# Allyn D. Rifkin, PE RTPG – the Rifkin Transportation Planning Group

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January 10, 2017

Councilmember Jose Huizar, Chair Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson Councilmember Gilbert A. Cedillo Councilmember Mitchell Englander Councilmember Felipe Fuentes

Planning and Land Use Management Committee Los Angeles City Hall 200 N. Spring Street Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: City Planning Case Nos: CPC-2015-896-GPA-VZC-HD-MCUP-ZV-DB-SPR, VTT-74131-2A and ENV-2015-897-EIR

Council File Nos: 16-1368-S2, 16-1368

Project Address: 333 S. La Cienega Boulevard

## PROPOSED MIXED USE PROJECT LOCATED AT 333 S. LA CIENEGA BOULEVARD --- TRAFFIC STUDY PEER REVIEW

I am a Transportation/Planner Engineer with over 40 years of experience in reviewing Development Projects for Traffic Impacts within the context of City of Los Angeles and State of California Environmental Regulations. **Attachment 1** of this letter is a summary of my professional experience, which includes my former position with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) as the Chief of the Bureau of Planning and Land Use Development. At the request of the Beverly Wilshire Homes Association, I have completed an Independent Peer Review of the Traffic Study (dated March 17, 2016) and subsequent material analyzing an amended, slightly smaller project (dated October 13, 2015) prepared by the Applicant's Traffic Consultant – The Mobility Group. Those reports are part of the initial Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) prepared in support of the proposed project.

Following are my detailed review comments:

1. The Traffic studies misrepresent the operation of the traffic signal at 3rd/La Cienega. Thus the conclusion about that Level of Service (LOS) for this intersection being LOS C with and without the project implying that traffic conditions are "acceptable" consistent with the Community Plan is misleading and fallacious. The Traffic studies analyzed the intersection with no adjustment for "opposed" left turn phases (see **Attachments 2 and 3**). In a field review of the intersection I observed that the left turn traffic signals for both the north/south and the east/west traffic controls operated separately. Thus the traffic signal allocation of traffic flow during the peak hours has resulted in significantly more congestion than implied by LOS C. Correcting for the left turn phasing, by adding the code #3 to the LADOT evaluation sheet, predicted LOS E/F for this intersection - a much worse level of congestion which is consistent with my field observations (**see Attachment 4**).

2. The use of the trip rate for a "Super Market" for what is likely to be a high end /specialty food market grossly understates the trip generation potential of the proposed project. My review of the base data in the Institute of Transportation Engineer (ITE) Trip Generation Handbook, cited in the Traffic studies, indicates that the average size of the sites surveyed for the Land Use Category 850 - Supermarket have an average size of 56,000 square feet. The proposed "supermarket" is expected to be approximately 27,000 square feet, a totally different kind of market.

In a similar development case processed by the City of Burbank, the applicant was required to survey Whole Foods Markets (including the one at SM/Fairfax) to evaluate the trip potential of a high end/specialty food market (see Appendix A). That survey yielded a PM peak hour trip rate of 15.16 vehicles per 1,000 square feet compare to the Supermarket rate used in the project Traffic study -- 9.98 vehicles per 1,000 square feet. Attachment 5 summarizes my application of the Whole Foods market rate to the trip generation calculation and compares it to that which was presented in the project Traffic study. The conclusion is that the actual number of PM peak hour trips for the amended project could be 75% higher than evaluated in the Traffic study.

3. Attachment 4 is a revision to the PM Peak Hour capacity analysis for the amended project impacts at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega, using the adjustments described in the above two findings – i.e., using the correct left turn phasing assumption and using the Whole Foods trip generation for the Supermarket. The conclusion is that at LOS E/F there would be a significant traffic impact during the PM Peak Hour at the intersection 3rd/La Cienega. The Traffic Study must be corrected for these identified errors in the analysis. The same error would surely apply to other intersections as well as to 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega. <u>The project must examine traffic mitigation</u> measures for the impact at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega and at other intersections as appropriate; and the City must re-circulate the DEIR.

4. The DEIR summarily dismisses the likelihood that there would be traffic impacts on adjacent residential streets from the project – based upon the conclusion that the surrounding arterials are not projected to be congested. LADOT Traffic Study policies describe the parameters of thresholds for residential street impacts and when it might be appropriate for review of impacts. An analysis of residential impacts is warranted if adjacent arterials are congested and if residential streets would present a logical by-pass route. The minimum threshold for residential impacts would be an addition of 120 vehicles per hour.

