

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 9, 2024

TO: City Council

FROM: Inder Khalsa, City Attorney
Dianna Jensen, Director of Public Works - Engineering & Transportation/
City Engineer
Ryan D. Chapman, Assistant Director of Public Works Engineering &
Transportation/Traffic Engineer

SUBJECT: Comment letter to the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Yolo 80 Managed Lanes Project

Recommendation

Authorize the City Manager to sign the attached comment letter related to the Caltrans' Draft Environmental Impact Report ("Draft EIR") for the Yolo 80 Managed Lanes Project, and submit it to Caltrans on behalf of the City of Davis.

Fiscal Impact

There are no fiscal impacts as a result of commenting on the Draft EIR.

Council Goal(s)

Review of this comment letter indirectly relates to the City Council's Goal Objective 2 task I: "Support state and regional efforts to remedy severe I-80 traffic congestion through the City of Davis and the Causeway through improvements to the freeway and mass transit options such as an express busway."

Commission Action(s)

The Bicycle Transportation and Street Safety Committee (BTSSC) has been identified as the lead commission in evaluating and offering suggested comments on the Draft EIR to Council. The BTSSC considered the Yolo 80 Managed Lanes draft EIR at their December 14th meeting. Additionally, the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) considered the draft EIR at their November 27th meeting. The Draft BTSSC meeting minutes and NRC comments are attached.

Background and Analysis

Caltrans has released the Draft EIR for the Yolo 80 Managed Lanes Project that would add managed lanes for high occupancy vehicles (HOV) and/or toll lanes to I-80 and a portion of US 50. The project limits are from the Yolo/Solano County Line just west of Richards Boulevard, through Yolo County, and to West El Camino Avenue on I-80, and Interstate 5 (I-5) on US-50 in Sacramento County. Attachment 2 shows a map with the project limits. The Yolo 80 Managed Lanes Project is a Caltrans project and the City of Davis has no jurisdiction or permitting authority over this project. Decision making with

respect to this Project, including approval or disapproval of the project, is within the sole authority of Caltrans. The City does have an opportunity to provide feedback on the Project, which is the purpose of this report.

The project website with the draft EIR can be found at <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-3/d3-projects/d3-i80-corridor-improvements>

The deadline for submitting comments on the Draft EIR was originally set for January 5, 2024, but on December 22, 2023, Caltrans sent the attached letter extending the comment period to January 12th, 2024. Members of the public who are interested in submitting comments on the project should submit them directly to Caltrans at Yolo80corridor@dot.ca.gov. **Please note: As comments are part of the official CEQA record being collected by Caltrans the City will not forward comments to Caltrans on behalf of residents, and we therefore encourage residents to submit their comments directly to Caltrans.**

Staff has prepared the attached comment letter on the Draft EIR that incorporates staff and City Attorney review of the Draft EIR, taking into consideration the comments that were received from the BTSSC and NRC. The letter focuses on legal compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the legal standards to which EIR's are held under CEQA law. The purpose of CEQA is to inform government decisionmakers and the public about the potential environmental effects of government activities, as well as to identify potential mitigation measures to reduce significant environment effects. Where an EIR is prepared, CEQA also requires a lead agency to consider a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. The focus of the draft comment letter is on the legal sufficiency of the Draft EIR document, and the conclusions, mitigation measures, and alternatives evaluated therein. The draft comment letter from the City also attaches the NRC and BTSSC comments by reference.

Once the comment period has closed, Caltrans will review comments and prepare responses to be included in the Final EIR. Staff believes that there will be ten days between the release of the Final EIR (including the Caltrans response to comments received on the Draft EIR) and Caltrans action to approve either the proposed project or an alternative as the project ("no project" is an alternative).

We anticipate that this 10 day period will allow some level of review of the final EIR before it is certified but likely will not provide sufficient time to evaluate and return to the Council for additional consideration of a preferred alternative.

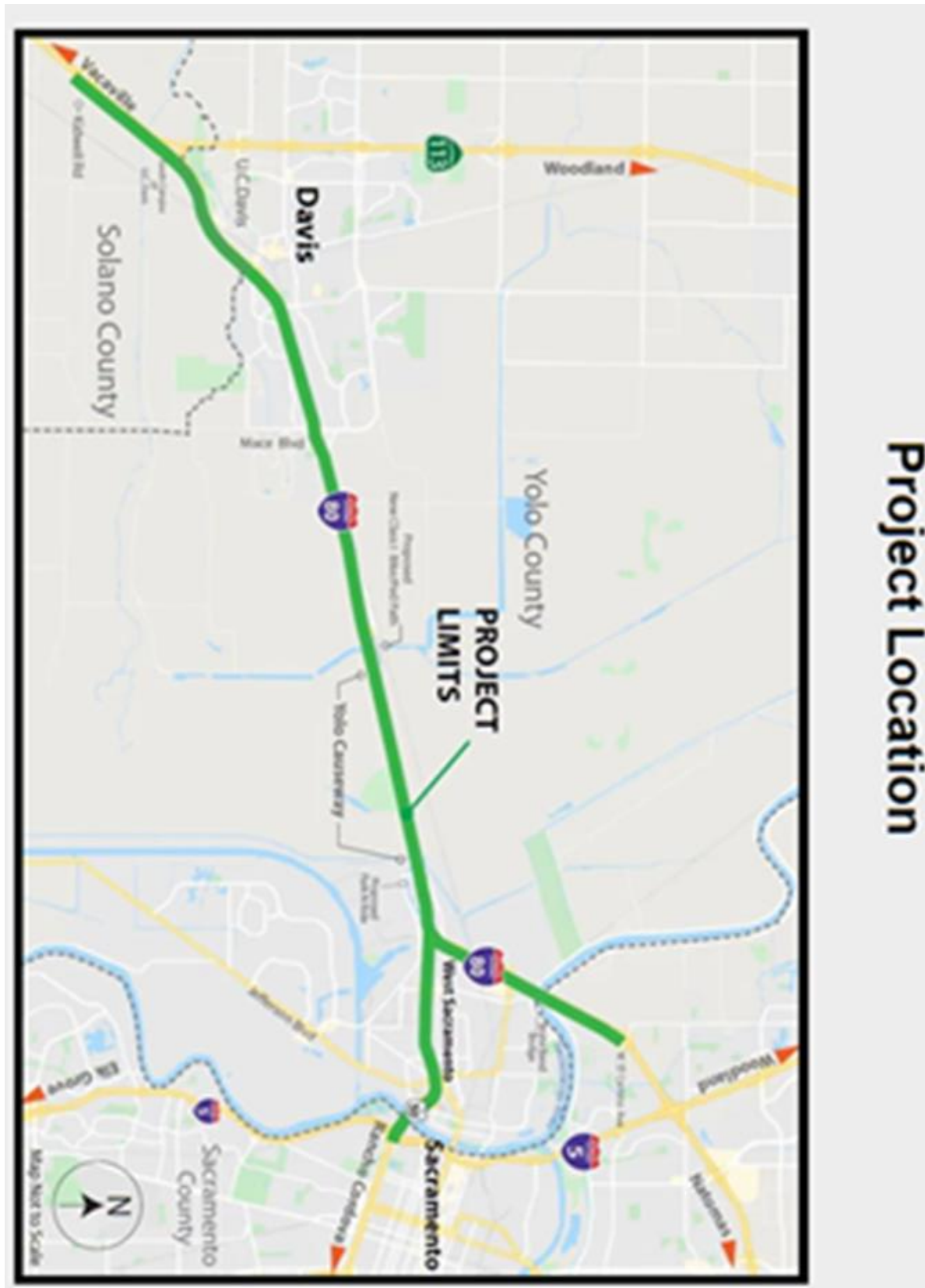
If the Council desires to include a preferred alternative or other desired policy outcome in the comment letter, additional language to this effect can be added with Council direction. Such direction would have to be based on the information that we have before us in the Draft EIR as there will not be time to develop such policy direction based on the Final EIR and the response to comments. For a full listing and description of the

