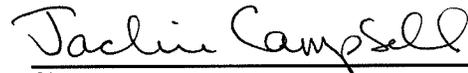


**STAFF REPORT**  
**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION JOINT MEETING**  
**June 14, 2012**

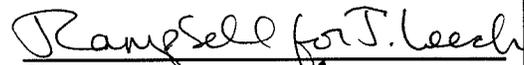
**ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION**

**Submittal of Comments to Caltrans concerning the South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment**

**Report prepared by:**  
**Jackie Campbell, Community Development Director**

  
Signature

**Jonathan Leech, Contract Planner, Dudek**

  
Signature

**Reviewed by:**  
**Dave Durlinger, City Manager**

  
Signature

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Action Item  X ; Non-Action Item    

Consider public comments and submit a comment letter on the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the proposed South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project proposed by Caltrans District 5.

**Motion:** I move to authorize the Mayor to sign the comment letter to be transmitted to Caltrans District 5 on or before Friday, June 22, 2012.

**I. PROJECT INFORMATION**

Caltrans is the lead agency in proposing a joint project in coordination with the City of Carpinteria, City of Santa Barbara, County of Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) to construct one High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lane in each direction on Highway 101 between the Carpinteria Creek bridges and the Hot Springs Interchange. The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion and delay on this approximately 10-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 101, provide capacity for future travel demand,

improve travel time on U.S. 101, provide for high occupancy vehicle (HOV) continuity on U.S. 101 in southern Santa Barbara County and encourage a modal shift to transit and carpooling.

Four alternatives were evaluated in the draft environmental document, including the No Project or No Build Alternative. In this scenario, no new HOV Lane would be constructed. Traffic congestion would continue or worsen as traffic volumes increase over time, particularly in the a.m. and p.m. peak hours. Existing infrastructure would remain in place and no new retaining walls or soundwalls would be constructed.

Three build alternatives were evaluated in the document. Each alternative generally takes a different approach to the widening effort as described below.

**Alternative 1 (widen inside and outside)** includes a selective inside and outside or hybrid widening approach within the available right-of-way. This alternative maximizes opportunities to retain and refine high-value resources including scenic views, wetlands and median/outside landscaping.

**Alternative 2 (widen to the outside)** includes widening with a lane constructed to the outside of the existing roadway to maximize landscaping in the median where right-of-way is available.

**Alternative 3 (widen to the inside)** includes construction of all new paved lanes within the existing available median to maximize the retention of outside planting throughout the corridor.

All three alternatives include the following project features:

- Add pavement width in each direction on U.S. 101 to provide for six travel lanes;
- Improve the southbound shoulder ditches near Bailard Avenue to provide graded, flat-bottom swales for stormwater treatment;
- Replace bridges at Arroyo Paredon, Toro Canyon, Romero, Oak and San Ysidro Creeks;
- Widen bridges at Franklin and Santa Monica Creeks;
- Widen traffic undercrossings at South Padaro Lane and Evans Avenue;
- Build a southbound auxiliary lane between the reconfigured Sheffield Drive on-ramp and the Evans Avenue off-ramp;
- Provide median landscaping from 0.4 of a mile south of Carpinteria Creek to 0.3 of a mile south of Carpinteria Creek;
- Install replacement plantings throughout the corridor;
- Build retaining walls and soundwalls for noise abatement where appropriate;
- Provide noise attenuating pavement surfacing on all travel lanes;
- Relocate utilities as needed;

- Lengthen cross culverts to accommodate additional pavement width;
- Build maintenance vehicle pull-out areas (Alternative 1 has 11 pull-outs/Alternative 2 has 21 pull-outs/Alternative 3 has one pull-out);
- Incorporate permanent stormwater treatment Best Management Practices (BMPs); and
- Incorporate measures to preserve the pre-construction runoff rates.

Once all of the public comments on the draft environmental document are received, the Project Development Team (PDT) including representatives from Caltrans, SBCAG, County of Santa Barbara, City of Santa Barbara and City of Carpinteria, will select one alternative as the preferred alternative and will proceed with the next phase of project development and ultimately the City's permit review process. The Council will have an opportunity at a future public hearing to discuss and determine which of the three build alternatives is the preferred alternative for Carpinteria before final design drawings are initiated.