**Attachment 6** is a map showing the project location and the proximity of residential streets within the Beverly Wilshire Homes Association: Blackburn Avenue, Orlando Avenue, and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The congestion from the traffic impact at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega could logically cause diverted traffic to these residential streets. According to Table B.2 of Attachment B to the Applicant's Traffic study, the Total Daily Trips for the amended project is estimated to be 1,947 vehicles per day. If only 10% of the daily traffic would divert to an Orlando- Blackburn or 4<sup>th</sup> Street route – the impact would be 195 vehicles per day – significantly above the 120 vehicles per day threshold. The possibility of a residential traffic impact requires that the Traffic Study be augmented with an analysis of the residential street conditions and impacts.

5. LADOT Traffic Study Policies allow up to a 15% transit discount for a project proximate to a Rapid Bus line. While the project is in-fact adjacent to Metro Line 705 Rapid Bus line, it seems illogical that the luxury components of the project (i.e.: homes with 24:7 on-call drivers; a "quality" restaurant; and a high end/specialty Supermarket) would lend itself to significant walking and public transit use.

Again, referring to LADOT policies, the granting of the full 15% transit/pedestrian credit must be evidenced by transit and pedestrian improvements. Reviewing the staff report on the project, it appears that the applicant has offered to install a pedestrian traffic signal and cross walk across Blackburn Avenue and to install a bus transit shelter for the Rapid Bus line stop on La Cienega Boulevard. While these are documented in the FINDINGS section of the staff report, there are no supporting conditions of approval that would compel the applicant to follow through on these measures. The project must be conditioned to install the traffic signal, cross walk and transit shelter to the satisfaction of LADOT to ensure the allowance of the 15% transit/pedestrian credit.

6. The Traffic Study assumes the geographic distribution project trips to be 20% north; 30% south; 15% east; and 35% to west. There is no evidence presented justifying this assumption. The assertion that only 15% of the traffic is oriented to the east understates the potential impact to the Beverly Wilshire Homes Association, the residential neighborhood to the east. The Traffic Study must be updated to justify the geographic distribution of project trips.

Based upon my review of the Traffic Analyses, I would conclude that the Traffic Study is inadequate and wrongly concludes "no significant" traffic impact.

The Los Angeles City Council should not certify the FEIR until the Traffic Study is corrected and appropriate traffic mitigation measures are identified. The FEIR should be re-circulated as appropriate and the approval of the requested project zone change and vesting tentative tract map should be conditioned to include appropriate measures.

Very truly yours,

Allyn D. Rifkin, PE

Attachment 1 – Allyn D. Rifkin, PE statement of qualifications

- Attachment 2 PM Peak Hour LOS Analysis at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega Original Project
- Attachment 3 PM Peak Hour LOS Analysis at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega Amended Project
- Attachment 4 Revised PM Peak Hour LOS Analysis at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega Amended Project
- Attachment 5 Comparative PM Peak Hour Trip Generation Analysis Amended Project
- Attachment 6 Project Location Map

## ATTACHMENT 1

## Allyn Rifkin, P.E. Experience and Qualifications

Mr. Rifkin has over 30 years of experience in the field of transportation engineering and planning. Included in that experience are assignments in both the private and public sectors, ranging from consultant for developers to research for the Automobile Club of Southern California. Until recently, he was the Chief of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation's Bureau of Planning and Land Use Development, responsible for managing a staff of 38 professionals and serving as the key department liaison between the development community and City Council on traffic mitigation and transportation planning issues. He supervised the completion of numerous project EIRs for the City of Los Angeles. His latest projects focused on transit oriented development along various rail alignments in the Los Angeles area. As a private consultant, Mr. Rifkin has worked closely with residential neighborhood associations and development projects. Other consultant efforts of interest include assistance to the Eagle Rock neighborhood in the formation of the Colorado Boulevard Pilot Community Parking program and to County Supervisor Yaroslavsky in the initial proposal to convert Olympic and Pico Boulevards into a one-way pair.

Professionally, Allyn is a registered professional engineer (PE) in the State of California. He is active in the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), and has served as the president of the ITE'S largest Chapter of ITE, the Southern California Chapter, with over 1,100 members. In addition to serving on the ITE National Transit and Transportation Planning committees, he has been instrumental on national steering committees for the ITE Trip Generation Committee and the Urban Goods Movement Committee. He has lectured extensively on the topics of traffic impact mitigation and on neighborhood traffic controls.

