

Notice of Completion & Environmental Document Transmittal

Mail to: State Clearinghouse, P. O. Box 3044, Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 (916) 445-0613
 For Hand Delivery/Street Address: 1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

SCH # 2006041162



Project Title: Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update
 Lead Agency: County of Tulare
 Mailing Address: Tulare County Resource Management Agency, 5951 South Mooney Boulevard
 City: Visalia Zip: 93277
 Contact Person: David Bryant, Project Planner
 Phone: (559) 824-7000
 County: Tulare
 Project Location: County: Tulare City/Nearest Community: na
 Cross Streets: na Zip Code: na
 Lat. / Long.: 36° 19' 48" N / 119° 17' 31" W Total Acres: 3,097,600 (entire County)
 Assessor's Parcel No.: na Section: na Twp.: na Range: na Base: na
 Within 2 Miles: State Hwy #: 99, 63, 137, 43, 65, 190, 198, Waterways: Lake Kaweah, Lake Success
245, 216, 201, 180

Airports: Eckert Field, Porterville Municipal Airport, Sequoia Field, Thunderhawk Field, Tulare Municipal Airport (Mefford Field), Visalia Municipal Airport (VMA), and Woodlake Municipal Airport.
 Railways: Union Pacific Railroad, Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Railroad, San Joaquin Valley Railroad
 Schools: Various: 48 school districts throughout the County.

Document Type:

CEQA: NOP Draft EIR NEPA: NOI Other: Joint Document
 Early Cons Supplement/Subsequent EIR EA Final Document
 Neg Dec (Prior SCH No.) Draft EIS Other
 Mit Neg Dec Other Recirculated Draft EIR FONSI

Local Action Type:

General Plan Update Specific Plan Rezone Annexation
 General Plan Amendment Master Plan Prezone Redevelopment
 General Plan Element Planned Unit Development Use Permit Coastal Permit
 Community Plan Site Plan Land Division (Subdivision, etc.) Other

Development Type:

Other: General Plan Update

Project Issues Discussed in Document:

Aesthetic/Visual Fiscal Recreation/Parks Vegetation
 Agricultural Land Flood Plain/Flooding Schools/Universities Water Quality
 Air Quality Forest Land/Fire Hazard Septic Systems Water Supply/Groundwater
 Archeological/Historical Geologic/Seismic Sewer Capacity Wetland/Riparian
 Biological Resources Minerals Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading Wildlife
 Coastal Zone Noise Solid Waste Growth Inducing
 Drainage/Absorption Population/Housing Balance Toxic/Hazardous Land Use
 Economic/Jobs Public Services/Facilities Traffic/Circulation Cumulative Effects
 Other

Present Land Use/Zoning/General Plan Designation:

Various
 The proposed Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update establishes a planning framework and policies for the planning period to 2030 and is considered a comprehensive update of the County of Tulare's (County) current General Plan. The General Plan Update will provide for the continuation of many existing policies, modifications of others, and the addition of new policies. The General Plan Update project documents consist of the General Plan Update document (consisting of three parts: Part I: the Goals & Policies Report, Part II: the Area Plans, and Part III: the Community and other Plans (the plans in Part III will not be changed as part of this update, except for Dinuba (revised by this update to include the Dinuba Golf Course) and Pixley (revised by this update to include Harmon Field)), the Environmental Impact Report, and the General Plan 2010 Background Report.

State Clearinghouse Contact:

(916) 445-0613

State Review Began: 3.25 - 2010

SCH COMPLIANCE 5.10 - 2010

Project Sent to the following State Agencies

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resources | State/Consumer Svcs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boating & Waterways | General Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coastal Comm | Cal EPA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colorado Rvr Bd | ARB - Airport Projects |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation | ARB - Transportation Projects |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fish & Game # <u>4</u> | ARB - Major Industrial Projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Delta Protection Comm | SWRCB: Div. Financial Assist. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cal Fire | SWRCB: Wtr Quality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation | SWRCB: Wtr Rights |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parks & Rec | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reg. WQCB # <u>5F</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central Valley Flood Prot. | Toxic Sub Ctl-CTC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Cons & Dev Comm. | Yth/Adlt Corrections |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DWR | Corrections |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cal EMA | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resources, Recycling and Recovery | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bus Transp Hous | Independent Comm |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aeronautics | Energy Commission |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHP | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NAHC |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caltrans # <u>6</u> | Public Utilities Comm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trans Planning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Lands Comm |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing & Com Dev | Tahoe Rgl Plan Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food & Agriculture | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services | Conservancy |
| | Other: _____ |