project alternatives evaluated please see Chapter 1.3.1 of the DEIR, available at the link included above.

Attachments

1. Project Map
2. Draft EIR Comment Letter
3. Draft BTSSC Meeting minutes
4. NRC comments
5. Letter to Caltrans requesting an extension of the comment review deadline.
6. Caltrans Response to comment period extension request

Attachment 1: Project Map





Masum Patwary
Environmental Scientist
Caltrans District 3
703 B Street,
Marysville, CA 95901

Dear Mr. Patwary:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft Environmental Impact Report (“DEIR”) for the Yolo 80 Corridor Improvements Project (“Project”). The City of Davis (“Davis”) respectfully submits these comments to help Caltrans to ensure that the Environmental Impact Report complies with the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”). Public Resources Code sections 21000-21889, CEQA Guidelines sections 15000-15387.

The City’s concerns fall into the following general categories:

Project Description

An inaccurate or incomplete project description may render the analysis of significant environmental impacts inherently unreliable. While extensive detail is not necessary, the law mandates that EIRs should describe proposed projects with sufficient detail and accuracy to permit informed decision-making. (CEQA Guidelines section 15124).

- 1) Chapter 1.3.1.1 does not discuss the phasing of the project. Our understanding of the project is that there is insufficient funding to complete the entire project in one phase so construction will have to be phased. If this is correct, a discussion of project phasing should be included in the project description and is necessary to fully inform the public about the construction timing and project schedule.
- 2) Chapter 1.5 of the DEIR addresses alternatives considered but rejected. The City requests Caltrans include and analyze a project alternative that converts an existing general-purpose lane to a tolling lane or HOT lane. Caltrans should explain why the alternative of converting an existing lane to HOV was considered but the option of a toll lane, which could generate revenue for transit improvements, was not considered.

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Climate Change, Local Plan Consistency

The DEIR determines that the impacts on climate change, including air quality and greenhouse gas emissions (“GHG”) will be less than significant after implementation of standard mitigation measures as described in Exhibit E to the DEIR.

- 3) Chapter 3.4.3.3 describes the applicable Regional Plans that address Greenhouse Gas Emissions (“GHG”) reduction policies or strategies. The City of Davis adopted its Climate Action and Adaptation Plan on April 18, 2023 and requests that it be included in the analysis of consistency with local plans. The City understands that Caltrans is not required to include the Davis CAAP in the DEIR analysis as it was adopted after Caltrans released the Notice of Preparation for the Project DEIR. The City recommends that Caltrans do so, however, given that the CAAP represents the City’s most recent policy document related to GHG. Specifically, the CAAP includes three climate action goals relevant to the project – (1) expand public transit (TR6), (2) develop Transportation Demand Management (TR9), and (3) strengthen regional transit (TR7). A copy of the CAAP is attached for your convenience.

Traffic and Transportation

VMT Mitigation Measures

Vehicles Miles Traveled measures the amount of travel for all vehicles in a geographic region over a given period of time, typically a one-year period. It is calculated as the sum of the number of miles traveled by a vehicle. CEQA requires that an EIR identify “all feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts.” CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1). The City submits the following comments related to Caltrans’ mitigation measures related to Transportation/VMT impacts.

- 4) The DEIR concludes that the impacts of the project on vehicles miles traveled will be significant and unavoidable even after the implementation of mitigation. The DEIR identifies eight “VMT Reduction Measures.” The City notes that these reduction matters are not included in the table of mitigations in Exhibit C, however, and it is unclear if Caltrans intends to adopt them as formal mitigation measures under CEQA. Caltrans is obligated to identify all feasible VMT mitigation measures, even if they will not result in mitigation of VMT impacts to a “less than significant” level. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1).
- 5) The DEIR states that Caltrans is making a commitment to contribute \$55 million toward the measures. However, full implementation of these VMT-reducing will require substantial additional financial investment. The specific process by which this additional funding will be obtained is not specified in detail, and the DEIR appears to assume the additional funding will come from tolls. CEQA requires that mitigation measures be “fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other legally binding instruments.” CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(2). The DEIR’s “Mitigation Reduction Measures” fail to meet this requirement, as long-term funding

for the mitigation measures is not currently available, and the DEIR fails to propose a legally binding pathway to funding them. The City notes that Caltrans could improve the enforceability of the VMT mitigation measures by seeking to enter binding agreements with the affected agencies who will establish a tolling authority, and developing an agreed upon methodology for establishing toll amounts that would fully fund the ongoing mitigation measures. Finally, it would be important for the tolling agencies to agree to divert revenue towards the mitigation measures. If this is not feasible, then Caltrans could commit to funding the mitigation measures until tolls are established and the mitigation measures could be funded through binding and legally enforceable agreements.