## II. BACKGROUND

The South Coast 101 HOV Lanes project is a major component of the multi-modal solution for reducing current and future congestion on the 101 freeway. After many years of community discussion and debate between proponents of widening the freeway and alternative transportation advocates, a consensus solution emerged through the *101 in Motion* community planning effort that combined both approaches. For two years community stakeholders, elected officials and transportation professionals worked together to develop a multi-modal package of congestion reduction strategies that was described to the public as a "lane and a train." The South Coast HOV Lanes project is the lane and a new commuter rail service connecting west Ventura County with South Santa Barbara County will be the train.

The overall *101 in Motion* package includes five elements that together implement a multi-modal strategy:

- Add a lane and a train (a carpool/HOV lane and commuter rail service)
- Facilitate transit and carpool use
- Use demand management strategies
- Improve operations and communication
- Select operational improvements north of Milpas Street

The South Coast HOV Lane project will facilitate the other elements of the *101 in Motion* multi-modal strategy by encouraging single occupant commuters to carpool, vanpool and use transit, e.g., commuter buses and trains. Nearly two-thirds of the total congestion relief planned through the *101 in Motion* effort can be attributed to the carpool lanes.

The South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project will be the fourth and final phase of the overall 101 widening project. The first phase from Milpas to Hot Springs Road /Cabrillo Boulevard will be completed in June 2012. The second phase, from Mussel Shoals in Ventura County to the Carpinteria Creek Bridge is fully funded and began construction in March 2012. Construction is planned for completion in late 2015. The third phase, which was recently allocated full funding by the California Transportation Commission, will include replacement of the Linden Avenue and Casitas Pass Road Interchanges. The South Coast 101 HOV Lanes project is estimated to

cost approximately \$425 million and take ten years to construct. Nearly two-thirds of the total cost of this project will come from local funding sources. Measure A will contribute \$140 million toward the project and the SBCAG Board has dedicated an additional \$150 million over the next ten years from Santa Barbara County's formula share of state gas tax revenues. The state and federal governments will be the source of the remaining one-third of the project costs.

In addition to the HOV lanes project, SBCAG is working to implement all of the other components of the *101 in Motion* strategy. SBCAG recently submitted a proposal to Union Pacific Railroad to use the company's existing rail line to operate a single commuter train from Ventura County to Carpinteria that would be operated by Metrolink. Measure A allocated \$25 million for development of this new service and SBCAG has identified more than \$20 million in additional state funding that can be used for track improvements, new rail sidings and station upgrades to support this new commuter rail service. An environmental document is currently being prepared to evaluate impacts associated with two rail siding improvements along this corridor (one at Seacliff in Ventura County and one in Summerland). Rail sidings in these two locations would facilitate passenger service in the corridor by allowing trains to pass at more frequent and convenient locations. The environmental document for the LOSSAN North project is expected in fall 2012. The City submitted comments on the Notice of Preparation for the environmental document earlier this year.

SBCAG and the Ventura County Transportation Commission jointly operate the VISTA interregional transit service that connects western Ventura County to southern Santa Barbara County. The VISTA service has 22 daily routes with an additional four more planned for the near future. More than 250,000 rides are offered each year on this very successful service. SBCAG recently established a new interregional transit service called the Coastal Express Limited that adds four new express bus routes from the Ventura Government Center to downtown Santa Barbara and Goleta.

SBCAG's Traffic Solutions division provides assistance to local employers and the public to encourage commuters to switch from driving alone to carpooling, vanpooling, using transit, telecommuting, walking or biking to work. Traffic Solutions is currently developing a real-time ridesharing phone application that will allow people to form spontaneous carpools and electronically share the costs of driving. This new service is a demonstration project that is being implemented as part of the traffic management program of the Mussel Shoals to Carpinteria Highway 101 widening project.

