagement of all segments of the population as well as critical stakeholders in the community, business interests, academia, builders, environmental advocates, and to foster consensus on a vision and preferred land use pattern. It is anticipated that the regional blueprint planning grants will build capacity for regional collaboration and integrated planning that will in turn enable regions to plan to accommodate all their future growth, thereby reducing need for sprawl.

1. The grants for regional collaborative decision-making will lead to adoption of blueprint plans that will:
2. Foster a more efficient land use pattern that (a) supports improved mobility and reduced dependency on single-occupant vehicle trips, (b) accommodates an adequate supply of housing for all incomes, (c) reduces impacts on valuable habitat, productive farmland, and air quality, (d) increases resource use efficiency, and (e) results in safe and vibrant neighborhoods.
3. Provide consumers more housing and transportation choices.
4. Improve California's economic competitiveness and quality of life.
5. Reduce costs and time needed to deliver transportation projects through informed early public and resource agency involvement.

6. Secure local government and community support, including that of under-represented groups, to achieve the resulting comprehensive vision through including innovative computer models and public involvement activities.
7. Establish a process for public and stakeholder engagement that can be replicated to build awareness of and support for critical infrastructure and housing needs.

o **SCAG Compass Blueprint Program (<http://www.compassblueprint.org/about>)**

Compass Blueprint is a new way to look at how the region grows. The Compass Blueprint Growth Vision is a response, supported by a regional consensus, to the land use and transportation challenges facing Southern California now and in the coming years.

The Growth Vision encourages:

- Focusing growth in existing and emerging centers and along major transportation corridors
- Creating significant areas of mixed-use development and walkable communities
- Targeting growth around existing and planned transit stations
- Preserving existing open space and stable residential areas

Housing Element

As we indicated previously, continued high growth is expected for Los Angeles County, which will have impacts to our State transportation facilities. We ask that efforts be made to provide affordable housing for all income levels to ensure that substantial numbers of employees can afford to purchase homes and live in proposed residential projects.

We look forward to reviewing the traffic study. Again, we would welcome an opportunity to participate in its development.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (213) 897-6696 or Alan Lin the project coordinator at (213) 897-8391 and refer to IGR/CEQA No. 080733AL.

Sincerely,



ELMER ALVAREZ
IGR/CEQA Program Manager

cc: Scott Morgan, State Clearinghouse