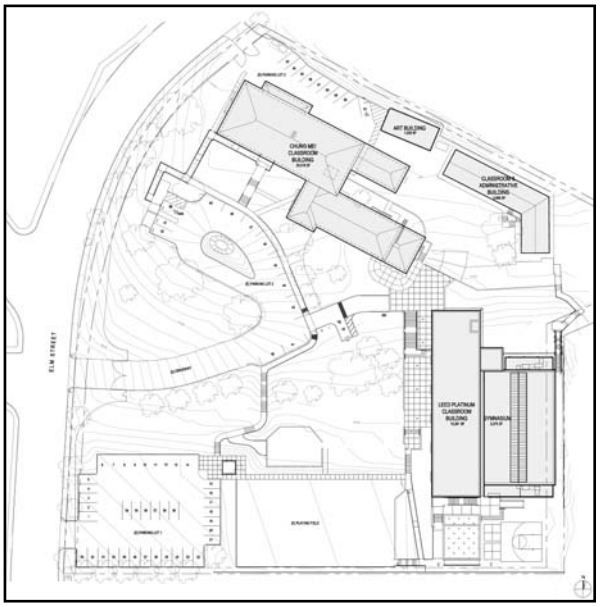
Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report

SCH No. 2015112047



City of El Cerrito
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March 2016

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THIS DOCUMENT

This Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (Draft SEIR) is prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the Summit K2 Charter School Operational Expansion Project ("Project") (State Clearinghouse Number 2015112047). This document is prepared in conformance with CEQA (California Public Resources Code, Section 21000, et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000, et seq.), and the City of El Cerrito rules and regulations. This Draft SEIR is intended to serve as an informational document for the public agency decision makers and the public regarding the Project.

The purpose of an EIR is to disclose information to the public and to decision makers about the potential environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR does not recommend either approval or denial of a proposed project; rather, it is intended to provide a source of independent and impartial analysis of the foreseeable environmental impacts of a proposed course of action. This Draft SEIR describes the proposed Project, analyzes its environmental effects, and discusses reasonable alternatives that would avoid, reduce, or minimize environmental impacts.

The City of El Cerrito is the lead agency for the proposed Project. The El Cerrito Planning Commission will consider the information presented in this document in making an informed decision regarding the approval, conditions of approval, or denial of the proposed Project.

PREVIOUS ANALYSIS AND SUBSEQUENT EIR

The Windrush School Master Plan Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration ("Prior MND") was adopted in 2007 for physical and programmatic changes to the school operated at the Project site (1800 Elm Street). Operation of the Summit K2 Charter School was approved on January 28, 2014, with reliance on the environmental analysis contained in the Prior MND. The Prior MND (State Clearinghouse Number 2007042071) is incorporated by reference.

In the section discussing Subsequent EIRs and Negative Declarations, CEQA Guidelines §15162 provides that:

> (a) When an EIR has been certified or a negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in the light of the whole record, one or more of the following:

(1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;

(2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or

(3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the Negative Declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:

(A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;

(B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;

(C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or

(D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative

The City issued an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation for the proposed Project on November 23, 2015, which circulated for the statutory 30-day period. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15162, the Initial Study determined that the impacts of the proposed Project would be within those of the Prior MND in all topic areas except Noise and Transportation and Circulation. The Initial Study is included as Appendix A.

This document is a Draft SEIR to the Prior MND focused by the Initial Study to the topic areas of Noise and Transportation and Circulation. This Draft SEIR evaluates the potential environmental impacts that might reasonably be anticipated to result from the expanded operations and student enrollment proposed under the Project. The analysis in this Draft SEIR includes updated existing conditions regarding the noise and traffic environment. There are otherwise no changed circumstances or new information that would affect this analysis.

SUBSEQUENT EIR ORGANIZATION

Following this brief introduction to the Draft SEIR, the document's ensuing chapters include the following:

Chapter 2: Executive Summary and Impact Overview

Chapter 3: Project Description

Chapter 4: Noise

Chapter 5: Transportation and Circulation

Chapter 6: Alternatives

Chapter 7: References

Appendices

In Chapters 4 and 5, each assessment of potential environmental effects is preceded by a description of the environmental setting, as it relates to the respective environmental topic under discussion. This is then followed by an evaluation of environmental impacts that may be associated with the Project and the mitigation measures that would reduce or eliminate these impacts, as may be necessary.

SEIR REVIEW PROCESS

This Draft SEIR is intended to enable City decision makers, public agencies and interested citizens to evaluate the environmental consequences associated with the proposed Project. The City of El Cerrito, as lead agency, will consider the information contained in the SEIR prior to making a decision on the Project. As required under CEQA, the City must also respond to each significant effect identified in the SEIR by making findings and if necessary, by making a statement of overriding considerations for significant and unavoidable effects (if any) before approving the Project. In accordance with California law, the SEIR on the Project must be certified before any action on the Project can be taken. SEIR certification does not constitute Project approval.

During the review period for this Draft SEIR, interested individuals, organizations and agencies may offer their comments on its evaluation of Project impacts and alternatives. The comments received during this public review period will be compiled and presented together with responses to these comments in a Final SEIR. Together, the Draft SEIR and the Final SEIR will constitute the SEIR for the Project. The El Cerrito Planning Commission will review the SEIR documents at a noticed public meeting and will consider whether or not to certify the SEIR and approve the Project.

In reviewing the Draft SEIR, readers should focus on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible environmental impacts associated with the Project. Readers are also encouraged to review and comment on ways in which significant impacts associated with this Project might be avoided or mitigated. Comments are most helpful when they suggest additional specific alternatives or new or modified mitigation measures that would provide better ways to avoid or mitigate significant environmental impacts. Reviewers should

explain the basis for their comments and, whenever possible, should submit data or references in support of their comments.

This Draft SEIR will be circulated for a minimum forty-five (45) day public review period. During that public review period, comments should be submitted in writing to:

Sean Moss
Senior Planner
City of El Cerrito, Community Development Department
10890 San Pablo Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530
Phone: 510-215-4359
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After reviewing the SEIR and following action to certify it as adequate and complete, the El Cerrito Planning Commission will be in a position to approve, revise or reject the Project as currently proposed. This determination will be based upon information presented on the entirety of the Project, its impacts and probable consequences, and the possible alternatives and mitigation measures available.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT UNDER REVIEW

PROJECT LOCATION

Summit K2 Charter School is located at 1800 Elm Street in El Cerrito in a residential neighborhood a couple blocks from the El Cerrito del Norte BART station. The approximately 4-acre parcel is identified as assessor's parcel number (APN) 502-122-041.

Surrounding land uses are primarily single-family residential.

SITE HISTORY AND PRIOR ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

A private school, Windrush School, operated under a series of use permits and amendments since 1987, the most recent of which were approved in 2007, including a master plan that was analyzed in the Prior MND. Under the approved use permits, Windrush was permitted to operate a school of up to 347 students in grades K-8. School hours were limited to 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. and summer programs were capped at 175 students. Windrush School ceased operation at the site in 2012 due to financial considerations.

Summit K2 Charter School was found to be compliant with the existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) by the El Cerrito Zoning Administrator (and confirmed by the Planning Commission) and began operations in the Fall of 2014 with grade 7 enrollment of 125 students and continued operations in Fall of 2015 with 240 7th and 8th grade students.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The CUP limits student enrollment to 347 students during the normal school year and to 175 students during the summer session and limits normal school days to the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The Project involves proposed amendments to the existing CUP that would allow increased usage of the Summit K2 Charter School to include high school (grades 9 through 12) in addition to middle school students, increased enrollment to 630 students during the normal school year and 315 students during the summer session, and extension of the allowable normal operating hours by a half hour to 3:30 p.m. during normal school days.

The proposed changes to the CUP represent an increase of the enrollment limit during the normal school year by 283 students compared to the existing CUP and 390 students compared to existing conditions, and an increase in the enrollment limit during the school's summer session by 140 students.

The proposed expansion of the school program and student enrollment can be accommodated at the site as it exists today and no changes are proposed to the buildings or site. The school does not plan to change the existing schedule or school activities as a part of this Project though retains some flexibility to do so within the allowances under their use permit.

The Project also includes improvements to intersection operation with respect to signal timing and pedestrians and bicycles at the school driveway intersection (at Elm Street/Hill Street/Key Boulevard.

The proposed Project is described in greater detail with figures in Chapter 3, Project Description.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This summary provides an overview of the analysis contained in Chapters 4 and 5. CEQA Guidelines §15123(b) requires a summary to include discussion of: (1) each significant effect with proposed mitigation measures and alternatives that would reduce or avoid that effect; (2) areas of controversy known to the lead Agency including issues raised by agencies and the public; and (3) issues to be resolved including the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate the significant effects.

The following section is organized as follows: (1) a summary of the Initial Study findings; (2) potential areas of controversy; (3) significant and significant unavoidable impacts; and (4) alternatives to the proposed Project that would reduce or avoid the environmental impacts of the project. A summary is also required to discuss issues to be resolved, including the choice among alternatives, and whether or how to mitigate significant environmental effects.

INITIAL STUDY FINDINGS

The potential environmental effects associated with physical and programmatic changes to the school operated at the Project site were previously addressed under for the Windrush School Master Plan in the Prior MND adopted in 2007.

