

April 14, 2006

Nedzlene Ferrario, Senior Planner
City of Sacramento, Planning Division
915 I Street
Sacramento, CA, 95814

SUBJECT: Railyards Specific Plan #P05-097
SMAQMD # SAC200500788

Dear Ms. Ferrario:

Thank you for providing the project listed above to the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (District) for review. The Railyards Specific Plan presents an exciting vision of a dense, mixed use, infill project in Downtown Sacramento, the heart of the region. While the design has many compelling features, several elements of the plan warrant revision. The plan could be altered to improve connectivity and favor mass transit, actions that will positively affect regional air quality. Specific suggestions are outlined below.

Sensitive Receptors

To the extent possible, avoid locating residential uses and other sensitive receptors near the Interstate 5 freeway, to reduce potential toxic exposure.

Pedestrian Circulation and Complete Streets

Given this project's significance and location in the center of the regions urban core, it is vital that pedestrian and bicyclist transportation be anticipated and encouraged to the maximum extent possible. We encourage the proponent to conduct a pedestrian circulation audit to determine ways to maximize pedestrian mobility within the project, and to maximize the projects function as a pedestrian thoroughfare between Downtown, the Dos Rios/Richards Boulevard Area, West Sacramento, and the American River Parkway. To ensure that this project allows for and encourages a high level of pedestrian and bicycle transit the project should feature a network of "complete streets." We recommend that safe and well designed sidewalks and bike lanes be mandated on all streets within the project, and that these improvements extend to the roadways connecting the project to the rest of the city.

Re-routing Jibboom Street away from the I street bridge.

The planned re-routing of Jibboom Avenue away from the I street bridge has the potential to negatively impact bicyclists and pedestrians traveling between West Sacramento and the Richards Boulevard Area. Rerouting Jibboom severs the direct connection between Richards Boulevard and the I street bridge and negatively impacts connectivity from this neighborhood to West Sacramento. Both areas have significant existing uses and major redevelopment projects in various stages of the planning process. As these new projects are built and occupied pedestrian and bicycle trips

across the river between these two areas will likely increase. The I Street Bridge features a crosswalk and low speed limit, making it a functional (if very narrow) bicycle and pedestrian connection across the river. The removal of elevated section of Jibboom could create a significant barrier for bicyclists and pedestrians if alternative access of equal or greater quality, that closely follows the original route, is not implemented as part of this project.

Additionally the re-routing of Jibboom may adversely affect automobile circulation in the area, creating longer trips with more delays. This may lead to a corresponding increase in emissions.

We suggest that that the plan be adjusted to leave Jibboom Street intact along its current route. If this is unfeasible we recommend that Jibboom's function as pedestrian and bicycle connection between West Sacramento and Richards Boulevard be replaced with a bicycle and pedestrian access to the I Street Bridge that follows the original routing of Jibboom Street.

Connecting Big Four boulevard to the intersection of North 12th and North B Streets

The poor walkability at the intersection of North 12th Street and North B Street is currently a significant barrier along the primary pedestrian route between downtown Sacramento and the Dos Rios neighborhood. The crossing at North B Street has a high pedestrian volume throughout the day.

The Railyards Plan contains an East-West Arterial named "Big Four Boulevard" which will run from Jibboom Street to North 12th Street at the existing intersection of North 12th and North B streets. This new connection has the potential to increase the number of cars traveling through the existing intersection and negatively affect the pedestrians that will navigate it. The impact should be mitigated to maximum extent possible, and all feasible measures to improve the walkability of the intersection should be implemented. Specific improvements might include a pedestrian only phase that is long enough to accommodate pedestrians with limited mobility, in-roadway warning lights, and countdown Signals.

Connecting to Alkali Flats

We recommend the project increase the number bicycle and pedestrian connections to the Alkali Flats Neighborhood. Eighth Street should connect all the way to Big Four Boulevard, and F or E Street should connect through to 6th street.

Connecting to the Richards Boulevard Project

There is a major development planned for the PG & E property that is adjacent to this property on the north-west side. The current plan for the project includes hospitality, commercial, retail, and residential components. The Railyards project design should anticipate this development and ensure interconnectivity between the two projects.

Connecting to the American River Parkway

The American River Parkway comes in proximity to the Railyards project via two primary routes. The first route is the bike trail that runs from Old Town Sacramento, through the planned project area, and through Discovery Park where it connects to the American River Parkway near the confluence of the American and Sacramento River. The projects orientation to the frontage along the Sacramento River should provide sufficient connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians using this route.

The second route comes to the Railyard project from the bike trail that runs along the east side of the American River. A former rail bridge that has been converted to bicycle/pedestrian use crosses the river (approximately) between Point West and North C Street. Bicyclists and pedestrians on the parkway would cross the aforementioned bridge, travel surface streets to North B, which they would follow into the project at Big Four Boulevard. Currently there are barriers to bicycle and pedestrian activity along this route. The barriers include the lack of a formal bike route and safety/ maintenance issues along the bike trail on the West side of the river. These barriers should be eliminated to help mitigate the traffic and air quality impact of this project of this project.

Transit connection to the proposed Sports and Entertainment District:

This proposed use will create a substantial amount of new trips and corresponding emissions. The design of this facility should highly encourage patrons that utilize public transit, walk, or bike. A direct, pedestrian only pathway should link the Sports/Entertainment facilities and plaza to the planned light rail station at the corner of Big Four Boulevard and 7th Street.

We look forward to working with city staff and the proponent. If you have any questions please contact me at 916-874-2694 or <jhurley@airquality.org>.

Sincerely,

Joseph James Hurley
Assistant Air Quality Analyst/Planner
Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality District

Cc: Larry Robinson, SMAQMD
Taiwo Jaiyeoba, Sacramento Regional Transit
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