

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 4

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Governor's Office of Planning &amp; Research

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Rich Stabler, Senior Environmental Specialist  
Permit Sonoma Natural Resources Section  
2550 Ventura Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA 94503

**Estero Trail Easement: Designation of Trail Corridors and Associated Staging Areas and Construction and Operation of Recreational Amenities Project- Draft Environmental Document (DEIR)**

Dear Rich Stabler:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Estero Trail Easement: Designation of Trail Corridors and Associated Staging Areas and Construction and Operation of Recreational Amenities Project. We are committed to ensuring that impacts to the State's multimodal transportation system and to our natural environment are identified and mitigated to support a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system. The following comments are based on our review of the December 2019 DEIR.

***Project Understanding***

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District is proposing to designate and survey trail corridors and associated staging areas as contemplated by the Trail Easement and consistent with the Conservation Easement. Under the terms of the Trail Easement, the District identified two 50-foot wide trail corridors to be evaluated in the EIR (approximately 30.3 acres) and two staging areas, not to exceed 1.5 acres for a total combined area of approximately 31.8 acres of project area, with approximately 4.8 acres of actual potential disturbance associated with construction of two five-foot wide trails within the designated trail corridors. Improvements to the access road are also evaluated as part of the project. The Sonoma County will identify the precise locations of the two 5-foot-wide pedestrian-only trails within the 50-foot wide corridors, cumulatively not to exceed 5 miles in length once the project is

approved and the EIR certified. Presently, access to the Estero Americano (Estero) is available via Valley Ford Estero Road, off State Route (SR)-1 for kayakers and other boaters within Sonoma County. The project site is bounded by SR-1 to the north.

### ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Considerations***

The first paragraph of page 3.13-3, *Alternative Modes: Pedestrian, Bicycle and Transit Facilities* section, should be replaced with the following:

*“Pedestrians and bicyclists are both permitted on SR-1. Presently, there are no designated pedestrian or bicycle facilities along the project frontage; however, both modes are permitted on SR-1 and share the road with motor vehicles. SR-1 is a scenic roadway and popular with recreational and touring bicyclists. Class II bike lanes are recommended for SR-1 as part of both the District 4 Bike Plan and the Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. There are no transit facilities in the area.”*

On page 3.13-4, *Traffic Volumes* section, the first paragraph states that “no bicycle counts were conducted”. However, bicycle counts should be included as they are needed to verify the impacts and potential conflict points.

On page 3.13-19, *Mitigation Measure 3.13-5*, please revise the following sentence to add the section in bold: “Currently there are no Class II bike lanes on SR-1 in the vicinity of the project site. However, Class II bike lanes are proposed for SR-1 based in the Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan **and in the Caltrans District 4 Bike Plan.**”

On page 3.13-20, *Mitigation Measure 3.13-5*, the document states:

*“Since the project use is a pedestrian trail which would not allow road bikes, bicycle access to the site is expected to be negligible.”*

While trail access is primarily for pedestrians, recreational and touring cyclists might use the trail facilities despite this restriction. Therefore, measures to accommodate cyclists should be considered, including providing bicycle parking for cyclists who wish to access the trails. Until SR -1 can be widened to accommodate Class II bike lanes, consideration should be given to adding roadway signs R-411 and R-117 (see California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices) on SR-1 near the access road as a potential mitigation measure.

### **Biology**

- If needed, please state whether there are self or agency-imposed consequences for failing to achieve the Rare Plant Salvage and Translocation Plan.
- Please state the reasoning for only including California Native Plant Society Rare Plant Ranks 1 and 2 in the biological analysis.
- On Figure 3.4-3 Wetlands and Waters of the U.S., Intermittent Drainage (ID-02) appears to be missing. Please include this in the subsequent environmental document.

### **Lead Agency**

As the Lead Agency, Sonoma County is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the State Transportation Network (STN). The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.

### **Encroachment Permit**

The document identifies a new entry drive from SR-1 would be constructed. Please be advised that any work or traffic control that encroaches onto the State Right-of-Way (ROW) requires an encroachment permit.

To obtain an encroachment permit, a completed encroachment permit application, environmental documentation, six (6) sets of plans clearly indicating the State ROW, and six (6) copies of signed, dated and stamped (include stamp expiration date) traffic control plans must be submitted to: Office of Encroachment Permits, California DOT, District 4, P.O. Box 23660, Oakland, CA 94623-0660. To download the permit application and obtain more information, visit <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep/applications>.

Rich Stabler, Senior Environmental Specialist  
January 24, 2020  
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Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Andrew Chan at 510-622-5433 or [andrew.chan@dot.ca.gov](mailto:andrew.chan@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Mark Leong  
District Branch Chief  
Local Development - Intergovernmental Review

c: State Clearinghouse