- 6) Similarly, the City notes that full implementation of the VMT mitigation measures is largely outside the legal jurisdiction of Caltrans as ongoing funding will depend on the intervening actions of multiple other public agencies. While the City understands that Caltrans cannot control the discretionary actions of other public agencies, as noted above, Caltrans could either seek agreement from the affected agencies, or agree to fund the mitigation measures itself until such time as tolling agencies are able to fully fund them. The DEIR does not look at this option or analyze its feasibility.
- 7) In addition to lacking legal enforceability, the proposed VMT Reduction Measures appear to defer mitigation of ongoing VMT impacts to a later date without meeting the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(B), including the identification of specific performance standards that the mitigation measure should achieve and identifying potential actions that could attain that result.
- 8) Finally, even if the VMT Reduction Measures are fully implemented and funded over the long term, they would not be sufficient to offset the VMT impacts of Build Alternatives 2-5. In addition to revising the 8 VMT Reduction measures to meet CEQA requirements for enforceability and specificity, the City requests that Caltrans review options to further reduce the VMT impacts of the Project. The DEIR does not include any analysis of other potential mitigation measures besides the eight proposed measures, and does not provide a basis for concluding that these are the only feasible mitigation measures to address VMT for the Project.
- 9) Table 2.1-28 states that the cost to increase Route 42A and 42B services for 15-minute headways during morning and afternoon peak hours would be \$16 million annually. The City asks that Caltrans reexamine this cost estimate. The City notes that the expansion of the Causeway Connection was estimated to cost less than \$1 million per year. It is not clear to the City that expanding the routes of two 42 bus routes would cost 16 times more than the Causeway Connection. If those numbers are correct, the City asks that Caltrans look at expanding other bus routes (e.g. 43, 43R, 230) instead of discarding the measure completely.

- 10) Section 2.1.10.8 includes subsidizing transit passes and/or eliminating fares as a potential VMT reduction measure. Caltrans's methodology for estimating the VMT reduction due to a voluntary trip reduction plan should be more fully described and analyzed. Since the analysis time frame uses 2019 traffic data through both the NCST calculator and SACSIM more analysis should be done to make sure that any mitigation measures that restore transit service to 2019 levels are not double counting or over estimating the VMT benefits that they would provide.
- 11) With respect to Tables 2.1.27 and 2.1.28 related to VMT Reducing Measures, the City requests Caltrans to consider that commuters travel I-80 from Dixon to Davis and Sacramento. Although there is Solano Express bus service between Dixon and Davis, expansion of this service on the blue line to Sacramento with improved frequencies, especially between Dixon and Davis would likely have a beneficial impact on VMT. Another option to consider would be a Capitol Corridor train stop in Dixon. The Yolobus 42 routes cover long distances. Shorter, more frequent routes (particularly during commute times) between Woodland and Davis should also be considered. While the City acknowledges that this latter option would not substantially change the VMT on I-80, it could mitigate some of the I-80 GHG impacts.
- 12) Table 2.1.28 rejected a mitigation calling for increases to parking costs at UC Davis and Downtown Sacramento since currently there are no plans to proceed with this program. The VMT reduction estimate from this measure is significant and the City request that Caltrans consider working with the affected agencies to increase parking costs by a lesser amount in order to provide some VMT mitigation.

Induced Demand Analysis

- 13) The City notes that the DEIR contains contradictory information about whether commercial or truck traffic is considered in the analysis of induced demand and elasticity. The Fehr and Peers memorandum of November 16, 2023 states that increases to commercial traffic would be 19-29% based on induced demand, but later states that "With commercial driving excluded, the automobile daily induced VMT has an elasticity of 0.71." Additional explanation of why commercial traffic should be excluded from this analysis would be helpful in terms of understanding the agency's induced demand methodology.

Safety Concerns

- 14) Section 2.1.10.3 "Collision Data" summarizes the number of collisions and collision rates for the freeway segments of the Project Area. The Project proposes reducing the inner shoulder width in order to create the managed lane through the City of Davis and onto the Causeway. The reduction or elimination of the inner shoulder should be analyzed to determine if this will increase the likelihood of collisions and to

evaluate impacts on local first responders, such as police, fire and emergency services.

- 15) Along the same lines, the DEIR should analyze to the increased risk of collisions during the construction period. The City understands that staged traffic control, such as narrower lanes, no (or minimal) shoulders, and lane shifts have had an impact on collision rates during the current work on I-80 across the Causeway and in West Sacramento. The increased number of collisions has also had an impact on the City of Davis due to the increase in emergency calls for service to assist with incidents on the Causeway. For example, the Davis Fire Department saw an increase in calls to the Causeway between October 12th and November 22nd. The City received calls for service for 9 incidents in that same time frame in 2022, but this figure nearly doubled to 17 incidents in 2023.

Air Quality

- 16) Section 3.4.4.1 "Operation Emissions" as well as Table 3.4.2, analyzes CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion and its impact on GHG emissions. But the model used for this calculation does not account for "induced travel." A project that reduces travel time can lead to changes in traveler behavior that can increase the overall amount of travel, and therefore the Project may result in "induced travel." The DEIR needs to either explain how induced travel impacts were evaluated for GHG and air quality impacts or provide a full analysis these impacts.
- 17) Section 3.4.5 CEQA Conclusion determines that the Build Alternative will result in additional vehicle capacity that will result in an increase of impacts from VMT. The Project's very modest decrease in projected GHG emissions in 2049 are attributed to newer more fuel-efficient fleets and the increase in electric vehicles. The City requests a more detailed analysis of the Project's consistency with the State of California's goals of a 40% reduction (below 1990 levels) by 2030 and 85% reduction by 2050 (2022 Scoping Plan, ARB).
- 18) Section 3.4.6.1 (p. 3-64) describes a Governor's Office of Planning and Research report (2015) that identified a 50% reduction in petroleum use in cars and trucks by 2030 as a "key state goal" for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Here again, the Project should be fully evaluated for consistency with State goals, even where they are not legally binding.