His college education began with a B.S. in Systems Engineering at UCLA and led to an M.S. in Transportation Engineering at Northwestern University. Rifkin is nationally recognized for his expertise in travel demand forecasting. His more recent work has involved traffic plans to relieve congestion in various hot spots of development in Southern California including the South Coast Plaza area of Orange County, Downtown Los Angeles, Westwood, the LAX Transportation Corridor (the initial area in Los Angeles to adopt a traffic impact mitigation fee), and Warner Center.

He was involved in the creation of five transportation trust funds with current balances exceeding \$23 million for transportation improvements. In his role as mediator of development traffic impact Mr. Rifkin launched a neighborhood traffic safety program currently exceeding \$1.5 million in neighborhood traffic controls and negotiated pedestrian safety mitigations from the Los Angeles Unified School District.

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ATTACHMENT 3 PM Peak Hour LOS Analysis at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega – Amended Project

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ATTACHMENT 4 Revised PM Peak Hour LOS Analysis at 3<sup>rd</sup>/La Cienega – Amended Project

## ATTACHMENT 5 Comparative PM Peak Hour Trip Generation Analysis – Amended Project

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Trip Generation Analysis

#### 333 S. LA CIENEGA Revised Project Modified Super Market

SOURCE:	ITE - TRIP GENERATION MANUAL - 9TH EDITION

#### PM Peak

	Source &	Quantitio				PM Pe	ak Hour		
Land Use Assumptions	Source a	Quantitiy	Units		Trip Rate			Total Trips	
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EXISTING USES									
Department Store	ITE 875	47,676	SF	0.95	0.92	1.87	-45	-44	-89
Transit/Walk Reduction - 15%							7	7	13
Pass-by Reduction - 50%							19	19	38
NET RETAIL							-19	-19	-38
TOTAL EXISTING							-19	-19	-38

PROPOSED USES									
Apartments	ITE 220	145	DU	0.40	0.22	0.62	60	29	90
Transit/Walk Reduction - 15%							-9	-4	-13
NET RETAIL							50	26	76
Super Market	see NOTE	27,685	SF	7.58	12.08	15.16	210	334	544
Internal Trip Reduction - 5%							-10	-17	-27
Transit/Walk Reduction - 15%							-29	-48	-78
Pass-by Reduction - 40%							-67	-108	-176
NET SUPERMARKET							102	162	263
					-				
Restaurant	ITE 931	3,370	SF	5.02	2.47	7.49	17	8	25
Internal Trip Reduction - 5%							-1	0	-1
Transit/Walk Reduction - 15%							-2	-1	-4
Pass-by Reduction - 10%							-1	-1	-2
NET RESTAURANT							11	7	18
TOTAL PROPOSED							163	195	357
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TOTAL NET				144	176	320

Note: PM Peak hour Supermarket rates from City of Burbank - based on average of 3 So Calif Whole Foods Mkts

increase over previous trip assignments

114	77
adjustment	factor

REVISED ALTERNATIVE

DEIR SCENARIO

**107 76 183** adjustment factor 1.75

**191** 1.68



ATTACHMENT 6 Project Location Map

## 3. FUTURE TRAFFIC CONDITIONS

### **PROJECT TRAFFIC**

The development of traffic generation estimates for the proposed project involves the use of a three-step process, trip generation, trip distribution, and traffic assignment. For the purposes of this report, the terms "traffic" and "trips" generally refer to vehicle trips.

### **Project Traffic Generation**

The proposed project consists of residential apartments and a high-end grocery store. Per City direction, empirical data was collected to properly develop trip rates based on the possibility that trip generation rates from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) underestimate trip making characteristics of high-end grocery stores that tend to operate longer hours and provide food service options that attract more patrons for shorter trips, relative to typical grocery stores. In conjunction with the City of Burbank, three sites were chosen for the empirical trip generation study:

- Whole Foods West Los Angeles (11666 National Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA)
- Whole Foods Pasadena (465 South Arroyo Parkway, Pasadena, CA)
- Whole Foods Beverly Hills (239 N. Crescent Drive, Beverly Hills, CA)

Surveys were conducted at all three Whole Foods Market (WFM) locations from 7:00 to 10:00 AM and 4:00 to 7:00 PM on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, November 5 to 7, 2013. At each location the WFM does not share parking with another use and the driveways provide exclusive access to WFM parking. At all three store locations, cars were counted at driveways as they entered and left the market's parking facilities. Additionally, the trip generation study collected information on the number of vehicles that were observed to park on street and patronize the WFM, thereby accounting for trips generated that may not have utilized the stores exclusive parking facility. The trip generation estimates are provided in Table 3.