The City prepared an Initial Study to identify potential impacts that could occur with development of the currently proposed Project, as compared to those that were identified in the Prior MND. The Initial Study is included as Appendix A. The Initial Study concluded that there would be no additional impacts to the following environmental issues, beyond those considered in the Prior MND:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forest Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Utilities and Service Systems

The Prior MND included mitigation measures related to construction activities at the site. The current Project does not include construction, so no mitigation is carried over from the Prior MND, as fully discussed in the Initial Study.

SCOPING MEETING AND KNOWN CONCERNS

The City held a scoping meeting to accept comment on the scope of the environmental analysis on December 2, 2015, during the 30-day period for the Initial Study and Notice of Preparation.

Verbal comments at the scoping meeting included concerns about existing and proposed traffic and parking in the area, noise from students and vehicles, and whether a high school is being considered in a different location. Comments received at the scoping meeting were taken into account during preparation of this document, including in the Noise, Transportation and Circulation, and Alternatives chapters.

No written comments were received during the comment period, though one letter was received just after the comment period. This letter from Franklin Leong is included with the Initial Study in Appendix A. The letter was a follow-up to comments provided verbally at the scoping meeting and includes tallies of observed vehicles passing Manor Circle at Elm Street during various times of the day. These observed volumes were compared to the volumes used in the traffic study (Appendix C) and found to be comparable for similar times of the day and time periods. The letter also noted that vehicles often ignore the "Keep Clear" sign at the intersection of Elm Street and Manor Circle. This is considered a code enforcement item (rather than environmental issue) and has been provided to the City for their attention.

IMPACT SUMMARY

This document is a Draft SEIR to the Prior MND focused by the Initial Study to the topic areas of Noise and Transportation and Circulation. This Draft SEIR evaluates the potential environmental impacts that might reasonably be anticipated to result from the expanded operations and student enrollment proposed under the Project under those two topic areas.

The analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 of this document provide a description of the existing setting, potential impacts of Project implementation, and recommended mitigation measures to reduce or avoid potentially significant impacts that could occur as a result of Project implementation. **Table 2.1** at the end of this chapter lists a summary statement of each impact and corresponding mitigation measure, if warranted, as well as the level of significance after mitigation.

SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS THAT CANNOT BE MITIGATED TO A LEVEL OF LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT

No significant and unavoidable impacts have been identified. All impacts are either less than significant or can be reduced to that level through mitigation, as discussed in the following text and table.

IMPACTS REDUCED TO A LEVEL OF LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT THROUGH MITIGATION

The following potentially significant impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels with implementation of mitigation measures:

Noise: There are no significant impacts identified for the topic of noise.

Traffic: The Project would cause a significant impact to the intersection of Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard under existing conditions that would be fully mitigated through restriping of the intersection to split the existing single travel lane into one left turn only lane and one through-right lane (Impact and Mitigation Measure Traffic-2).

The Project would contribute to a significant impact to the intersection of San Pablo Avenue / Hill Street / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard under cumulative conditions that would be fully mitigated through planned improvements to this intersection under the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, to which the Project will contribute a fair share of funding (Impact and Mitigation Measure Traffic-4).

The Project could result in vehicle queues during after-school pick-up that exceed available queuing capacity. The potential for recurring queues will be monitored, and if they occur, abated through operational changes (Impact and Mitigation Measure Traffic-5).

All other impacts would be less than significant without the need for mitigation, as detailed in Table 2.1 and in the Initial Study.

IMPACTS DETERMINED NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

The following potentially significant impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels with implementation of mitigation measures:

Noise: The increased number of students at the site would result in increased noise levels generated at the site and experienced at surrounding residences; however, the noise level at nearby residential properties would remain within acceptable noise levels and the impact of the Project would be less than significant (Impact Noise-1).

The increased student enrollment would also increase traffic volumes on surrounding streets and related traffic noise at area residences; however, the increased traffic noise would be less than 1 decibel and the impact would be considered less than significant (Impact Noise-2).

Traffic: The Project would contribute additional traffic to existing and future cumulative intersection operations; however, with the exception of the intersections identified in Traffic-2 and Traffic-4, the intersection operations would remain within acceptable Levels of Service and Project impacts would be less than significant (Impacts Traffic-1 and Traffic-3).

Topic areas other than Noise and Traffic included less-than-significant impacts or no impact, as detailed in the Initial Study.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS SUMMARY

The two alternatives analyzed in Chapter 6 are summarized below.

Alternative A: No Project, Enrollment to Current Approvals is a "no project" alternative. This alternative represents the possibility that the current Project is not approved and the Summit K2 Charter School would continue to operate at the site under existing approvals and conditions. The existing Conditional Use Permit would allow for enrollment of up to 347 students in grades K through 8, which represents an increase of 107 students over existing conditions. Because the school is not yet operating at the full allowable enrollment, Alternative A represents 27% of the enrollment increase proposed by the Project.

Alternative B: Reduced Enrollment (85% of Proposed) was chosen to avoid the Project impact under existing conditions to the intersection of Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard. Under Alternative B, enrollment would be increased to 571 students and would allow for the increased enrollment to be any combination of middle and high school students, as under the proposed Project. Alternative B represents an increase of 331 students at the site, which would be 85% of the enrollment increase proposed by the Project.

ALTERNATIVES CONCLUSION

No significant and unavoidable impacts were identified under the proposed Project. All Project impacts are either less than significant or can be reduced to those levels through implementation of the mitigation contained in this Draft SEIR. Because of the low impact of the proposed Project, differences between it and the Alternatives are marginal and confined to reductions in already less than significant impacts or avoidance of the need for mitigation.

Alternative B would be the environmentally superior alternative. Alternative B would meet all Project Objectives, though to a marginally lessened degree than would the proposed Project. Alternative B would avoid the Project's only intersection impact under existing conditions (at Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard) and the potential for queuing hazards. The Project's contribution to cumulative impacts at the intersections of Key Boulevard /Cutting Boulevard and San Pablo Avenue/Peerless Avenue/Eastshore Boulevard/Hill Street would remain significant and require mitigation. However, the reduction in the level of significance of impacts would also reduce this Alternative's contribution toward mitigation measures that, when implemented, would improve operating conditions to better than what would be experienced without the addition of Project trips. Specifically, improvements to Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard would be fully funded by the Project under the proposed Project whereas Alternative B would only be required to contribute a fair share contribution to these improvements. Similarly, the fair share contribution toward funding improvements at the San Pablo Avenue/Peerless Avenue/Eastshore Boulevard/Hill Street intersection would be approximately 15% less under Alternative B than under the proposed Project. As noted in the Initial Study and this Draft SEIR, all other impacts of the Project would be less-than-significant and Alternative B would have the same or only marginally reduced impact in other topic areas.

Because Alternative A represents continued operation under the existing Conditional Use Permit with no new approvals required, there would be no mechanism to require mitigation under this Alternative. Therefore, the traffic impacts under Alternative A would remain significant and Alternative A would not be environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

TABLE 2-1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Potential Environmental Impacts	Recommended Mitigation Measures	Resulting Level of Significance
Significant and Unavoidable Impacts		
None	None	Not Applicable
Less than Significant Impacts After Mitigation		
Traffic-2: Key Blvd. and Cutting Blvd. Existing Plus Project Intersection Operation. The Project would contribute additional traffic to existing intersection operations that would cause the intersection operations to degrade from LOS C to LOS E. This is a significant impact.	**Mitigation Measure Traffic-2: Restriping on Key Blvd. at Cutting Blvd**. The project applicants shall fully fund and work with the City to implement the following improvements at the Key Blvd. and Cutting Blvd. Intersection: • Restripe the intersection to remove five parking spaces along the southern side of the eastern leg of Key Blvd. and split the existing westbound single travel lane into one left turn only lane and one through-right lane.	Less than Significant
Traffic-4: San Pablo Ave. / Hill St. / Peerless Ave. / Eastshore Blvd. Cumulative Plus Project Intersection Operation. The Project would contribute an additional 8 seconds of additional delay to already deficient (LOS F) intersection operations at this intersection. This is a significant impact.	**Mitigation Measure Traffic-4: Fair Share Contributions to Improvements at San Pablo Ave. / Hill St. / Peerless Ave. / Eastshore Blvd**. The project applicants shall pay fair share percentage to the City for the construction of the improvements to this intersection identified in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, which include: • Elimination of the second southbound left-turn lane on San Pablo Avenue, and • Modified access to Peerless Avenue as one-way inbound.	Less than Significant
Impact Traffic-5: Queuing Could Exceed Capacity. Queuing of vehicles could exceed the available capacity during the after-school PM peak hour, which could impact vehicle travel on nearby street and would be a significant impact.	**Mitigation Measure Traffic-5: Queue Monitoring and Abatement**. It shall be the responsibility of the project operator to ensure that recurring vehicle queues do not occur that interfere with vehicle travel lanes on public roadways. If a recurring queue occurs, the project operator shall employ abatement methods as needed to abate the queue. Suggested abatement methods include but are not limited to the following: • To accommodate expected maximum queues during afternoon pick-up activities, the school could encourage students to use a mode other than a personal vehicle in order to achieve a 10 percent or greater reduction in after-school	Less than Significant

TABLE 2-1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Potential Environmental Impacts	Recommended Mitigation Measures	Resulting Level of Significance
	pick-ups. • Alternatively, the school could assure that 10 percent or more of the students leave the campus at least 15 minutes later than the majority of students to achieve a reduced maximum queue that could be accommodated within the on-site and on-street loading spaces. (This could be achieved through participation in after-school activities or off-setting of school hours for different grades.)	
Less than Significant Impacts with No Mitigation Required		
Noise-1: On-site Operations. Proposed Project operations would not result in the exposure of persons to excessive noise levels or result in a substantial increase in permanent or periodic existing noise levels without the Project. This is a less-than-significant impact.	No mitigation warranted.	Less than Significant
Noise-2: Project-Generated Traffic. Traffic noise levels along roadways serving the site would not be substantially increased with the operation of the Project. This is a less-than-significant impact.	No mitigation warranted.	Less than Significant
Traffic-1: Existing Plus Project Intersection Operation. The Project would contribute additional traffic to existing intersection operations; however, with the exception of the intersection identified in Traffic-2, the intersection operations would remain within acceptable Levels of Service and the impact would be less than significant.	No mitigation warranted.	Less than Significant
Traffic-3: Cumulative Plus Project Intersection Operation. The Project would contribute additional traffic to cumulative intersection operations; however, with the exception of the intersection identified in Traffic-4, the intersections would operate within acceptable Levels of Service and the contribution of the Project to cumulative intersection impacts would be less than significant.	No mitigation warranted.	Less than Significant

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3

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the Project location, existing uses, details of the proposed Project, required approvals, Project objectives, and intended uses of the EIR.