Miscellaneous/Non-CEQA Comments

- 19) The City notes that the public circulation period for the DEIR has been marked by noticing flaws, with incorrect documents loaded to the website at various points, supporting information on the VMT analysis posted later than the rest of the DEIR,

and repeated reports that physical copies of the documents were not available for significant periods of time at the Mary L. Stephens Davis Library. For all of these reasons, as well as the additional time it affords for review, the City appreciates the extension of the public comment period to January 12, 2024. However, one may argue that the extension provided may not be sufficient to account for these noticing deficiencies and we continue to have concerns about the adequacy of the availability of documents as noted above, particularly as it pertains to the document access to interested members of the community who may wish to participate in the DEIR review and comment process.

20) Section 2.1.10.7 Environmental Consequences proposes adding Class II bike lanes to County Road 32A, at the intersection of 32A/105 and the Class I bikeway that parallels I-80. When this is designed, the City requests that a safe crossing to access to the Class I bikeway be developed for westbound cyclists to use.

21) We note that Project T-8 in Table 1.3-3 incorrectly refers to "Olive Hill Lane" and "Olive Hill Road" instead of "Olive Drive."

In addition, the city received comments from two City commissions: the Bicycling, Transportation, and Street safety Commission (BTSSC) and the Natural Resources Commission (NRC). Their comments have been attached for your consideration as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this DEIR. Please feel free to contact Ryan Chapman, Assistant Director of Public Works Engineering and Transportation if you have any questions. He can be reached at rchapman@cityofdavis.org.

Sincerely,

Mike Webb
City Manager

Attachments:
NRC Comments
BTSSC Comments



Draft Minutes
City of Davis
Bicycling, Transportation, and Street Safety Commission (BTSSC)
Davis Senior Center Activity Room, 646 A Street, Davis, CA 95616
Thursday, December 14, 2023
5:30 p.m.

Commissioners: Brook Ostrom (Chair), Andy Furillo, Fei Ma, Nick Bates, Schuyler Campbell. NRC Commissioner John Johnston.

Council Liaisons: Donna Neville

Staff: Ryan Chapman, PWET Assistant Director/City Traffic Engineer
Jennifer Donofrio, City of Davis

Absent: Brett Lee

1. Call to Order & Roll Call
Meeting called to order at 5:34 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda
Motion (Bates, Campbell)

Motion carries: 5-0

3. Brief Announcements from Staff and Liaisons

A. Council Announcements

Councilmember Donna Neville arrived after brief announcements.

B. Staff Announcements

Jennifer Donofrio shared that the agenda and staff reports are in a binder.

4. Public Comment

Hiram Jackson stated he was on the school board and informed the commissioners about the school board parcel tax. He shared the importance of this tax and that its funds are used for school programs, electives, athletics, the library, counselors and more. The proposed new tax will be on the ballot and with no sunset date.

Alan Hirsch thanked Donna Neville for attending the teach-in discussion about I-80 managed lanes EIR. He also spoke about a YoloTD meeting on Monday night

where they selected their preferred alternative in advance of the EIR being approved.

5. Consent Calendar

A. Commission Minutes from September 14, 2023

Motion (Bates, Furillo):

Motion carries: 4-0-1.

Abstain (Commissioner Campbell did not attend at the September meeting)

B. Commission Minutes from October 12, 2023

Motion (Furillo, Campbell):

Motion carries: 4-0-1.

Abstain (Commissioner Ma, did not attend the October meeting)

6. Regular Items

A. Review I80 Widening Draft EIR

Ryan Chapman provided an overview of the draft EIR and highlighted that the comments heard tonight and the Natural Resource Commission's letter will be provided to City Council. He explained what types of comments the City is looking for and what comments belong in the City's comment letter. He shared that the EIR is a disclosure document that looks at alternatives. He stated that if there is an environmental impact, then their needs to be a mitigation measure to respond to that impact.

Clarifying Questions

Commissioner Ma asked about the goal for this discussion. Ryan Chapman shared it is letting us know what was deficient or missed in the EIR to include in the letter.

Councilmember Neville shared that City Council requested an extension of the EIR's due date, but it was denied by Caltrans. She also read what the CEQA laws is and recommended that the commission focus on three areas for EIR comments. The three areas of focus are, (1) sufficient disclosure and analysis, (2) is the Mitigation Adequate and (3) do you want to new or modified alternatives.

Commissioner Ostrom asked Ryan Chapman about his thoughts about the EIR. Ryan Chapman noted there were challenges with accessing the EIR documents. He pointed out that the an older EIR draft was posted originally on the Caltrans website and at the libraries. He also noted how Caltrans removed the incorrect draft EIR from library and there was a period where the new EIR was not at the library during the comment period. He shared issues with mitigation measures and the project timeline. He noted issues with bicycle facilities during and after construction. He shared that the EIR needs

88 to included project phasing and how that was not included. He also stated
89 that he did not see how this project would be funded. Finally, he stated that
90 cut through traffic was not analyzed in the EIR and it needs to be included to
91 understand the project impacts on City streets.

92
93 NRC Commissioner Johnston asked about how the NRC letter and BTSSC
94 comments will be moved forward. Ryan Chapman shared that the comments
95 will be reviewed by the City Manager's Office and then go to City Council.

96
97 Commissioner Furillo asked about how YoloTD voted on a preferred
98 alternative ahead of the EIR approval and asked if this practice is unusual?
99 Ryan Chapman shared that he has seen this before.

100
101 Commissioner Johnston asked about a superior alternative. City
102 Councilmember Donna Neville shared that she is looking into this.

