



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

February 7, 2013

TO: David W. Louie, Chair
Esther L. Valadez, Vice Chair
Harold V. Helsley, Commissioner
Curt Pedersen, Commissioner
Pat Modugno, Commissioner

FROM: Karen Lafferty, Regional Planner II *KL*
Ordinance Studies Section

**SUBJECT: PROJECT NO. R2012-02415-(1-5)
CASE NO. LURT201200003/ENV CASE NO. T201200251
AMENDMENT TO TITLE 22 (ZONING ORDINANCE) REGARDING
PROPOSED AMBULANCE SERVICES ORDINANCE**

Agenda of February 20, 2013 Agenda Item No. 7

BACKGROUND

The County of Los Angeles contracts with ambulance service providers to provide emergency medical services to the unincorporated areas of the County. These emergency providers are mandated to meet certain response times and, therefore, must strategically locate their facilities throughout the unincorporated area. However, current zoning restrictions do not provide enough adequate locations in all unincorporated communities to enable emergency providers to establish facilities that meet emergency response time requirements.

The Board of Supervisors recognized that to improve emergency response times for ambulance services in the unincorporated areas of the County, the Zoning Ordinance should be amended. Adequate locations need to be identified for emergency ambulance service providers so the health and safety needs of the various communities can be met, while minimizing any potential impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Therefore, on July 17, 2012 the Board made a motion that the Department of Regional Planning revise Title 22 (Zoning Ordinance) to:

1. Provide definitions of different types of emergency and non-emergency ambulance service facilities;

2. Permit appropriate types of emergency ambulance service facilities to be located in specified commercial and manufacturing zones subject to a ministerial process;
3. Provide appropriate permitting standards and processes applicable to non-emergency facilities in specified commercial and manufacturing zones; and
4. Direct the Regional Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing and forward its recommendation on the proposed ordinance revisions to the Board for its consideration.

CURRENT COUNTY REGULATIONS

The Zoning Ordinance lists “ambulance services” as a service use in several commercial and industrial zones, but does not provide a definition of the use. Ambulance services require a conditional use permit in zones Unlimited Commercial (C-3), Commercial Manufacturing (C-M), and Light Manufacturing (M-1). Ambulance services are permitted in zones Restricted Heavy Manufacturing (M-1½), Heavy Manufacturing (M-2), and Unclassified (M-3).

ISSUES

Division 2 of Title 7 of the County Code provides information on specific businesses that require business licenses. Title 7 includes Ambulances and Ambulettes. The proposed Title 22 amendment does not provide definitions of ambulance, ambulettes, or public agency but refers to the definitions within Title 7.

For reference, those definitions are as follows:

Ambulances (Chapter 7.16)

"Ambulance" means a motor vehicle specially constructed, modified, equipped, or arranged for the purpose of transporting sick, injured, convalescent, infirm, or otherwise incapacitated persons, authorized by the state as an emergency vehicle, and used, or having the potential for being used, in emergency or nonemergency medical service to the public, regardless of level of service. An ambulance includes a ground ambulance and EMS Aircraft.

Ambulettes (Chapter 7.17)

"Ambulette" means a motor vehicle specially constructed, modified, equipped, or arranged for the purpose of transporting sick, injured, invalid, convalescent, infirm, or otherwise incapacitated persons whose medical condition requires transportation services but does not require emergency services or equipment during transport.

Public Agency (7.02.280)

"Public agency" means the United States or any federal department or agency thereof, this state, any other state, or any state department or agency of either, a county, city and county, parish, city, public corporation or public district of this state or of any other state.

After researching ambulance facilities and consulting with the Department of Health Services, staff classified ambulance services into three categories: 1) ambulance emergency and nonemergency services – headquarters; 2) ambulance emergency services – satellite offices; and 3) ambulance nonemergency services – satellite offices.

