February 10, 2015

Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: Adopt Mitigated Negative Declaration
Civic Center Drive Improvements Project
Project No. CAP 13-001

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION: (1) Conduct a hearing to consider adopting the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact for the Civic Center Drive Improvements project; and (2) Approve the Resolution adopting the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, the Mitigation monitoring and Reporting Program, and associated California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) findings for the project.

SUMMARY: On July 24, 2012, your Board approved funding for infrastructure improvements along Civic Center Drive between Merrydale Road and Judge Haley Drive/Armory Drive, known as the Civic Center Drive Improvements project. The primary project goals were to integrate pedestrian and bicycle connections, improve Civic Center Drive circulation/traffic safety, and create a sense of scale and welcoming to the Civic Center campus. Preliminary concept plans were prepared and public workshops were held in 2013.

On December 17, 2013, your Board approved a preferred concept plan that included a roundabout at the intersection of Civic Center Drive and Peter Behr Drive/Memorial Drive, new bicycle facilities in the roadway (Class 2), and a separate bicycle facility on the west side from the SMART station to the roundabout, accessible pedestrian paths and sidewalks, landscaping, and lighting, all to provide seamless connectivity between the Civic Center campus, the new SMART Civic Center rail station and the anticipated permanent farmers market site to be located on the ‘Christmas Tree’ lot.

With the approval of the concept plan, the environmental review began under both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, because of federal grant funds) and an Initial Study was prepared in accordance with CEQA. The significant effects of the project noted in the Initial Study have been mitigated by modifications to the project so that the potential adverse effects are reduced to a point where no significant effects would occur. A draft Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for the project.
A "Notice of Availability of the Draft Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact and Notice of Public Hearing for the Marin Civic Center Drive Improvement Project" was filed on December 12, 2014 with the State Clearinghouse and County Clerk, which initiated a 30-day public comment period that concluded on January 12, 2015. The notice was also published in the Marin Independent Journal on December 12, 2014. The draft Initial Study was available online (http://www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/capital-projects/roundabout-project#Update) and could also be obtained by contacting the Department of Public Works. Two emailed comments were received from the public and no comments were received from agencies either directly or through the State Clearinghouse.

Public Comments
Comments received were associated with Transportation/Traffic, specifically on general pedestrian & cyclist safety concerns of Civic Center Drive and the proposed roundabout. The Initial Study analyzed pedestrian and bicycle safety, and based on referenced technical studies, potential impacts were found to have a less than significant impact. In addition, studies have found that because the roundabout will reduce existing vehicle speeds and provide enhanced crosswalk safety features, there may be an improvement to pedestrian/cyclist safety. Some of the comments received were about a potential ‘kiss and ride lot’ and other improvements that are not part of this project.

CONCLUSION: Throughout the design process, staff and the design team have taken a collaborative approach that included numerous meetings with various public stakeholders a subcommittee of your Board, various County departments, an intermodal working group (comprised of County, City of San Rafael, SMART, and Marin Transit staff), the Agricultural Institute of Marin, Cultural Service Commission, and Civic Center Conservancy.

Numerous studies have been prepared on biology, traffic, air quality, archaeology, historic resources, and water quality that are associated with the Initial Study. The Initial Study is in full compliance with CEQA, and provides adequate information and analysis to make the necessary findings and adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact. This approval fulfills CEQA requirements for environmental review and permitting. Pending Federal grant funding authorization, staff will return to your Board to consider final plan approval and fiscal impacts.

REVIEWED BY: [ X ] County Administrator [ ] N/A
[ ] Department of Finance [ X ] N/A
[ ] County Counsel [ X ] N/A
[ ] Human Resources [ X ] N/A

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Echols
Principal Civil Engineer
Board of Supervisors
February 10, 2015
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Attachments: Resolution

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration *(provided under separate cover on 12/12/14)*
Public Comments

c: Gabriella Calicchio, Cultural Services Director
   David Speer, Facilities Planning & Development Manager
   Linda Dahl, Parks Director
   Brian Crawford, Director of Community Development
   Nancy Mackle, City Manager, City of San Rafael
   Nader Mansourian, San Rafael Public Works Director
   Nancy Whelan, Marin Transit General Manager
   Farhad Mansourian, SMART General Manager
   Brigitte Moran, Agricultural Institute of Marin

*(The Initial Study, specific technical studies, and memoranda are available for review at the Department of Public Works Room 304, Civic Center, San Rafael, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily.)*