103
104 *Public Comment*

105 Alan Hirsch shared his issues with the EIR including that it was not available
106 at the library, how challenging it was to access the technical reports. He
107 noted that Caltrans did not provide a complete EIR, because they did not
108 provide all the technical reports to the libraries. He recommended that the
109 BTSSC request Caltrans to recirculate the EIR.

110
111 *Commissioner Discussion*

112
113 Commissioner Campbell shared that more needs to be done to improve
114 transit. He noted that the Capitol Corridor trains are packed and there are not
115 enough train cars. Commissioner Furillo stated that there are two alternatives
116 that highlight transit, but these alternatives are not along transit corridors. He
117 noted at the primary alternative, states there is transit on a portion of the
118 project area. However, there is a 5-mile stretch between 80/50 split and I-5,
119 which has no transit and there are no plans to add transit. The same issue
120 exists with Alternative 6B, which states there is transit, but I-80 has no transit.

121
122 Commissioner Bates asked if there is not transit today, how are the models
123 evaluating transit? Ryan Chapman shared information about the models. The
124 UC Davis research model uses induced demand and land use patterns to
125 model transportation. The SACSIM model created by SACOG, evaluates land
126 use and models trips in the region using trip data. We see few people in the
127 region using transit as a result, the model is not showing transit use. The
128 SACOG model does not look at changes in land uses.

129
130 Commissioner Campbell shared that we have a weak transit system in the
131 Sacramento region and unless we build a strong transit system, we will not
132 see it in the model.

Commissioner Furillo shared that when transit is available along geographical pinch points, there are examples where transit systems can have high transit use.

NRC Commissioner Johnston stated that transit agencies have methods to create models and we should be asking them for this information. Ryan Chapman stated that he is seeing the shift towards transit in the mitigation measures. NRC Commissioner Johnston noted that there was limited information in the EIR about what models that used Caltrans used and what information was included in setting up the model.

Commissioner Ostrom and Commissioner Furillo shared their concerns about the mitigation measure to expand Yolo Bus Route 42A was rejected, because the annual cost would be \$16 million. This comment was also picked up by NRC. There was discussion that commissioners believe this is an error with decimal places.

Commissioner Ostrom highlighted how the project area is part of an important east west corridor, however the EIR does not consider impacts to the whole corridor. He also noted that there was no discussion about impacts to local roadways, including Mace and Cowell. He believes that these impacts are being completely ignored. He thinks that the EIR should include mitigation measures from Caltrans to address impacts to our City and County streets.

Commissioner Furillo asked if adding an additional lane in the project area has any impacts on the choke point, where I-80 goes from 8 lanes to 4 lanes. We want to understand if adding a lane in the project area makes a difference with delay?

Commissioner Ma asked about VMT mitigations and how do we know if these mitigation measures will happen in the future. Ryan Chapman shared that Caltrans is entering into MOUs with other agencies to manage the VMT mitigation measures. Commissioner Bates stated that these mitigation measures are good ideas and asked if these ideas would be good to have in place without this project. He also asked about the connection between the mitigation measures and revenue. Ryan Chapman stated that Caltrans will provide money for these mitigation measures to the agencies implementing the measures. He also noted that if they create a tolling authority, then they will also use this revenue to pay for mitigation measures. Ryan Chapman shared that he wants to understand if there is no tolling, then how are the mitigation measures going to be funded.

Commissioner Furillo stated that in order to increase transit service, you need to create a car lane.

NRC Commissioner Johnston asked why in the mitigation measures VMT reduction stopped at 43%, when the threshold is 0%. He would like clarification on where this number came from? Ryan Chapman suggested that the BTSSC include in their comments that the mitigation measures do not go far enough.

Commissioner Ostrom asked about collisions on the causeway and will this project reduce or keep the collision rates the same. Ryan Chapman shared that there is a paragraph in the EIR that the collision rate will not increase, but he stated that he would like Caltrans to better explain this determination with their plan to add an additional lane and limit the shoulder area. He would also like Caltrans to consider collision impacts during both construction and the build out. Commissioner Furillo shared he wants to consider the safety of the bike path. He has seen fence pieces, bumpers, along the pathway. He also noted areas where the path is currently narrowed due to construction. He noted that there is no viable alternative route for bicyclists and the construction is impacting the pathway.

Commissioner Bates shared that most alternatives include adding a travel lane and a toll lane, but asked why there was no option for not adding a travel lane and adding a toll lane.

The BTSSC completed their general comments about the EIR and then created a BTSSC EIR Comment List, see below. The purpose of this list was to share this list with City Council to help draft a letter to Caltrans. Commissioners provided comments on three topic areas in bold.

BTSSC EIR Comment List

Did the EIR have sufficient disclosure and analysis?

1. The EIR did not analyze diversion traffic and cut-through traffic. This needs to be included.
2. The National Center for Sustainable transportation calculator was used to model the toll lane alternative, but the calculator guidelines say not to use this calculator for toll lanes.
3. Did Caltrans consider choke points and people using cut-through routes?

Was the mitigation adequate?

1. The mitigation was not adequate related to transit improvements. The proposed mitigation just restores transit services to pre-pandemic levels. Is Caltrans double counting VMT reduction?

2. There are no identified mitigation measures for the bike path during construction. The roadway shoulder is being eliminated during construction, which means that there will be construction impacts adjacent to the pathway.
3. The VMT mitigation should be zero or close to zero in accordance with California Air Resource Board. A project of this scope should not be moving forward without VMT mitigation compliance.

Do you want to new or modified alternatives?

1. The EIR is insufficient in explaining the primary alternative and alternative 6B with regards to transit. The BTSSC suggests adding a transit connector from Mace to I-80 instead of at I-80/US 50. The transit lane that is proposed on I-80 between I-5 and 80/50 split does not carry buses and there are no proposals for buses on this route.
2. There should be an alternative with one lane being a toll lane and no additional lanes being added.

Motion (Bates, Furillo): The BTSSC recommends that City Council consider the list of EIR comments and also include the NRC letter with their letter to Caltrans.

Motion carries: 5-0

7. Subcommittee and Liaison Assignment Updates. This item is for brief updates on subcommittee work or reports from commission liaison(s) on meetings attended, if any.