Ambulance headquarters are usually a large facility, typically occupying 10,000 square feet or larger. Ambulances or ambulettes may be located and dispatched from a public agency or an authorized emergency transportation operator requesting nonemergency services or emergency backup services. Ambulances and ambulettes may be washed and maintained at these facilities. This is a 24-hour facility that may include sleeping facilities, locker room, restrooms with showers, and lunchroom.

Ambulance satellite offices are smaller facilities, varying in size from 1,000 to 5,000 square feet; they accommodate 1 – 3 ambulances, with two employees per ambulance. These are also 24-hour facilities that may include sleeping facilities, locker room, restrooms with showers, and lunchroom.

The difference between emergency and nonemergency satellite offices is that emergency satellite offices are operated by an *authorized emergency transportation operator*. The proposed amendment defines this term within the ordinance as follows:

Authorized Emergency Transportation Operator

A private ambulance company licensed by the County of Los Angeles that has been awarded a contract for providing emergency medical response in an exclusive operating area established by the Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency and as identified in the EMS Plan approved by the California EMS Authority.

All authorized emergency transportation operators must respond to 911 calls within a contracted response time. Ambulance services are currently not permitted in commercial zones where placement is often needed to meet required response times. Amendments to Title 22 will consider that adequate locations are identified for emergency ambulance service providers. Well located ambulance facilities will meet the health and safety needs of the communities, while minimizing any potential impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Expanding the definition of ambulance services to include “satellite offices” lessens the impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods. Satellite offices are smaller facilities that only have the ambulances and support facilities necessary to serve the adjacent neighborhoods. Adding development standards to the ordinance amendment allows approval by a ministerial process. This process improves the time required to obtain entitlements from the County.

SURVEY OF LOCAL COUNTIES

Local counties have similar provisions to the County’s provisions for which zones ambulance services are permitted or conditionally permitted. However, the counties of Kern, San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange permit ambulance services in some

commercial zones. San Bernardino County is the only County that provides a definition, and classifies ambulances along with Taxis and Limousine dispatch facilities.

County	Permit Requirement	Zone
Los Angeles	Conditional Use Permit	C-3 (Unlimited Commercial), C-M (Commercial Manufacturing), M-1 (Light Manufacturing)
	Permitted	M-1½ (Restricted Heavy Manufacturing), M-2 (Heavy Manufacturing), M-3 (Unclassified)
Kern	Conditional Use Permit	E (Estate District), R-1 (Low Density Residential), R-2 (Medium Density Residential), R-3 (High Density Residential), CO (Commercial Office), C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial), PL (Platted Land)
	Permitted	C-2 (General Commercial), C-H (Highway Commercial), M-1 (Light Industrial), M-2 (Medium Industrial), M-3 (Heavy Industrial)
San Bernardino	Minor Use Permit	IC (Community Industrial), IR (Regional Industrial), IN (Institutional), SD (Special Development)
	Permitted (Conditional Use Permit required if maximum building coverage exceeds 10,000 sq. ft., the use will have more than 20 employees per shift, or if not exempt from CEQA.)	CS (Service Commercial), CH (Highway Commercial)
Ventura	Conditional Use Permit	CO (Commercial Office)
	Planning Development Permit	CPD (Commercial Planned Development), M1 (Industrial Park)
Riverside	Conditional Use Permit	R-3A (Village Tourist Residential)
	Permitted	C-1/C-P (General Commercial), C-P-S (Scenic Highway Commercial)
Orange (Ambulance services are regulated by Fire Department; any submittal to Planning would be processed as a CUP)	Conditional Use Permit	C-2 (General Business)

PROPOSED DRAFT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

The proposed amendment to Title 22 contains definitions of ambulance services – headquarters, and emergency and nonemergency satellite offices, and provides zones where the uses are permitted or conditionally permitted. Where Title 22 currently allows

“ambulance services” either permitted or conditionally permitted will now apply to Ambulance Emergency or Nonemergency Services – Headquarters. The uses will be allowed in the zones as follows:

