

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 11, DIVISION OF PLANNING

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May 20, 2011

11-SD-163

PM 1.41

Balboa Park Plaza de Panama

NOP# 233958

SCH# 2011031074

Michelle Sokolowski  
City of San Diego Development Services Department  
1222 First Avenue, MS-501  
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Ms Sokolowski:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) received a copy of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed Balboa Park Plaza de Panama project located near State Route 163 (SR-163). Caltrans has the following comments:

- 1) Please coordinate with Caltrans regarding the seismic retrofit to the Laurel Street Overcrossing to as it relates to the bypass bridge alternative. Construction on the Laurel Street Overcrossing is scheduled to begin construction in 2012 and end construction in 2013. During construction, traffic for the Cabrillo Bridge will be limited to pedestrian traffic. Please contact Caltrans project manager Lou Melendez at (619) 688-3328 for more information.
- 2) The City's proposed project is located directly adjacent to the portion of the State of California owned State Route 163 (SR-163) that is known as the "Cabrillo Freeway Historic District." This District is: (1) eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, (2) listed in the California Register of Historical Resources, (3) listed with the City of San Diego as Historic Landmark #441, and (4) designated as a Historic Parkway by the California State Legislature. It is also an official California Scenic Highway.

The Cabrillo Freeway Historic District is National Register eligible under Criterion A for its association with pioneering freeway development in Southern California and under Criterion C for its landscaping, which reflects early concepts of freeway beautification. The period of significance is 1940-1948. The boundaries of the Cabrillo Freeway Historic District are, to the south, at a point approximately 300-feet south of the Laurel Street Bridge and, to the north, at a point just south of the 6th Avenue On-Ramp Undercrossing for a total length of 1.6-miles. The contributing elements of the District include the landscaping, the Cabrillo Bridge, the four-lane roadway, the on-ramps and off-ramps for the overcrossings determined eligible, and the Washington Street overcrossing that spans 6th Street, in addition to 8 bridges within the District.

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With respect to the Cabrillo Bridge (also referred to as the Laurel Street Bridge #57-0215 and #57C-0596), it is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places in addition to it being a contributing element to the Cabrillo Freeway Historic District. The City's proposal to add a by-pass bridge to the eastern end of the existing Cabrillo Bridge will in all likelihood result in a significant impact not only to the bridge itself, but to the State owned Cabrillo Freeway Historic District. These impacts must be addressed in the EIR and mitigation proposed. Please strongly consider avoiding all impacts to such an iconic and historic bridge/district.

- 3) If the project will require a Caltrans issued encroachment permit, the City will also need to address, within your EIR, Caltrans obligations as they relate to the State Of California's Public Resources Code 5024.

Any work performed within Caltrans' right-of-way (R/W) will require discretionary review and approval by Caltrans and an encroachment permit will be required for any work within the Caltrans' R/W prior to construction.

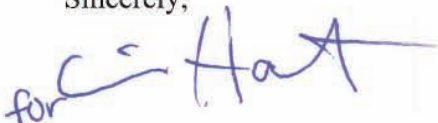
As part of the encroachment permit process, the applicant must provide an approved final environmental document including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determination addressing any environmental impacts within the Caltrans' R/W, and any corresponding technical studies. If these materials are not included with the encroachment permit application, the applicant will be required to acquire and provide these to Caltrans before the permit application will be accepted. Identification of avoidance and/or mitigation measures will be a condition of the encroachment permit approval as well as procurement of any necessary regulatory and resource agency permits. Encroachment permit submittals that are incomplete can result in significant delays in permit approval.

Additional information regarding encroachment permits may be obtained by contacting the Caltrans Permits Office at (619) 688-6158. Early coordination with Caltrans is strongly advised for all encroachment permits.

- 4) The limits of the proposed bypass road need to be off the Cabrillo Bridge structure. If retaining walls are to be removed as part of the construction of the proposed bypass bridge alternative, please coordinate with Caltrans.

If you have any questions on the comments Caltrans has provided, please contact Marisa Hampton of the Development Review Branch at (619) 688-6954.

Sincerely,



JACOB ARMSTRONG,  
Chief Development Review Branch