Over the past two years, SBCAG has been working aggressively to expand the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) capabilities in our region, both to fulfill the South Coast ITS Plan called for by *101 in Motion* and to meet the expanding ability of mobile devices to inform travelers about traffic conditions. An important component to expanding the Intelligent Transportation System infrastructure in the county is the redesign and refocusing of the SBRoads.com website, which for the last several years has been dedicated to publicizing information about the US 101 Milpas to Hot Springs project. SBRoads.com was recently relaunched as a more broadly focused website centered on a map of the South Coast that displays real time traffic information, incidents reported by the CHP, estimated travel times between cities, and live feeds from freeway cameras. The site also contains information about regional transportation projects, the four-phase US 101 widening project, news and other information about transportation issues in Santa Barbara County, and contact information for local jurisdictions and transit services.

### **III. PUBLIC REVIEW/MEETINGS**

Caltrans District 5 prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the environmental effects of the project. The document was released in late March for a 60-day public comment period which was set to close on May 25, 2012. However, in response to requests to extend the public comment period, that date was moved to July 6, 2012 to allow an additional six weeks for comments to be submitted. The document has been available for review at City Hall, the Carpinteria Public Library and other various public locations as well as on the Caltrans and City websites.

Caltrans hosted two public hearings on the draft environmental document at Montecito Country Club on Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup> and on Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at Carpinteria High School. A total of approximately 180 people attended the meetings to learn more about the project and provide verbal comments to Caltrans staff on the draft document. Public comments at the Carpinteria meeting addressed different topics including noise, aesthetics, construction phasing, coordination with other US 101 projects and costs.

Future public meetings on the required Conditional Use Permit and Coastal Development Permit for the segment of the project within the City boundary will be held before the City's Planning Commission. At that time, the public and the Commission will have the opportunity to review the final environmental document and the proposed project alternatives at a more fully developed stage in the design process. The project will also be subject to review by the Architectural Review Board at noticed public hearings wherein staff and the public can discuss the aesthetic treatments of the bridges, railings, retaining walls and soundwalls, and also review the proposed landscape plan for the corridor.

### **IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

The attached draft comment letter addresses the analysis provided within the DEIR/EA and provides specific comments on issue areas including aesthetics, noise, traffic, stormwater quality, biological resources, cumulative impacts and the need for a Local Coastal Program (LCP) Amendment to address the project's conflict with wetlands protection policies of both the City of Carpinteria and County of Santa Barbara wetland protection policies. The draft letter is included as Attachment A to this report and will be finalized and transmitted to Caltrans once reviewed and signed by the Mayor after public input and Council discussion. In general, the document provides a thorough analysis of the potential environmental impacts that could occur within the City of Carpinteria (our comments are focused primarily on only that segment of the project within the city boundaries). The draft comments also address how the subject project relates to the proposed Linden Avenue – Casitas Pass Road Interchanges Project.

Our main point of concern with the document is the absence of a link between the impacts of the project and the opportunity to improve regional coastal access that could be achieved through the addition of bicycle and pedestrian amenities in the form of trails connecting Santa Claus Lane to Carpinteria on the west end of the City and the Carpinteria Rincon Trail connecting the east end of the City to Rincon Beach County Park and the Class I bike path under construction as part of the Mussel Shoals to Carpinteria Highway 101 HOV Lane Project.

The comments in the attached draft letter specifically address these issues and others as they arise throughout the draft EIR/EA.

## **V. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Funding for this project comes from various sources including a portion of the Measure "A" sales tax collected in Santa Barbara County. Total cost for the 10.9-mile HOV Lane project is estimated at \$425 million. In addition to local funds, federal and state highway funds will also be used to fund the project.

City staff costs in these preliminary phases of review are covered by both the General Fund and Development Impact Fees. Once an application is submitted, staff costs will be paid for by the applicant.

## **VI. ATTACHMENT**

A. Draft Environmental Document Comment Letter to Caltrans dated June 22, 2012

June 22, 2012

Matt Fowler  
Senior Environmental Planner  
Department of Transportation, District 5  
50 Higuera Street  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Re: South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project DEIR/EA Comments  
SCH# 2009051018

Dear Mr. Fowler:

The City of Carpinteria has received the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment dated March 2012 for the construction of the US 101 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes Project. We appreciate the opportunity to review this environmental document and offer the following comments. As a portion of the project area is located within the City and within the coastal zone, a Conditional Use Permit and a Coastal Development Permit from the City are required. We have focused our comments on the segment of the project within our City boundary, as well as on our concerns regarding the required Local Coastal Program Amendment to address the project's conflict with wetland protection policies in the City of Carpinteria and County of Santa Barbara.