Please note State Clearinghouse Number (SCH#) on all Comments

2006041162

SCH#: _____
 Please forward late comments directly to the Lead Agency

AQMD/APCD 37

(Resources: 3, 2, 7)

Please letter attached dated 5/18/10 3/17/08 continue to be valid CT/AM 5/18/10

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1352 WEST OLIVE AVENUE
P.O. BOX 12616
FRESNO, CA 93778-2616
PHONE (559) 445-5421
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Be energy efficient!*

May 18, 2010

2135-IGR-/CEQA
6-TUL-GEN
TULARE COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN UP-DATE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT REPORT
SCH 2006041162 (2)

Mr. David Bryant, Project Planner
County of Tulare
Resource Management Agency
5961 S. Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277

Dear Mr. Bryant:

Caltrans has completed its review of the recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) County of Tulare 2030 General Plan Update. The key documents of the General Plan Update include the Goals and Policies and the Background Reports. The Goals and Policies will guide future decisions within the County. Caltrans has the following comments:

The previous Caltrans comments dated March 7, 2008 (copy enclosed) continue to be valid.

Please be advised that any future development adjacent to a State Route, whether the entitlement is deemed by the lead agency to be discretionary or ministerial should be sent to Caltrans for review. Please send a response to our comments and a copy of the Board resolution related to the proposed project. If you have any questions, please contact me at (559) 445-5867.

Sincerely,

PAUL-ALBERT MARQUEZ
North Planning Branch Chief

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lorena Mendibles".

Lorena Mendibles
Transportation Planner
District 6

Enclosure

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1352 WEST OLIVE AVENUE
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*Flex your power!
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March 7, 2008

2135-IGR/CEQA
6-TUL-GEN
TULARE COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN UP-DATE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT REPORT
SCH 2006041162

Mr. David Bryant, Project Planner
County of Tulare
Resource Management Agency
5961 S. Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277

Dear Mr. Bryant:

Caltrans has completed its review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) County of Tulare 2030 General Plan Update. The key documents of the General Plan Update include the Goals and Policies and the Background Reports. The Goals and Policies will guide future decisions within the County. Caltrans has the following comments:

The Cities and County have approved a number of residential subdivisions, commercial or retail centers, and industrial projects that is developed or is currently being constructed. Growth resulting from these and the proposed changes in the General Plan will continue to impact State Route (SR) 63, SR 65, SR 99, SR 190, SR 198 and SR 201 in the future. The increased traffic volumes on the State Routes will need to be mitigated as part of project specific development and as part of the regional effort through Tulare County's Regional State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) or local funds. Individual developments will typically be required to prepare Traffic Impact Studies (TIS).

With any new development or as part of the redevelopment effort, the County should plan for the future widening of the state infrastructure by requiring the dedication to the ultimate right of way as delineated in the Transportation Concept Report. The County should require sufficient setbacks from the highway system to incorporate or modify the system as required in the future. Many of the interchanges have had only minor modifications since originally constructed. In the future, modification of the existing interchanges may be necessary. In rare cases, complete reconstruction of an interchange could be warranted. The General Plan Update should consider the traffic impacts and mitigation at interchanges. The County should not take any action that could jeopardize the future acquisition of right of way for roadway purposes.

Caltrans and its partners should strive to maintain a level of service of "C" or better for the State Highways system within the County of Tulare. As shown in Table 5-6 (Page 5-26) in the Background Report, there are four roadway segments that have unsatisfactory level of service (LOS "F"): State Route (SR) 63 from SR 198 to Walnut, SR 63 from Walnut to Caldwell, SR

65 from SR 137 (West) to Hermosa, and SR 198 from Kings County Line to SR 99. It is recommended that the County, Tulare County Association of Governments and Caltrans work to develop a strategy to resolve these under performing segments of the State highway system.

The following list of planned improvements represents known or expected needs that have not been included in the proposed General Plan Update.

Goshen

It is recommended that the development of this area, generally along SR 99 and northeast of SR 198 should include a conceptual planning provision to upgrade the SR 99 facility from a 4-lane freeway to a 8 lane freeway and SR 198 from a 2-lane highway to a 4-lane freeway, with a new interchange at SR 198 and Road 56 and an over crossing at Road 68. The SR 99 to SR 198 interchange requires a 2-mile separation between interchanges. It enables the local agencies to establish a building envelope setback of future development in order to allow preservation of right of way along the SR 99 corridor.

