

Exhibit G

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California Department of Transportation

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
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October 25, 2022

Craig Spencer, Chief of Planning
Monterey County Housing and Community Development Department (HCD)
1441 Schilling Place, South 2nd Floor
Salinas, California 93901
Submitted via email to spencerc@co.monterey.ca.us

Dear Mr. Spencer:

Caltrans, Monterey County, and California Coastal Commission staff met on August 29, 2022 and September 7, 2022 to discuss a Local Coastal Plan Amendment (LCPA) for Caltrans' Highway 156 and Castroville Boulevard Interchange Safety Improvement Project (EA 05-31601) and to answer Coastal Commission questions on the preferred configuration of the proposed interchange, particularly the configuration of the southernmost intersection of the Highway 156 off- and on-ramps connecting to the new alignment of Castroville Boulevard. Specifically, during both meetings Coastal Commission staff requested that Caltrans consider construction of a compact diamond configuration at the southernmost intersection rather than the proposed roundabout. It is our understanding that Monterey County and Coastal Commission have met additionally in September and October 2022 to discuss the interchange configuration and the LCPA for the Project. Per your email on October 24, 2022, Coastal Commission staff continue to request consideration of a compact diamond configuration of the southernmost intersection rather than a roundabout configuration or justification for the roundabout. Per your email, Coastal Commission staff are concerned with the potential for the southernmost roundabout to enable the County's future planned Blackie Road Extension and are concerned with the impacts on agricultural land associated with the southernmost roundabout. To continue to address Coastal Commission staff's concerns and to memorialize our past discussions, we would like to summarize the follow key points below.

It's important to note that a compact diamond configuration at the southernmost intersection of the proposed new Highway 156 off- and on-ramps with the new alignment of Castroville Boulevard could immediately accommodate the County's Blackie Road Extension project with no additional physical improvements to the intersection. On the other hand, the proposed roundabout at this location would not be appropriately sized to accommodate traffic volumes from the Blackie Road Extension Project and would need to be modified further. Specifically, connection of

the Blackie Road Extension project would require a roundabout with multiple lanes rather than the current proposed one lane roundabout to accommodate the increased traffic volumes from the Blackie Road Extension Project.

As a result of Caltrans' rigorous environmental impact analysis for the proposed Project, and the permitting processes under way with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and US Fish and Wildlife Service, Caltrans has identified the proposed project, including the roundabout configuration at the southernmost intersection, to be the least environmentally damaging alternative to address critical safety issues at the current at grade intersections of Castroville Boulevard, Monte del Lago and Highway 156. A compact diamond configuration at the southernmost intersection would require construction of a new bridge over Moro Cojo Slough due to the need for a sufficient distance to transition the on-ramp onto southbound Highway 156. A new bridge over Moro Cojo Slough would result in significantly more permanent impacts on jurisdictional wetlands and coastal wetland ESHA as well as permanent impacts on breeding habitat for the federal and State Endangered and State Fully Protected Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (SCLTS) and other listed amphibian species (California tiger salamander [CTS] and California red-legged frog [CRLF]) as summarized in Table 1 below. The Least Environmentally Damaging Alternative (LEDPA) analysis prepared for the proposed Project in support of the other permitting processes dated July 21, 2021 and contained as Attachment A to this letter, provides an extensive analysis of project alternatives that eliminates construction of a bridge across Moro Cojo Slough from further consideration, and that discusses why the proposed project is the least environmentally damaging alternative.

Table 1 Comparison of Impacts – Diamond Configuration vs. Roundabout at Southernmost Intersection

Impact	Compact Diamond	Roundabout	Difference (Roundabout vs. Diamond)
Jurisdictional Wetlands	3.391 acres	1.270 acres	-2.12 acres
Listed Amphibian Habitat (SCLTS, CTS, CRLF)	7.73 acres	1.47 acres	-6.26 acres
Agricultural Impacts	27.8 acres (6 parcels impacted)	23.29 acres (7 parcels impacted)	- 4.51 acres

Highway 156 and Castroville Boulevard Interchange Safety Improvement Project (EA 05-31601)

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In addition to conflicting with wetland protection policies of the California Coastal Act, selection of a compact diamond configuration for the southernmost intersection of the Project would be counter to Sections 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act, Sections 2081 and 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code, the Federal Endangered Species Act, as well as Section 5050 of the California Fish and Game Code which was amended by legislative act (Senate Bill 1231) for this Project. All of the above-mentioned laws, sections and codes require that impacts on listed species and their habitat as well as jurisdictional wetlands be minimized.

If there any questions or concerns, please contact me at (805) 748-7004 or at mitch.dallas@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Mitch Dallas

Senior Coastal Resources Specialist

Attachments:

Alternatives Analysis for the State Route 156 Castroville Boulevard Interchange Project

cc:

Erik Lundquist, HCD Director

Anna Quenga, HCD Principal Planner

Michael Lew, PE, Caltrans District 5

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