We begin by providing general comments on the document overall, and then proceed with specific comments indexed to document chapters and page numbers.

**General Comments (Entire Document)**

The summary discussion of the document (Page xi) correctly identifies that the South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project would necessitate an Amendment to the Local Coastal Program (LCP) for the City of Carpinteria and County of Santa Barbara. In the absence of such an amendment, the project would be inconsistent with existing resource protection policies related to wetlands. California Coastal Commission staff has indicated that potential project impacts to coastal wetlands would run counter to policies contained in the California Coastal Act, and that extraordinary benefits of the project in other areas such as enhanced public access to coastal resources would need to be brought into the consideration of whether to approve an LCP Amendment and the project itself. On balance, the proposed LCP Amendment must be most protective of all coastal resources.

With respect to the "Coordination with Other Agencies" discussion on Page xi, the California Coastal Commission (CCC) should be identified in a separate bulleted discussion. NEPA must address a proposed action's consistency with the Coastal Zone Management Act, which in California means compliance with the California Coastal Act. The referenced Amendment to the

Carpinteria LCP is deemed necessary in order to achieve the certification necessary for satisfaction of the CZMA.

With regard to the foregoing discussion, it would be helpful for the DEIR to provide greater detail as to the specific ways in which the proposal itself would enhance public access to coastal resources in a regionally important manner. Opportunities for the project to accommodate connections or gap closures in pedestrian or bicycle facilities serving coastal areas should be identified, and where possible, included in the project description itself as bona fide benefit that can be ascribed to the proposal.

Given the entire Carpinteria portion of the project lies within the Coastal Zone, and noting that an LCP Amendment is necessary, the CCC will necessarily be involved in the review of the Amendment request. The standard of review for project impacts on coastal resources, including efforts for avoidance and mitigation, is therefore the Coastal Act. Consultation with CCC staff to confirm the standards to be applied for mitigation would be advisable, in order to avoid potential understatement of such requirements in the environmental document. This effort should be conducted in cooperation with the City.

## **Chapter 1 – Proposed Project**

### **1.3.1 Build Alternatives**

Page 15, Second to last bullet: Provide median landscaping from 0.4 mile south of Carpinteria Creek to 0.3 mile south north of Carpinteria Creek (this is the only location where median planting is the same for all alternatives).

Page 16, Alternative 1, Final Bullet: Would the proposed retaining wall along the southbound shoulder right-of-way preclude an alternative which extends Santa Claus Lane as a bike/pedestrian path to connect to the northern terminus of Carpinteria Avenue?

### **1.4 Permits and Approvals Needed**

Table 1.4 Permits and Approval Required for Proposed Project

Coastal Development Permit *and Conditional Use Permit* needed from the City of Carpinteria.

A separate entry should be included for California Coastal Commission; the Permit/Approval would be Local Coastal Plan Amendment, Carpinteria and County of Santa Barbara; Status could be Early Consultation has occurred, LCP Amendment request to be submitted during design phase.

## **Chapter 2 – Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation**

### **2.1, page 34**

Venco should be Venoco

### **Table 2.1, page 39**

Remove Bega and Clippinger from list of Proposed Development

Include Dahlia Court 33 apartments and Casas de las Flores 44 apartments

**2.1.1.2 Consistency with State, Regional and Local Plans – Environmental Consequences**

Last Paragraph, page 49

A Conditional Use Permit is also required in addition to the Coastal Development Permit

**2.1.1.3 Coastal Zone**

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures, page 52

Same comment regarding CUP requirement

**2.1.1.4 Parks and Recreation**

Affected Environment, page 53

Include reference to Bluffs Nature Preserve and Viola Fields, Farmer Parcel Open Space

**Table 2.3, Park and Recreational Facilities**

Add items 12 and 13 to Carpinteria’s list: Bluffs Nature Preserve and Viola Fields, Farmer Parcel Open Space