Tipton

A railroad grade separation and new interchange is proposed at SR 99 and SR 190 in the City of Tipton. This is a long-term future need that has been identified as part of an advanced planning/corridor analysis. The State Highway System could be negatively affected by increasing the number, size or frequency of train traffic on the Southern Pacific Railroad line. Increasing train traffic could increase the vehicle-to-train conflict potential resulting in the need to plan for and fund a SR 99 grade separation (railroad overhead crossing).

Similarly, increasing train traffic could be incompatible with the high traffic volumes projected on 12th Avenue, north of SR 198 in the City of Hanford. A train crossing delay could create vehicle queuing on the ramps. Ramps are transition areas between freeway free flow and the stop and go traffic on local roads. Traffic backing up along the ramps could impact public safety.

Caltrans has public safety concerns with increasing the vehicle-to-train conflict frequency. Please check to insure that the potential increase in vehicle-to-train conflict does not violate the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) rules.

Earlimart and Pixley

The SR 99/Avenue 56 interchange has been identified as a location needing railroad grade separation. This would require reconstruction of the existing interchange and ramps and is a long-term future need that has been identified as part of an advanced planning/corridor analysis.

The SR 99/Avenue 100 and SR 99/Avenue 96 interchanges have been identified as needing ramp improvements in the Community of Pixley. Consideration is being given to converting the frontage roads to a couplet system. The isolated SR 99/Avenue 100 northbound hook off ramp and the two isolated hook ramps near the park at Avenue 104 will be closed as part of the interchange improvements.

Dinuba Area

A signal warrants analysis should be completed to determine if the intersection of SR 201 and Avenue 80 would need left-turn channelization and intersection signalization soon. In the future, SR 201 will need to be widened to 4 lanes as part of County circulation system improvements.

City of Tulare

Caltrans understands that the following cities are outside the County jurisdiction. However, Caltrans seeks to have a seamless transportation system. The SR 99/Prosperity Avenue interchange will need auxiliary lanes in the near future. In addition, local road improvements are needed on Prosperity Avenue for instance, the addition of travel lanes to the Prosperity Avenue overcrossing and construction of retaining walls along Blackstone Street.

The SR 99/Bardsley Avenue ramp termini need signalization, ramp termini widening, and ADA improvements.

The SR 99/SR 137 interchange (Tulare Avenue) ramps have City streets that access the ramps from stop control, at-grade intersections. Cul-de-sacs should be constructed at edge of the state right of way on East San Joaquin Avenue and East Sierra Avenue. In addition, ramp termini signalization and widening is needed.

The City is in the process of updating its General Plan. There is consideration to annex land east of SR 99 between Tagus and Prosperity Avenue. The existing partial interchange at SR 99/Avenue 256 includes many non-standard features that are incompatible with urbanization. This interchange should be closed, or reconstructed and relocated.

City of Kingsburg

Avenue 344 intersects the SR 99 southbound off ramp at Mendocino Avenue. In a growing urban setting, the local roads should be separated from the ramps. Avenue 344 should be realigned. In addition, the Gilroy Street/on ramp should be realigned. This northbound on ramp is an isolated ramp that needs direct access from Mendocino Avenue.

It is recommended that the Draft EIR, identify any improvements to State facilities that would need to be made as a result of the increased traffic volume generated by proposed land use changes. The report should also determine any fair share costs that should be paid by project proponents towards future State improvements. In order to mitigate impacts, when a project is filed, a financing plan should be required. The plan should identify the financing measures necessary to carry out the various elements of the development plan. The elements should include the construction and maintenance of State, local and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage and any other infrastructure and public services, and any other appropriate regulations, programs or public works projects. The financing plan would be evaluated, modified and expanded over time as the planning process evolves through the various levels with the intent that each of the development projects "pay their fair share" over the long term so as not to be a financial burden on the TCAG, Cities, County or State.

It is recommended that the County of Tulare consider a Development Impact Mitigation Program similar to the Cities of Tulare and Visalia. The mitigation program should secure funding for a zone of benefit for the future improvements to local and State facilities necessitated by the accumulated impacts of development. The project proponent would contribute per the Development Mitigation Program to the improvements of the before mentioned State Route facilities. However, the General Plan Update process of evaluating and preparing circulation plans is an ideal time to consider a Traffic Impact Fee Program (TIFP). A TIFP allows for the county to establish a pro-rata fair share fee structure that collects mitigation fees based on project development impacts and provides needed funds for improvements to the State and local road systems in an equitable and efficient manner. Since a project's TIS needs to address impacts for the highest use of undeveloped lands, Caltrans recommends that the County develop a TIFP that is based on "build-out" of the General Plan. If the County were to develop a comprehensive TIFP that would adequately address the impacts of subsequent development based on the General Plan "build-out", it may not be necessary for Caltrans to comment on every development proposed. Caltrans would need to continue reviewing development proposals that are adjacent to state facilities, of regional significance or may reduce the level of services of state facilities. As a transportation partner, Caltrans is requesting a copy of the County of Tulare Zoning Ordinance to facilitate the review of future projects. The Ordinance is necessary to evaluate the TIS comparison assessment of the highest land uses utilized in the study in order to properly comment during the project review cycle.

