



## Memorandum

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**Date:** May 21, 2020

**To:** Ms. Natalie Noyes, David J. Powers & Associates, Inc.

**From:** Ollie Zhou  
Gary Black

**Subject:** 480 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Mixed-Use Development CEQA Transportation Analysis

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Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc. has completed a CEQA transportation analysis for the proposed residential development located at 480 E 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Mateo, California. The project proposes a seven-story 225-unit residential complex to replace the existing parking lot on site. The project also proposes to construct a six-story 696-space parking garage to replace the existing parking lot at 400 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The project would include a pedestrian bridge connecting the parking garage to the residential complex. 164 of the spaces in the parking garage would be reserved and gated for residential use, 234 spaces would be a replacement for the demolished parking lots, and the remaining 298 new spaces would be used as public parking for the downtown area. Access to the proposed parking garage would be provided via one driveway on E. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

### CEQA Analysis

This section describes the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) transportation analysis for the proposed project. The CEQA 2019 Update included four CEQA issues related to transportation:

- a) Would the project conflict with a plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle lanes and pedestrian paths?
- b) For a land use project, would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?
- c) Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible land uses (e.g., farm equipment)?
- d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

### Potential Conflict With A Plan, Ordinance or Policy Addressing the Circulation System

There are four regional/local plans addressing the multimodal circulation system that are relevant to this project:

- C/CAG Congestion Management Program (CMP)
- City of San Mateo General Plan
- City of San Mateo Bicycle Master Plan
- City of San Mateo Pedestrian Master Plan

Potential project impacts resulting from project conflicts with these three plans are discussed separately below.

### **Potential Conflict with the General Plan**

The City of San Mateo General Plan includes policies addressing potential project effects on intersection operations. The City maintains a level-of-service (LOS) standard of mid-level LOS D for all intersections. According to General Plan Policy C-2.7, a development project may be required to fund off-site circulation improvements which are needed as a result of project generated traffic if:

- a) The level of service at the intersection drops below mid-level LOS D (average delay of more than 45 seconds) when the project is added, and
- b) An intersection that operates below its level of service standard under the base year conditions experiences an increase in delay of four or more seconds, and
- c) The needed improvement of the intersection(s) is not funded in the applicable five-year City Capital Improvement Program from the date of application approval.

The project's effects on intersection levels of service are discussed in a separate traffic operations analysis report.

### **Potential Conflict with the Pedestrian Master Plan**

The project proposes detached sidewalks along the streets fronting the project site. Detached sidewalks provide barriers between pedestrians and roadway traffic and would improve pedestrian safety and comfort levels. Therefore, the project would be in conformance with the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Crosswalks are currently lacking at the intersection of Claremont Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It is recommended that the project install crosswalks at the intersection of Claremont Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to complete the pedestrian network within the immediate project vicinity.

### **Potential Conflict with the Bicycle Master Plan**

The recently adopted Bicycle Master Plan 2020 identifies a list of proposed bicycle network improvements. The identified improvements along the project frontage include bike lanes on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and bike boulevards on Claremont Street. The project footprint would not intrude onto the public right-of-way and would not be in conflict with the adopted Bicycle Master Plan 2020.

### **Potential Conflict With CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, Subdivision (b)**

Pursuant to SB 743, the CEQA 2019 Update Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b) states that vehicle miles travelled (VMT) will be the metric in analyzing transportation impacts for land use projects for CEQA purposes. The *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in December 2018 provides recommendations regarding VMT evaluation methodology, significance thresholds and screening thresholds for land use projects. The following OPR recommendations are relevant to the project:

- OPR recommends that office or residential projects exceeding a level of 15 percent below existing VMT per capita may indicate a significant transportation impact.
- OPR recommends that projects (including office, residential, retail and mixed-use developments) proposed within ½ mile of an existing major transit stop (San Mateo Caltrain station qualifies) may be presumed to have a less-than-significant impact on VMT.
- OPR recommends that 100 percent affordable residential development in infill locations be presumed to have a less-than-significant impact on VMT.

It should be noted that agencies are not required to adopt VMT analysis guidelines until July 1, 2020. The City of San Mateo, at the time of this report, is undertaking a process of updating its significance thresholds to be consistent with SB 743, but has not released draft thresholds. In the absence of an adopted, or even draft, City policy with numeric thresholds, this study utilized OPR guidelines in analyzing VMT.

### **Residential VMT**

The project proposes to construct a 225-unit affordable housing complex at 480 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in downtown San Mateo, CA. The project site is located approximately 1,600 feet south of the San Mateo Caltrain station, which is about a 7-minute walk or a 3-minute bike ride. According to OPR recommended guidelines, the residential component of the project may be presumed to have a less-than-significant impact on VMT because it is located within ½ mile of an existing major transit stop and is a 100 percent affordable residential development.

