June 15, 2017

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND PERSONAL DELIVERY**

Craig Chalfant, Senior Planner

City of Long Beach

Development Services/Planning Bureau

333 West Ocean Boulevard, 5th Floor

Long Beach, CA 90802

craig.chalfant@longbeach.gov

**Re: Long Beach General Plan Land Use Element and Urban Design Element Project**

Dear Mr. Chalfant:

Dear City of Long Beach Development Services/Planning Bureau,

I am writing on behalf of Long Beach Transportation and Parking Solutions in regard to the Final EIR General Plan Land Use Element and Urban Design Elements (SCH NO. 2015051054). We previously submitted a letter on the same topic on November 18, 2016, and have reviewed the City of Long Beach’s (the “City’s”) response contained in the FEIR.

**A Parking Analysis is Required.**

The FEIR’s response to our comment seems to have misunderstood California law regarding the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”). While a parking shortage is not itself an environmental impact under CEQA, a project’s overall effects on parking conditions must be considered if they may have a potential impact on the environment. *See* *Taxpayers for Accountable School Bond Spending, v. San Diego Unified School District*, 215 Cal.App.4th 1013, 1052 (“. . . a project’s impact on parking generally should be studied for any potential impact on the environment. . . .”).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Under the Land Use Element as proposed, parking will become scarcer due to increased growth and stagnant or decreasing parking requirements. With parking scarcity, cars are likely to idle at curbs and circle more, creating more pollutant emissions and increased traffic.

Parking scarcity will impact different streets differently. Some streets may become slow as people crawl along them searching for parking, and some streets may become quicker as their parking spaces are removed completely. Some streets will become heavily trafficked by cars seeking to park adjacent to areas with too little parking. Generally, the flow of traffic and all associated environmental impacts are affected by the relative scarcity of parking. To not analyze the effects on parking on the volume and vectors of trip locations is to ignore major potential environmental impacts of the General Plan Amendment (the “Project”).

Indeed, as explained by *Taxpayers*, whether a physical impact (such as many more cars being parked in a neighborhood) of a project causes “adverse economic or social effects on people,” (such as an increase in the cost of parking, a decrease in car ownership, or an increase in the daily stress levels of residents) is relevant to whether that impact is considered “significant” under CEQA. *Id*. at 1036 (citing CEQA Guidelines section 15382). The LUE changes the relative supply of and demand for parking in the City of Long Beach, and the environmental impacts of those changes must be considered under CEQA. If the change in parking availability has significant environmental impacts, they must be mitigated to the extent feasible. The potential environmental impacts of the Project’s effects on parking availability have not been analyzed at all.

**A Lack of Parking Would Especially Harm Disabled Residents and Visitors.**

The lack of an analysis to parking impacts is especially concerning since a decrease in parking availability has an especially strong impact on disabled residents and visitors.

Many disabled people have physical or psychological needs that are not met by public transit. For people with anxiety or depression, the stress and social nature of using public transit can pose an insurmountable emotional obstacle at times. People with chronic fatigue or chronic pain may not have the ability to walk far enough or stand long enough to take public transit or park in remote locations. Many people rely on medical equipment that is difficult to transport via public transit. People with invisible illnesses often do not wish to face potential skepticism of their use of disabled facilities in public transit, and avoid public transit altogether. People who struggle with walking will not be able to walk several blocks from their car to their destination, and will be less able to access the City’s amazing restaurants, aquarium, museums, and beachfront.

Good parking is not just a luxury for folks who can afford a house with a garage, but a necessity for anyone who depends on their car for mobility. Disabled people systematically face decreased employment opportunities and earnings and are less likely to be able to afford the exorbitant parking fees that will be charged for off-street parking if the City develops a more severe parking deficit. The ADA parking requirements are proportional to the total spaces offered, so if overall parking becomes scarce in the City, disabled parking spaces will become scarce as well.

Since the EIR did not analyze parking impacts, this disparate impact to disabled people has not been analyzed by the City at all.

**The EIR’s Traffic Analysis is Faulty.**

Regardless of parking impacts, the traffic analysis performed by the City in the EIR is faulty.

It is based solely on the convenience of travel for private automobiles, even though the EIR admits this is inconsistent with the General Plan Mobility Element, Senate Bill 375, the Climate Protection Act of 2008, and the proposed revisions to the Land Use Element. It only analyzes the changes in volume to capacity ratios of *conflicting turn movements* at various intersections. It does not analyze the number of cars which will go on various streets, or how many total miles will be traveled by vehicles. It is not a traffic analysis; it is an inter-section congestion analysis.

Indeed, the EIR claims no other “robust” methodology is available, but the City’s chosen methodology is so frail as to be broken by roundabouts or freeways. Furthermore, the EIR makes several questionable assumptions in this ill-conceived analysis. It assumes that socioeconomic growth will be evenly distributed by area in each Major Area of Change. Generally, socioeconomic growth is concentrated by geographical area more by changes in land use regulations. If the neo-industrial re-zoning is successful, residential and commercial zones near the neo-industrial area will also experience more socioeconomic growth. These types of inter-relationships by geographical area are completely ignored. Likewise, it assumes that the socioeconomic factors and traffic of each TAZ will be evenly distributed by area. The Major Areas of Change within a given TAZ may lie completely outside of the high-trafficked or extremely dense corridors, or completely within them. Traffic has impacts on specific streets in specific ways. It is **never** evenly distributed by area.

The traffic analysis uses an outdated, rudimentary methodology that does very little to actually address the environmental impacts of changes in traffic conditions.

**Conclusion.**

Because the traffic analysis and discussion of parking-related environmental impacts are inadequate, the EIR is inadequate and should not be certified and instead be revised.

      Sincerely,



                                                                            Jamie T. Hall

1. For additional reading on this issue, seeArthur F. Coon, “Is ‘Parking’ Really A CEQA Impact? Same As It Ever Was!” available at http://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/is-parking-really-a-ceqa-impact-same-53939/ as of the date of this letter. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)