Commissioner Furillo shared that there was a YoloTD meeting in November and they are considering a new transit center in downtown Woodland. They also discussed detours to Yolo Bus during events, like Kings games and how closing stops and roads is causing significant impacts. YoloTD will be bringing this up with Sacramento City Manager's office. YoloTD also has three openings on their committee.

8. Long Range Calendar: Upcoming Meeting Dates and/or Potential Agenda Items

Commissioner Bates requested staff provide the BTSSC with an update on the downtown parking plan. He would like to understand what moved forward since the plan was adopted and what has stalled. Ryan Chapman shared that this item could be added in a couple of months.

Commissioner Ma asked for an update on the G Street Corridor. Jennifer Donofrio provided a short updated that staff will be bringing an item to City Council in January

271 sharing the results of the survey and asking them to provide recommendations list of
272 infrastructure improvements and parking.

273
274 Commissioner Ostrom asked about an update on Spin. Staff will add this request to the
275 calendar.

276
277 *Public Comment*

278 Two audience members from Yolo County shared that they are working on a taskforce
279 and might bring something to the BTSSC about this work. They provided their contact
280 information to Jennifer Donofrio to follow-up.

281
282 *Discussion*

283
284 9. Adjournment.

285
286 *Motion (Campbell, Furillo): Adjourned at 7:35 p.m. Motion carries, 5-0.*

NRC Discussion: Caltrans I-80 Yolo Widening Draft Environmental Impact Report November 27, 2023

NRC Motion

At the regular meeting of the Natural Resources Commission on November 27, 2023, the following motion was approved unanimously (Johnston, Blough, 5-0):

“The NRC recommends that all comments from individual Commissioner review of the Caltrans I-80 Yolo Widening Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), as presented and discussed at the NRC meeting, be compiled and sent to Ryan Chapman, Assistant Director, Public Works Engineering and Transportation, and Mike Webb, City Manager. Further, the NRC requests that the comments in full should be provided to the Bicycling, Transportation and Street Safety Commission in advance of their December 14, 2023 meeting, and that they be appended in full to the BTSSC recommendations to City Council.”

NRC Comments

The following are the compiled NRC comments, both sent in advance of the NRC meeting, and also discussed by all Commissioners during the meeting. Commissioners’ review “assignments” in advance of the NRC meeting were as follows:

K Tuso : 2.2.2 Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff

J Byrne: 2.2.6 Air Quality, and 3.4.6 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategies

J Blough: 2.2.8 Noise

J Johnston -Transportation/Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Measures: 2.1.10 Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities; and 3.2.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions; and 3.4.4 Project Analysis

Comments from Keara Tuso: Stormwater (highlighting included as submitted)

- Under section 2.2.2.3, Environmental Consequences, sections discuss various building options and their impacts on stormwater
 - o No Build Alternative 1 would have no changes or impacts to stormwater
 - o Build Alternatives 2a and 2b
 - Caltrans will implement a SWPPP, in accordance with Standard Measure WQ-1, which would include construction site BMPs during construction activities to avoid and reduce potential water quality effects. The SWPPP would include BMPs to protect sensitive areas and to prevent and minimize stormwater and non-stormwater discharges. Standard Measure WQ-1 requires Caltrans to follow all applicable guidelines and requirements in the 2018 Caltrans Standard Specifications, Section 13, regarding water pollution control and general specifications for preventing, controlling, and abating water pollution to Caltrans-owned storm sewers, streams, waterways, and other bodies of water.

- Standard Measure WQ-4 requires preparation of a Stormwater Data Report during the design phase, which would describe whether permanent treatment BMPs should be incorporated. Operation of Build Alternatives 2a and 2b would have minimal effects on water quality.
- All other Build Alternatives would have the similar stormwater impacts as noted for Build Alternatives 2a and 2b
- Under section 2.4.5.8, Water Quality and Storm Water Runoff, it is anticipated that the Project in combination with the projects listed in Table 2.4-1 would contribute to temporary adverse cumulative impacts on water quality. However, each project that disturbs one or more acres would comply with NPDES and install BMPs during construction to minimize potential adverse impacts on water resources.
- CEQA section:
 - All Build Alternatives would result in an increase of impervious surfaces, as described in Section 2.2.2, Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff. In accordance with the Caltrans MS4 permit, Standard Measure WQ-1 incorporates post-construction water quality treatment BMPs and low impact development controls to reduce non-point source pollutants as needed. Additionally, Standard Measure WQ-4 has been incorporated into the project and requires the preparation of a Stormwater Data Report (SWDR) during the design phase to describe whether permanent treatment BMPs will be considered. Temporary construction impacts related to water quality would be less than significant for Build Alternatives 2a and 2b through 7a and 7b.

Overall comment from Keara: Stormwater impacts are less than significant and would not require additional comment from the NRC.

Comments from Jacob Byrne: Air Quality and GHG

- Construction emissions would exceed Yolo and Sacramento air quality standards, but neither district has jurisdiction over Caltrans; a construction project in a local jurisdiction would otherwise be required to reduce emissions through mitigation
- Alternatives do result in changes to operational emissions, generally the managed lane direct connector appears to increase emissions, but this may not be true in every case
- The no build scenario results in increased emissions; this relates to assumed continued growth in congestion
- Vehicle emissions reductions will reduce emissions overtime in opposition to the increase in VMT
- page 3-61 states "Furthermore, the model does not account for induced travel." Does this statement mean the induced VMT from the project is not considered in the GHG emissions analysis? If the induced VMT is not being considered, in the GHG analysis, what VMT is used as the basis of this analysis? Is induced VMT

also omitted from the air quality analysis? On page 2-116 it is noted that 'Caltrans determined that induced travel demand, which is synonymous with induced VMT, represents the metric most appropriate for determining a transportation project's impact.' This seems to create a contradiction with the approach taken in the GHG analysis if this induced VMT is not considered. This would similarly be true for the air quality analysis if induced VMT is not used to calculate emissions. In both cases exclusion of induced VMT would lead to lower estimated emissions from build alternatives.

