

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

February 20, 2020

FEB 20 2020

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation
Planning Division
Attn: Julie Yom, Park Planner
1000 S. Fremont Avenue Unit #40
A-9 West, Third Floor
Alhambra, CA 91803

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

RE: Descanso Gardens Master Plan – Mitigated
Negative Declaration (MND)
SCH# 2020019072
GTS# 07-LA-2020-03145
Vic. LA-210 / PM R19.189
Vic. LA-2 / PM R22.857

Dear Julie Yom:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the above referenced project. The proposed project is a 15-year Master Plan to guide the development of Descanso Gardens between 2020 and 2035. The Master Plan would act as a framework to guide new development and recommend improvements to existing gardens, seeking to provide implementable projects that would sustain operations. The Master Plan would include recommendations for improving the quality of Descanso Gardens, a County special use park facility, in the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Area.

The nearest state facilities to the proposed project are I-210 and SR-2. After reviewing the MND, Caltrans does not expect project approval to result in a direct adverse impact to the existing State transportation facilities. However, the initial study states that 184 additional parking spaces and 70 additional overflow spaces are to be constructed, which can induce demand for additional vehicle trips and increase Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT.) For this reason, Caltrans supports reducing the amount of parking whenever possible. Research on parking suggests that abundant car parking enables and encourages driving. Research looking at the relationship between land-use, parking, and transportation indicates that the amount of car parking supplied can undermine a project's ability to encourage public transit and active modes of transportation. For any project to better promote public transit and reduce VMT, we recommend the implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies as an alternative to building unnecessary parking.

Caltrans encourages the Lead Agency to actively promote alternative transportation options that allow users to access the project site without a privately-owned motor-powered vehicle. Such as:

- Adding sidewalks or protected walking areas along Descanso Dr.
- Striping the bike lanes along Descanso Dr. with high visibility green paint.

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- Adding curb extensions to the Descanso Dr. pedestrian crossing, located between the primary and guest parking lots, to improve safety and visibility for people walking.
- Constructing a bus stop with shelter near the proposed Entry Garden, then coordinating with local transit agencies to provide adequate transit service to the project site. Local transit agencies that operate in the area include: Glendale Beeline, Pasadena Transit, LADOT, and LA Metro.
- Upgrading to Class IV protected bikeways along Verdugo Blvd.

The Lead Agency should consider any reduction in vehicle speeds to benefit pedestrian and bicyclist safety, as there is a direct link between impact speeds and the likelihood of fatality or serious injury. The most effective methods to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to vehicles is through physical design and geometrics. These methods include the construction of physically separated facilities such as Class IV bike lanes, wide sidewalks, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, landscaping, street furniture, and reductions in crossing distances through roadway narrowing. Visual indicators such as, pedestrian and bicyclist warning signage, flashing beacons, crosswalks, signage, and striping should be used in addition to physical design improvements to indicate to motorists that they can expect to see and yield to pedestrians and people on bikes.

Additionally, an encroachment permit will be required for any project work proposed on or in the vicinity of the Caltrans Right of Way and any transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials which requires use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways will need a Caltrans transportation permit. We recommend large size truck trips be limited to off-peak commute periods.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov and refer to GTS# 07-LA-2020-03145.

Sincerely,



MIYA EDMONSON

IGR/CEQA Branch Chief

cc: Scott Morgan, State Clearinghouse