**2.1.5 Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

**Affected Environment, page 88, Bulleted Items Mid-page**

Three measures are used to assess mainline traffic operations for the project. The first metric, peak period and total daily delay (vehicle and person hours) is not common to the general public, and is not well explained in this section of the report. A description of how vehicle and person hour delays are calculated, using non-complex terminology, would assist the reader to grasp these concepts. For instance, vehicle delay could be described as the difference in the amount of time required for a vehicle to travel the distance of the corridor during a period of congestion, compared to the time this same trip requires at the posted speed limit. The number of minutes of delay per vehicle is then multiplied by the number of vehicles making the trip under congested conditions, to render total hours of vehicle delay (peak hour and daily). A similar explanation for the person hours would also be helpful.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes, page 107, second paragraph under heading.**

The discussion indicates that local agencies desire bicycle and pedestrian improvements within the project limits. Two such facilities are of particular interest to the City of Carpinteria and include a Class I bikepath/pedestrian trail to connect Santa Claus Lane to Carpinteria Avenue on the west end of the City and a Class I bikepath/pedestrian trail to connect Carpinteria Avenue at Highway 150 to Rincon County Beach Park.

The City encourages Caltrans to include within the discussion of project alternatives establishing a bike and pedestrian trail from the eastern terminus of Santa Claus Lane to connect with the western terminus of Carpinteria Avenue.

For the Carpinteria Rincon Trail Project, the City released for public review on June 7, 2012 a Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration for this trail, thus advancing this proposal as a potential

means to enhance the connectivity of regional bike and pedestrian facilities within the project corridor. There is currently no funding source identified nor have permit applications been made.

With regard to these improvements identified by the City, CCC staff have indicated that enhancing public access to coastal resources must be demonstrated by the proposed project, in order to balance against impacts upon coastal resources including wetlands. It would therefore be helpful for the DEIR to provide greater detail as to the specific ways in which the proposal itself would enhance public access to coastal resources in a regionally important manner, particularly with regard to alternative transportation modes that also serve the goal of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions from conventional transportation means. Opportunities for the project to accommodate connections or gap closures in pedestrian or bicycle facilities serving coastal areas should be identified, and where possible, included in the project description itself as bona fide benefits that can be ascribed to the proposal.

### **2.1.6 Visual/Aesthetics**

#### **Carpinteria City Unit**

The paragraph indicates that “Carpinteria has limited to no views of the Pacific Ocean.” Views to the ocean are available to Highway 101 travelers in the Bailard Avenue region across the Bluffs Nature Preserve and Viola Fields open space areas.

#### **Carpinteria Salt Marsh Unit**

The description should note that northbound travelers on US 101 enjoy expansive views of the Pacific Ocean across the Carpinteria Salt Marsh through this unit.

### **2.1.7 Cultural Resources**

Page 226, Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures, First Bullet

Care should be taken to ensure the fencing erected to establish the Environmentally Sensitive Area associated with cultural resource deposits on Via Real is not in any manner labeled to indicate to the public the presence of cultural resource materials. The potential for unlawful search and removal of artifacts could be associated with signage indicating the purpose of the exclusionary fencing.

## **2.2 Physical Environment**

### **2.2.1 Hydrology and Floodplain, Affected Environment**

What if the Linden Avenue – Casitas Pass Road Interchanges Project is delayed or denied? What are the impacts to the floodplain at Carpinteria Creek? Would this also have downstream effects at Franklin Creek? This seems to be a reasonable worst-case scenario that should be evaluated in this document.

### **2.2.2 Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff**

State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards

Page 235, paragraph 4: Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Program

This paragraph has a typo in the first sentence: country should be county.

### **Carpinteria Creek, page 238**

This section of the document indicates that the on-grade low-water bike/pedestrian crossing located in Carpinteria Creek would be removed as part of this project; however, in reviewing the Linden Avenue – Casitas Pass Road Project, the EIR for that project indicates that it will include realignment of the bike path and removal of the low-water crossing. Again, there is reference in the last bullet item of this discussion that the Linden Avenue – Casitas Pass Road project would construct several stormwater treatment best management plans. If that project does not move forward, how will this project address the impacts at Carpinteria Creek?

