



CITY OF SALINAS
TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION STAFF

DATE: JULY 9, 2020

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS, TRANSPORTATION & TRAFFIC DIVISION

FROM: ANDREW EASTERLING, TRAFFIC ENGINEER

TITLE: DRAFT CENTRAL AREA SPECIFIC PLAN: TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

The Traffic and Transportation Commission is requested to consider recommending approval of the Draft Central Area Specific Plan based on the Transportation Impact Analysis and recommended mitigation measures contained in the Draft Environmental Impact Report prepared for the project.

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the City Council approve the Draft Central Area Specific Plan based on the Transportation Impact Analysis and recommended mitigation measures contained in the Draft Environmental Impact Report prepared for the project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Draft Central Area Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and the Draft Specific Plan have been released for the required 45-day public review period pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15087 and Government Code Section 65453, respectively. The required 45-day public review period for each of these documents began on June 27, 2020 and ends on August 11, 2020. The documents have been submitted to the Commission for comment and recommendations to the City Council. The Commission is requested recommend approval of the Draft Specific Plan based upon the analyses, conclusions, conditions of approval and mitigation measures contained in the Draft EIR.

BACKGROUND:

The Traffic and Transportation Commission will consider ONLY the transportation and circulation related elements of the Draft Central Area Specific Plan and DEIR. The Salinas Planning Commission will evaluate land use, design, and other CEQA considerations specific to their responsibilities and duties in making their recommendations to City Council. Comments and recommendations provided by the Traffic and Transportation Commission will be received and forwarded to the City's Community Development Department to include in the reports to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Pursuant to CEQA, a Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) (dated, February, 2019, prepared by Fehr and Peers), was prepared, to determine whether and to what extent the Central Area Specific Plan would have significant impacts on the transportation network in the City of Salinas. A performance baseline was established through traffic volume data collection and field observations of 56 study intersections in Salinas and nearby areas of unincorporated Monterey County. Freeway mainline and ramp junction volumes along US 101 were also collected. A vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and a level of service analysis (LOS) using the criteria of the Highway Capacity Manual (2000 and 2010 Editions) was then conducted using the observed volumes and compared against standards of significance derived from relevant local and state policy documents. An existing conditions operational analysis of the study intersections, US 101 segments, and US 101 ramp junctions found that four intersections function at LOS scores below Salinas minimum thresholds. All of the US 101 mainline sections and ramp junctions evaluated function within the standards set by the Monterey County Congestion Management Plan (CMP).

The Draft Central Area Specific Plan includes flexibility in possible development scenarios when implemented, in accordance with the General Plan, such as commercial conversion and flex use buildings. As such, the TIA for the Draft Central Area Specific Plan considered a minimum of 3,419 and a maximum of 3,983 new homes and apartments to provide a conservative analysis. In addition to the residential uses, the TIA considered a likely development scenario of approximately 250,000 square feet of retail and office uses may also be built within the Village Center and a portion of the Neighborhood Zones. These residential and commercial uses will be built within the Plan's Residential/Mixed Use Zoning Districts. Three school sites are proposed within the Central Area Specific Plan on three parcels for a combined 48 acres. They include a middle school (7th grade through 8th grade) on 18 acres, an elementary school (kindergarten through 6th grade) on 12 acres, and another elementary/middle school (kindergarten through 8th grade) on 18 acres. Also proposed are an approximately 22,000 square foot library on two acres and a fire station on 2.0 acres. Approximately 187 net acres of public streets are included in the plan.

The Draft Central Area Specific Plan was developed based on New Urbanism design principals to promote walkability and the use of alternative modes of transportation, provide a variety of housing choices, ensure access to parks and open space and promote sustainability. The Draft Specific Plan Area (also referred herein as "Plan Area") has been designed to provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to schools, parks, and open space areas. For example, land uses have been located to ensure a 5 to 10 minute walk to the Village Center portion of the development area, parks, and other uses. Additionally, bus transit access to the project would be such that anyone within the Plan Area would be within walking distance, approximately ½ mile, of a bus stop. Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) currently provides bus service provided along Boronda Road, adjacent to the Plan Area, and may provide transit service within the interior of the Plan Area in the future, as funding becomes available. Public sidewalks would be adjacent to all proposed public streets, and there would be pavement and striping for bike lanes and/or paths within portions of the Plan Area.

In addition, a variety of pedestrian connections would be provided; the proposed parks would provide additional walking paths between various portions of the Plan Area, as well as to adjacent off-site areas. A northerly and southerly greenway is proposed that runs east-west through the

entire North of Boronda Future Growth Area. A greenway is a shared-use, paved, all-weather, ADA-compliant path within a landscaped planter. It is a bicycle route that connects bicycle lanes on San Juan Grade Road easterly to bicycle lanes on McKinnon Street, El Dorado Drive, Natividad Road, Independence Boulevard, Hemingway Drive, Constitution Boulevard, Sanborn Road, and Williams Road. Further, a variety of traffic calming measures would be included in the Plan Area. Bicycle parking would also be provided within the Plan Area. Overall, given that the Central Area Specific Plan is designed in accordance with New Urbanism principles, non-automobile transportation choices are accorded a high priority in the development of the plan.