PROJECT SITE

LOCATION AND VICINITY

Summit K2 Charter School is located at 1800 Elm Street in El Cerrito in a residential neighborhood approximately 400 feet from the El Cerrito del Norte BART station. The approximately 4-acre parcel is identified as assessor's parcel number (APN) 502-122-041.

Surrounding land uses are primarily single-family residential. An existing nine-foot-high wood acoustic wall is located at the southern boundary of the Project site and acts as a sound barrier to the adjacent Manor Circle residences.

EXISTING USES AND SITE HISTORY

The site was first developed for institutional use in 1935, when the Chung Mei Home for homeless and orphaned Chinese-American boys was constructed on the site and remained in operation until 1954. From 1956 to 1974 the site served as the home of the Western Baptist Bible College. From 1974 to 1987 the site was operated as the Armstrong Preparatory School. During its use of the site, the school administration applied for and received approval from the City of El Cerrito of a use permit to define its operation and therefore limit its potential impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

A private school, Windrush School, operated under a series of use permits and amendments since 1987, the most recent of which were approved in 2007, including a master plan ("Prior Project") that was analyzed in the Prior MND. Under the approved use permits, Windrush was permitted to operate a school of up to 347 students in grades K-8. School hours were limited to 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. and summer programs were capped at 175 students. Windrush School ceased operation at the site in 2012 due to financial considerations.

Summit K2 Charter School was found to be compliant with the existing conditional use permit by the El Cerrito Zoning Administrator (and confirmed by the Planning Commission) and began operations in the Fall of 2014 with grade 7 enrollment of 125 students and continued operations in Fall of 2015 with 240 students in grades 7 and 8.

Figure 3.1 shows the school's location and surrounding neighborhood and **Figure 3.2** shows the existing site plan.

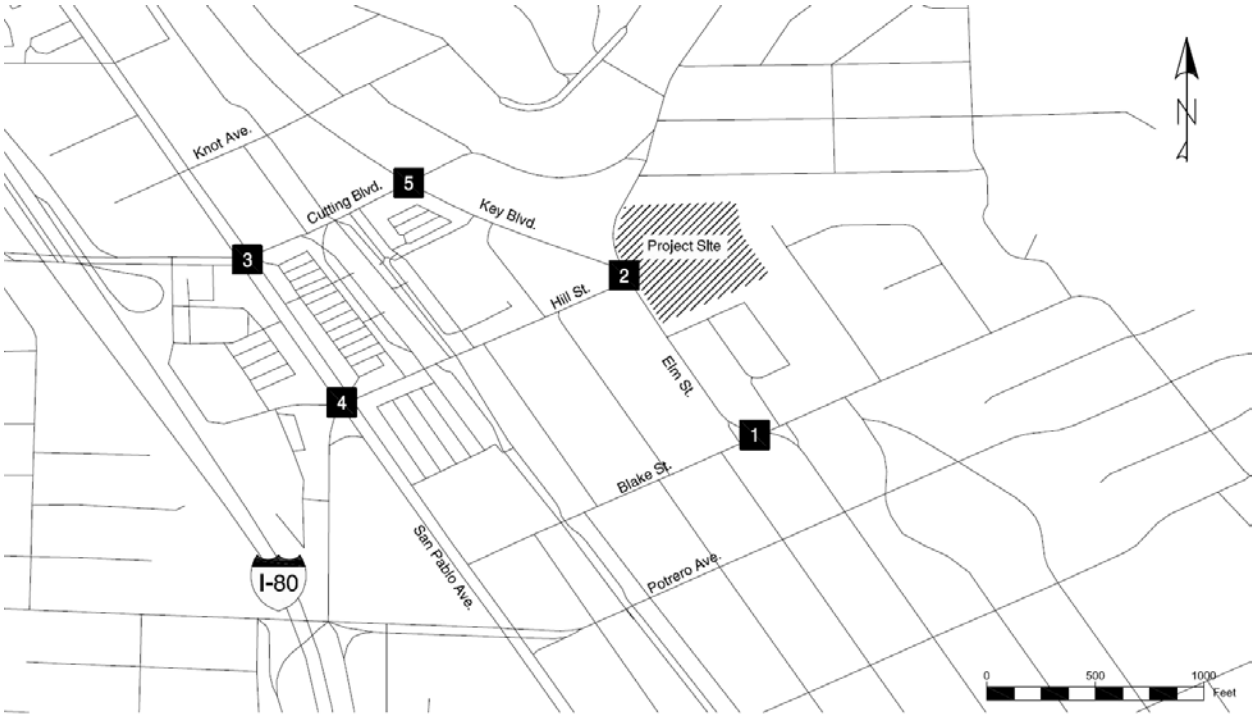

Figure 3.1: Project Location

Source: Kittelson & Associates, with traffic study locations shown (see Chapter 5: Transportation and Circulation)

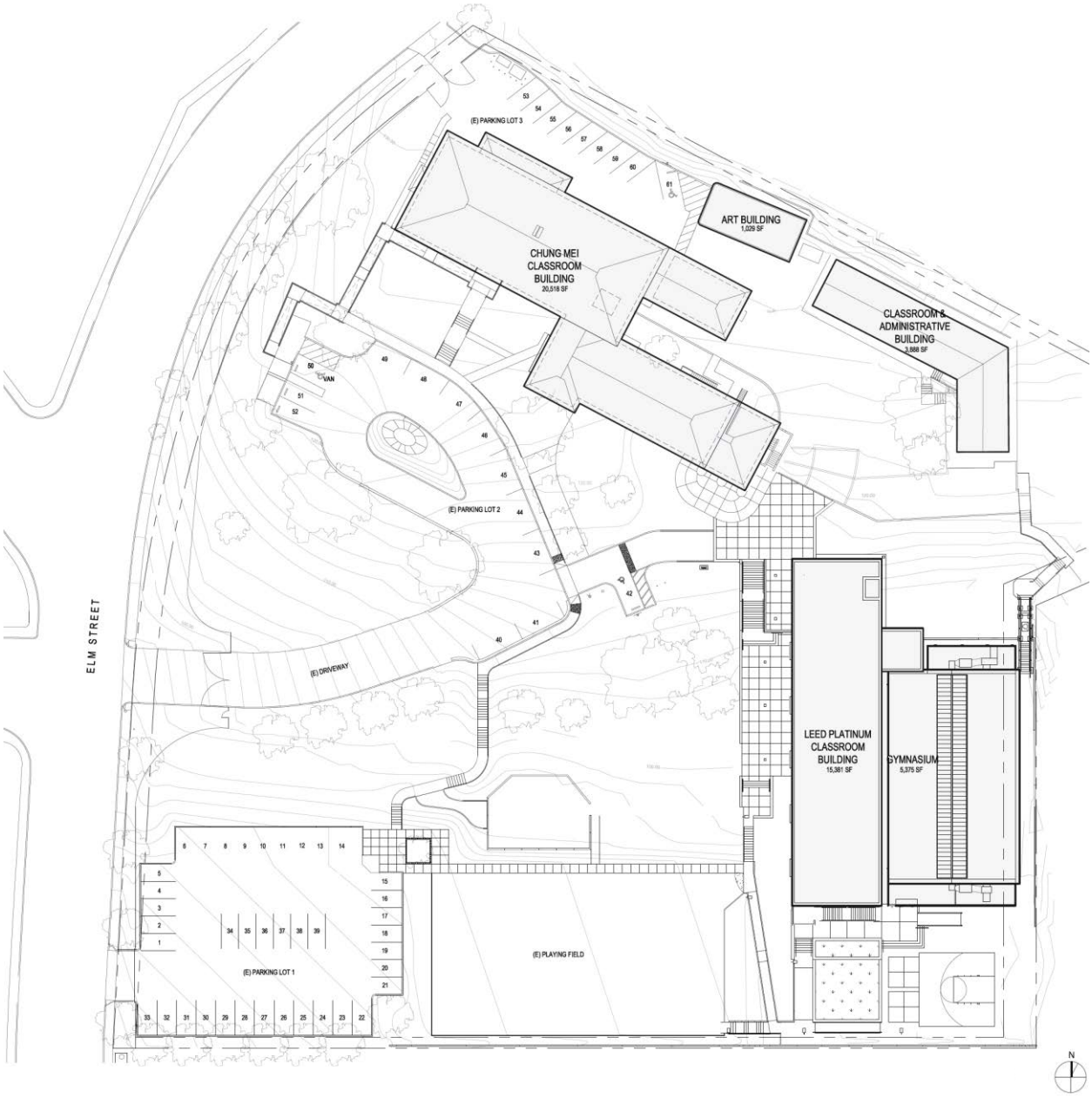

Figure 3.2: Existing Site Plan

Source: Studio Bondy Architecture via the applicant

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION AND ZONING

The site's General Plan land use designation is Institutional and Utilities and the site is zoned Public/Semi-Public (PS), both of which are consistent with the historic and continued use of the site as a charter school.

