

Memorandum

To: Chair and Commissioners

Date: November 21, 2008

From: JOHN F. BARNA, JR

File: Book Item 2.2c (9)
Action

Ref: Final Environmental Impact Report – The Block at Orange Expansion Project (Resolution E-08-29)

Issue: Should the Commission, as a Responsible Agency, consider the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Block at Orange Expansion Project (Expansion Project) located in the central portion of Orange County in the City of Orange and approve this project for consideration of a new public road connection directly opposite the State Route 22 westbound The City Drive on/off ramps at Metropolitan Drive?

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Commission consider the FEIR and statement of overriding considerations for the Expansion Project and approve this project to allow for future consideration of a new public road connection.

Background: The Expansion Project is proposed to expand the Block at Orange located at 20 City Boulevard West in the City of Orange. The 85.67 acre site is currently developed with a variety of retail shops and restaurants, and a 30-screen movie theater. The Expansion Project includes 11,000 square meters gross building area of retail space, an apartment complex that includes 500 units, two hotels (300 units), parking improvements, and circulation improvements including a new City street (referred to as the “The Block Drive” or the “Fourth Leg”) located at Metropolitan Drive opposite the westbound SR-22 on/off ramps.

On June 5, 2006, in their Project Report, Caltrans approved the preferred alternative proposal to construct a city street opposite the intersection at State Route 22 westbound The City Drive on/off ramps and Metropolitan Drive. The proposed project is to be funded entirely by the City of Orange without the use of State or Federal funds. Construction is expected to begin January 2009.

The proposed new public road connection was evaluated in the site plan for the Expansion Project FEIR. The City of Orange was the lead agency for the FEIR. Caltrans was identified as a responsible agency and provided comments in response to the draft environmental document. The FEIR was approved following a hearing by the City of Orange on January 13, 2004. An addendum to the FEIR addressing minor changes to the approved plan was approved by the City of Orange, following a hearing, on December 13, 2005. The site plan in the addendum to the FEIR also included the proposed new public road connection at the Metropolitan Drive/SR 22 westbound ramp intersection. State Route 22 is part of the National Highway System and the

freeway and Expressway System. Metropolitan Drive is classified by the City of Orange as a secondary arterial.

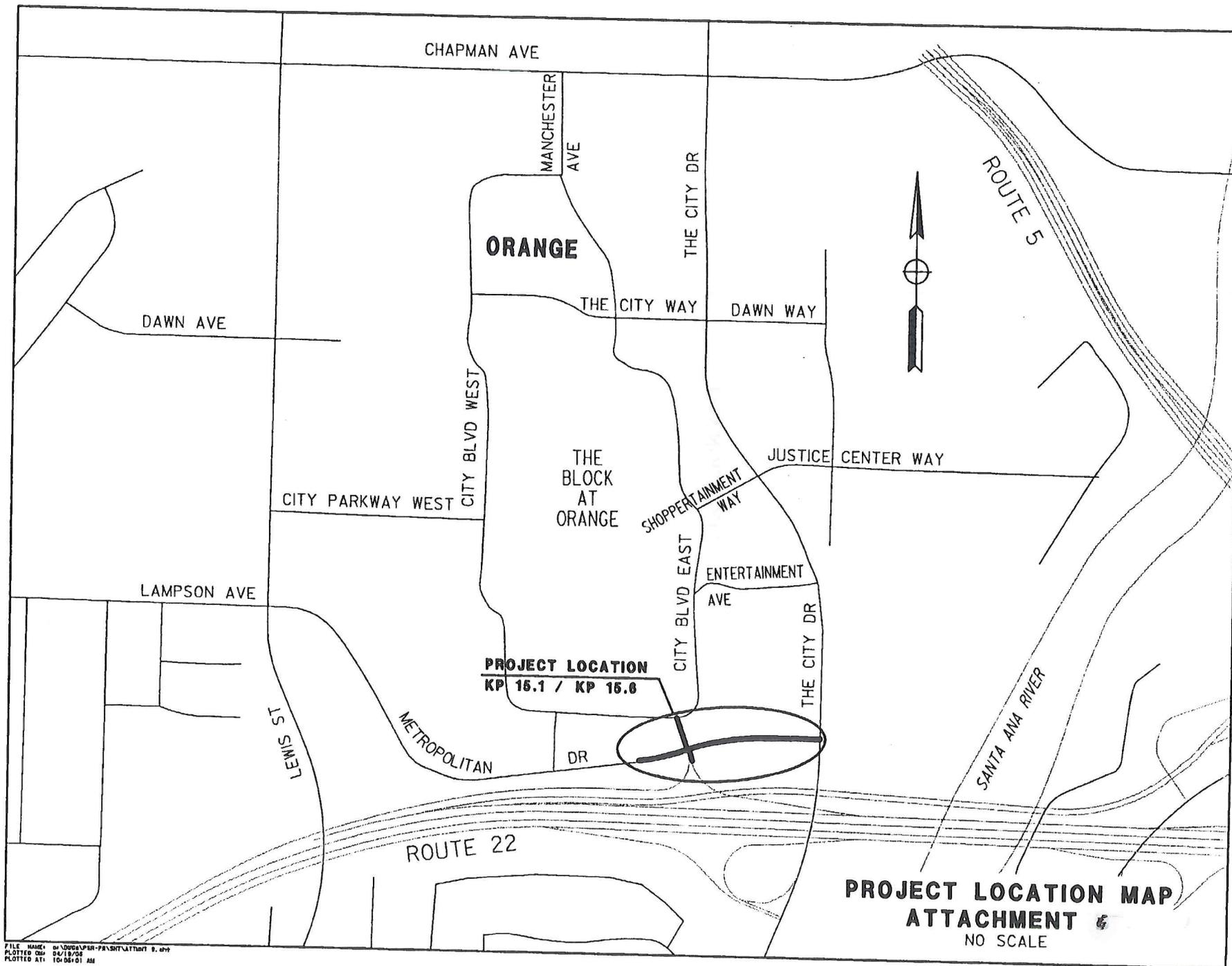
At the time of project approval, the City of Orange City Council adopted a statement of overriding considerations for the Expansion Project due to three impacts that remain significant and unavoidable despite implementation of feasible mitigation measures. These impacts are aesthetics due to the substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; air quality violations that substantially contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation as a result of construction and operation, and noise due to construction activity. These unavoidable impacts do not relate to the new public road connection. The proposed city street and public road connection will improve traffic circulation on the local street system and reduce traffic congestion resulting in a reduced potential for traffic accidents.

Attachment – Project Location

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Resolution for Future Consideration of New Public Road Connection 12-ORA-22, 15.1/15.6 (PM R9.4/R9.7) Resolution E-08-29

- 1.1 **WHEREAS**, the City of Orange (City) has completed a Final Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:
- The Block at Orange Expansion Project
- 1.2 **WHEREAS**, the City has certified that the Final Environmental Impact Report has been completed pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines for its implementation; and
- 1.3 **WHEREAS**, the project includes improvements at the Route 22 westbound The City Drive on/off ramps at Metropolitan Drive.
- 1.4 **WHEREAS**, the Final Environmental Impact Report did identify significant effects after mitigation; and
- 1.5 **WHEREAS**, the California Transportation Commission, as a responsible agency has considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report.
- 2.1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby approve the above referenced project to allow for future consideration of a new public road connection.



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