The State of California has a Transportation Concept Report (TCR) for each of the State Routes that identify the ultimate right-of-way cross-section upgrades in the future. Caltrans request that the County of Tulare use the TCR to provide guidance, insure orderly development and protect private property rights, while preserving and insuring the ultimate State and local road systems for the future.

Most of the interchanges in the County will need improvements to accommodate the future growth of the communities in Tulare County. Caltrans is currently in the process of developing conceptual layouts for the SR 99 main line and future improvements of the interchanges within funding and staffing constraints. It is recommended that the local agency adopt the existing TCR's into the Circulation Element of the General Plan and when the planning conceptual drawings are available update the Circulation Element at that time. Some of the local streets closest to the ramp intersections may need to be closed, and any new connections to local roads should be located at least 525 feet from a ramp intersection.

A traffic and financial study will be needed to determine the ultimate configuration of each of the interchanges needing improvements. Either the County or the proponent of any regionally significant project that will significantly impact the current interchange should prepare these studies. Until a financial and traffic study is completed, the County should not take any action that would jeopardize the future acquisition of right-of-way for roadway purposes.

The integration between the State highway system and local road network is a critical component for a safe and efficient seamless transportation network. As growth occurs, the need for auxiliary lanes on State Routes, additional lanes on the ramps, intersection and driveway set backs on the local road away from the State highway system are typically needed. Caltrans is

your partner in planning an efficient design to integrate the State highway system and the local roads. Caltrans looks forward to working with the County in addressing this important portion of the transportation system.

As traffic volumes increase, roadway noise becomes more pronounced. Noise studies in conformance with FHWA regulations should be included in the Environmental Impact Report and areas of concern should be defined. Mitigation for the defined area needs to be considered for all non-commercial and industrial areas. The County needs to make a condition of approval stating that any required future noise abatement will be the responsibility of the property owner or the County.

Caltrans recommends that the County incorporate the guiding principles of the "San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint; Vision for the Valley." The Blueprint represents a collaborative planning process, with the eight San Joaquin Valley counties working together to prepare a guide for growth within the Central Valley. The Blueprint will develop a valley-wide "vision" that will include the integration of transportation, housing, land use, economic development and environmental protection that will serve as a significant contribution to improving the Valley's quality of life.

An encroachment permit must be obtained for all proposed activities for placement of encroachments within, under or over the State highway rights-of-way. Activity and work planned in the State right-of-way shall be performed to State standards and specifications, at no cost to the State.

TRANSIT; for all residential developments

Ongoing development throughout the County of Tulare will make traffic operations significantly worse by adding considerably to delay and congestion. Transit alternatives can help reduce congestion and delay and reduce overall degradation of air quality and gridlocked intersections. The County of Tulare should focus on ways to eliminate trips in addition to enhancing capacity. Transportation alternatives the County should consider include standard highway solutions along with the following:

1. Park and ride facilities on site or within the proximity of this project.
2. A study of the general accommodation and provision of mass transit in this area to provide insight on ways of increasing transit usage.
3. Exploring the potential of commuter shuttles. The shuttle could be financed through an assessment district and provide a way for individuals to utilize a park-and-ride facility or commercial area parking lot and be shuttled to various commercial/office centers within the area. Commuters who need to go further could use the transit system if the Counties and Cities planned for convenient connections. This may help to reduce the Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) demand seeking to use the State Highway System.
4. Providing for continuity of non-motorized transportation.
5. Exploring the potential for employer-sponsored carpools/vanpools or monthly transit passes for employees as well as including as a condition of project approval a covered transit stop as mitigation for project-related impacts to the transportation/circulation system.
6. Exploring the potential for linking the purchase of a monthly transit pass with new

residential development as partial mitigation for congestion and air quality impacts, and to ensure the long term viability of public transportation.

TRIP REDUCTION; for commercial and large office developments

Incorporation of on-site childcare should be given serious consideration as part of this project as a way to reduce trips and encourage employees to patronize facilities within the project site.

