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June 7, 1999

2131-IGR/CEQA
6-FRE-GEN
FRESNO COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE
NOP/DEIR
SCH 99051024

County of Fresno
Public Works & Development
Services Department
2220 Tulare Street, Sixth Floor
Fresno, CA 93721

Attention: Gina Francis

We have reviewed the Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Notice of Public Scoping Meeting for the Fresno County General Plan Update. Caltrans has the following comments:

In the Notice of Preparation to prepare an EIR, page 7 of the proposed methodology under Transportation is lacking a fundamental statement that proposed developments need to pay their fair share for circulation improvements.

Traffic impacts and mitigation measures to State highway facilities need to be addressed. The DEIR needs to address the ultimate transportation network (including local and freeway/interchange facilities) needed to accommodate the proposed land use at an acceptable level of service. It is Caltrans' policy to maintain State facilities at a LOS "C" standard as indicated in "A Guide for Traffic Impact Studies." The County of Fresno needs to require the consultant to follow the Caltrans' "A Guide for Traffic Impact Studies" when analyzing State facilities in the transportation section of the EIR. We request a scoping meeting with the consultant to identify the parameters of the TIS and discuss appropriate study parameters and methodologies.

Once the ultimate network is determined, a funding and phasing mechanism needs to be established to insure construction at an appropriate time. If funding sources are not identified, it is our understanding that a plan cannot simultaneously identify substantial shortcomings in the circulation system and offer no viable funding source or growth management policy to remedy the problem. Without determining the fiscal soundness of the plan, the land use and circulation elements will be inconsistent.

There is a need to evaluate circulation extending beyond the boundaries of Fresno County. Any shortcomings or opportunities that may be regional circulation issues need to be addressed in the DEIR. Caltrans is willing to foster dialogue between agencies to help address these issues. Regional circulation issues may include, but are not limited to discussions of an east-west corridor within Fresno and Madera Counties.

The area plan needs to establish a correlation between the land use and transportation elements. Land use design concepts that encourage the use of alternative modes of travel (transit, bicycles, pedestrian, etc.) and discourages single-occupancy-vehicle ridership needs to be an inherent part of the plan. Analysis of transit is necessary. The analysis needs to provide a serious transit feasibility study including what transit improvements are really feasible. The financing and scheduling of these facilities also needs to be identified. A high-speed rail alternative needs to also be discussed. This discussion needs to include the proposed alignment, financing and scheduling of a high-speed rail system through Fresno County.

The projected changes or improvements to State highway segments as they apply to sidewalks, curbs/gutters of drainage shall be identified. Advanced notice of these types of improvements can aid Caltrans in determining design standards and working with County staff on detailed projects. The right-of-way requirements for any proposed improvement or modifications to State highway segments shall be identified. Caltrans needs to be consulted regarding current typical cross-sections on State routes within Fresno County.

The DEIR shall incorporate Caltrans policy and design standards that intersections need to be located at least 125 meters from ramp intersections and right-in/right-out access may be permitted beyond 60 meters from ramp intersections.

Please send us a response to our comments prior to the final EIR and a copy of the County resolution related to this project. Questions regarding the above comments need to be referred to Roger Barnes, Transportation Engineer, at (559) 444-2514. Should you have any other questions, please call me at (559) 445-6666.

Sincerely,



MOSES STITES
Office of Transportation Planning