South Coast
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Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Proposed Premier on First Project (SCH No. 2016021054)

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are meant as guidance for the Lead Agency and should be incorporated into the Final EIR.

SCAQMD Staff's Summary of Project Description

The Lead Agency proposes to demolish an existing two-story building and surface parking lot, and construct two 14-story buildings in two phases on 1.8 acres (Proposed Project). Surrounding uses include a mix of commercial and multi-family residential uses. The Proposed Project is approximately 356 feet east of the Interstate 5 Freeway (I-5 Freeway)[1]. Construction of Phase I is expected to begin in mid-2018 and be completed by late 2019. Phase II will begin in early 2020 and be completed in early 2022. Therefore, Phase I will be in operation while Phase II is under construction.

SCAQMD Staff's Summary of Air Quality Analysis

In the Air Quality Section, the Lead Agency quantified the Proposed Project's construction and operational emissions and compared those emission estimates to SCAQMD's regional and localized air quality CEQA significance thresholds. The Lead Agency found that the Proposed Project's construction and operational air impacts would be less than significant[2]. The Lead Agency also performed a health risk impact analysis (HRA) and found that the Maximum Exposed Individual Resident cancer risk would be 5.6 in one million, which is below SCAQMD's CEQA significance threshold of 10 in one million for cancer risk[3].

SCAQMD staff has concerns about the air quality and HRA analyses in the Draft EIR. Details are included in the attachment. SCAQMD staff has also included project design features as recommendations to the Lead Agency in the attachment. Pursuant to the California Public Resources Code Section 21092.5 and the CEQA Guidelines Section 15088, the Lead Agency is required to provide SCAQMD with written proposed responses to all comments contained herein prior to the certification of the Final EIR.

SCAQMD staff is available to work with the Lead Agency to address any questions that may arise from the comments included in this letter. Please contact Jack Cheng, Air Quality Specialist, CEQA IGR Section, at (909) 396-2448, if you have any questions regarding the comments.

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[1] Draft EIR. Section 3.0 Environmental Setting. Page 3.0-1 and an Aerial Map Inspection.
[2] *Ibid*. Section 4.2 Air Quality. Regional Construction and Operational Estimates. Regional Air Quality Tables Only Combine Construction Emissions With Construction and Operation Emissions With Operation. See also Appendix B: Air Quality – CalEEMod Output files and Health Risk Assessment. Pages 10 and 15.
[3] *Ibid.* Page Table 4.2-17 – Maximum Residential Receptor/ Carcinogenic Risk. Page 4.2-32.

Sincerely,

Lijin Sun

Lijin Sun, J.D.
Program Supervisor, CEQA IGR
Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

Attachment
LS:JC:GM
LAC170720-05
Control Number

ATTACHMENT

Air Quality Analysis: SCAQMD's Air Quality CEQA Thresholds of Significance

1. Based on the Proposed Project's construction schedule[4], construction and operation activities are expected to overlap. The Lead Agency combined the construction and operational emissions and disclosed the calculations in the Draft EIR for information. In the case of overlapping construction and operation activities, SCAQMD staff recommends adding the construction and operational emissions and comparing those emissions to SCAQMD's air quality CEQA significance thresholds for operation[5] to determine the level of significance.

Health Risk Assessment (HRA) Analysis

2. In the HRA, the Lead Agency used the AERMOD dispersion model to estimate DPM concentrations from the diesel vehicles traveling along I-5 Freeway and used the 2015 California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) Guidance to estimate potential health risks to residents at the Proposed Project. SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency revise the HRA based on the following comments:

   a. The Lead Agency used the Terrain Height Option "Non-Default Regulatory Option – Flat" in the AERMOD dispersion model. SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency use the "Regulatory Default Option – Elevated" or provide additional justification for using the "Non-Default Regulatory Option." National Elevation Dataset (NED) 1 arc-second or 7.5-minute Digital Elevation Model (DEM) terrain elevation data is recommended if the "Elevated" setting is used.

   b. The Lead Agency averaged the DPM emissions for the 30-year of exposure and used that emission rate to estimate health risks. In 2015, the OEHHA Guidance revised the health assessment guideline to acknowledge that children are more susceptible to the exposure to air toxics[6]. Vehicles get cleaner with time due to regulations and technologies. It would not be appropriate to average out the emissions over the 30-year exposure duration since this would likely underestimate potential health impacts to children who would be exposed to higher DPM concentrations during earlier years. Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the DPM emissions for each year be applied to each of the corresponding age bins (i.e. emissions from Year 1 should be used to estimate cancer risks to the third trimester to 0 year age bin; Year 1 and 2 should be used to estimate the cancer risks to the 0 to 2 years age bins; and so on).

   c. The Lead Agency used the mean breathing rates to calculate a weighted average breathing rate. Consistent with SCAQMD's Risk Assessment Procedures, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency use the 95th percentile for children from the third trimester through age 2 and 80th percentile daily breathing rate for all other ages[7].

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[4] Draft EIR. Section 2.0 Project Description. Page 2.0-48.

[5] South Coast Air Quality Management District. *SCAQMD Air Quality Significance Thresholds*. Accessed at: http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality-significance-thresholds.pdf?sfvrsn=2.

[6] Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. March 6, 2016. *Air Toxics Hot Spots Program Guidance Manual for the Preparation of Health Risk Assessments 2015*. Accessed at: https://oehha.ca.gov/air/crnr/notice-adoption-air-toxics-hot-spots-program-guidance-manual-preparation-health-risk-0.

