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**M E M O R A N D U M**

**DATE:** December 11, 2009

**TO:** Aleida Andrino-Chavez, City of Albany

**FROM:** Theresa Bravo and David Clore

**SUBJECT:** Response to Comments on Buchanan Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Project Initial Study/Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration

This memorandum provides responses to the verbal comments received at the November 19, 2009 Traffic and Safety Commission Hearing on the Buchanan Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Project Initial Study/Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (Draft IS/MND). Staff-initiated corrections are also provided. No written comments were received during the 30-day public comment period.

The comments from the hearing are numbered in the margin of the meeting minutes (attached) and discussed below. Corrections to the Draft IS/MND necessary in light of the comments received and responses provided, or necessary to amplify or clarify material in the Draft IS/MND, are included in the responses. Underlined text represents language that has been added to the Draft IS/MND; text with ~~strikeout~~ has been deleted from the Draft IS/MND.

**Traffic and Safety Commission Hearing Comments  
 November 19, 2009**

**Response 1:** In response to this comment, the discussion on page 7 of the Draft IS/MND is revised as follows:

**University Village Project.** UC Berkeley is currently proposing to develop a 5.3-acre site within the existing University Village, which is located south of the proposed project. The project includes development of a 55,000 square foot Whole Foods Market, 30,000 square feet of retail space, and a 175-unit senior housing facility. ~~A number of improvements would be made at the intersection of Buchanan Street and Jackson Street as part of the University Village project, including: traffic signal modernization, protected left turn movements on all four approaches, new bulb-outs on the west side of the intersection (including a bus bulb at the southwest corner), and the addition of exclusive left turns on the Jackson Street approaches with the associated loss of a few parking spaces.~~ Dedication of an exclusive right-turn lane along eastbound Marin Avenue, west of San Pablo Avenue is also proposed as part of this project.

**Response 2:** To address safety concerns, the City may wish to install additional lighting in areas of the Class I pathway that would be visibly obstructed from Buchanan Street by trees and other existing vegetation. The City of Albany, in consultation with the USDA, will consider the need for lighting along the segment of the Class I path that crosses through the USDA property. It is not anticipated that new lighting in this area would obstruct day or nighttime views in the area, or introduce new light

or glare beyond the immediate vicinity of the pathway, as this segment of the pathway is setback from the roadway.

**Staff-Initiated Changes**

Figure 2 (Aerial Photograph and Surrounding Land Uses) on page 5 of the Draft IS/MND is revised to show the correct alignment of the Buchanan Street Connector Trail (labeled in purple). An approximately 500-foot segment of the alignment as it crosses beneath the freeway was incorrectly labeled to show the path's previous alignment. The corrected figure is provided on the following page.

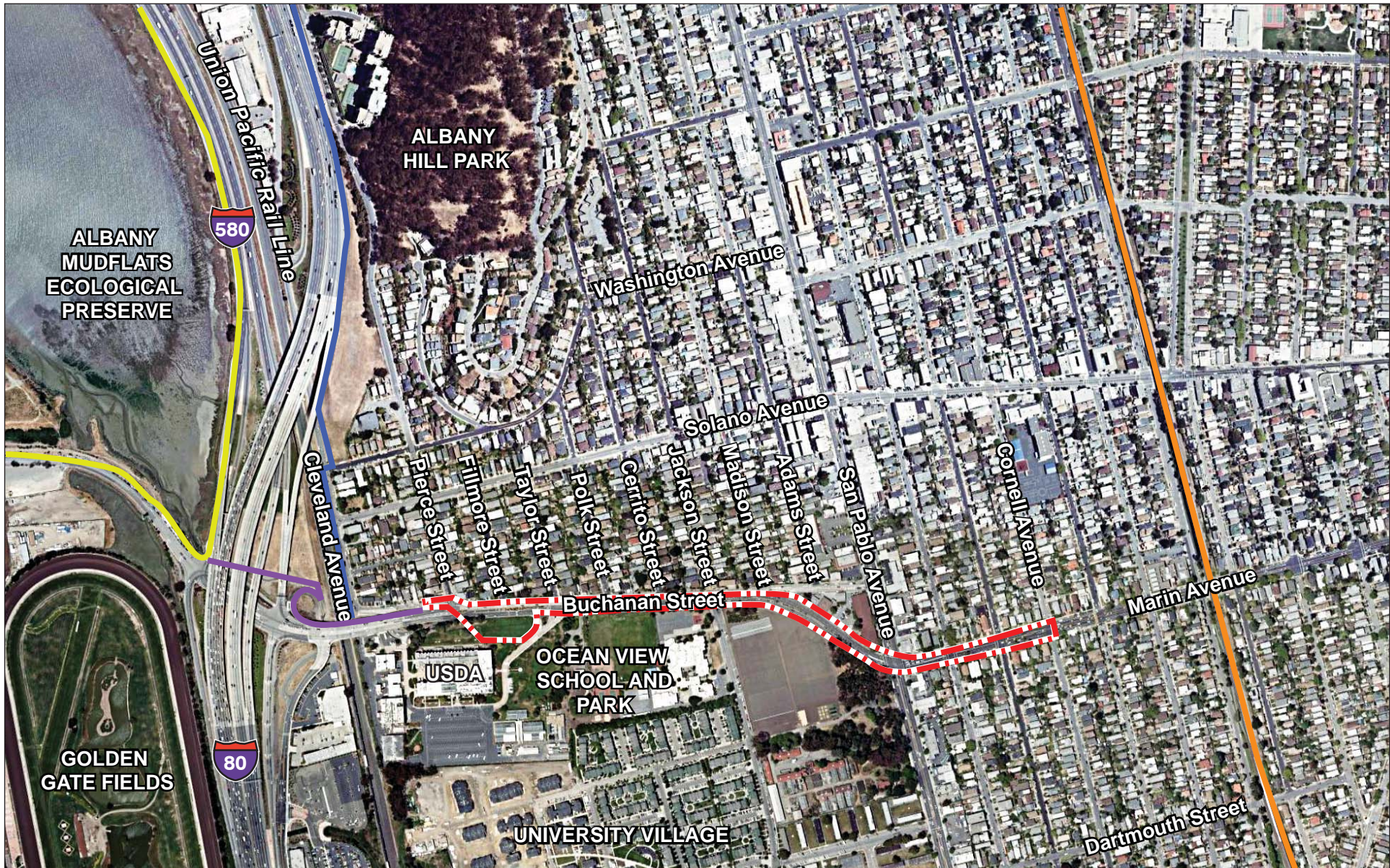
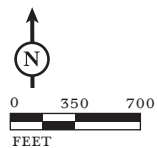