PROPOSED PROJECT

INCREASED ENROLLMENT

The existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) limits student enrollment to 347 students during the normal school year and to 175 students during the summer session and limits normal school days to the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Project involves proposed amendments to the existing CUP that would allow increased usage of the Summit K2 Charter School to include high school (grades 9 through 12) in addition to middle school students, increased enrollment to 630 students during the normal school year and 315 students during the summer session, and extension of the allowable normal operating hours by a half hour to 3:30 p.m. during normal school days.

Compared to the existing CUP and Prior MND, the proposed Project would increase the enrollment limit during the normal school year by 283 students and during the school's summer session by 140 students.

However, the Summit K2 Charter School is not currently operating at the full enrollment limit allowed under the CUP. As noted above, enrollment for the 2015/2016 school year is 240 students in grades 7 and 8. This current enrollment is the existing condition for purposes of the analysis in this EIR. Compared to the existing conditions, the proposed Project would increase the enrollment limit during the normal school year by 390 students.

The proposed expansion of the school program and student enrollment can be accommodated at the site as it exists today and no changes are proposed to the buildings or site. The school does not plan to change the existing schedule or school activities as a part of this Project though retains some flexibility to do so within the allowances under their use permit.

SCHOOL DRIVEWAY INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

As a part of the Project, improvements to intersection operation with respect to pedestrians and bicycles would be made at the school driveway intersection (at Elm Street/Hill Street/Key Boulevard), as shown in **Figure 3.3**. These improvements would not impede the operation of the intersection for vehicular traffic.

Improvements to signal timing are also included as a part of the Project. The current signal phasing plan at the school driveway intersection separates all approaches; i.e., each leg of the intersection is served with green time independent of any other leg.

The proposed signal phasing plan would serve vehicles exiting the school driveway and vehicles turning right from Key Boulevard during the same phase. The movements made from these two legs of the intersection do not conflict as left turns from Key Boulevard are prohibited, and left turns from the school driveway are prohibited. This alternative signal phasing could be implemented with the existing geometric configuration and would not require updating of traffic signal hardware.

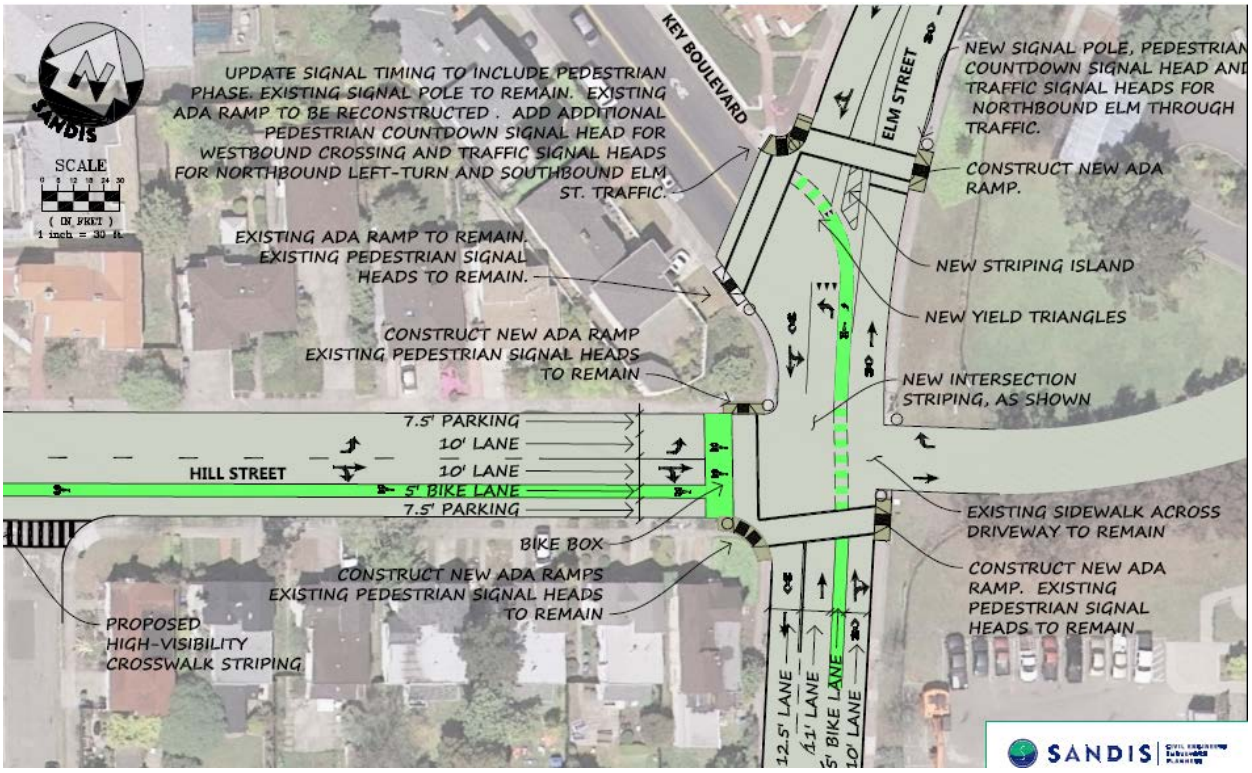

Figure 3.3: Proposed Improvements to School Driveway Intersection

Source: Kittelson & Associates, 1/5/2016

CONSTRUCTION AND CHANGES TO THE SITE

No changes to any of the buildings or site conditions are proposed or required to accommodate the proposed expansion of the school program or increase in student enrollment. The existing site plan is shown in Figure 3.2.

REQUIRED APPROVALS

The requested entitlements for the Project include:

- An amendment to the existing Conditional Use Permit from City of El Cerrito.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following Project objectives were identified by City staff or the applicant, as noted:

1. City: To allow for continued viability of a historically institutional site.

2. City: To encourage the use of public transportation by concentrating more and older students at a school site in close proximity to a major transit hub (El Cerrito del Norte BART Station).

3. Applicant: To foster a consistent culture and learning environment by operating a middle and high school on the same campus.

4

NOISE

INTRODUCTION

INITIAL STUDY DETERMINATION

The Initial Study prepared for this Draft SEIR (see Appendix A) determined the Project would result in no new impacts for the following checklist criteria:

- For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, exposure of people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

- For a project in the vicinity of a private airstrip, exposure of people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15162, this Draft SEIR does not further address the aforementioned criteria since the Initial Study provided sufficient information necessary to determine that the impacts identified in the Prior MND adequately address impacts of the proposed Project.

The Initial Study determined the current Project may result in new significant impacts or an increased severity in previously determined significant impacts under the following checklist criteria:

- Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies

- Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels

- A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project

- A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project

The current Project represents increased use of the existing school campus, which would result in additional noise. The potential impact of the current Project was assessed in an Environmental Noise Assessment prepared by Illingworth & Rodkin for this analysis. This chapter is based on the Noise Assessment, which is included in full as Appendix B.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON NOISE

Noise may be defined as unwanted sound. Noise is usually objectionable because it is disturbing or annoying. The objectionable nature of sound could be caused by its pitch or its loudness. Pitch is the height or depth of a tone or sound, depending on the relative rapidity (frequency) of the vibrations by which it is produced. Higher pitched signals sound louder to humans than sounds with a lower pitch. Loudness is intensity of sound waves combined with the reception characteristics of the ear. Intensity may be compared with the height of an ocean wave in that it is a measure of the amplitude of the sound wave.

In addition to the concepts of pitch and loudness, there are several noise measurement scales which are used to describe noise in a particular location. A decibel (dB) is a unit of measurement which indicates the relative amplitude of a sound. The zero on the decibel scale is based on the lowest sound level that the healthy, unimpaired human ear can detect. Sound levels in decibels are calculated on a logarithmic basis. An increase of 10 decibels represents a ten-fold increase in acoustic energy, while 20 decibels is 100 times more intense, 30 decibels is 1,000 times more intense, etc. There is a relationship between the subjective noisiness or loudness of a sound and its intensity. Each 10 decibel increase in sound level is perceived as approximately a doubling of loudness over a fairly wide range of intensities.

There are several methods of characterizing sound. The most common in California is the A-weighted sound level (dBA). This scale gives greater weight to the frequencies of sound to which the human ear is most sensitive. Because sound levels can vary markedly over a short period of time, a method for describing either the average character of the sound or the statistical behavior of the variations must be utilized. Most commonly, environmental sounds are described in terms of an average level that has the same acoustical energy as the summation of all the time-varying events. This energy-equivalent sound/noise descriptor is called L_{eq}. The most common averaging period is hourly, but L_{eq} can describe any series of noise events of arbitrary duration.

The scientific instrument used to measure noise is the sound level meter. Sound level meters can accurately measure environmental noise levels to within about plus or minus 1 dBA. Various computer models are used to predict environmental noise levels from sources, such as roadways and airports. The accuracy of the predicted models depends upon the distance the receptor is from the noise source. Close to the noise source, the models are accurate to within about plus or minus 1 to 2 dBA.

