

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 4

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Making Conservation
a California Way of Life.**RECEIVED**
MAY 18 2020
CITY OF ALAMEDA
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

May 11, 2020

Mr. Eric J. Levitt
City Manager
City of Alameda
2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 320
Alameda, CA 94501

Dear Mr. Levitt:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) received your letter dated January 21, 2020, regarding the City of Alameda (City) Central Avenue Safety Project that includes a segment through State Route (SR) 61. The project proposes complete streets improvements to enhance traffic safety and includes converting the existing highway from 4 lanes to 3 lanes to provide two travel lanes, one center lane, and bike lane in each direction.

You have concerns regarding Caltrans approval process in the development of the Project Initiation Document (PID) and requested that the City be granted the lead agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

As you know, the PID is a scoping document that defines the project's purpose and need and identifies a range of design alternatives to proceed to the next phase for Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED). The PA&ED requires completion of technical studies, including traffic operations and accident analyses, to identify the preferred design alternative and provide justification for any nonstandard design features. Although the PID includes an initial assessment of proposed nonstandard design features, approval will be based on information from technical studies and further design details during the PA&ED phase.

During the PID development, Caltrans and the City held a focus meeting on January 15, 2020, to discuss the Caltrans project delivery process and appropriate guidance to complete the PID. Caltrans approved the PID on April 2, 2020 and will continue to coordinate with the City to provide support throughout the subsequent phases of the project. The cooperative agreement for the PA&ED phase was provided to the City to execute on April 8, 2020.

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Caltrans understands that this agreement will be presented to the Alameda City Council for approval at the upcoming Council meeting on May 19, 2020. For PA&ED, Caltrans approves your request to be the CEQA Lead Agency and acknowledges the City's determination of a Categorical Exemption (CE) in 2016, that covered substantial portions of the project limits, including Caltrans right of way. Caltrans will be the CEQA responsible agency and expects that the City, under agreement as the CEQA Lead Agency, will update previous studies, assess impacts of the entire project, re-validate its CE determination, and submit the necessary environmental documentation and technical studies for Caltrans review and comments. The City will conduct the CEQA environmental process according to Caltrans standards that include, but are not limited to, the Standard Environmental Reference available at www.dot.ca.gov/ser.

Caltrans supports the City's efforts on this important project and looks forward to continued collaboration towards its successful completion. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me at (510) 286-5900 or Tiffany Centeno, Project Manager at (510) 385-8169 or Melanie Brent, Deputy District Director, Environmental Planning and Engineering at (510) 286-5907.

Sincerely,



TONY TAVARES
District Director

cc: Mayor Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, City of Alameda
Andrew Thomas, Director of Building, Planning, and Transportation, City of Alameda
Gail Payne, Senior Transportation Coordinator, City of Alameda