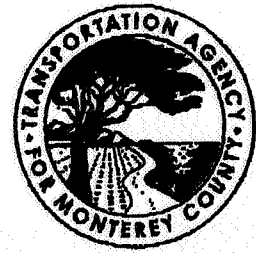


TAMC

TRANSPORTATION AGENCY
FOR MONTEREY COUNTY



Regional Transportation Planning Agency • Congestion Management Planning
Local Transportation Commission • Monterey County Service Authority for Freeways & Expressways

October 6, 2006

Mr. Carl Holm
Planning Manager
County of Monterey
168 West Alisal, 2nd Floor
Salinas, California 93901

**SUBJECT: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report and
Circulation Element for the Monterey County 2006 General Plan**

Dear Mr. Holm:

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County, acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency and Congestion Management Agency for Monterey County, has reviewed the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Monterey County 2006 General Plan. This document provides a comprehensive update of the Monterey County General Plan, last updated in 1982, and its related area plans.

Transportation Agency staff has coordinated closely with the County on this effort and overall supports the general language and concepts identified in the goals and policies being considered. This language provides for the county's future transportation needs through coordination with our agency to fund and deliver important regional transportation improvements, by requiring growth to pay for growth, by maximizing use of the county's existing infrastructure, and by providing for improved access to transit, bicycle, and pedestrian alternatives to automobile travel. To aid in further refining these documents, staff offers the following comments for your consideration:

6-1

Draft Environmental Impact Report

1. In regards to methods of restoring a roadway network that is over-capacity, the document states on page 4.6-8: "These two methods (construction and expansion) are most often selected and favored by policy in Monterey County."

6-2

While the section goes on to discuss demand management and preventative measures, the Transportation Agency suggests including language about the implementation of

- alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycle and pedestrian pathways or additional transit service, that can be employed in appropriate situations to reduce capacity and limit the need for costly construction or expansion projects. 6-2 Cont.
2. Table 4.6-4 notes that Highway 1 "southbound from Highway 68 on-ramp to Fremont Street off-ramp" operated at a Level of Service E in PM Peak Hour conditions for the year 2000. This segment of Highway 1 should be listed as northbound and Highway 68 should also be labeled as either East (Monterey / Salinas) or West (Holman Highway). 6-3
 3. With regards to the Rail Transportation section beginning on page 4.6-18, the Transportation Agency recommends making the following revisions:
 - 3.1. "The Monterey Branch line from Castroville to Monterey passes through the cities of Marina, Seaside, and Sand City and terminates at Cannery Row in Monterey."
 - 3.2. "The single-track branch line is inactive and owned by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) from Castroville to Contra Costa in Seaside, and by the Cities of Seaside and Monterey from Contra Costa into the City of Monterey." 6-4
 - 3.3. "An Environmental Impact Report prepared by the Transportation Agency, certified August 23, 2006..."
 - 3.4. "The estimated cost of the extension of service is \$90 million (year of expenditure dollars)..."
 - 3.5. "The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation commission is in the process..."
 - 3.6. "These studies include sponsoring an alternatives analysis..."
 4. Exhibit 4.6-6a depicts the modeling maps for the expected Level of Service in the year 2030 without the Transportation Agency's 14-Year Improvement Plan. With respect to the segment of U.S. 101 that extends from the northern Monterey County border through Prunedale and the City of Salinas, the Transportation Agency requests clarification as to why this segment does not appear as an area of deficiency as past modeling efforts have shown. 6-5

Circulation Element

1. Goal C-1: Achieve an Acceptable Level of Service by 2026
 - 1.1. Policy C-1.1: The Transportation Agency supports the flexible level of service standards identified in the draft circulation element. These standards are necessary, at a minimum, to accommodate land uses that support travel by transit, bicycle and pedestrians, and which can reduce reliance on the

automobile for daily travel. This connection between land use development and transportation is critical for meeting our county's transportation needs over the life of the updated General Plan.

The Transportation Agency also supports the County's use of a regional baseline Level of Service D, and believes this standard to be more efficient in terms of road-capacity utilization and fostering development that's easily served by transit and non-motorized transportation. Our Agency suggests that a Level of Service C standard for any roadway is too restrictive and costly to address as well as has the effect of discouraging centralized development at densities that are necessary to adequately support transit service. Staff would also recommend that an even lower level of service standard is appropriate in community areas where transit service, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and land uses oriented around these forms of transportation are planned.

- 1.2. Policy C-1.2: The Transportation Agency supports the measures listed for achieving the target Level of Service described above. In particular, the Transportation Agency supports the County of Monterey's efforts to establish and adopt its own impact fee program in coordination with the regional development impact fee update that is currently underway.
 - 1.3. Policy C-1.4: The Transportation Agency supports the language addressing mitigation of cumulative off site transportation impacts of new development and appreciates the support of the County of Monterey in the collection of regional impact fees to address impacts to regional roads and highways.
 - 1.4. Policy C-1.10: The Transportation Agency looks forward to working collaboratively with the County to improve traffic congestion at critical locations.
2. Goal C-2: Optimize the use of the County's Transportation Facilities
 - 2.1. Policy C-2.7: The Transportation Agency suggests revising this policy to state that alternative modes of transportation are to be encouraged, not just considered.
3. Goal C-4: Provide a Road and Highway Network for the Efficient and Safe Movements of People and Commodities
 - 3.1. Policy C-4.7: The Transportation Agency would like to caution that separating bicycle traffic from automobile vehicle traffic does not always ensure the safety of bicyclists. Many separated path facilities constructed around the county over the past two decades have actually resulted in more conflicts between automobiles and bicyclists at intersections. The Transportation Agency therefore supports accommodation of bicycle travel via Class II

bicycle lanes on new facilities, or on separated paths where traffic levels warrant according to Chapter 1000 of the Caltrans Highway Design Manual.

4. **Goal C-8: Encourage a Rail System that Offers Efficient and Economical Transport of People and Commodities**
 - 4.1. **Policy C-8.2: The Transportation Agency suggests revising this policy to include:**
 - "Transit-oriented development around existing and future rail, light rail or bus rapid transit stations shall be encouraged."
 - 4.2. **Policy C-8.3: The Transportation Agency suggests revising this policy to state:**
 - "Passenger rail, light rail or bus rapid transit service to urban centers shall be encouraged."
5. **Goal C-5: Provide for a Safe, Convenient Bicycle Transportation System Integrated with other Transportation Modes**
 - 5.1. The Transportation Agency supports the inclusion of the bicycle-specific policies in the draft Circulation Element in addition to those already included in the rest of the document.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this document. If you have any questions, 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
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