

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

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Eugenia Chusid
City of Santa Monica
Civil Engineering and Architecture Division
1437 4th Street, Suite 300
Santa Monica, CA 90401

**COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE
CALIFORNIA INCLINE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
(State Clearinghouse No. 2006041147)**

Dear Ms. Chusid,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed California Incline Bridge Replacement project. The project proposes to upgrade and reconstruct the California Incline between Pacific Coast Highway and Ocean Avenue within the City of Santa Monica to meet current seismic safety standards and to improve the substructure of the facility. The City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) has reviewed the DEIR for the proposed improvement project and offers the following comments:

1. The construction duration is expected to be 10 months. Since the project involves a complete demolition of the existing structure, excavation, grading and reconstruction of the new superstructure, this construction duration seems highly aggressive and optimistic. The construction hours proposed are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Special consideration should be given to allowing nighttime work to fast-track the construction.
2. The DEIR states that the California Incline will be closed to traffic during the entire duration of the construction. While it is structurally infeasible to maintain a portion of the California Incline open to traffic during demolition, the City of Santa Monica should consider, if possible, allowing traffic during peak travel periods along any completed portions of the facility. Perhaps the construction can be phased such that half of the roadway can be built first and peak hour traffic allowed on the newly constructed roadway while the other half is constructed. This is similar to the approach taken by Caltrans along Lincoln Boulevard (SR1) south of Jefferson Boulevard. In this case, the west side of the roadway was constructed first and traffic is currently allowed to drive along this segment while the middle and east side of the roadway is under construction.

3. The Draft EIR does not include a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) that sets the detours during the construction of the project. LADOT staff should be included in the design and preparation of the TMP. The TMP should be designed, either through signage or temporary roadway striping, to discourage the use of Channel Road and Entrada Drive as bypass routes during the closure of the California Incline. The TMP should ensure that there are adequate and clear trailblazing signs leading to and on the detour routes, ensure that possible and needed improvements (e.g., turn signals, turn lanes, etc.) to facilitate the additional traffic are implemented on the detour streets, ensure that possible and needed neighborhood traffic mitigations are implemented on non-detour neighborhood streets.
4. The traffic report in the appendix of the DEIR does not mention the potential impacts related to weekend traffic. The analysis estimates how much traffic will be diverted to the other routes only during weekday peak hours. A similar analysis of Summer weekend traffic should also be included to see if the traffic volumes diverted to the other access points may actually be higher than during weekday hours.
5. The traffic report includes an operational analysis at 25 key intersections affected by the proposed project. The existing conditions analysis in the report is based on 2002 traffic counts from the City of Santa Monica's database of traffic count data. Since these traffic counts may be outdated, new traffic counts should be taken at the study locations to determine if the 2002 data set is still reflective of current conditions.
6. The traffic report indicates that the intersection of Pacific Coast Highway at Chautauqua Drive/Channel Road is currently operating at unsatisfactory service levels during peak travel periods. During peak commute hours, motorists traveling through this intersection experience substantial delays and queuing. With the addition of diverted traffic resulting from the closure of the California Incline, these conditions are expected to worsen.

To address this potential significant impact, the DEIR proposes that, in lieu of traffic calming measures and signal timing adjustments, clearly marked detour signage be placed along Pacific Coast Highway to encourage motorists to use other available detour routes like Ocean Avenue ramps via Moomat Ahiko Way, and the I-10 Freeway via Lincoln Boulevard. While this sort of detour signage is certainly recommended by LADOT, it is not likely to dissuade motorists familiar with the area to avoid the Channel Road/Entrada Drive route. Therefore, traffic calming measures and signal timing adjustments should also be evaluated that can reduce the impact of diverted traffic on residential streets.

Clearly, as explained in the DEIR, the California Incline is currently structurally deficient and in need of repair. As with most roadway construction efforts, traffic impacts during the construction period are unavoidable. However, to minimize the amount of disruption resulting from diverted traffic, please work with LADOT on the design and implementation of a TMP that can effectively discourage cut-through traffic through residential streets. LADOT staff would gladly meet with the City of Santa Monica to discuss these comments and to assist in the evaluation of traffic calming and traffic signal timing solutions. If you have any questions, please call me at 310-642-1624.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tomas Carranza", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Tomas Carranza
Transportation Engineer

c: Norman Kulla, CD 11
Jay Kim, LADOT Planning
Pauline Chan, LADOT Western District
Ken Husting, LADOT Capital Programs