



October 19, 2007

Mr. Robert Richelieu
Planning Manager
City of Salinas
200 Lincoln Avenue
Salinas, California 93901

**SUBJECT: Comments on the Draft Supplement to the Salinas General Plan
Final Program Environmental Impact Report**

Dear Mr. Richelieu:

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency and Congestion Management Agency for Monterey County. Transportation Agency staff has reviewed the draft Supplement to the Salinas General Plan Final Program Environmental Impact Report. The project proposes a sphere of influence amendment and annexation of unincorporated Monterey County land, located to the north and east of the City, totaling 3,347 acres and is planned for up to 14,318 total dwelling units and approximately 9 million square feet of commercial/retail/mixed use and public developments.

The Transportation Agency offers the following comments for your consideration:

Regional Road & Highway Impact

1. As indicated throughout the draft document, and set forth by the *2006 Greater Salinas Area Memorandum of Understanding* between the City of Salinas and the County of Monterey, the City has agreed to support fees, as reflected by the Transportation Agency's overall financing program, as mitigation for impacts to the regional transportation system and to work with our agency towards the establishment of a regional fee program. To that end, our agency appreciates the City's continued participation, recommendations, and support in the update of the *Nexus Study for a Regional Development Impact Fee Program* and in the development of our agency's regional development impact fee program.

As such, the Transportation Agency supports that project developers will be responsible for payment of a regional impact fee as outlined in mitigation measures SEIR-RT1, SEIR-RT2, and SEIR-RT3. The implementation of these mitigation measures however should not be contingent on the adoption status of the impact fee program. The Transportation Agency contends, and Caltrans has confirmed, that payment of regional development impact fees on a project-by-project basis is sufficient to be considered mitigation for cumulative impacts to the regional transportation system. Our agency requests that the referenced mitigation measures be revised to remove "when this program is adopted by TAMC" in the final document.

2. The draft supplement and associated traffic study show that several segments of US-101 through the City of Salinas, from John Street to south of Airport Boulevard, would operate at unacceptable levels of service during the P.M. peak hour. The proposed mitigation for these impacts is listed as widening US-101 to six lanes, which, as the document correctly notes, is not part of the Transportation Agency's regional fee program. Considering the widening of US-101 through the City of Salinas is not expected to occur by the Salinas General Plan's 2030 horizon year, alternative mitigation will be necessary to address regional impacts. Such mitigation would include the construction of the Westside Bypass and the Eastside Connector, both of which are included in our agency's regional fee program and are designed to alleviate congestion on US-101 through the City of Salinas. A fair-share payment in regional development impact fees on an ad-hoc basis by new development in the annexation area would fulfill this obligation.
3. The draft supplement also shows that segments of US-101 through and north of the Prunedale community operate at deficient levels of service and offers the Prunedale Bypass and Eastern Corridor Improvement (between Crazy Horse Canyon Road and Harris Road via Old Stage Road) as alternative mitigations to widening mainline US-101. Our agency does not consider the Prunedale Bypass to be a feasible project for construction within the 2030 time horizon and as such, should not be included as potential mitigation. A plan-line study for the Eastern Corridor Improvement project is proposed for funding in our agency's proposed Transportation Investment Plan. It is anticipated that the plan-line study may result in the project being included in the regional fee program in a future revision. No additional funding or specific alignments for the project have yet been identified and, in the event the Transportation Investment Plan is not approved at the ballot, the City should be prepared to identify alternative funding for the plan-line study. Considering the uncertainty to the feasibility of the proposed alternative mitigations, a fair-share payment in regional development impact fees on an ad-hoc basis by new development in the annexation area should be included as the preferred mitigation measure for cumulative impacts in the final document.
4. If any new development is to be located in the planned annexation area and construction is set to begin before the annexation is approved, the Transportation Agency recommends that the infrastructure, particularly roadways, curb, sidewalks, gutters, and lighting, be constructed to a standard no less than what the City currently requires to ensure that the City or new residents will not have to bear the cost of upgrades once the annexation is complete.

Pedestrian & Bicycle

5. The Transportation Agency supports accommodation of alternative forms of transportation both through the design of transportation facilities and through the design and orientation of land uses. Our agency appreciates the City's commitment to encouraging the use of alternative forms of transportation in the proposed project, as well as the stated project objective to 'provide convenient circulation for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.' To encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel, developing contiguous linkages of facilities and removing impediments to vehicle-less travel is integral.

As such, future environmental review of the sub-regions of the annexation area need to address bicycle and pedestrian issues; our agency requests that these documents include a

discussion and map of proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities for any new developments that demonstrate how internal facilities will provide connections to existing and proposed facilities surrounding the development. Specifically, facilities internal to new development should provide direct access and connections to the existing bicycle facilities on Boronda Road and Williams Road as well as the planned facilities on Freedom Parkway, Old Stage Road, Natividad Road, Rogge Road, and San Juan Grade. Additionally, subsequent environmental review and development planning should place a premium on safe and accessible pedestrian access to the site from intersections and crosswalks, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities. These neighborhoods should also be designed with sidewalks that connect to external facilities, provide access to transit stops, and do not include the use of cul-de-sacs without a cut-through for pedestrian travel. Also, the documents should address the need for new roadways to be designed to accommodate bicycles with adequate pavement for bike travel, particularly along major arterials.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this document. If you would like to discuss these comments further, please contact Michael Zeller of my staff at (831) 775-0903.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Zeller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "Z".

Debra L. Hale
Executive Director

cc: Dave Murray, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 5
Ron Lundquist, Monterey County Department of Public Works
Carl Sedoryk, Monterey-Salinas Transit
Nicholas Papadakis, AMBAG
Douglas Quentin, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District