FIGURE 2

LSA



-  PROJECT AREA BOUNDARY
-  SAN FRANCISCO BAY TRAIL
-  PLANNED PIERCE STREET PATH
-  OHLONE GREENWAY
-  BUCHANAN STREET CONNECTOR TRAIL

*Buchanan Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Path IS/MND*  
 Aerial Photograph and Surrounding Land Uses

SOURCE: GOOGLE EARTH; LSA ASSOCIATES, INC., 2009

I:\DMJ0803 Buchanan Street\Figures\RTC\Fig\_2.ai (10/19/09)

**6. Discussion and Possible Action on matters related to the following items:**

**6-1 Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration**

Chavez introduced the issue and mentioned that in addition to the CEQA, there was a NEPA as part of the federal environmental process because the project involves the USDA property. Chavez introduced Theresa Bravo from LSA and Associates, the environmental consulting firm in charge of conducting the study.

Bravo explained that the purpose of the meeting was to receive public comment. She said that based on the project findings, staff had found that the Buchanan Path project would not have considerable impacts on the environment and therefore an Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND) was prepared. This meant that all the impacts of the project could be mitigated at the "less than significant level." The draft ISMND was published on November 9 and the comment period would close on December 8, 2009. Bravo mentioned six key findings of the project, which were typical of every environmental study:

- Construction dust: The City is required to implement mitigation measures that address the impacts of construction and reduce emissions and dust when construction starts.
- Two impacts were identified for biological resources: Special status bird species may be adversely affected by the project implementation. Protective measures should be taken if at the time of project construction, these special status birds are present. The other biological impact is on the trees that would be removed by the construction of the path- A tree survey identified the type, condition, and location of all the trees in the area. Of the 160 trees identified in the area, approximately 38 trees would be removed along Marin Ave. and Buchanan St., including six Coastal Redwoods. The project consultant identified suitable areas along the path where trees would be replaced and additional trees would be planted.
- Cultural resources: The draft ISMND has identified standard mitigation measures to be implemented in the unlikely event that archeological resources or human remains are found during the construction activities.
- Construction Hazards: A contingency plan is required that includes procedures to follow in the event that construction workers encounter toxic waste chemicals during the construction of the project.
- Hydrology: The City is required to prepare a storm water pollution prevention plan and a drainage plan to ensure that the water quality is not impacted by the construction of the project.
- Transportation and traffic: Construction activities may increase traffic in the area during construction of the project. The City is required to develop a traffic management plan for the construction phase. The project itself would not increase traffic in the area. AECOM developed a traffic study that analyzes 8 (eight) intersections around the project area and concluded that all of these would operate at an acceptable level of service after the project is built.

Bravo summarized the schedule of the environmental review process and clarified that only those comments that addressed the adequacy of the environmental document, not the merits of the project, would be considered in the final environmental document.

The Commission members discussed the issue. McCroskey said that he had some comments on the document. On page 7, third sentence of the last paragraph, he said that it referred to the Buchanan/Jackson signal project as part of the University Village project. This was erroneous because they were two different projects. In addition, he suggested including a lighting plan for the western end of the path on the USDA property where would be dark going behind the redwood trees.

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The session was open to the public.

Beth Pianitza of the University of California Physical and Environmental Planning, expressed support for the project and the intention of the University to grant the easement along the Gill Tract for the construction of the Buchanan Path.

Mazur asked if it would be possible to implement a bus stop on the east side of Jackson St. at the south leg of the intersection with Buchanan. She was concerned that buses would not be able to stop at that location because of lack of space. She wondered if the controller could be moved so in the future it would not interfere with a potential bus stop. Chavez said that the controller would be replaced, but that she would have to talk to the City Engineer about a possible new location in the same area for the new controller in order to leave room for a potential bus stop.

Sherie Reineman, Albany resident supported the idea of having a bus stop at that intersection.