A quantitative VMT analysis also was conducted. According to the Year 2020 Plan Bay Area model forecasts, the Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) containing the project site (TAZ 257) is estimated to generate 13.03 average daily VMT per resident. In comparison, the San Mateo County average daily VMT per resident is 16.02. The estimated project VMT per resident would be 18.66% below the County-wide average, which is below the OPR recommended residential VMT threshold of 15% below existing regional VMT per capita. Therefore, the proposed residences can be expected to generate less than significant VMT when compared to the County average, beyond the fact the project site is within ½ mile of Caltrain.

### **Garage VMT**

The proposed 696 parking spaces in the parking garage would serve three purposes:

1. 164 spaces would be reserved and gated for the new residential development on site,
2. 234 spaces would replace the existing public parking spaces on site and street spaces that would be lost around the site, and
3. the remaining 298 parking spaces would be built to serve the downtown in-lieu parking program. It is this last component of the parking garage that is subject to VMT analysis.

The City of San Mateo Municipal Code 27.64.100 states that projects within the central parking and improvement district (CPID) within the downtown specific planning area are allowed to satisfy their CPID-specific parking requirements through in-lieu fee payment. According to City staff, since year 2015, developments within the CPID district have paid for 325 in-lieu fee spaces:

- 221 S. El Camino Real – 92 in-lieu fee spaces
- 2 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue – 59 in-lieu fee spaces
- 405 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue – 70 in-lieu fee spaces
- 406 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue – 104 in-lieu fee spaces

Since 298 parking spaces are proposed to be built for the in-lieu parking program, these spaces can be associated with the developments, which are mostly office developments. These 298 spaces are also proposed to be delineated as 10-hour parking spaces, which are more catered towards employee parking.

These developments were evaluated for transportation impacts under CEQA at the time using Level of Service (LOS), and approved before VMT analysis became necessary. Therefore, it would be appropriate to assess their VMT as part of this project because this project will provide some of the parking spaces (i.e. what parking could not be accommodated on their respective sites) that they need in order to comply with City parking requirements, which are already reduced for Downtown

projects compared to Citywide parking standards. According to OPR recommended guidelines, office projects may be presumed to have a less-than-significant impact on VMT if they are located within ½ mile of an existing major transit stop. By linking these parking spaces as serving those office developments, it may be presumed that these parking spaces would generate a less-than-significant VMT impact.

### **Would the Project Substantially Increase Hazards Due to A Geometric Design Feature or Incompatible Land Uses?**

The project proposes a parking garage on the existing Claremont and 5th parking lot. This parking garage also would include parking spaces for the residential component of the project. Pedestrian access from the residential parking spaces to the residential building would be provided via a pedestrian bridge. The proposed site plan would provide vehicles with adequate connectivity through the parking areas. The parking aisle widths all meet the San Mateo parking design standards. Sufficient turnaround spaces are also provided for parking spaces at dead-end aisles. A security gate is shown on the fourth level separating the public parking spaces from the residential spaces, meeting City requirements.

According to the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, the minimum stopping sight distance is the distance required by the user, traveling at a given speed, to bring the vehicle or bicycle to a stop after an object ½-foot high on the road becomes visible. Stopping sight distance for motorists is measured from the driver's eyes, which are assumed to be 3 ½ feet above the pavement surface, to an object ½-foot high on the road. The required stopping sight distances are based on the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, Table 201.1. The project driveway is located on 5th Avenue, which has a speed limit of 25 mph, the Caltrans stopping sight distance requirement is 200 feet (based on a design speed of 30 mph). There are no roadway curves or vegetation along either side of the driveway, but there are on-street parking spaces located on both sides of the driveway. To maintain adequate sight distance, one parking space west of the driveway should be removed.

The proposed project would not substantially increase hazards on-site due to a design feature, nor would the project inhibit emergency access to the site or surrounding uses. The project would be subject to the City of San Mateo's SPAR process for additional review of the adequacy of circulation patterns. In this manner, the proposed project would not create or increase on-site hazards.

Under background plus project conditions during the PM peak hour, the micro-simulation analysis conducted for the downtown corridors (see the General Plan Conformance Report for details) indicated that traffic exiting the proposed garage would create queuing issues on eastbound 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue extending from Delaware Street back past the railroad tracks, which is a potential safety impact. This potential impact can be mitigated by the proposed physical improvement to restripe eastbound 5th Avenue to two lanes between the proposed project driveway and Delaware Street by removing on-street parking (see the General Plan Conformance Report for details). With this improvement, the eastbound per-lane demand volume on the roadway would be reduced and queuing would be shortened to better than existing conditions at Delaware Street. At Claremont Street, the 95th percentile queue length would be reduced to 125 feet and would not extend past the railroad tracks. "Keep Clear" markings could be considered along eastbound 5th Avenue in front of the proposed project driveway to facilitate vehicles accessing the proposed garage.

The General Plan Conformance Report identifies other locations with insufficient turn pocket lengths due to traffic generated/rerouted by the proposed project. Queues at these locations would not create any potential safety problems.

**Would the Project Result in Inadequate Emergency Access?**

All driveway and drive aisles on-site would be at least 20 feet wide and would comply with the City requirement for emergency vehicle access. Emergency access would not be inhibited by the proposed project.