TRIP REDUCTION; for large employers/ office complexes

Alternative transportation policies should be applied to the development. An assessment of multi-modal facilities should be conducted. This assessment should be used to develop an integrated multi-modal transportation system to serve and help alleviate traffic congestion caused by the project and related development in this area of the County and Cities. The assessment should include the following:

1. Pedestrian walkways should link this office complex to an internal project area walkway, transit facilities, as well as other walkways in the surrounding area.
2. The project should develop a Transportation Management Plan (TMP). The TMP should go beyond offering transit options. Car-pooling, Van pooling, and other options should be included. The goal of the TMP is to reduce overall trips and the impact of those trips on transportation/air quality.
3. A Transportation Management Agency (TMA) and a TMA coordinator should be designated for the entire development area. The responsible TMP coordinator for this project should be assigned and directed to work with the TMA coordinator.
4. If transit is not available within ¼-mile of the site, transit should be extended to provide services to what will be a high activity center.
5. The consideration of bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation needs more attention. The project TMP should offer internal amenities to encourage bicycle use. These include parking, security, lockers and showers. However, internal bicycle paths should be coordinated with local and regional pathways to further encourage the use of bicycles for commuter and recreational purposes.

Climate Action Strategies at Caltrans

Land use decisions, transportation policies, restrictions, and choices made today involving new technology to reduce the emissions per VMT, will determine how to achieve a sustainable transportation variety. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, sustainable transportation will yield other benefits such as: more efficient use of transportation resources, reduced dependency on fossil fuels, greater energy security, improved mobility and travel options, and a more livable community.

As part of the Climate Action Team, Business, Transportation and Housing (BTH)/Caltrans has been working with the California Environmental Protection Agency to formulate strategies to make transportation cleaner, more energy efficient, and lower GHG emissions. These strategies are primarily based on established Caltrans policy, the State Strategic Growth Plan, and planning

activities and scenarios proposed at the regional level. However, implementation of these strategies requires an adequate level of funding and a concerted effort and collaboration on the part of State regional and local agencies.

The BTH/Caltrans strategy to reduce GHG emissions from transportation is twofold. One strategy is making transportation systems more efficient through operational improvements, application of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), and smart land use thus reducing congestion and lowering the rate of growth in fuel consumption and CO₂ from motor vehicles. The second is cleaner, more energy efficient transportation systems and operations which focuses on integrating consideration of energy and GHG emission reduction measures into planning, project development, operations, and maintenance of transportation facilities, fleets, buildings and equipment.

Smart growth refers to development practices that result in more compact, accessible, multi-modal communities where travel distances are shorter, people have travel options, and it is possible to walk and bicycle to more destinations. Smart growth policies can reduce per capita vehicle travel 10-30 percent. Although these land use changes provide diverse and durable benefits, they take many years to be achieved and require coordination of land use and transportation investment policies toward measurable outcomes.

The dilemma is that the transportation system management and land use planning are disjointed and there is a disconnect between the timing and nature of these developments. While the State and the metropolitan planning organizations have the responsibility for transportation planning, land use and zoning remains the prerogative of local governments. Land use and transportation agencies must build a stronger information and policy bridge. A more coherent and integrated land use - transportation approach is needed and a concerted effort among stakeholders to agree on regional growth scenarios that incorporate smart land use provisions and energy efficiency measures. With regional blueprint planning efforts in the San Joaquin Valley, this critical bridge is being built.

Caltrans through its Local Development/Intergovernmental Review (LD/IGR) program works with local jurisdictions early and through their land use planning and decision making processes consistent with the requirements of CEQA and State planning law. Caltrans seeks to reduce vehicle trips associated with proposed new development and recommends appropriate mitigation measures for dealing with the remaining transportation impacts of such development. The LD/IGR Program is intended to ensure that local land use planning and development decisions include the provision of transportation choices, including transit, intercity rail, passenger service, air service, walking, and biking, when appropriate. Caltrans advocates community design (e.g. urban infill, mixed use, and transit-oriented development) that promotes an efficient transportation system and healthy communities.

Caltrans provides on an annual basis transportation planning grants to local and regional governments, community advocates, and universities advancing livable communities, environmental justice, energy efficiency, and alternative modes of travel. The programs and projects funded through these grants provide awareness and support development and implementation of best practices.

Mr. David Bryant
March 7, 2008
Page 8

Please provide us with your responses to our comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan Update in advance of preparing the Final EIR for public hearing. If you have any questions, please call me at (559) 488-7306.

Sincerely,

AL DIAS
Central Planning Branch
District 6

C: Ms. Theresa Szymanis, AICP
Division Manager, Countywide Planning
Mr. Britt L. Fussel, P.E., County of Tulare
Assistant Director-Engineering
Mr. Ted Smalley, Executive Secretary
Tulare County Association of Governments
SCH 2006041162