

INTERDEPARTMENTAL ENGINEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

*County of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works
Department of Regional Planning*

MEETING

Place: Room 150
Hall of Records
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Date: September 23, 2010
2:00 PM

DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT

Steve Burger, Department of Public Works
Andy Narag, Department of Public Works
Susan Tae, Department of Regional Planning

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Alex Baharlo, KFG Investments
Becky Bennett, Community Resident
Linda Haring, Community Resident
Roger Haring, Community Resident
Patricia Howell, Community Resident
David Koontz, City of Santa Clarita
Diana Larios, Community Resident
Karl Mallick, CCL Engineering
Jeff Preach, Castaic Area Town Council
John Radich, Community Resident

DISCUSSION

1. Project No. R2007-01226-(5) (M. Glaser)
Plan Amendment No. 200900006
Zone Change No. 200900009
Environmental Assessment No. 200900080
Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan Update (One Valley One Vision)
Discussion of public comments regarding changes to the Master Plan of Highways that are proposed for adoption with the Area Plan Update
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The meeting began with a general discussion of Interdepartmental Engineering Committee (“IEC”) meeting procedures, and its role in making recommendations to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and Regional Planning Commission. For those who wished to comment on any of the

agendized items, speaker cards were available.

Staff made with a general presentation on the overall One Valley One Vision (“OVOV”) project history, including the need for IEC recommendations to be presented at the continued Regional Planning Commission hearing that is scheduled for December 8, 2010, before continuing with each item for consideration:

- a. The Area Plan Update includes a change to the Master Plan of Highways that would reclassify Vasquez Canyon Road (between Bouquet Canyon Road and Sierra Highway) from a Major Highway to a Limited Secondary Highway. The public comment requests that the Major Highway designation be retained.

Staff discussed that the Limited Secondary Highway designation is being recommended because of average daily trips and low-density proposed for this area. Three (3) people spoke on this item, and expressed concerns and comments, including that Vasquez Canyon Road is a heavily traveled road, continuous maintenance is required, subdivisions are proposed in the area, and people drive fast in the area, and the road is served as a commuter route. Additional comments included that development is proposed in the area, two lanes are part of a Limited Secondary Highway while four lanes would be appropriate with the development, and that not having enough lanes would alter traffic patterns south.

IEC clarified with those who commented regarding where they lived, and that the Limited Secondary Highway is constructed with two lanes with sufficient right-of-way (“ROW”) for four lanes in the future if needed. IEC also discussed traffic thresholds for when four lanes would be required, and that the Limited Secondary Highway represents the best of both worlds regarding costs and environmental issues as it allows for construction of four lanes if needed. Additional turn lanes can also be included as needed at intersections. IEC also discussed that additional lanes may encourage speeding, and any access for more than one home would require a turn lane. IEC concluded that since the Limited Secondary Highway designation still allows for four lanes and the ROW will be graded as part of development, the Limited Secondary Highway designation is most appropriate.

ACTION: IEC recommends that Vasquez Canyon Road (between Bouquet Canyon Road and Sierra Highway) be reclassified from a Major Highway to a Limited Secondary Highway.

- b. The Area Plan Update includes a change to the Master Plan of Highways that would remove the designation of Sloan Canyon Road (north of Hillcrest Parkway) as a Limited Secondary Highway. The public comment requests that the Limited Secondary Highway designation be retained.

Staff discussed its recommendation that the Limited Secondary Highway designation be removed.

Five (5) people spoke on this item, and expressed concerns and comments, including that the road was 80 feet and the Castaic Area Town Council (“Town Council”) recommended a smaller road, but in order to use Bridge and Thoroughfare (“B&T”) fees for its construction a highway designation is necessary. Other comments included that the area should remain rural and the community wants the highway designation to be removed; and that through subdivision, improvements are required and B&T fees could be applied to its construction.

IEC clarified with those who commented that highways are a very urban type of design, and clarified details regarding where specific portions or areas may be affected. IEC also clarified that the level of improvements is dependent on traffic needs. IEC concluded that there were many differing opinions and from an engineering standpoint, there is not enough traffic to warrant a highway designation, it would be difficult to construct, and without connectivity it would become a “dead end” highway. IEC further concluded that because of the inequity of not accessing B&T fees, IEC should continue this item to allow for more community outreach to the Town Council. There was nothing in this process that prevents a separate effort from OVOV to evaluate proposals for Sloan Canyon Road.

ACTION: IEC recommends that this item be continued off calendar. New notification would be required for the next IEC meeting regarding this item.

- c. The Area Plan Update includes a change to the Master Plan of Highways that would reclassify San Francisquito Canyon Road (north of Copper Hill Drive) as a Secondary Highway to a Limited Secondary Highway. The Highway would connect to McBean Parkway to San Francisquito Canyon Road. The public comment requests that the Highway designation be removed.

Staff discussed its recommendation that the Highway designation be reclassified, and the Highway connect to McBean Parkway. No one spoke on this item.

IEC discussed that, while concerns with increased traffic are understandable, this segment is a classic example of a Limited Secondary Highway, which is a rural highway. IEC also requested clarification from staff regarding the location of the Significant Ecological Area (“SEA”). IEC concluded that a Limited Secondary Highway is appropriate given the topography of the surrounding area. Any future subdivisions would require an SEA Conditional Use Permit which would ensure that each project, including construction of San Francisquito Canyon Road, is designed sensitive to the SEA.

ACTION: IEC recommends that San Francisquito Canyon Road (north of Copper Hill Road) be reclassified from a Secondary Highway to a Limited Secondary Highway, and aligned to connect to McBean Parkway.

- d. The Area Plan Update does not include a change to the Master Plan of Highways that would designate a Highway between the communities of Castaic and Tesoro del Valle. The public comment requests that a Highway be designated between the two communities.

Staff discussed the public comment requests that a Highway be designated between Castaic and Tesoro del Valle. Two (2) people spoke on this item, and expressed comments that when the Interstate 5 Freeway and The Old Road become congested and/or closed, the only community alternative is to travel north towards Bakersfield. A letter from the City of Santa Clarita (“City”) indicates their support for this. Additional comments include that those opposed to this highway are Tesoro residents, and that emergency access is necessary. The City also spoke indicating its support for connectivity, but as a collector road rather than a highway designation for this connection.

IEC discussed that congestion may severely limit travel, but questioned whether the cost of the connection would justify construction of a highway. Separate study should be pursued for funding, design, and budget for this connection; connectivity would be easier to achieve without a highway designation. Some ROW could be preserved within reasonable limits, and efforts should continue to explore this option separate from the OVOV process. IEC concluded connectivity is worth further evaluation, but through separate review and a highway should not be designated through OVOV. Collector roads could be appropriate and feasible. Staff will also be developing policy language to support connectivity between the Castaic and Tesoro communities.

ACTION: IEC recommends that a highway not be designated between the communities of Castaic and Tesoro del Valle. IEC recommends staff develop policy language to encourage connectivity, and for a separate effort to further evaluate feasibility.

For further information, contact Mitch Glaser, Department of Regional Planning at (213) 974-6476 between 7:30 AM and 5:30 PM, Monday through Thursday.

SMT:st