Use	C-H	C-1	C-2	C-3	C-M	M-1	M-1.5	M-2	M-3
Headquarters	N/A	N/A	N/A	CUP	CUP	CUP	P	P	P
Emergency Services	CUP	CUP	P ¹	P ¹	P ¹	P ¹	P	P	P
Nonemergency Services	N/A	N/A	N/A	CUP	CUP	CUP	P	P	P

(chart footnote)

1. Ministerial review of project. The following are development standards for approval of every ambulance service facility, unless specifically modified by a conditional use permit:
 - A. The authorized emergency transportation operator must provide certification by a public agency to provide 911 response services;
 - B. No more than two ambulances may be located on-site at any one time;
 - C. A designated parking space shall be provided for each ambulance located on-site; and
 - D. A site plan approved by the Director is required. Along with the application materials required for a site plan, pursuant to Section 22.56.1680 (Application for review – information and documents required), a copy of the certification with a public agency is required.

In developing the ordinance, staff considered how adding this use to the C and M zones would affect other portions of Title 22. Part 18 of Chapter 22.52 (Mixed Use Development) allows mixed residential and commercial uses within the same building in Zones C-H, C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-M. An ambulance service provider in the same structure as residences would not be appropriate; ambulance services are 24-hour facilities, the adjacent residents could hear noise from activity in the facility and the ambulances leaving from the parking lot. Therefore, all types of ambulance services are added to the commercial uses not permitted in a mixed use development (Section 22.52.1920.A).

Ambulance services emergency or nonemergency satellite offices are rarely located in stand-alone buildings, but are located within existing commercial or industrial buildings or plazas. However, ambulance emergency and nonemergency services – headquarters, are usually in standalone buildings. Ambulance service facilities are similar to fire stations as fire stations are 24-hour facilities where service vehicles are located on-site, and the facilities include eating and sleeping facilities. For reference, fire stations are permitted by-right in Zones C-1, C-2, C-3, C-H, C-M and in all manufacturing zones, therefore it is appropriate to locate ambulance service facilities in these zones.

The regulations within the proposed Ordinance expand and refine the existing regulations for ambulance services that are within the Zoning Ordinance. The specific regulations within the proposed Ordinance will supersede the general provisions related to ambulance services within the existing amendment.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

An Initial Study was prepared for the draft ordinance in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Initial Study showed that there is no substantial evidence that the amendments will have a significant effect on the environment. Based on the Initial Study, the Department of Regional Planning has prepared a Negative Declaration for this project. No comments have been received regarding the Initial Study at the time of this report.

LEGAL NOTIFICATION

A 1/8 page legal advertisement was published in five newspaper of general circulation, the Los Angeles Times, on January 19, 2013. Case related materials were sent on 1/17/2013 to at least one County Library in each Supervisorial District, as follows: 1st District: East Los Angeles Library; 2nd District: A.C. Bilbrew Library; 3rd District: Topanga Library; 4th District: Hacienda Heights Library; 5th District: La Crescenta Library and Lancaster Regional Library. Staff posted case information on the Department of Regional Planning's web site (http://planning.lacounty.gov/view/ambulance_services_ordinance/) on 1/17/2013.

OUTREACH

Staff worked with the Department of Health Services, Emergency Medical Services Agency in developing the proposed Ordinance. Staff also worked with ambulance drivers associated with the Los Angeles County Ambulance Association.

Staff received comments from the County Departments of Public Health, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works; they have reviewed the draft ordinance and have no comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Staff has not received any comments regarding this proposal at the time of this report.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Regional Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution and forward Project No. R2012-02415-(1-5) to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in a public hearing.

SUGGESTED MOTION

“I move that the Regional Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution and forward Project No. R2012-02415-(1-5) to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in a public hearing.”

Attachments:

Draft Ambulance Services Ordinance
Draft Resolution
Initial Study
Hearing Notice