Since the sensitivity to noise increases during the evening and at night—because excessive noise interferes with the ability to sleep—24-hour descriptors have been developed that incorporate artificial noise penalties added to quiet-time noise events. The Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) is a measure of the cumulative noise exposure in a community, with a 5 dB penalty added to evening (7:00 PM – 10:00 PM) and a 10 dB addition to nocturnal (10:00 PM – 7:00 AM) noise levels. The Day/Night Average Sound Level (DNL or L_{dn}) is essentially the same as CNEL, with the exception that the evening time period is dropped and all occurrences during this three-hour period are grouped into the daytime period.

EFFECTS OF NOISE

Sleep and Speech Interference

The thresholds for speech interference indoors are about 45 dBA if the noise is steady and above 55 dBA if the noise is fluctuating. Outdoors the thresholds are about 15 dBA higher. Steady noise of sufficient intensity (above 35 dBA) and fluctuating noise levels above about 45 dBA have been shown to affect sleep. Interior residential standards for multi-family dwellings are set by the State of California at 45 dBA DNL. Typically, the highest steady traffic noise level during the daytime is about equal to the DNL and nighttime levels are 10 dBA lower. The standard is designed for sleep and speech protection and most jurisdictions apply the same criterion for all residential uses. Typical structural attenuation is 12-17 dBA with open windows. With closed windows in good condition, the noise attenuation factor is around 20 dBA for an older structure and 25 dBA for a newer dwelling. Sleep and speech interference is therefore possible when exterior noise levels are about 57-62 dBA DNL with open windows and 65-70 dBA DNL if the windows are closed. Levels of 55-60 dBA are common along collector streets and secondary arterials, while 65-70 dBA is a typical value for a primary/major arterial. Levels of 75-80 dBA are normal noise levels at the first row of development outside a freeway right-of-way. In order to achieve an acceptable interior noise environment, bedrooms facing secondary roadways need to be able to have their windows closed; those facing major roadways and freeways typically need special glass windows.

SETTING

REGULATORY SETTING

City of El Cerrito General Plan

The Resources and Hazards Element of the City of El Cerrito General Plan identifies noise and land use compatibility standards for various land uses. These standards are intended to provide for compatible noise environments for land uses throughout the community. Residential land uses are considered "normally acceptable" in exterior noise environments of 60 dBA L_{dn} or less. The General Plan also identifies goals and policies designed to limit noise exposure at noise sensitive land uses. Goal H3 states the following: "New development complies with the noise standards established in the General Plan, all new noise sources are within acceptable standards, and existing objectionable noise sources are reduced or eliminated." General Plan policies applicable to the evaluation of noise are listed below.

H3.2: Outdoor Noise Levels. "The goal for maximum outdoor noise levels in residential areas is an L_{dn} of 60 dB. This level is a requirement to guide the design and location of future development and is a goal for the reduction of noise in existing development. However, 60 L_{dn} is a goal that cannot necessarily be reached in all residential areas within the realm of economic or aesthetic feasibility. This goal will be applied where outdoor use is a major consideration (e.g., backyards in single-family housing developments and recreation areas in multi-family housing projects). The outdoor standard will not normally be applied to the small decks associated with apartments and condominiums but theses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Where the city determines that providing

an L_{dn} of 60 dB or lower outdoors is not feasible, the outdoor goal may be increased to an L_{dn} of 65 dB at the discretion of the Planning Commission."

H3.7: Areas Below Desired Noise Standards. "These guidelines are not intended to be applied reciprocally. In other words, if an area currently is below the desired noise standards, an increase in noise up to the maximum should not necessarily be allowed. The impact of a proposed project on an existing land use should be evaluated in terms of the increase in existing noise levels and potential for adverse community impact, regardless…[sic]"

H3.8: Non-Transportation Related Noise Sources. "For non-transportation related noise sources, noise levels outdoors should not exceed the limits in the table above (e.g., 60 dBA L_{dn} for residential land uses). Interior noise levels shall be 15 decibels lower than those shown in the table."

H3.9: Noise Environment in Existing Residential Areas. "Protect the noise environment in existing residential areas. In general, the City will require the evaluation of mitigation measures for projects under the following circumstances:

1. The project would cause the L_{dn} to increase 3 dB(A) or more.

2. Any increase would result in an L_{dn} greater than 60 dB(A).

3. The L_{dn} already exceeds 60 dB(A).

4. The project has the potential to generate significant adverse community response."

H3.10: Mitigating the Effects of Noise on Adjacent Properties. "Require proposals to reduce noise impacts on adjacent properties by incorporating appropriate measures into the project."

City of El Cerrito Municipal Code

Section 19.21.050 of the City of El Cerrito Municipal Code reiterates the guidelines and performance-based standards stated in the Noise section of the Resources and Hazards Element of the General Plan. For brevity, the Municipal Code language has not been repeated in this discussion of applicable regulatory criteria.

EXISTING NOISE ENVIRONMENT

An ambient noise monitoring survey was conducted between Wednesday, September 30 and Friday, October 2, 2015 to document ambient noise levels at the site and in the Project vicinity. The noise survey included one long-term noise measurement at the south property line of the school at the midpoint of the playfield (the source of the highest noise levels generated on-site) and five short-term (10-minute) noise measurements. The primary noise sources in the area include outdoor activities at the school, local traffic, and BART trains. Measurement locations are shown in **Figure 4.1**. A summary of the long-term and short-term measurement results are shown in **Table 4.1**.

An existing nine-foot-high wood acoustic wall is located at the southern boundary of the site adjacent to the Manor Circle residences. Sound measurements were taken on the school side of

the sound barrier, though projections take the existing barrier into account as further described in the impact analysis.

Figure 4.1: Noise Measurement Locations

Table 4.1: Summary of Long- and Short-Term Noise Measurement Data (A-Weighted Decibels, dBA)

Noise Measurement Location	Measured Daytime Noise Levels		Primary Noise Sources
	L_{50}	L_{eq}	
LT-1: South property line of school at midpoint of playfield. (10/1/2015)	47-68	51-67	Student activities, traffic, BART trains
ST-1: South of Chung Mei classroom building. School children indoors. (9/30/2015, 11:10 -11:20 am)	54	55	Traffic, BART trains
ST-2: South of Gymnasium. School children indoors. (9/30/2015, 11:30 -11:40 am)	50	51	BART trains, aircraft
ST-3: North of Chung Mei classroom building. School children outdoors during lunch. (10/2/2015, 12:10 -12:20 pm)	53	55	Traffic, BART trains
ST-4: Northeast corner of school. School children outdoors during lunch. (10/2/2015, 12:20 -12:30 pm)	48	50	Traffic, BART trains, School children
ST-5: Parking lot near playing field. School children outdoors during lunch. (10/2/2015, 12:33 -12:43 pm)	64	66	School children

Notes:

L_{50} - The A-weighted noise level that is exceeded 50% of the time during the measurement period or median sound level.

L_{eq} - The average A-weighted noise level during the measurement period.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Implementation of the Project would have a significant effect on the environment if it were to:

- Expose people to or generate noise levels in excess of established in the local general plan, noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.

- Result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project.

- A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project.

Specifically, in the study area, the following thresholds are applied:

- General Plan Policy H3.2, Outdoor Noise Levels, establishes an L_{dn} of 60 dB as the noise goal where outdoor use is a major consideration (e.g., backyards in single-family). Where the city determines that providing and L_{dn} of 60 dB or lower outdoors is not feasible, the outdoor goal may be increased to an L_{dn} of 65 dB at the discretion of the Planning Commission.

- General Plan Policy H3.9, Noise Environment in Existing Residential Areas, requires the evaluation of mitigation measures for projects under the following circumstances:

  1. The project would cause the L_{dn} to increase 3 dB(A) or more.

  2. Any increase would result in an L_{dn} greater than 60 dB(A).

  3. The L_{dn} already exceeds 60 dB(A).

  4. The project has the potential to generate significant adverse community response.

Additionally, the following threshold was not explicitly addressed in the Initial Study; however, because the Project does not include construction and would not otherwise generate groundborne vibration, the Project would have no impact with respect to the following threshold, which is not further addressed:

- Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels

NOISE FROM ON-SITE OPERATIONS

Impact Noise-1: **On-site Operations.** Proposed Project operations would not result in the exposure of persons to excessive noise levels or result in a substantial increase in permanent or periodic existing noise levels without the Project. This is a ***less-than-significant*** impact.

Based on observations made during the noise monitoring survey, the use of the playing field generates the highest noise levels on the school campus, with periodic noise from sports activities. No changes to timing and type of use of the outside area are proposed as a part of the Project, though the amount of students at the field when it is in use would be expected to increase with the proposed enrollment increases. Noise levels in areas near the gymnasium and classroom are substantially less. Currently, all after-school sports practices are based in the gymnasium, with the exception of some use of the outdoor playfield for soccer practice. Soccer practice also occurs in the gymnasium and the use of the field for these practices is intermittent

at this time. The use of the gymnasium results in maximum instantaneous noise levels ranging from 47 to 50 dBA outside of the gymnasium building.

Site LT-1 was the data collection point at the residential property line adjacent to the playfield. Between the hours of 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM (primary school hours), hourly average noise levels ranged from 51 to 67 dBA L_{eq} at the residential property line. The highest hourly average noise levels coincided with outdoor activity such as the lunchtime period between 12:10 PM and 12:45 PM. During non-school hours, hourly average noise levels ranged from 45 to 62 dBA L_{eq}. The L_{dn} on Thursday, October 1, 2015 was 60 dBA.

