

City of Oceanside Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

BikeWalk Oceanside

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February 1, 2023

Rob Dmohowski,
Principal Planner
City of Oceanside
300 N. Coast Highway
Oceanside, CA 92054

RE: Oceanside Transit Center Redevelopment Project – CEQA Scoping Meeting Comments

Dear Mr. Dmohowski,

The Oceanside Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee is a citizen's advisory committee whose role is to advise the City on programs, projects, and policies which improve bicycling and walking in the community. The Committee's membership includes over 75 Oceanside residents who are concerned about bicycling and walking infrastructure and opportunities. Our goals are to promote bicycling and walking in the community for health, recreation, and transportation, to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety, and to improve bicycling and pedestrian facilities.

The Committee previously submitted a detailed comment letter dated October 24, 2022, to NCTD, The Toll Brothers, and the City on the Oceanside Transit Center (OTC) Redevelopment Project. The concerns expressed in that letter remain the principal concerns of our Committee, and we respectfully re-submit that letter (attached) as comments in the Scoping Meeting. Our concern-areas in that letter were in the following categories:

1. Transit Related
2. Active Transportation
3. Car Parking
4. On-going Community Input

Having not yet received a formal response on many of these concern areas from the Applicant, the purpose of this follow-up letter is to provide additional input relative to the CEQA Scoping Process, as well as our thoughts on potential approaches the Applicant could use to address our previously-stated concerns.

An overriding interest of our Committee, aside from the four concern categories above, is that the OTC project should contribute to climate-stabilization goals, which should be an important CEQA focus. The current proposal, based on what we have seen to date, fails to do this in some key respects, as discussed further below.

1. Transit-Related Concerns

We previously pointed out the regional significance of the existing Oceanside Transit Center, being the most important transit center in the NCTD system, with 3 intercity/commuter rail lines, the SPRINTER Light Rail Line, seven NCTD bus routes, FLEX service, and intercity bus service. Our overriding concern in this area is that the proposed redevelopment hides the existence of the OTC from the existing neighborhood and Coast Highway, blocking its view to these areas behind large apartment building blocks. This contrasts with the existing facility,

which is clearly a transit center when viewed from all three of the adjacent street frontages. We believe that by hiding the transit center from the public, the public will be less aware of transit and transportation alternatives, thus generating more motor-vehicle greenhouse gas emissions than a design more open and visible to the community would.

The proposed redevelopment also provides no more transit bus capacity than the existing facility, despite likely growth in the area over the life of the OTC, which could extend out 40 to 60 years. We believe there are alternative ways to develop the site to provide greater transit capacity.

Potential Approaches to Address these Concerns:

Reconfigure the building blocks so as to create a view corridor to the transit center from at least Tremont and Michigan Street. We believe Michigan will be one of the most important approaches to access both the on-site development and the transit center. The Michigan corridor should be widened, by narrowing the apartment building blocks and creating a pleasant view to towards the west and the transit center.

Signage should also be generously used to make it clear to the public that there is an important public transit and rail center here. Consider the creation of an archway structure over Michigan between the two apartment building blocks with large signage such as “To Transit Center”, “Grand Central Oceanside”, or words to that effect. Ensure a strong tie-in to the roundabout planned by the City at Coast Highway and Michigan. For example, Michigan, from the Coast Highway roundabout to Cleveland, could be a uniformly designed and landscaped “complete street,” with traffic slowed enough to make all active transportation modes pleasant to use. Consider an art project at the roundabout with a subject related to the OTC and/or our climate crisis. Consider approaches from Topeka, Tremont, and the new access road that is west of Tremont, between the new parking garage and the north face of the apartment building, all having the same features as the Michigan entrance street. Consider these features for Cleveland.

Analyze the internal frontage on Cleveland Street to see if additional bus layover bays can be constructed, to allow for system expansion as well as to handle emergency or overflow needs, such as the current bus bridge operating between Irvine and Oceanside due to the track problems in San Clemente.