### **Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures**

#### **Permanent Stormwater Treatment Best Management Practices, page 250**

Using the area between US 101 southbound ramps and the frontage road (Carpinteria Avenue) as a bioswale or biostrip may have impacts to the existing vegetation and habitat in these locations. Has this been analyzed in the biological resources section of the document to evaluate the level of expected pollutants and what occurs with any accumulated contaminated runoff? These areas serve as foraging areas for white tailed kites and potential impacts to kite habitat should also be considered.

### **2.2.5 Hazardous Waste or Materials**

#### **Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures, page 267**

This paragraph indicates that reuse of soil contaminated with aerielly deposited lead may be used. The Final EIR/EA must clarify whether the soil will be reused or not, and where. If this practice will occur within the City of Carpinteria, we want to ensure that all precautions are taken to reduce potential impacts to the maximum extent feasible.

### **2.2.6 Air Quality**

#### **Environmental Consequences, Naturally Occurring Asbestos, page 282**

The second sentence seems to be missing the word “miles” from the second sentence (line five).

### **Avoidance, Mitigation, and/or Mitigation Measures**

#### **Second bullet, page 283**

This mitigation measure identifies that recycling and waste diversion techniques will be used to the extent feasible. The City is concerned about the reuse of soil containing aerielly deposited lead in the vicinity of sensitive receptors. The document must clarify if and where this soil will be reused rather than exported to an appropriate disposal site.

### **PM<sub>10</sub> Measures, page 285**

Bullet 2 inadvertently refers to “map recordation and finish grading for the structure.” As these are not aspects of the project, please correct this reference.

### **2.2.7 Noise**

#### **Regulatory Setting**

#### **Full Paragraph, page 289**

While the existing discussion indicates that one of the factors used in determining the reasonableness for implementing a noise abatement measure (including erection of a sound wall)

is “residents’ acceptance,” a separate explanation of the sound wall voting process would benefit the reader. Members of the public might assume all the walls identified as reasonable will be constructed, whereas in fact it would require a majority vote of the property owners benefitted from a particular sound wall for the wall to be constructed. Consequently, many of the reasonable sound walls identified in the DEIR might not be constructed as part of the project.

### **Sheffield Drive to San Ysidro Road/Eucalyptus Lane**

#### **Page 291**

Third sentence suggested corrections: There is an at-grade ~~grade~~ crossing at ~~Posipilo~~ Posilipo Lane...

### **Receptor Group 2 (R4-R7A)**

#### **Page 303**

Final sentence: Because the predicted future noise level exceeds the noise abatement criterion for residential uses (67 decibels), the homes represented by Receptors R4 through R7A ~~by these~~ ~~receptors~~ would be adversely affected by noise.

## **2.3 Biological Environment**

### **Table 2.33 Riparian Impacts**

#### **First Column Heading**

For clarity, the heading should be revised to: Number of Trees per Species

### **Coast Live Oaks**

#### **Initial paragraph, page 353**

Second to last sentence: Although this section of right-of-way has the most terrestrial habitat value within the project limits, its habitat values are diminished by the presence of ornamental species and by the adjacent residential areas.

### **Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures**

#### **Riparian (page 353), Coast Live Oaks (page 354)**

The replacement ratio for native trees removed is identified as a maximum of 3:1, with a note that higher replacement ratios are sometimes appropriate, but that project-specific circumstances warrant this degree of replacement. In either this discussion, the discussion of biological resources in Section 3.2.2, or both, it should be noted that restoration or enhancement of native tree species above these ratios could be requested or required by the CCC in order to achieve, “on balance,” greater protection for coastal resources in association with the CCC consideration of necessary LCP Amendments for this project.

### **Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures**

#### **Wetlands (page 383)**

Compensatory areal mitigation for loss of wetlands is presented as a range from 1:1 up to 3:1. The project as proposed would be inconsistent with wetland protection policies of the Carpinteria LCP, thus necessitating an Amendment. In that the LCP Amendment directly involves wetland resources, it should be assumed that not less than the 3:1 replacement ratio would be acceptable to

the CCC. In either this discussion, the discussion of biological resources in Section 3.2.2, or both, it should be noted that compensatory mitigation for wetlands above these ratios could be requested or required by the CCC in order to achieve, "on balance," greater protection for coastal resources in association with CCC consideration of necessary LCP Amendments for this project.