To determine the L_{dn} attributable to the operation of the school, the data collected between the hours of 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM (primary school hours) were input into the equation used to calculate the L_{dn}. Following this method, it was conservatively assumed that all noise measured at Site LT-1 during the hours of 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM was produced by the school. The result of the calculation showed that the school generates an L_{dn} noise level of 57 dBA at the residential property line. This noise level does not include the noise reduction provided by the exiting noise barrier that separates the playing field from residential outdoor activity areas. The L_{dn} noise level calculated for non-school hours was 56 dBA L_{dn} on the school property north of the noise barrier. The L_{dn} for school and non-school sounds is 60 dBA L_{dn} at this location.

The results of previous studies prepared for the Prior MND show that the existing noise barrier provides at least an 8 dBA reduction in noise levels from school-related noise sources. Therefore, existing school-related noise is calculated to be 49 dBA L_{dn} in the rear yards of Manor Circle residences assuming that the existing noise barrier provides 8 dBA of noise reduction. The estimated L_{dn} noise level in the rear yard of Manor Circle residences is 57 dBA L_{dn} (i.e., 49 dBA L_{dn} + 56 dBA L_{dn} = 57 dBA L_{dn}).

The increase in the number of students is calculated to increase noise levels emanating from the playing field by up to 4 dBA during school hours. With the Project, school-related noise is projected to be 53 dBA L_{dn} in the rear yards of Manor Circle residences assuming that the noise barrier would continue to provide 8 dBA of noise reduction from school-related noise sources. When added to the L_{dn} noise level calculated for non-school hours (56 dBA L_{dn}), the overall L_{dn} in the rear yards of Manor Circle residences is calculated to increase by 1 dBA L_{dn} to 58 dBA L_{dn}. The resultant L_{dn} noise level would remain below 60 dBA L_{dn}, and would not be substantially increased with the Project (increase is less than 3 dBA L_{dn}), resulting in a less-than-significant impact.

TRAFFIC NOISE

Impact Noise-2: **Project-Generated Traffic**. Traffic noise levels along roadways serving the site would not be substantially increased with the operation of the Project. This is a ***less-than-significant*** impact.

Roadways serving the site include Elm Street, Key Boulevard, and Hill Street. Traffic volumes supplied for 5 intersections in the vicinity of the Project were reviewed to calculate noise level increases due to additional Project traffic occurring during the AM Peak Hour and After-school PM Peak Hour. Based on a review of these traffic volumes, traffic noise levels are anticipated to

increase by 2 dBA L_{eq} or less at all study intersections as a result of the Project during the AM Peak Hour and After-school PM Peak Hour. The increase to the L_{dn} would be less than 1 dBA when averaged over a 24-hour basis. The Project would not cause the L_{dn} to increase 3 dBA or more, and the impact is a less-than-significant.

CUMULATIVE NOISE IMPACTS

There Project area is fully developed and there are no other known project in the immediate vicinity that have the potential to cause cumulative noise impacts to which the Project would contribute. As discussed under Impact Noise-2, the Project's contribution to traffic noise would be less than 1 dBA, which would also not be considered a considerable contribution to cumulative increases in traffic noise levels. There would be no additional cumulative noise impacts of the Project.

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5

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

INTRODUCTION

INITIAL STUDY DETERMINATION

The Initial Study prepared for this Draft SEIR (see Appendix A) determined the Project would result in no new impacts for the following checklist criteria:

- Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks.
- Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).
- Result in inadequate emergency access.
- Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15162, this Draft SEIR does not further address the aforementioned criteria since the Initial Study provided sufficient information necessary to determine that the impacts identified in the Prior MND adequately address impacts of the proposed Project.

The Initial Study determined the current Project may result in new significant impacts or an increased severity in previously determined significant impacts under the following checklist criteria:

- Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit.
- Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways.

The current Project represents increased use of the existing school campus, which would result in additional traffic. For this reason and because traffic conditions change over time, the potential impact of the current Project was assessed in a Transportation Impact Analysis prepared by

Kittleson & Associates for the applicant and peer reviewed for this analysis by W-Trans. The Traffic Study, with addendums and peer review are included in Appendix C and this chapter is based on these analyses.

LEVEL OF SERVICE DEFINITIONS

Level of service (LOS) describes the operating conditions experienced by motorists. LOS is a qualitative measure of the effect of a number of factors, including speed and travel time, traffic interruptions, freedom to maneuver, driving comfort, and convenience. LOS A through LOS F covers the entire range of traffic operations that might occur. Motorists using a facility that operates at LOS A will experience very little delay, while those using a facility that operates at LOS F will experience long delays. These conditions are generally described below:

LOS A: Free Flow or Insignificant Delays: Vehicles are completely unimpeded in their ability to maneuver within the traffic stream. Control delay at signalized intersections is minimal.

LOS B: Stable Operation or Minimal Delays: The ability to maneuver within the traffic stream is only slightly restricted, and control delay at signalized intersections are not significant.

LOS C: Stable Operation or Acceptable Delays: The ability to maneuver and change lanes is somewhat restricted, and average travel speeds may be about 50 percent of the free flow speed.

LOS D: Approaching Unstable or Tolerable Delays: Small increases in flow may cause substantial increases in delay and decreases in travel speed.

LOS E: Unstable Operation or Significant Delays: Significant delays may occur and average travel speeds may be 33 percent or less of the free flow speed.

LOS F: Forced Flow or Excessive Delays: Congestion, high delays, and extensive queuing occur at critical signalized intersections with urban street flow at extremely low speeds.

METHODOLOGY

As discussed in more detail in the Transportation Impact Analysis (Appendix C), analysis of the study intersections was performed using intersection LOS procedures from the 2000 Highway Capacity Manual (HCM), operationalized using Synchro 8 software. CCTA's Technical Procedures, which includes traffic impact guidelines, states that 2010 HCM procedures should be used, but a number of issues in Synchro's results for 2010 HCM have been observed, particularly with regard to 5-legged intersections, of which this study has two. CCTA has recognized these issues and has been employing 2000 HCM for its own analyses of five-legged intersections. For these reasons, the analysis was performed using the 2000 HCM procedures.

Data were collected during the AM peak period between 7:00 – 9:00 AM as well as during a four-hour PM peak period between 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM. This extended PM observation period was

identified to capture travel activity during the typical peak period for the school (2:00 – 4:00 PM) as well as during the peak period for the adjacent street (4:00 – 6:00 PM). Analyses were performed to evaluate travel activity during these three peak periods. Peak hours were identified for each peak period based on the highest volumes observed during four consecutive 15-minute observations. These peak hours are AM (7:45 – 8:45 AM), after-school PM (2:45 – 3:45 PM), and PM (4:45 – 5:45 PM).

Intersection LOS were analyzed for existing and future cumulative (2040) conditions.

SETTING

EXISTING ROADWAY NETWORK

The regional roadway network in the study area is comprised of the freeway system that serves West Contra Costa County. Specifically, Interstate 80 (I-80) operates from its terminus in downtown San Francisco northeast across the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge to Oakland and other East Bay cities. It also provides direct connections with other interstate freeways such as Interstate 580 and Interstate 880.

The Project site is located on Elm Street, a north-south minor arterial, approximately 1/3 mile east of I-80. East-west access to the site is provided primarily via Hill Street, Cutting Boulevard, Key Boulevard and Potrero Avenue, all classified as minor arterials. Other local roads provide access to the Project site and connection to the regional network, including San Pablo Avenue, a north-south principal arterial parallel to I-80 in the Project vicinity. The Project is located approximately two blocks east of San Pablo Avenue.

Pedestrian facilities are abundant in the Project vicinity with access provided to the site via sidewalks on both sides of all local roads. Marked pedestrian crossings are located at the intersections of the school's main driveway and Elm Street, the Elm Street/Blake Street intersection, the San Pablo Avenue/Cutting Boulevard intersection, the San Pablo/Hill Street/Peerless Avenue/Eastshore Boulevard intersection, and the Key Boulevard/Cutting Boulevard intersection.

Bicycle facilities are provided in the Project vicinity. The Ohlone Greenway is a Class I facility (separated bike trail) providing north-south access through and beyond the limits of El Cerrito. It is located two blocks west of the Project site underneath the elevated BART tracks. Elm Street and Hill Street are Class III facilities (on-street, signed bike routes) with "sharrow" markings on the pavement to signal that drivers and cyclists share the road.

The transit system in the study area includes regional passenger service provided by Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) and bus services provided by Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) and West Contra Costa County Transit (WestCat). The nearest bus stops are located within two blocks of the Project site on Elm Street and Hill Street. The El Cerrito del Norte BART station is located two block west of the Project site along Hill Street.

Direct access to the Project site is provided via three driveways along Elm Street: 1) the main driveway at the intersection with Hill Street, 2) the driveway for a small parking lot on the northern side of the site, and 3) the driveway for a parking lot on the southern side of the site.

PROJECT STUDY AREA

Intersection LOS were analyzed for the following five intersections in the vicinity of the Project. These intersections, shown on Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3, Project Description, were selected in coordination with and under the direction of City of El Cerrito staff.

1. Elm Street and Blake Street
2. Elm Street and Hill Street/Key Boulevard/School Driveway
3. San Pablo Avenue and Cutting Boulevard
4. San Pablo Avenue and Hill Street/Peerless Avenue/Eastshore Boulevard
5. Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard

Additional information, including trip distribution and intersection volumes and lane geometry under all studied conditions can be found in the Transportation Impact Analysis included as Appendix C.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

As shown in **Table 5.1**, all study intersections would operate acceptably during each peak hour under existing conditions.