The proposed project will replace existing land uses. As such, the total number of proposed project trips has been reduced by the number of trips associated with the existing land uses. This reduction eliminates double counting of the number of net new vehicles expected on the roadway.

The total number of project trips was also reduced by the expected internal capture of the proposed project. Internal capture refers to trips generated by mixed use developments where trips to or from two land uses in the proposed project are made by just one vehicle trip entering or leaving the project site. Such trips may include those made by residents patronizing the on-site retail before or after their commute to work. Internal capture results in a lower number of total vehicles entering and leaving the project site, which in turn reduces the total number of vehicles on the roadway network.



		TALA	RIA AT	BURB	ANK PI	TAB ROJECT	LE 3 ' TRIP (	GENERA	TION	ESTIM/	ATES						
												Esti	imated	Trip Ge	neratio	n	
Land Use	Siz	.e	ITE	Daily	Peak ⊢	lour		PM	Peak H	lour	Daily	AM	Peak H	lour	PM	Peak ⊢	lour
			Code	Rate	Rate	% In	% Out	Rate	% In	% Out	Trips	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
<u>Proposed Land Uses</u>	42.00	lunf	050	100.0	7 50	530/	470/	12.00	400/	510/	4 202	170	150	226	25.4	265	510
Less 5% Walk/Bike Credit [i] Less 5% Walk/Bike Credit [i] Retail - Supermarket less credits	42.90	KSI	850	102.2	7.50	33%	4776	12.06	4976	21%	4,392 (1757) (264) ( <u>119)</u> 2,253	(69) (10) ( <u>5)</u> 89	(61) (10) (4) 78	(130) (20) ( <u>9)</u> 167	(102) (15) (7) 130	265 (106) (16) (7) 136	(208) (31) ( <u>14)</u> 266
Apartment [b]	241.00	DU	220	6.65	0.51	20%	80%	0.62	65%	35%	1,584	24	98	122	98	52	150
PROPOSED PROJECT TRIP E	STIMATI	s									3,837	113	176	289	228	188	416
<u>Existing Land Uses</u>																	
General Office Building [c]	21.00	ksf	710	11.03	1.56	88%	12%	1.49	17%	83%	(232)	(29)	(4)	(33)	(5)	(26)	(31)
Single Family Detached House [d]	2.00	DU	210	9.52	0.75	25%	75%	1.00	63%	37%	(19)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(2)
Apartment [b]	41.00	DU	220	6.65	0.51	20%	80%	0.62	65%	35%	(273)	(4)	(17)	(21)	(16)	(9)	(25)
Church [e]	12.00	ksf	560	9.11	0.56	62%	38%	0.55	48%	52%	(109)	(4)	(3)	(7)	(3)	(4)	(7)
Drinking Place [f]	1.83	ksf	925					11.34	66%	34%		n/a	n/a	n/a	(14)	(7)	(21)
TRIP CREDITS FOR EXISTING	G LAND	JSES TO	D BE RE	MOVE	D						(633)	(38)	(25)	(63)	(39)	(47)	(86)
TOTAL PROJECT TRIP GENE	RATION	ESTIMA	ATE								3,205	75	151	226	189	141	330

Notes:

- Source: Trip Generation, Ninth Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), 2012. The average trip generation rate [b]
- was used for trip generation purposes. Source: The Dependence purpose. Source: The Dependence in Minh Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), 2012. The average trip generation rate was used for trip generation purposes. [c]
- Source: Trip Generation, Ninth Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), 2012. The average trip generation rate [d]

was used for trip generation purposes. Source: Trip Generation, Ninth Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), 2012. The average trip generation rate [e] was used for trip generation purposes.

Source: Trip Generation, Ninth Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), 2012. The average trip generation rate [f]

was used for trip generation purposes.

[g] Given the large number of retail trips made as intermediate stops on the way from an origin to a primary trip destination without a

route diversion, a pass-by trip credit of 40% was applied. Given the large number of proposed retail trips that could be made by on-site residents without a vehicle trip, an internal trip credit of [h]

10% was applied. Given the number of residences and employment locations within a 1/2 mile of the project site, a bike/walk trip credit of 5% was applied. [i]

<sup>.</sup> Trip generation rate was calculated based on empirical data collected at three (3) Whole Foods stores in 2013. The trip generation rate presented is [a] the average of the rates observed at the three stores.