



December 3, 2007

Mr. Bob Schubert
Senior Planner
Monterey County Planning Department
168 West Alisal Street, 2nd Floor
Salinas, California 93901

**SUBJECT: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the
Heritage Oaks Subdivision Project**

Dear Mr. Schubert:

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 Environmental Impact Report for the Heritage Oaks Subdivision project. The project proposes the subdivision of 79.5 acres into 32 lots for the construction of new homes and affordable apartment units, located in the unincorporated community of Aromas in northeast Monterey County.

The Transportation Agency offers the following comments for your consideration:

Regional Road & Highway Impact

1. The draft environmental impact report states that the project will generate 381 daily trips upon build-out, with 39 new trips occurring during the PM peak-hour. As the traffic study for the project indicates, a considerable portion of these additional trips (29%) will utilize the currently deficient US-101 interchange at San Juan Road, resulting in a potentially significant cumulative impact. The Transportation Agency is in the process of completing an update to our regional development impact fee program, which includes a draft project list that proposes improvements to the San Juan Road / US-101 interchange. As such, the Transportation Agency is supportive of mitigation measure TRANS-1-B, which requires the project applicant to make a fair share payment in regional fees prior to the issuance of building permits, and appreciates the County's continued efforts to positively address impacts to the transportation system stemming from new development at both a project-specific and regional level.

Pedestrian, Bicycle, & Transit

2. 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. As such, the Transportation Agency is concerned that no pedestrian or bicycle

facilities will be provided in the project area. The draft document states, and our agency concurs, the project will generate pedestrian and bicycle demand, but this demand is being forgone to preserve the 'rural character' of the area. The Transportation Agency does not believe that the inclusion of bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly facilities and the preservation of natural surroundings are mutually exclusive ideals.

The heritage of the area can be maintained while the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians is supported. Some examples of potential alternatives would be to construct a multi-use pathway throughout the development with access to external roadways and facilities, to provide a green buffer between sidewalks and the roadway, to use colored and/or textured crosswalks and sidewalks, and to preserve and incorporate a portion of the 418 oaks trees that are planned for removal. Also, our agency's development principals and alternative measures, provided in our letter dated June 5, 2006, should also be used as a resource. **This issue should be revisited in the final document with a discussion of how the development will accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel in the project site.**

3. The document notes that internal streets will be constructed to include on-street parking; our agency recommends that new streets constructed within the development provide adequate space along the shoulders to accommodate safe bicycle travel.
4. Our agency discourages the use of cul-de-sacs in site designs, as they impede and discourage the use of bicycle and pedestrian travel by creating longer travel times and blocking access to surrounding portions of the development. The conceptual land use plan provided in the draft document illustrates that there are potentially several areas of concern in this regard. The Transportation Agency strongly urges that as the development of this project moves forward, specific development designs remove unnecessary use of cul-de-sacs and provide adequate cut-throughs or pedestrian paths to surrounding internal and external communities where cul-de-sacs are retained.
5. As the document notes, the existing transit system in the area is limited, with the closest transit stop approximately ten miles south of the project site at the Prunedale Park and Ride. Monterey-Salinas Transit does offer RIDES service in this area for individuals that are not able to use existing fixed route services. Our agency recommends that the applicant work closely with Monterey-Salinas Transit to ensure that the development will provide adequate access for this and any other potential future service routes. In addition, Monterey-Salinas Transit's *Designing for Transit* Guideline Manual should be used as a resource for accommodating any future transit access to the project site.

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,



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