The expected amount of traffic generated by the proposed project was estimated based on the proposed project land uses, distributed across the existing transportation network based on observed traffic volumes. After accounting for the impact of project-related traffic on existing conditions, an operational analysis found that five (5) intersections would experience below-standard LOS scores in the morning and/or evening peak period under the Existing Plus Project Conditions scenario. The East Laurel Drive northbound off-ramp was found to operate at LOS E in the PM peak conditions, which is below the minimum standards set by the County CMP. No significant impacts were found on the US 101 study segments in the Existing plus Project scenario.

The TIA evaluates traffic impacts in an existing condition, and for a future “Cumulative Condition”. For this TIA, 2045 is the future horizon year for Cumulative Condition impact analyses. Based on observed volumes in the Existing Condition, travel behavior forecasting software was used to estimate and distribute future vehicle traffic onto the roadway network in order to test how the proposed project would impact the transportation network. The roadway network improvements provided in the City’s General Plan, including the eastside and westside bypasses, are reflected in the cumulative analyses.

Under the Cumulative with No Project Conditions scenario, fourteen (14) intersections and three (3) segments of US 101 would operate below local LOS standards. For the Cumulative with Project Scenario, project trip generation was distributed over the forecasted cumulative volumes. Under this Cumulative Plus Project Conditions scenario, sixteen (16) intersections would function below local level of service standards during the morning and/or evening peak period. One segment of US 101 was found to operate below the minimum standards in the morning peak period, and three segments failed in the evening peak period. All ramp junctions were found to operate within appropriate standards for all cumulative scenarios.

Unique to this Transportation Impact Analysis and the Draft Central Area Specific Plan is the consideration of an adjacent development, the approved West Area Specific Plan (WASP).

The WASP includes residential and mixed-use commercial development that encompasses 797 acres in the northwest area of the City of Salinas, north of Boronda Road. It includes four residential neighborhoods with approximately 4,340 housing units, 571,500 square feet of mixed-use village center with residential and commercial development, 11 parks, three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Two additional scenarios were modeled, the Existing Plus Project and WASP Condition and the Cumulative Plus Project Plus WASP Condition. In the Existing Plus Project Plus WASP Condition scenario, nine (9) intersections were found to operate below local minimum service standards in either the morning or evening peak period and none of the studied segments of US 101 were found to operate below the minimum standard. In the

Cumulative Plus Project Plus WASP Condition scenario, twenty-two (22) intersections were found to operate below the local LOS thresholds set by the City and two segments of US 101 were found to operate below the LOS standard in the AM peak period.

Significant impacts were found as a result of the addition of project traffic in both the Existing and Cumulative Condition scenarios. In the Existing with Project Conditions scenario, significant impacts were identified at five (5) intersections and one ramp junction; under the Cumulative With Project Condition scenario, there were impacts at sixteen (16) intersections and one freeway mainline segment. These impacts are largely mitigated through the addition of signal installation and/or optimization, as well as the addition of extra lanes and/or turn pockets. Highway mainline and ramp junction impacts are mitigated with contributions to the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) Regional Development Impact Fee Program. No impacts were found with regards to bicycle/pedestrian facilities and public transportation service.

Transportation impacts that can be mitigated through the City's Traffic Improvement Program are funded through the collection of development impact fees, specifically the Traffic Fee Ordinance. Other transportation impacts that are not mitigated as part of the Traffic Improvement Program may be significant and unavoidable if mitigation is not properly funded. Transportation impacts identified for the Existing Plus Project Condition are considered a direct result of the project traffic, and the project applicant shall be responsible for the full mitigation funding and implementation pursuant to the mitigation measures contained in the DEIR and applicable City policies. Impacts found for the Cumulative Plus WASP Plus Project Condition are considered partially the result of the project traffic and partially other background growth within and near the City. The project applicant could make a fair-share contribution towards the mitigation relative to the portion of project trips with the background growth to mitigate the impact. However, without an additional funding mechanism to ensure full funding of these mitigation measures, these impacts may be considered significant and unavoidable. There are twenty-two (22) intersections which would function below the acceptable level of service standards during the morning and/or evening peak period of the Cumulative Plus WASP Plus Project Condition which may result in significant and unavoidable impacts. These intersections include:

- US 101 Southbound Ramps/Echo Valley Road/Crazy Horse Canyon Road
- US 101 Northbound Ramps/Crazy Horse Canyon Road
- Crazy Horse Canyon Road/San Juan Grade Road
- Hebert Road/San Juan Grade Road
- Old Stage Road/Hebert Road
- Natividad Road/Rogge Road
- Natividad Road/Russell Road
- San Juan Grade Road/Van Buren Avenue
- North Main Street/Boronda Road
- Natividad Road/Boronda Road
- North Main Street/West Laurel Drive
- Natividad Road/East Laurel Drive
- Constitution Boulevard/East Laurel Drive
- North Sanborn Road/Boronda Road

- Old Stage Road/Williams Road/Private Road
- North Main Street/East Bernal Drive
- Sherwood Drive/Natividad Road/East Bernal Drive/La Posada Way
- Williams Road/East Boronda Road
- East Front Street/Sherwood Drive/Market Street
- South Davis Road/Blanco Road
- Salinas Street/North Main Street/West Market Street/East Market Street
- South Main Street/West Blanco Road/East Blanco Road

The TIA concludes that the development of the Central Area Specific Plan may result in traffic operations below Salinas minimum thresholds. The DEIR also recommends conditions of approval to mitigate the operational impacts to Salinas minimum thresholds. Implementing these mitigation measures maintains an acceptable level of service in accordance with the City General Plan. Prior to the approval of final improvement plans for each tentative map, each project applicant for development within the Specific Plan Area shall provide its fair-share contribution for the mitigation of transportation impacts, in proportion to the area planned for development by such project applicant. Total fees shall be determined by the City of Salinas. The final improvement plans shall note this improvement and the fair-share funding requirement.

The Traffic and Transportation Commission is requested to consider the traffic and transportation conclusions of the DEIR and provide comments that would be forwarded to Community Development staff for incorporation in the Planning Commission and City Council consideration of the DEIR. Furthermore, staff is requesting the Commission recommend approval of the project and certification of the DEIR to the Planning Commission and City Council based on the analyses, conclusions and mitigation measures included in the Draft Environmental Impact Report related to transportation and circulation. Comments shall be based on technical information provided within the DEIR and TIA.

Vehicle Miles Traveled:

California Senate Bill 743 prescribes a significant change to the CEQA transportation impact analysis methodology. Past practice has measured transportation impacts strictly by LOS impacts. Effective July 1, 2020, LOS metrics will no longer be considered in the CEQA transportation impact analysis methodology. LOS impacts are evaluated and mitigated through the City's police powers, but they are no longer considered CEQA impacts. The CASP TIA includes a VMT analysis section, however it is not considered in the DEIR as the statewide implementation date has not gone into effect yet.

Boronda Road Congestion Relief Project:

The City of Salinas has plans to widen and improve East Boronda Road between Dartmouth Way and Independence Boulevard, including the installation of roundabouts at major intersections, Capital Improvement Project Number 9510. On May 16, 2017, the City Council approved the roundabout concept along East Boronda Road at the following intersections: McKinnon Street, El Dorado Drive, Natividad Road, Independence Boulevard, and Hemingway Drive. The project will widen East Boronda Road into a four-lane roadway with landscaped median, and bike lanes. The

existing bridge over Gabilan Creek (near Independence Boulevard) will also be widened to accommodate the four-lane roadway with bike lanes and sidewalks.

City staff has worked closely across departments to provide coordination between West Area and Central Area Specific Plans and the Boronda Road Congestion Relief Project. The Boronda Road Congestion Relief Project has been designed with consideration to accommodate the anticipated traffic volumes forecasted from the future growth area and to ensure sufficient right of way is reserved. Additionally, the Central Area Specific Plan DEIR and TIA have incorporated the adopted plans of the Boronda Road Congestion Relief Project. There has been an extensive and iterative process to ensure consistency between the projects.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The City of Salinas has determined that a program-level environmental impact report is required for the Draft Central Area Specific Plan Project pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). It is noted, however, that the Specific Plan provides a very high level of design detail for certain components of the project. Where sufficient detail is available in the Specific Plan, a full project level analysis is provided in the DEIR.

The City is currently soliciting comments on the content of the DEIR from interested persons and organizations concerned with the project in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15087. As previously noted, the public review period for the DEIR is June 27, 2020 to August 11, 2020. More information on the DEIR can be found at <https://www.cityofsalinas.org/our-city-services/community-development/documents-public-review>

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

The project site is identified as a Future Growth Area in the General Plan; the project is consistent with the Council Goal to entitle and develop within the FGA. Additionally, responsible consideration of development projects supports the Council Strategic Plan goal of Economic Diversity and Prosperity.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Community Development Department is the lead on this project with coordination from the Public Works Department regarding infrastructure and traffic, including collaboration on the Boronda Road Congestion Relief Project.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Full DEIR (Volume I - EIR)

Attachment 2: CASP DEIR (Volume II - Appendices) Public Draft

Attachment 3: CASP Public Review Draft June 2020

Attachment 4: Salinas Traffic Improvement Program