



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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June 25, 2020

Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Proposed Moreno Elementary School Replacement Project

South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are meant as guidance for the Lead Agency and should be incorporated into the Final MND.

South Coast AQMD Staff's Summary of Project Description

The Lead Agency proposes to construct a new elementary school with a 77,000-square-foot, two-story building containing 38 classrooms and five portable classrooms for future expansion on 8.97 acres (Proposed Project). The Proposed Project would accommodate the existing 483 students and provide capacity to accommodate an additional 467 students for a total of approximately 950 students. The Proposed Project is located at 13700 Nason Street on the northeast corner of Bay Avenue and Nason Street in the City of Moreno Valley. Construction is anticipated to take 18 months and be completed in early 2022¹.

South Coast AQMD Staff's Summary of Air Quality Analyses

In the Air Quality Analysis section, the Lead Agency quantified the Proposed Project's construction and operational emissions and compared those emissions to South Coast AQMD's recommended regional and localized air quality CEQA significance thresholds. Based on the analysis, the Lead Agency found that the Proposed Project's regional construction air quality impacts would be less than significant². However, the Lead Agency found that the Proposed Project's localized PM_{2.5} emissions from construction activities would be 6.25 pounds per day (lbs/day), which would exceed South Coast AQMD's localized air quality CEQA significance threshold for PM_{2.5} at 6 lbs/day³. With implementation of Mitigation Measure Air Quality (AQ)-1, which requires watering ground surfaces three times per day during site preparation and grading to minimize fugitive dust emissions⁴, the Proposed Project's localized construction emissions from PM_{2.5} would be reduced to be less than significant at 5.70 lbs/day⁵.

South Coast AQMD Staff's Comments

CEQA Consultation Requirements for School Facilities

In the MND, the Lead Agency reviewed the South Coast AQMD Facility Information Detail (FIND) database and found no permitted facilities or mobile sources within one quarter mile of the Proposed

¹ MND. Chapter 3 Project Description, Page 25.

² MND. Chapter 5 Environmental Analysis, Pages 50 to 51.

³ *Ibid.* Page 52.

⁴ *Ibid.* Page 53.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Project site⁶. The California Public Resources Code 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15186 establish special consultation requirements for school projects involving the purchase of a school site or the construction of a secondary or elementary school by a school district, which are meant to ensure that lead agencies consult with other agencies, such as the local air district, in order to carefully examine and disclose the potential health risks that may result from siting a school within one-fourth mile of facilities that may reasonably be anticipated to emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste. Here, since the Proposed Project involves construction of a new elementary school, the Proposed Project is subject to the consultation requirements. Therefore, South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency initiate the required consultation. For a search of South Coast AQMD permitted facilities pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21151.8 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15186, please fill out the “Grid Search Request Form” that is available at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/aqmd-forms/Permit/ab3205-request-form.pdf>.

Recommended Mitigation Measure for Localized Air Quality Impacts from Construction: Tier 4 Final Construction Equipment or Level 3 Diesel-Particulate Filters

CEQA requires that all feasible mitigation measures that go beyond what is required by law be utilized to minimize or eliminate any significant adverse air quality impacts. The Proposed Project’s localized PM_{2.5} construction emissions were mitigated to 5.70 lbs/day, which were slightly below South Coast AQMD’s localized air quality CEQA significance threshold for PM_{2.5} at 6 lbs/day⁷. Therefore, to further reduce PM_{2.5} emissions during construction, South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency incorporate the following mitigation measure in the Final MND.

- Require the use of off-road diesel-powered construction equipment that meets or exceeds the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Tier 4 Final off-road emissions standards for equipment rated at 50 horsepower or greater during construction of the Proposed Project. Such equipment will be outfitted with Best Available Control Technology (BACT) devices including a CARB certified Level 3 Diesel Particulate Filter (DPFs). Level 3 DPFs are capable of achieving at least 85 percent reduction in particulate matter emissions⁸. A list of CARB verified DPFs are available on the CARB website⁹.

To ensure that Tier 4 Final construction equipment or better would be used during the Proposed Project’s construction, South Coast AQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency include this requirement in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts with construction contractor(s). Successful contractor(s) must demonstrate the ability to supply the compliant construction equipment for use prior to any ground disturbing and construction activities. A copy of each unit’s certified tier specification, model year specification, and CARB or South Coast AQMD operating permit (if applicable) shall be available upon request at the time of mobilization of each applicable unit of equipment. Additionally, the Lead Agency should require periodic reporting and provision of written documents by construction contractor(s) to ensure compliance, and conduct regular inspections to the maximum extent feasible to ensure compliance.

In the event that construction equipment cannot meet the Tier 4 Final engine certification, the Project representative(s) or contractor(s) must demonstrate through future study with written findings supported by substantial evidence that is approved by the Lead Agency before using other technologies/strategies. Alternative applicable strategies may include, but would not be

⁶ *Ibid.* Page 56.

⁷ It is based on 3.5 acres with sensitive receptors at 25 meters in Source Receptor Area 24 (Perris Valley).

⁸ CARB. November 16-17, 2004. *Diesel Off-Road Equipment Measure – Workshop*. Page 17. Accessed at: https://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/ordiesel/presentations/nov16-04_workshop.pdf.

⁹ *Ibid.* Page 18.

limited to, construction equipment with Tier 4 Interim or Tier 3 emission standards and reduction in the number and/or horsepower rating of construction equipment.

Conclusion

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15074, prior to approving the Proposed Project, the Lead Agency shall consider the MND for adoption together with any comments received during the public review process. Please provide South Coast AQMD with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the adoption of the Final MND. When responding to issues raised in the comments, response should provide sufficient details giving reasons why specific comments and suggestions are not accepted. There should be good faith, reasoned analysis in response. Conclusory statements unsupported by factual information do not facilitate the purpose and goal of CEQA on public disclosure and are not meaningful, informative, or useful to decision makers and the public who are interested in the Proposed Project. Further, when the Lead Agency makes the finding that the recommended mitigation measure is not feasible, the Lead Agency should describe the specific reasons supported by substantial evidence for rejecting it in the Final MND (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15070 and 15074.1).

South Coast AQMD staff is available to work with the Lead Agency to address any air quality questions that may arise from this comment letter. Please contact Margaret Isied, Assistant Air Quality Specialist, at misied@aqmd.gov, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lijin Sun

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Program Supervisor, CEQA IGR

Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

LS:MI

RVC200602-12

Control Number