Clerical: Project T-8 in Table 1.3-3 refers to 'Olive Hill Lane' and 'Olive Hill Road' instead of 'Olive Drive'.

Comments from Jordan Blough: Noise

As expected, the noise chapters in the EIR are not particularly groundbreaking. The analysis seems adequate, and the potential issues with this project are not related to noise. No major comments from me.

Comments from John Johnston: VMT, GHG, and Energy

General

Project Description and Setting:

The relationship between this project and its role in the I-80 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan needs to be described. The goals are to assure the public that this project is consistent with the recommendations in the CMCP, that it is a necessary part of the CMCP, and that the mitigation measures and strategies proposed in the CMCP are adequately considered in the design of this project.

Environmentally Superior Alternative:

CEQA requires that the environmentally superior alternative be identified, and if it is not the preferred alternative, justifications should be included for why the preferred alternative is chosen over the environmentally superior one. These considerations do not appear to be in the subject DEIR.

VMT and GHG Comments

Explanatory information for Commissions (next 2 paragraphs).

Completing the Project will cause a 0-12% increase in VMT by induced traffic. Alternative 6 (transit only) is not projected to induce any new traffic; Alternative 7 (conversion of existing lanes) induces about 1%, and all the other alternatives induce about 12% more VMT. For these alternatives, the induced VMT is about 180 million miles/yr total and 128 million mi/yr autos only over existing traffic. That the DEIR would

classify this as a *Less-than-significant impact with mitigation* (Sec 3.2.8) probably doesn't ring true to most casual readers and requires some explanation. While VMT does increase over time, three factors mitigate the GHG effect. One is a VMT reduction program (AMM TRANS-1, Section 2.1.10.8). This is the "mitigation" referred to above (more comments on this below). The second factor is more efficient driving resulting from Project. The third, and most important, is the changing nature of the vehicle fleet toward more electric vehicles. The claim is that GHG emissions are expected to decrease slightly as a result of these changes (Table 3.4-2). Depending on the alternative, changes in GHG emissions compared with the No Build alternative range from -13 to +11% in 2029. The corresponding numbers in 2049 are -16 to -2% (all negative because the fleet has more completely transformed over time).

What follows are comments on the DEIR regarding VMT and GHG.

1. Underestimation of GHG estimates.

In Section 3.4.4.2, it is stated that the AQ model does not account for induced travel. Consequently, the GHG estimates in Table 3.4-2 may be underestimated by an unknown but not negligible amount. Most alternatives result in about 12% greater VMT, which is similar to or greater than percentage reductions in GHG. Consequently, including the induced traffic in the GHG calculation may change the project from one of reducing GHG to one that increases GHG. The GHG emissions should be recalculated to reflect all VMT.

2. Significance of GHG emissions.

The DEIR argues that there is no applicable threshold of significance for GHGs, and that Caltrans is not violating any policies (Sec 3.4.4). Why the numerous state laws and executive orders (some of which are described in Sec 3.4.1.2) don't constitute "policy" needs to be justified. Even if they are not state policy according to a technical definition of such, these executive orders, etc. clearly express the intent of the state government over multiple administrations and legislatures (e.g., AB1279). The project's very modest decreases in GHG in 2029 and 2049 contrast sharply with state goals of a 40% reduction (below 1990 levels) by 2030 and 85% reduction by 2050 (2022 Scoping Plan, ARB). The significant inconsistency between the project impacts and state goals should be highlighted for decision-makers and the public. Decision-makers should be properly informed that this particular project will not advance the state toward its stated climate goals.

In a similar vein, the DEIR (p 3-64) describes, a Governor's Office of Planning and Research (2015 report) that identified a 50% reduction in petroleum use in cars and trucks by 2030 as a "key state goal" for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Depending on the alternative, gasoline use by vehicles ranges from -13 to +11% in 2029 and -21 to +0.4% in 2049. Here again, the inconsistency between the project impacts and the state goals should be highlighted, even if they are not legally binding.

Issues with the VMT reduction package

1. Trip reduction plan methodology and double counting.

As noted in the VMT mitigation memo, a subsidizing transit passes and/or eliminating fares may be part of a voluntary trip reduction plan. If so, then the VMT reductions due to these three actions are being double-counted. The methodology for estimating the VMT reduction due to a voluntary trip reduction plan needs to be described. If it is not well enough defined at this point to know whether transit fare changes are included, one wonders how a five significant figure estimate of VMT reductions can be calculated or relied on. These three measures should be examined more closely and the VMT reductions revised accordingly, especially if they overlap.

2. Expansion of Yolobus Route 42.

The cost estimate associated with this measure should be reexamined. This measure was rejected because of costs, which were estimated to be \$16M/yr. In contrast, the expansion of the Causeway Connection was estimated to cost less than \$1M/yr. It is not apparent why expanding the routes of two 42 bus routes should cost 16 times more than the Causeway Connection. Is there a calculation error? If it turns out that the numbers are correct, consider expanding other bus routes (e.g. 43, 43R, 230) instead of discarding the measure completely.

3. Promote regional transit service.

Commuters travel I-80 from Dixon to Davis and to Sacramento. Although there is SolanoExpress bus service between Dixon and Davis, consider expanding this service on the blue line to Sacramento and improving frequencies, especially between Dixon and Davis. UCD has data on where its employees live and the potential ridership. Adding a Capitol Corridor train stop in Dixon would be another way to provide this service. The Yolobus 42 routes cover long distances. Shorter, more frequent routes (particularly during commuter times) between Woodland and Davis should also be considered. While this would not change the VMT on I-80, it could mitigate some of the I-80 GHG emissions. All of these ideas are consistent with Davis CAAP climate measures TR6 (expand public transit) and TR7 (strengthen regional transit).