[7] South Coast Air Quality Management District. June 5, 2015. Accessed at: http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/planning/risk-assessment/riskassprocjune15.pdf.

Guidance Regarding Siting Sensitive Receptors Near a High-Volume Freeway or Other Sources of Air Pollution

3. SCAQMD staff recognizes that there are many factors Lead Agencies must consider when making local planning and land use decisions. To facilitate stronger collaboration between Lead Agencies and SCAQMD to reduce community exposure to source-specific and cumulative air pollution impacts, SCAQMD adopted the Guidance Document for Addressing Air Quality Issues in General Plans and Local Planning (Guidance Document) in 2005. The Guidance Document provides suggested policies that local governments can use in their General Plans or through local planning to prevent or reduce potential air pollution impacts and protect public health. SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency review this Guidance Document as a tool when making local planning and land use decisions. The Guidance Document is available on SCAQMD's website at: http://www.aqmd.gov/home/library/documents-support-material/planning-guidance/guidance-document. Additional guidance on siting incompatible land uses (such as placing homes near freeways or other polluting sources) can be found in the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) *Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective*[8].

   Numerous health studies have demonstrated potential adverse health effects associated with living near highly travelled roadways. In traffic-related studies, the additional non-cancer health risk attributable to proximity is seen within 1,000 feet and is strongest within 300 feet[9]. California freeway studies show about a 70% drop off in particulate pollution levels at 500 feet[10]. As a result of these studies, in the Air Quality and Land Use Handbook, CARB recommends avoiding new sensitive land uses (such as housing) within 500 feet of a freeway[11]. Additional research has shown that the near roadway environment also contains elevated levels of many pollutants that adversely affect human health, including some pollutants that are unregulated (e.g., ultrafine particles) and whose potential health effects are still emerging. Guidance on strategies to reduce air pollution exposure near high-volume roadways can be found at: https://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/rd_technical_advisory_final.PDF[12].

Limits to Enhanced Filtration Units: Mitigation Measure (MM) AQ-1:

4. Strategies are available to reduce exposure, including, but are not limited to, building filtration systems, sounds walls, vegetation barriers, etc.[13] Because of the potential adverse health risks involved with siting residences near a freeway, it is essential that any proposed strategy must be carefully evaluated before implementation. When enhanced filtration units on residences are proposed, the Lead Agency should consider the limitations of the enhanced filtration. For example, in a study that SCAQMD conducted to investigate filters[14], costs were expected to range from $120 to $240 per year to replace each filter. In addition, because the filters would not have any effectiveness unless the HVAC system is running, there may be increased energy costs. It is typically assumed that

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[8] California Air Resources Board. April 2005. "*Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective*." Page 6. Accessed at: http://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/landuse.htm.

[9] *Ibid*.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] In April 2017, CARB published a technical advisory, *Strategies to Reduce Air Pollution Exposure Near High-Volume Roadways*: *Technical Advisory*, to supplement CARB's Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective. The Technical Advisory is guidance that is intended to assist planners tasked with developing local policies aimed at reducing exposure to traffic emissions and when weighing multiple options for reducing exposures to traffic emissions. It is important to note that the Technical Advisory is not intended as guidance for any specific project and does not create any presumption regarding the feasibility of strategies as mitigation measures for purposes of compliance with CEQA.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] This study evaluated filters rated MERV 13+ while the proposed mitigation calls for less effective MERV 12 or better filters. Accessed at: http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/aqmdpilotstudyfinalreport.pdf. Please also see the 2012 Peer Review Journal article by SCAQMD staff. Accessed at: http://d7.iqair.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Polidori-et-al-2012.pdf.

the filters operate 100 percent of the time while residents are indoors, and it does not account for the times when residents have their windows or doors open or are outside in common areas. These filters also have no ability to filter out any toxic gases from vehicle exhaust. The presumed effectiveness and feasibility of any filtration units should therefore be evaluated in more detail prior to assuming that they will sufficiently alleviate near roadway exposures.

Additional Recommended Project Design Features

5. SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency include the following project design features in the Final EIR to encourage the use of cleaner vehicles by occupants and visitors at the Proposed Project and to further reduce NOx emissions during operation.

   a) Vehicles that can operate at least partially on electricity have the ability to substantially reduce NOx emissions. It is important to make this electrical infrastructure available when the Proposed Project is built. The cost of installing electrical charging equipment onsite is significantly cheaper if completed when the Proposed Project is built compared to retrofitting an existing residence or a common electrical charging area. Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency require the residential and hotel/office building parking areas of the Proposed Project be constructed with the appropriate infrastructure for electric charging stations. For residential and office parking areas, SCAQMD staff recommends that the parking areas be appropriately wired from the electrical panel to allow later uses, if desired. At a minimum, residential electrical panels should appropriately-sized to allow for future expanded use.

   b) Residential and office parking areas shall include community electric vehicle charging station(s). Recommend 5% of parking spaces.

Permits

6. The Proposed Project may include stationary sources, including, but not limited to, boilers, emergency generators, restaurant broilers, etc.[15] In the event that a permit from SCAQMD is required, SCAQMD should be identified as a Responsible Agency for the Proposed Project in the Final EIR. Should there be any questions on permits, please contact SCAQMD's Engineering and Permitting staff at (909) 396-3385. For more general information on permits, please visit SCAQMD's webpage, at: http://www.aqmd.gov/home/permits.

[15] Draft EIR. Section 2.0 Project Description. Pages 2.0-25 and 2.0-39.