

The Sacramento Coalition to Save Public Education

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February 11, 2007

Jeremy Ketchum, Environmental Branch Chief
Attention: Ken Lastufka
Dept. of Transportation, Environmental Planning
2389 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95833



Subject: Sac 50 Bus/Carpool Lanes and Community Enhancement Project Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (DEIR/EA)

Dear Mr. Lastufka,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment.

The Sacramento Coalition to Save Public Education (SCSPE) is a community organization in the city of Sacramento and a member of Neighbors Advocating Sustainable Transportation. Our organization supports public education and opposes projects and activities that would negatively impact our public schools. Consequently we are concerned about the effect the widening of Highway 50 would have on our schools.

SCSPE supports and references the comments provided by Neighbors Advocating Sustainable Transportation and the Environmental Council of Sacramento.

Specifically we are concerned about traffic patterns and air quality as they relate to student safety, health and equitable access to a quality education. The DEIR/EIA (Section 2.4) does not adequately assess the impact on the schools within the study area.

Traffic Impacts

Highway 50 is close to many Sacramento City schools. This project can be expected to increase vehicle use of Highway 50. The additional congestion on Highway 50 will force more traffic onto nearby surface streets especially during the times when children are walking to and from school, and/or when parents are dropping or picking up students at school sites. This increases the likelihood of accidents involving students and parents. SCSPE believes that the EIR/EA must evaluate the impacts of the various project alternatives on neighborhood schools.

Air Quality

The Draft EIR/EA says that air quality impacts will be temporary and construction related, with no significant impact. However, the additional traffic that will use a

widened freeway will have a significant, long-term and permanent impact on air quality around Sacramento City schools. The DEIR/EA provides no description or mitigation for this impact.

Recent studies have shown that air quality is worse close to freeways and that this has a negative impact on children going to schools located near freeways. For example, see the Sacramento Bee article of January 26, 2007, "Living near busy roads tied to kids' lung risk, Impact on breathing is long-term health threat, study says". It is a well known fact that students already have to curtail their physical activity on "Spare the Air" days. Any further exposure will contribute to increased incidence of respiratory ailments, such as asthma, and obesity related to lack of physical activity. Any increase in air pollution will also result in students with respiratory problems having more absences due to illness which will impair their ability to receive the same education as the rest of the student population. The ability of all students, but particularly those with respiratory problems, to participate in before school and after school athletic activities will be decreased by lowered air quality at the schools within the various project alternatives.

Please evaluate the impacts on air quality to schools within a mile of the project corridor under each alternative and the impacts on children attending those schools.

Project Alternatives/Proposed Mitigation

Except for the no action alternative, there were no alternatives presented that will not involve highway construction. We suggest that projects to expand, enhance, and encourage ridership on public transit be included in the range of alternatives. The cost-benefit analysis should evaluate the build alternatives vs. the no build alternatives.

In the event that a build alternative is selected for implementation, project mitigation to alleviate traffic safety and air quality issues at affected schools should include full payment, in perpetuity, to the Sacramento City Unified School District for school bus service.

Sincerely,

Heidi McLean
Chairperson
Sacramento Coalition to Save Public Education

