

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

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*Making Conservation
a California Way of Life.*

March 25, 2020

Mr. Maiser Khaled
Director, Technical Services
Federal Highways Administration, California Division
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 4-100
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Khaled:

This is a response to a letter dated February 14, 2019, notifying the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) of updates to FHWA's "Policy on Access to the Interstate System," (Policy) issued in 2017. The previous policy promulgated in 2009 stipulated that Caltrans was to address 8 policy considerations and requirements (points) in an Interstate Access Change Request (Request). Under the 2017 update, Caltrans is to address two of eight points (previously points 3 and 4, now 1 and 2) on technical feasibility and safety, operational, and engineering acceptability, in a Request. The other six points, points 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the 2009 policy, regarding social, economic, planning, and environmental impacts are to be addressed separately through NEPA compliance. This letter details how Caltrans proposes to comply with the updated policy.

The Caltrans Project Development Procedures Manual, Chapter 27 – Access Control Modification, Federal Highway Administration Policy Requirements has been revised online at: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/manual-project-development-procedures-manual-pdpm>. Changes include reference and hyperlink to the current FHWA Policy. The text addresses the two current policy requirements as superseding the eight policy requirements in Section 2.7 of the FHWA Interstate System Access Informational Guide.

Caltrans proposes to do the following to address the other six policy points during the NEPA compliance process:

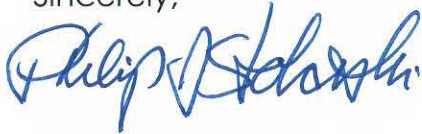
- Caltrans has determined no changes are needed to address the following points: policy point 2, on project alternatives; policy point 5, regarding consistency with local and regional land use and transportation plans; policy point 7, on coordination over revised access due to new, expanded, or changed development and transportation system improvements; and policy point 8, on selecting an alternative and completing the NEPA process prior to final approval of an access modification request. The NEPA compliance process adequately addresses them now.
- Policy point 1 ensures that an access point modification is to facilitate regional traffic needs, not to solve needs associated with local traffic. Policy point 6 ensures that isolated, piecemeal analysis for access change decisions are avoided and that where multiple access changes are anticipated, the analysis considers the possible cumulative effects if all were to be implemented. Policy points 1 and 6 are adequately addressed in Corridor System Management Plans, Transportation Concept Reports, the Regional Transportation Plans, and other long-range planning documents.
- FHWA's determination of safety, operational, and engineering acceptability will be included as an Appendix to the final NEPA document, whether EIS, EA, or CE.
- The final FHWA approval of requests for new or revised access control follow the completion of transportation planning, conformity, congestion management process, and the National Environmental Policy Act processes or necessary actions.

Caltrans intends to implement the new Policy on all projects where the project initiation document is to be approved on or after January 1, 2021; however, project engineers may choose to implement the Policy earlier than this date if they so choose. This effective date of implementation is included in the Manual Change Transmittal Memo that accompanies the Project Development Procedures Manual update posting online.

Mr. Maiser Khaled
March 25, 2020
Page 3

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the aforementioned procedures, please contact Jennifer Heichel at (916) 651-8164 or Antonette Clark at (916) 653-0253.

Sincerely,



Philip J. Stolarski
Chief
Division of Environmental Analysis



Janice Benton
Chief
Division of Design