Table 5.1: Intersection Level of Service – Existing Conditions

No.	North-South Cross Street	East-West Cross Street	Control	AM		After-School PM		PM	
				Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS
1	Elm St.	Blake St.	All-Way Stop	12.2	B	9.3	A	11.7	B
2	Elm St.	Hill St. & Key Blvd. & School Driveway	Signal	43.6	D	29.5	C	29.9	C
3	San Pablo Ave.	Cutting Blvd.	Signal	22.6	C	32.4	C	32.7	C
4	San Pablo Ave.	Hill St. & Peerless Ave. & Eastshore Blvd.	Signal	43.3	D	34.7	C	36.9	D
5	Key Blvd.	Cutting Blvd.	All-Way Stop	16.5	C	11.0	B	20.4	C

Bold identifies operations worse than acceptable LOS standards. (None in this table)

Delay denotes average vehicle delay in seconds.

Worst approach average vehicle delay shown for stop-controlled intersections.

LOS denotes level of service.

Source: Kittleson & Associates, 2015.

PROJECT TRIP GENERATION

Table 5.2 shows the vehicle trips that would be generated by the proposed Project.

Table 5.2: Project Trip Generation

Period	Amount (Students)	Trip Rate and Directional Distribution			Trips Generated		
		Total	In	Out	In	Out	Total
AM Peak Hour	390	1.37	52%	48%	278	256	534
After-School PM Peak Hour	390	0.83	48%	52%	155	168	323

Trip generation rate for middle school students was conservatively used as it is higher than the trip generation rate for high school students.

Source: Kittelson & Associates, 2015

REGULATORY SETTING

Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA)

The CCTA prepares the Congestion Management Program (CMP), a plan mandated by California law to describe the strategies to address congestion problems on the CMP network, which includes state highways and principal arterials. The CMP uses LOS standards as a mean to measure congestion and has established LOS standards to determine how local governments meet the standards of the CMP.

General Plan

The Transportation and Circulation Element of the El Cerrito General Plan contains policies and strategies relating to regional traffic, promoting alternative transportation modes and improving local access and circulation and sets LOS D or better as a standard for vehicular traffic at all intersections.

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, adopted in December 2014, is a planning effort between the Cities of El Cerrito and Richmond to create a shared vision for the future of the Avenue, identify improvements, and adopt regulations that can be applied consistently across the planning area.

The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan identifies the following improvements at one intersection in the Project study area, the San Pablo Avenue/Hill Street/Eastshore Boulevard/Peerless Avenue intersection:

- Eliminate the second southbound left-turn lane on San Pablo Avenue, and
- Modify access to Peerless Avenue as one-way inbound.

The Plan also establishes LOS E as the standard for signalized intersections along San Pablo Avenue.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Implementation of the Project would have a significant effect on the environment if it were to:

- Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit.
- Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways.

Specifically, in the study area, the following thresholds are applied.

For intersections along San Pablo Avenue:

- The addition of project traffic causes intersection operations to degrade from LOS E or better to LOS F; or
- The project traffic increases the average control delay by more than 5 seconds at an intersection already operating at LOS F under the No Project condition.

For all other intersections:

- The addition of project traffic causes intersection operations to degrade from LOS D or better to LOS E or F; or
- The project traffic increases the average control delay by more than 5 seconds at an intersection already operating at LOS E or LOS F under the No Project condition.

EXISTING PLUS PROJECT INTERSECTION OPERATIONS

Impact Traffic-1: **Existing Plus Project Intersection Operation.** The Project would contribute additional traffic to existing intersection operations; however, with the exception of the intersection identified in Traffic-2, the intersection operations would remain within acceptable Levels of Service and the impact would be ***less than significant.***

The increased enrollment under the current Project would add 390 additional students, which, as shown in Table 5.2, would add additional vehicles to the circulation system. The study area intersection operations with the addition of Project trips are shown in **Table 5.3**.

As shown in Table 5.3, most of the intersections in the study area would continue to operate within acceptable LOS and the impact of the Project would be ***less than significant***. The exception is the intersection of Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard, discussed below.

Table 5.3: Intersection Level of Service – Existing Plus Project Conditions

No.	North-South Cross Street	East-West Cross Street	Control	AM		After-School PM		PM	
				Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS
1	Elm St.	Blake St.	All-Way Stop	13.9	B	9.6	A	11.7	B
2	Elm St.	Hill St. & Key Blvd. & School Driveway	Signal	43.8	D	27.2	C	31.9	C
3	San Pablo Ave.	Cutting Blvd.	Signal	26.5	C	33.0	C	33.6	C
4	San Pablo Ave.	Hill St. & Peerless Ave. & Eastshore Blvd.	Signal	44.1	D	36.1	D	39.1	D
5	Key Blvd.	Cutting Blvd.	All-Way Stop	24.4	C	13.4	B	**39.8**	**E**

Bold identifies operations worse than acceptable LOS standards.

Delay denotes average vehicle delay in seconds.

Worst approach average vehicle delay shown for stop-controlled intersections.

LOS denotes level of service.

Source: Kittleson & Associates, 2015.

Impact Traffic-2: **Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard Existing Plus Project Intersection Operation.** The Project would contribute additional traffic to existing intersection operations that would cause the intersection operations to degrade from LOS C to LOS E. This is a ***significant impact.***

This impact at the intersection of Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard would be mitigated through implementation of the following modifications to the intersection.

Mitigation Measure Traffic-2: **Restriping on Key Boulevard at Cutting Boulevard.** The project applicants shall fully fund and work with the City to implement the following improvements at the Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard. Intersection:

- Restripe the intersection to remove five parking spaces along the southern side of the eastern leg of Key Boulevard. and split the existing westbound single travel lane into one left turn only lane and one through-right lane.

The improvements specified in Mitigation Measure Traffic-2 are shown in **Figure 5.1** and implementation of these improvements would result in LOS B with a delay of 14.9 seconds in the PM peak-hour. Mitigation Measure Traffic-2 would improve this intersection to a better performance level than under existing conditions and, thus, reduce the impact to a level of ***less than significant with mitigation***.

Figure 5.1: Proposed Improvements to Key Blvd. and Cutting Blvd. Intersection
Source: Kittelson & Associates, 1/5/2016

CUMULATIVE INTERSECTION OPERATIONS

As shown in **Table 5.4**, all study intersections would operate acceptably during each peak hour under cumulative conditions, with the exception of San Pablo Avenue/Hill Street/Peerless Avenue/Eastshore Boulevard in the AM peak hour and Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard in the PM peak hour (without improvements specified in Mitigation Measure Traffic-2).

Table 5.4: Intersection Level of Service – Cumulative Conditions

No.	North-South Cross Street	East-West Cross Street	Control	AM		After-School PM		PM	
				Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS
1	Elm St.	Blake St.	All-Way Stop	19.8	C	10.3	B	21.0	B
2	Elm St.	Hill St. & Key Blvd. & School Driveway	Signal	51.6	D	39.2	D	41.4	C
3	San Pablo Ave.	Cutting Blvd.	Signal	28.9	C	33.6	C	35.2	C
4	San Pablo Ave.	Hill St. & Peerless Ave. & Eastshore Blvd.	Signal	**>100**	**F**	62.0	E	71.1	E
5*	Key Blvd.	Cutting Blvd.	All-Way Stop	22.4	C	16.4	C	**66.2**	**F**

* Without implementation of Mitigation Measure Traffic-2.

Bold identifies operations worse than acceptable LOS standards.

Delay denotes average vehicle delay in seconds.

Worst approach average vehicle delay shown for stop-controlled intersections.

LOS denotes level of service.

Source: Kittleson & Associates, 2015.

Impact Traffic-3: **Cumulative Plus Project Intersection Operation.** The Project would contribute additional traffic to cumulative intersection operations; however, with the exception of the intersection identified in Traffic-4, the intersections would operate within acceptable Levels of Service and the contribution of the Project to cumulative intersection impacts would be ***less than significant.***

As shown in **Table 5.5**, assuming implementation of Mitigation Measure Traffic-2, most of the intersections in the study area would continue to operate within acceptable LOS and the contribution of the Project to cumulative intersection impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Table 5.5: Intersection Level of Service – Cumulative Plus Project Conditions

No.	North-South Cross Street	East-West Cross Street	Control	AM		After-School PM		PM	
				Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS	Delay	LOS
1	Elm St.	Blake St.	All-Way Stop	22.0	C	12.4	B	19.7	B
2	Elm St.	Hill St. & Key Blvd. & School Driveway	Signal	41.5	D	44.4	D	33.2	C
3	San Pablo Ave.	Cutting Blvd.	Signal	32.7	C	36.9	D	38.4	C
4	San Pablo Ave.	Hill St. & Peerless Ave. & Eastshore Blvd.	Signal	**>100***	**F**	66.5	E	74.2	E
5**	Key Blvd.	Cutting Blvd.	All-Way Stop	25.9	D	12.2	B	19.3	C

* Represents an 8-second delay.

** Assumes implementation of Mitigation Measure Traffic-2.

Bold identifies operations worse than acceptable LOS standards.

Delay denotes average vehicle delay in seconds.

Worst approach average vehicle delay shown for stop-controlled intersections.

LOS denotes level of service.

Source: Kittleson & Associates, 2015.

The exception is the intersection of San Pablo Avenue / Hill Street / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard, which would already operate at LOS F under cumulative conditions and to which the Project would add delay, as discussed below.