**Page 384, first bulleted paragraph**

Offsite mitigation is proposed in the Carpinteria Salt Marsh if full mitigation cannot occur within the Caltrans right-of-way. The City strongly supports actual wetland restoration by Caltrans, but would discourage any conversion of this approach to an in-lieu fee payment (contribution of funds to a mitigation project); simple contribution of mitigation funding cannot guarantee the creation of the actual amount of wetland acreage necessary to offset the permanent impacts.

**2.4 Construction Impacts**

**PM<sub>10</sub> Measures, page 412**

Bullet 2 indicates in the first sentence that gravel pads must be installed at all access points. However, the last sentence indicates that the placement of automatic wheel-washing equipment or gravel pads at all site exit points is recommended. Perhaps the second sentence was only intended to address the automatic wheel-washing equipment as a recommended measure? Please clarify.

**2.5 Cumulative Impacts**

Where is analysis of other cumulative impacts in addition to the cumulative analysis provided for aesthetics/visual resources? It seems there should be an analysis of cumulative noise impacts and cumulative biological resources impacts, and perhaps all other issue areas where there are identified project-specific impacts.

**Table 2.4.3 Potential Cumulative Project List**

Residential Projects should also include the Dahlia Court Apartments Expansion, 33 units, and Casas de las Flores Apartments, 44 units. Both are located within the City of Carpinteria. The Dahlia Court project is under construction and the Casas de las Flores project has received all of its approvals other than Building Permits.

**Chapter 3 – California Environmental Quality Act Evaluation**

**3.2.1 Less than Significant Effects of the Proposed Project**

**Noise, page 431**

In the existing discussion, only one significance threshold is identified for determination of potential noise impacts under CEQA, "a significant impact occurs when the design year noise levels (20 years after construction of the project) increase by 12 or more decibels over existing noise levels". However, the Initial Study Checklist in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines includes the following consideration.

*Would the project result in:*

- a) *Exposure of persons to the generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?*

Thus, under CEQA, it is important not only to examine absolute noise increases due to a project, but whether the resulting noise levels would be in excess of adopted standards. This discussion should be augmented with reference to the County of Santa Barbara and City of Carpinteria Noise Elements, which indicate that exterior noise exposure for residential land uses should not exceed 65 dBA CNEL.

This exterior noise criterion was adopted by local agencies to ensure that the interior noise criterion of 45 dBA CNEL for residences (California Noise Insulation Standards, Title 24, California Code of Regulations) can be achieved through normal construction methods and materials. Exterior noise levels substantially greater than 65 dBA CNEL could prohibit or hinder compliance with the State indoor criterion. Where noise abatement would not be provided for future project-related residential exterior noise levels exceeding 65 dBA CNEL, mitigation strategies to achieve compliance with the indoor criterion should be identified.

**3.2.2 Significant Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project  
Cultural Resources, page 431, Second Paragraph**

The discussion indicates that a draft memorandum of agreement will be submitted for review and comment at the same time the environmental document is in public circulation. The City of Carpinteria requests a copy of the referenced memorandum in order to understand the resolution of cultural resources impacts.

**Biological Resources, page 432**

This discussion should indicate the proposed project is currently inconsistent with the City of Carpinteria LCP policies protecting wetland resources. As such, an LCP Amendment will be required. It should also be noted that compensatory mitigation for wetlands alone may not be sufficient to resolve a policy conflict at the Coastal Act level, and other benefits of the project may need to be strongly demonstrated in order to achieve, "on balance," greater protection for coastal resources in association with CCC consideration of a necessary LCP Amendment for this project.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this environmental document. We look forward to continuing to work together on this important project to address regional traffic congestion through the South Coast area of Santa Barbara County.

Sincerely,

Al Clark  
Mayor, City of Carpinteria

cc: Scott Eades, Project Manager