



# City of Santa Barbara California

## PLANNING COMMISSION REVISED STAFF REPORT

**REPORT DATE:** January 5, 2017  
**AGENDA DATE:** January 12, 2017  
**SUBJECT:** South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project Draft Revised EIR  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Division, (805) 564-5470  
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Dan Gullett, Supervising Transportation Planner

### **I. HEARING PURPOSE**

The purpose of this hearing is to receive comments from the Planning Commission on the adequacy and completeness of the Draft Revised Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the South Coast 101 HOV Lanes Project. Written comments on the Draft Revised EIR, incorporating feedback from the Planning Commission will be prepared by City staff. City Council will review draft comments prepared by staff during the regular City Council hearing of January ~~31~~<sup>24</sup>, 2017. Comments from the City of Santa Barbara will be submitted to Caltrans prior to the close of the comment period on January 31, 2017. **No action on the Draft Revised EIR or project approval will be taken at this hearing.**

### **II. SOUTH COAST 101 HOV LANES PROJECT**

Caltrans, in coordination with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, City of Santa Barbara, City of Carpinteria, and County of Santa Barbara is proposing to widen U.S. 101 to add a part-time high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction for 10.9 miles. The project limits extend from 0.2 miles south of Bailard Avenue in the City of Carpinteria to Sycamore Creek in the City of Santa Barbara. The project includes reconstruction of the Sheffield Drive and Cabrillo Boulevard/Hot Springs Road interchanges.

The project requires a Coastal Development Permit from the City of Santa Barbara Planning Commission and design review approvals from the Architectural Board of Review and the Historic Landmarks Commission. The extent of the project within the City of Santa Barbara is between Olive Mill Road and Sycamore Creek.

### **V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Environmental review of the project has been conducted pursuant to both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), since this is a joint project by Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration. Caltrans is the Lead Agency for CEQA and the City is considered a Responsible Agency with discretionary review of the project.

A Final EIR for the project was certified by Caltrans in August 2014. Following certification of the Final EIR, a legal challenge was filed in Santa Barbara County Superior Court which resulted in a Writ of Mandate ordering Caltrans to rescind approval of the project and certification of the 2014 Final EIR. The ruling stated “the 2014 Final Environmental Impact Report certified by Caltrans in August 2014 was deficient in two respects: (1) the 2014 EIR failed to adequately identify, analyze, and mitigate impacts to area intersections, and (2) the 2014 FEIR did not adequately complete a cumulative traffic impacts analysis associated with local intersections.” An EIR must discuss cumulative impacts when they are significant, and the project’s incremental contribution is “cumulatively considerable.” The ruling did not reopen the 2014 FEIR to any other impacts or analyses.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(f)(2), new public comments are limited to portions of the EIR which have been revised and recirculated. The Draft Revised EIR includes revisions to the content of the document (Chapter 1), the traffic-related intersection and cumulative impacts analysis (Chapter 2), and the discussion of impacts and mitigations (Chapter 3).

The Draft Revised EIR includes two newly-defined, delay-based thresholds as criteria for determining whether an intersection is impacted by the project for signalized and unsignalized intersections. For signalized intersections, a level of service (LOS) grade decrease to LOS D or lower with a peak hour delay increase of 20 seconds or more from the project is considered significant. For unsignalized intersections, an LOS grade decrease to LOS D or lower with a peak hour delay increase by 10 seconds or more from the project is considered significant. Project specific traffic impacts were considered to be projected delay increases beyond the thresholds resulting from the project in year 2020. Cumulative traffic impacts were considered to be projected delay increases beyond the thresholds resulting from the project in year 2040.

The EIR analysis concludes that five intersections would be impacted in 2020: Southbound 101 on- and off-ramps at Bailard Avenue; Southbound 101 on- and off-ramps at Carpinteria Avenue; Northbound 101 on- and off-ramps at Via Real/Santa Monica; Cabrillo Boulevard and Los Patos; and Southbound 101 off-ramp at Milpas Street Southbound. The latter two intersections are in the City of Santa Barbara. The EIR analysis also concludes that seven intersections would be impacted in 2040: Southbound 101 on- and off-ramps at Bailard Avenue; Southbound 101 on- and off-ramps at Carpinteria Avenue; Northbound 101 on- and off-ramps at Via Real/Santa Monica; Southbound 101 off-ramp at San Ysidro Road/Eucalyptus Lane; Cabrillo Boulevard and Los Patos; and Southbound 101 off-ramp at Milpas Street Southbound; and Southbound 101 on-ramp at State Street and SR 154. The latter three intersections are in the City of Santa Barbara.

Appendix F of the document provides a summary of mitigation measures to address these congestion impacts. The mitigation approach is to identify improvements to the seven impacted intersections and to provide an equitable share monetary contribution to the improvements. The document acknowledges that since the identified improvements are not guaranteed to be completed, those impacted may not be mitigated to less than significant levels and a statement of overriding considerations may be necessary for project-specific and cumulative impacts.

For informational purposes, the document also provides a queuing analysis and an analysis of congestion management program thresholds and other local thresholds.

The 2014 Final EIR previously found unavoidable, significant cumulative and project-specific impacts in visual/aesthetics. Significant, but mitigable, impacts were identified in the areas of Cultural Resources, Paleontology, Water Quality, and Biological Resources (temporary and permanent impacts to riparian habitat, and wetlands; removal of oak trees and landscaping; and possible takes of endangered steelhead trout and tidewater goby). Less than significant adverse noise impacts were also identified. These conclusions have not changed.

## **VII. PUBLIC REVIEW AND NEXT STEPS**

The Draft Revised EIR was released for public review on December 2, 2016. Caltrans held a noticed public hearing on the document on December 15, 2016.

Following the end of the comment period (January 31, 2017), Caltrans will consider all written comments, and will prepare a Final Revised EIR, including written responses to comments, and any clarifications or revisions to the document or analysis needed. Caltrans would then certify the Final Revised EIR prior to submitting applications for Coastal Development Permits with local agencies.

While the City is not responsible for certifying the EIR, the Planning Commission will be relying on the certified EIR in its decision making process for the required Coastal Development Permit. At this time, the City should provide feedback to Caltrans regarding the adequacy of the Draft Revised EIR to ensure that the document complies with CEQA and serves the City's purposes in later consideration of the project. City comments should focus on any shortcomings in the revised portions of the EIR and on additional alternatives or mitigation measures the EIR should include.

Prior to reaching a decision on the Coastal Development Permit, the Planning Commission must consider the environmental effects of the project as shown in the certified EIR, adopt alternatives or mitigation measures that would that would substantially lessen or avoid any significant effect the project would have on the environment, and make findings for each significant effect on the environment. In considering alternatives and mitigation measures, the Planning Commission will be responsible for mitigating the direct or indirect environmental effects of those parts of the project it decides to approve.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

Receive a presentation summarizing the findings of the Draft Revised EIR with initial staff analysis and hold a public hearing to receive Planning Commission comments on the Draft Revised EIR. Note that members of the public should submit comments directly to Caltrans before the end of the comment period on January 31, 2017 (by mail to Caltrans, attention Jason Wilkinson, 50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 or by email to [jason.wilkinson@dot.ca.gov](mailto:jason.wilkinson@dot.ca.gov)).

### **Exhibit:**

The Draft Revised EIR is available for review at the Central Library (40 E. Anapamu St.), Eastside Library (1102 E. Montecito St.), Montecito Branch Library (1469 East Valley Rd.), Carpinteria City Library (5141 Carpinteria Ave.) and at: [www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/sb\\_101hov](http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects/sb_101hov)