2. Active Transportation Concerns

We previously commented that access to the proposed transit facility for transit users arriving by bike or on foot is not very user-friendly. It appears biking and walking transit users must enter between large residential building blocks on narrow roadways used by motor vehicles, rather than entering through an inviting “grand transit plaza” access. There are no separate bike lanes or paths into the facility. Use of active transportation modes to access the facility will become more and more important as we address climate change, and the facility should encourage this and be as easy as possible to access on foot or by bicycle. Finally, bicycle parking and storage for varied user groups (Daily Commuters, Casual Bike Users, Bikeshare Bikes) has not been indicated on the draft plan.

The Sierra Club has a policy statement that is very applicable to this project and reflects our Committee’s viewpoint:

Rail systems are most effective in stimulating compact development patterns, increasing public transit patronage and reducing motor vehicle use. Station access should be provided by foot, bicycle and public transit, with minimal, but full-priced, public parking. Accommodation of pedestrians, bicycles and public transit should be given priority over private automobiles.

Potential Approaches to Address these Concerns:

Reduce the width of the northern apartment building block in order to widen Michigan and create a better view corridor to the transit center. Use some of this extra right-of-way width to install separated bike lanes on Michigan, leading directly to the transit center area. Identify and establish bike parking and storage areas in clear view of the NCTD Customer Service Center, for security, including both a high-security bike lock-up facility and short-term use bike racks. The boutique hotel also proposed for the site should supply complimentary bikes for their guests' use, along with information on local biking destinations, to help mitigate local traffic and emissions. Guests from around the world can come to this hotel using only a plane-train combination. With downtown, the beach, the San Luis Rey River Bike Trail, and the numerous rail-bike trip options, many guests won't need to drive during their visit.

3. Car Parking Concerns

We previously stated that this facility will have one of the largest car parking facilities in the City of Oceanside. The proposed site plan does not indicate how the identified parking resources will be managed. By continuing the existing facility's policy of "free parking", the proposed facility will continue to encourage single-occupant auto travel to the OTC, thereby generating more climate-destabilizing greenhouse gases than a properly-managed and priced parking facility. The existing policy will also encourage employees to drive to the office building, boutique hotel patrons to use a car on their visit, and apartment residents to own more cars than they would otherwise.

Potential Approaches to Address these Concerns:

The OTC redevelopment should include a comprehensive car parking system that will tie the various uses together. A good car parking system will be automated, value-priced, and have congestion pricing algorithms as needed. It will also be shared among all site users and it will provide earnings to those currently losing money (i.e., those who don't solo-drive) because "free" car parking is being provided. The car parking system should be created by a third-party vendor, selected using a Requirements Document and an RFP process. The vendor should also be good at solar canopies, charging stations, and buying and selling electricity. The proposed parking system would increase economic fairness and modal choice while it would reduce driving and VMT. It would maximize transit ridership instead of maximizing driving to and from the OTC. This shift in mode choice is critical to help meet regional and state-wide climate stabilization targets by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

4. On-Going Community Input:

We previously pointed out the need for a community outreach and participation process for a project of this magnitude and potential impact on the community. Oceanside's District 1, all of Oceanside, and SANDAG all have a huge stake in the final form of the OTC. So far, there has been only one public meeting, held back in September, 2022, and it seems that the design has progressed very far with very little community input being taken into consideration. We learned, for example, that the Applicant was not aware of the Mobility Hub Elements that SANDAG had

recommended for this facility in a 2017 report. To our knowledge, there is no on-going community stakeholder group or meeting process, other than a plan to hold two “thematic” meetings managed by the Applicant.

Potential Approaches to Address these Concerns:

Establish a community stakeholder and advisory commission to guide development plans, including representation from all affected community members, including transit users, modal service providers, local residents, merchants, and City management. Establish a process for ensuring their input is carefully considered in design revisions in order to achieve the best outcome for all parties. Ensure that the Mobility Hub Elements previously identified by SANDAG for this facility are incorporated into the design.

It should be remembered that the existing facility is 40 years old, and that whatever is ultimately constructed will no doubt be in the community for at least another 40 years. Let’s ensure it is the best facility possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Lichterman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Lichterman
Chairman, Oceanside Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

cc: Oceanside Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee Members
Oceanside Mayor and City Council
Matt Tucker, NCTD
Lillian Doherty, NCTD
Katie Persons, NCTD
Jose Cervantes, NCTD
Marisa Mangan, SANDAG

ATTACHMENT – October 24, 2022 Comment Letter