4. Nishi overpass accounting.

In the VMT mitigation plan, Caltrans proposes to contribute \$5M to the Nishi overpass and in return, takes credit for 14M VMT reduction due to the Nishi project (\$0.34/VMT). However, Caltrans does not have control over this project. The Caltrans contribution is only 2.5% of the total project cost (250K per unit x 700 units + 18M for the overpass). That contribution is not very large, and its presence will not guarantee that the project

will be constructed. Accordingly, Caltrans should not claim VMT reduction credit for it. There are other measures that would definitely result in VMT reductions were they to receive the same monetary contribution. Alternatively, Caltrans could propose a substitute measure of equivalent size that would be funded if the Nishi project is not executed within a certain timeframe.

5. Parking price increases.

The proposed measure to increase parking costs was rejected because there were no plans at hand. The VMT reduction estimate from this measure is immense (multiple times larger than other measures proposed). Because of this potential, its feasibility should be reconsidered, even if only a part of the original scope is achieved.

6. Criteria for deciding whether the VMT reduction package is adequate.

The proposed VMT reduction package covers only 43% of the induced automobile VMT. It is not explained why the total induced VMT is the basis for comparison. In addition, there is no information in the DEIR to put this into a regulatory context and the criteria for deciding that 43% is good enough is not described. It is stated in the document that the available mitigation funds total roughly 14-15% of the project's capital costs. If cost the limiting factor, or if there are limits on the kinds of projects that can be included in a VMT mitigation package, the regulatory and/or statutory authorities should be clearly stated. If not, the justification for providing only 43% VMT mitigation as opposed to a higher value should be provided.

Miscellaneous Davis Issues

1. Consistency with local plans (Table 2.1-1).

The 2023 Davis CAAP was not included in the analysis of consistency with local plans. The 2007 General Plan was considered, but the CAAP is the latest and current thinking on GHG issues. The CAAP has 3 climate actions relevant to the project – expand public transit (TR6), Transportation Demand Management (TR9) and strengthen regional transit (TR7). Add the CAAP to Table 2.1-1 and elsewhere consistency with local plans is discussed.

2. Davis cut-through traffic impacts.

Davis “cut-through” traffic (i.e., drivers seeking to avoid congestion by cutting through town) was not addressed. This is a significant problem which the project may or may not alleviate. It turns out that because of induced traffic, the project will improve but not eliminate congestion. Traffic conditions after the project is built are discussed in Section 2.1.10.7. The environmental effects of this side flow and how it might improve or get worse should be included in the EIR.



November 21, 2023




Gurtej Bhattal
Project Manager
Caltrans, District 3
703 B Street
Marysville, CA 95901

Subject: Request to extend the comment period for the Yolo 80 Corridor Improvements Project draft EIR

Dear Mr. Bhattal;

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the Draft EIR for the I-80 Corridor Improvements Project. The City of Davis respectfully requests that the comment period for the Yolo 80 Corridor Improvements Project draft EIR be extended to at least January 10, 2024. The request is being made for two key reasons, as articulated below:

- 1) As of the date of this letter Caltrans has not posted the Technical Studies listed in Appendix H to the DEIR. While Caltrans staff has provided City staff with the requested materials, the City feels that it is crucial for full disclosure and transparency that all of the Technical Studies that are used or referenced in the draft EIR be available to the public in the same manner that the draft EIR is, both on the project website and as hard copies where the draft EIR have been made available to the public. As of today it has also come to our attention that old documents (prior drafts) have been posted to the Caltrans project web page, which required changes to correct the documents. Transparency and accuracy of the posted information is especially important for the traffic studies given the interest from the City and from members of the public to review and understand the methodologies used in the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) CEQA analysis. Posting the Technical Studies by no later than November 25, 2023 AND providing a review period extension to at least January 10, 2024 will ensure that the Draft EIR AND the Technical Studies have been available for a full minimum 45-day review period. A modest five-day extension can remedy this concern.
- 2) An extension of the comment period to January 10, 2024 will allow for the City Council to review and approve the City of Davis DEIR comment letter at the regularly scheduled January 9th City Council meeting. Should the Caltrans comment period not be extended past the current January 5, 2024 deadline, the City Council will need to schedule a

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23 Russell Boulevard, Davis, CA 95616

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special meeting the week of January 1st to review and approve the City comment letter. To do so will necessitate posting of the City Council meeting agenda and report during the holiday closure. The review schedule necessitated by the current Caltrans comment deadline is not ideal in terms of public transparency and access, especially in the midst of holidays. Again, a modest five-day extension to January 10, 2024 can remedy this concern.

We understand that the overall project schedule is important to Caltrans and is likely the impetus for the current January 5th comment deadline. However, the positive gesture to extend the comment period to January 10th we believe is very reasonable and in the best interest of public transparency of process, and document accessibility. Thank you for your consideration of this and please feel free to reach out to me or to Ryan Chapman on our team if you have any questions. I can be reached at mwebb@cityofdavis.org and Ryan can be reached at rchapman@cityofdavis.org

Sincerely,



Mike Webb
City Manager

cc: Tony Tovares, DOT Director
Masum A Patwary, Environmental Coordinator
Dennis Keaton, Public Information Officer
Davis City Council
Ryan Chapman, Assistant Director, Public Works Engineering & Transportation

California Department of Transportation

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December 22, 2023

Mr. Mike Webb
City Manager
City of Davis
23 Russell Boulevard
Davis, CA 95616

Dear Mr. Webb:

This letter is to inform you that Caltrans will extend the comment period for the Yolo 80 Corridor Improvements Project Draft EIR. The comment period was scheduled to close on January 5, 2024, but will now close one week later on January 12, 2024. We hope this provides the City sufficient time to review the Draft EIR and provide comments.

Please let myself or the Project Manager, Gurtej Bhattal (530-720-6153 or gurtej.bhattal@dot.ca.gov), know if there are any further questions or considerations which Caltrans can address. Thank you for your time and we look forward to receiving the City's feedback on the Draft EIR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Greg Wong'.

for AMARJEET S. BENIPAL
Director

c: Davis City Council
Ryan Chapman, Assistant Director, Public Works Engineering and Transportation
Suzy Melim, Caltrans District 3 Deputy Director of Environmental
Greg Wong, Caltrans District 3 Deputy Director of Program and Project Management
Gurtej Bhattal, Caltrans District 3 Project Manager
Masum A Patwary, Caltrans District 3 Environmental Coordinator