

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Ref: EA 120304
PM 28.8/39.0

February 16, 2011

Los Angeles City Planning Department
c/o Mulholland Specific Plan Staff
6262 Van Nuys Blvd., Suite 351
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Subject: Realignment of the Mulholland Bridge at I-405

Dear Design Review Board Staff and Members,

This letter provides documentation to the Los Angeles City Planning Department regarding the proposed realignment of the Mulholland Bridge, which is a component of the I-405 Improvement Project. Enclosed are copies of the approved I-405 Sepulveda Pass Widening Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and the recent Environmental Addendum covering this proposed realignment. Both of these documents were completed in full compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

As part of the environmental process, the Mulholland Drive Overcrossing (OC) was evaluated and found eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed project would adversely affect the Mulholland Drive Overcrossing under all of the build alternatives which would require the removal and replacement of the bridge in order to accommodate the new HOV lane on I-405. The Section 106 process was completed with a *Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Between the California Department of Transportation and the California State Historic Preservation Officer Regarding the Interstate 405 (I-405) Northbound High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lane Widening Project* which was executed on April 2, 2008. The stipulations included Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) documentation of the Mulholland Drive OC and installation of informative permanent metal plaques at both ends of the new bridge.

Various project refinements including a design alternative for the realignment of the Mulholland Drive Overcrossing have been developed since the EIR was approved in February 2008. The plan at that time called for replacement of the existing OC at the same location. The approved EIR identified the significant adverse impacts associated with this "replacement in place" plan. Subsequently, in January 2011, a Design Alternatives Study was prepared for the Mulholland Drive OC in response to continuing concerns about the construction related traffic impacts and disruption to the quality of life of the residents, schools, institutions and businesses along this corridor. The resulting realignment of the Mulholland Drive OC was proposed. It would allow for the existing bridge to remain fully operational while the new replacement bridge is constructed alongside.

Caltrans Environmental Planning Division has the responsibility of reviewing these changes to ensure that they do not result in meaningful new impacts. What we like to see is project refinements that, in fact, reduce environmental impacts. Our multidisciplinary team of environmental professionals and specialists completed a comprehensive evaluation of the potential impacts of the Mulholland Drive realignment. Traffic impacts were evaluated as a part

of the Design Alternatives Study in close coordination with the Los Angeles City Department of Transportation. The analysis determined that the Level of Service for the new T-intersection associated with the realignment would improve from the existing LOS F to LOS C. Visual/aesthetic impacts of the realignment footprint were evaluated and special design requirements have been proposed that maintain the existing visual character along I-405 and Mulholland Drive. These special design requirements would be formally adopted in consultation with the Mulholland Design Review Board and in coordination with the Caltrans Landscape Architect.

Our analysis recognized that the Mulholland Scenic Parkway provides access to scenic and recreational resources. The Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan outlines the procedures for the granting of adjustments, exceptions, or amendments to the requirements of this Specific Plan as set forth in the Los Angeles Municipal Code. In our opinion, the proposed changes to this Specific Plan resulting from the proposed realignment do not reach to a level of significance that would require a Supplemental EIR.

Caltrans maintains discretionary approval over project-related changes as the Lead Agency pursuant to Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines. We have determined that the enclosed Environmental Addendum is the appropriate CEQA document on the basis that substantial evidence in the light of the whole record, does not introduce new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. The realignment of the Mulholland Drive Overcrossing is not expected to increase the severity of the project's impact to any resources that were previously identified in the EIR. The I-405 Sepulveda Pass Project, with this proposed design refinement, remains adequately considered pursuant to CEQA.

This project refinement is considered by the project development team to be a critical component as it moves forward with the final design and construction of the I-405 Sepulveda Pass Project.

We appreciate the role you have in evaluating the refinements that Caltrans and METRO are proposing and look forward to successfully working with you to complete this critical action. Both agencies remain committed to our open and ongoing working relationship with the community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (213) 897-0703 or Carlos Montez at (213) 897-9116.

Sincerely,



RONALD KOSINSKI
Deputy District Director
Division of Environmental Planning
Caltrans, District 7

Attachments

Cc: Councilmember Paul Koretz
Councilmember Bill Rosendahl
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Assemblymember Mike Feuer
Assemblymember Julia Brownley
Assemblymember Holly J. Mitchell
Assemblymember Bob Blumentfield
Senator Fran Pavley
Senator Carol Liu
Senator Curren D. Price, Jr.
Congressmember Brad Sherman
Congressmember Howard Berman
Congressmember Jane Harman
Congressmember Henry Waxman
Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Diane Feinstein
Paul Edelman, Executive Director, SMMC
Marian Dodge, President, The Federation of Hillside and
Canyon Associations
Mike Barbour, I-405 Project Director, Metro
Community Advisory Committee Members, I-405 Sepulveda
Pass Improvements Project