Impact Traffic-4: **San Pablo Avenue / Hill Street / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard Cumulative Plus Project Intersection Operation.** The Project would contribute an additional 8 seconds of additional delay to already deficient (LOS F) intersection operations at this intersection. This is a ***significant impact***.

As noted in the Regulatory Setting, the San Pablo Area Specific Plan identifies the following improvements at the San Pablo Avenue/Hill Street/Eastshore Boulevard/Peerless Avenue intersection, including elimination of the second southbound left-turn lane on San Pablo Avenue, and modified access to Peerless Avenue as one-way inbound.

This impact would be mitigated through implementation of the following modifications to the intersection.

Mitigation Measure Traffic-4: **Fair Share Contributions to Improvements at San Pablo Avenue / Hill Street / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard.** The project applicants shall pay fair share percentage to the City for the construction of the

improvements to this intersection identified in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, which include:

- Elimination of the second southbound left-turn lane on San Pablo Avenue, and
- modified access to Peerless Avenue as one-way inbound.

Implementation of the improvements specified in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan would result in cumulative (with Project) intersection operations at this location of LOS E with a delay of 68.5 seconds in the AM peak-hour, which is considered acceptable operations under the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. Mitigation Measure Traffic-4 would ensure the Project contributes a fair-share of the funding toward the improvement of this intersection and, thus, reduce the impact to a level of ***less than significant with mitigation***.

STUDENT LOADING AND UNLOADING

Impact Traffic-5: **Queuing Could Exceed Capacity.** Queuing of vehicles could exceed the available capacity during the after-school PM peak hour, which could impact vehicle travel on nearby street and would be a ***significant impact***.

Vehicle queuing during pick up and drop off was also assessed, as vehicles queues have the potential to affect area circulation if queues extend onto public roadway vehicle travel lanes.

Due to the variation in queuing activities during the morning drop off ("slow-moving queue") and afternoon pick-up where vehicle tend to park and await their passengers ("parked queue"), there is space for 20 queued vehicles in the morning and 26 vehicles in the afternoon at the site.

At full enrollment, the potential maximum queue during the morning peak hour would be 20 vehicles, which would be accommodated on the Project site. During the afternoon pick-up, queues could reach 40 vehicles, which would extend beyond the Project driveway. The additional on-street capacity for queuing along the east side of Elm Street immediately north of Key Boulevard amounts to an additional 11 vehicles in the afternoon, which would still only accommodate a total of 37 of the 40 projected vehicles on- and off-site for afternoon pick-ups.

Mitigation Measure Traffic-5: **Queue Monitoring and Abatement.** It shall be the responsibility of the project operator to ensure that recurring vehicle queues do not occur that interfere with vehicle travel lanes on public roadways.

If a recurring queue occurs, the project operator shall employ abatement methods as needed to abate the queue. Suggested abatement methods include but are not limited to the following:

- To accommodate expected maximum queues during afternoon pick-up activities, the school could encourage students to use a mode other than a personal vehicle in order to achieve a 10 percent or greater reduction in after-school pick-ups.

- Alternatively, the school could assure that 10 percent or more of the students leave the campus at least 15 minutes later than the majority of students to achieve a reduced maximum queue that could be accommodated within the on-site and on-street loading spaces. (This could be achieved through participation in after-school activities or off-setting of school hours for different grades.)

Given the proximity of the school to the surrounding neighborhood and transit options and the likelihood that some students will engage in after-school activities that will result in a later pick-up time, it is considered possible that problematic queues will not develop or that in the event they do develop, it can be assumed successful queue abatement is achievable. Therefore, with implementation of Mitigation Measure Traffic-5, the impact related to queueing during student loading and unloading would be reduced to ***less than significant with mitigation***.

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ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6) require an EIR to include a discussion of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project. The CEQA Guidelines also require that the EIR explain why specific project alternatives considered at one time were rejected in favor of the proposed project. The selection of alternatives is to be guided by the provision of reasonable choices and the promotion of informed decision making and informed public participation. An EIR need not evaluate alternatives that would have effects that cannot be determined, or for which implementation would be remote and speculative.

The Guidelines also require that the EIR specifically evaluate a "no project" alternative within this discussion and that an "environmentally superior" alternative be identified (Section 15126.6 [e]).

- The alternatives addressed in this EIR were selected based on the following factors:
- The extent to which the alternative would accomplish most of the basic project objectives.
- The extent to which the alternative would avoid or lessen any of the identified significant environmental effects of the project (discussed in Chapters 4 through 18).
- The potential feasibility of the alternative (as discussed in this Chapter).
- The extent to which the alternative contributes to a "reasonable range" of alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice.

The proposed Project is fully described in Chapter 3 of this EIR (Project Description). The environmental consequences are addressed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this EIR.

W-Trans, the peer reviewer for the Transportation Impact Analysis, provided the information in this chapter related to potential traffic impacts of the alternatives.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

CEQA (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6 (a)) requires the analysis of alternatives that would feasibly attain "most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen

any of the significant effects of the project." Therefore, the stated objectives can be used as a metric against which an alternative can be measured when determining overall feasibility. Additionally, CEQA (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15131) requires the evaluation of a proposed project to address only impacts to the physical environment; economic and social effects can be analyzed only as one link in a chain of cause and effect from a proposed decision (e.g., physical changes caused, in turn, by economic and social changes). However, economic viability can be considered when determining the feasibility of a project alternative (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(f)(1)).

The following are the objectives that would be fulfilled by the proposed Project. Alternatives will be evaluated in part based on their ability to meet these objectives.

1. City: To allow for continued viability of a historically institutional site.

2. City: To encourage the use of public transportation by concentrating more and older students at a school site in close proximity to a major transit hub (El Cerrito del Norte BART Station).

3. Applicant: To foster a consistent culture and learning environment by operating a middle and high school on the same campus.

PROJECT IMPACTS

Based on the analysis contained in this Draft SEIR, implementation of the Project would not result in any significant and unavoidable impacts.

The Project would result in the following potentially significant impacts that would be significant without the implementation of mitigation measures, but would be reduced to a less than significant level if the mitigation measures recommended in this document are implemented.

Traffic: The Project would cause a significant impact to the intersection of Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard under existing conditions that would be fully mitigated through restriping of the intersection to split the existing single travel lane into one left turn only lane and one through-right lane (Impact and Mitigation Measure Traffic-2).

The Project would contribute to a significant impact to the intersection of San Pablo Avenue / Hill Street / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard under cumulative conditions that would be fully mitigated through planned improvements to this intersection under the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, to which the Project will contribute a fair share of funding (Impact and Mitigation Measure Traffic-4).

The Project could result in vehicle queues during after-school pick-up that exceed available queuing capacity. The potential for recurring queues will be monitored, and if they occur, abated through operational changes (Impact and Mitigation Measure Traffic-5).

All other impacts, including those in the topic area of Noise, would be less than significant without the need for mitigation.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

The alternatives analysis is presented as a comparative analysis to the proposed Project. A project may have the potential to generate significant impacts, but changes to certain features may also afford the opportunity to avoid or reduce such impacts. The following alternatives analysis compares the potential significant environmental impacts of the alternatives with those of the proposed Project, as well as ability to meet objectives.

SELECTION OF ALTERNATIVES

A. No Project, Enrollment to Current Approvals

B. Reduced Enrollment (85% of Proposed)

The above two alternatives have been chosen for evaluation. Both alternatives are located on the Project site. The alternatives focus on reduction of proposed enrollment, and related reductions in traffic levels and therefore traffic-related impacts. The two alternatives to be analyzed in comparison to the proposed Project are described as follows:

Alternative A: No Project, Enrollment to Current Approvals

Alternative A is a "no project" alternative. This alternative represents the possibility that the current Project is not approved and the Summit K2 Charter School would continue to operate at the site under existing approvals and conditions. The existing Conditional Use Permit would allow for enrollment of up to 347 students in grades K through 8, which represents an increase of 107 students over existing conditions. Because the school is not yet operating at the full allowable enrollment, Alternative A represents 27% of the enrollment increase proposed by the Project.

Alternative B: Reduced Enrollment (85% of Proposed)

Alternative B was chosen to avoid the Project impact under existing conditions to the intersection of Key Blvd and Cutting Blvd. Under Alternative B, enrollment would be increased to 571 students and would allow for the increased enrollment to be any combination of middle and high school students, as under the proposed Project. Alternative B represents an increase of 331 students at the site, which would be 85% of the enrollment increase proposed by the Project.

Alternatives Rejected as Infeasible

As described above, Section 15126.6(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination.

Alternative Site

This Project site has been previously developed for institutional uses, included school uses, and could accommodate additional student enrollment without the need for construction. While it is

possible the applicant could identify an alternate nearby site to utilize as a high school, even if a separate site is used as a high school, the Project site could support additional enrollment of middle school students. Therefore, an off-site alternative was not further explored for purposes of this environmental review.

Other Reduced Enrollment Alternatives

In determining which alternatives to assess, the relationship to the significant impacts of the Project were considered, which include only traffic impacts.

An alternative was considered that would avoid all traffic-related impacts without the need for mitigation. Such an alternative would allow for an increase of only 43 students, which is 11% of the proposed enrollment increase under the Project. Such an increase would also be below the existing Conditional Use Permit, which allows for an additional 107 students and is already being considered as Alternative A. Because an alternative that would avoid all traffic-related impacts is inconsistent with existing approvals, it has been rejected as a reasonable alternative to the proposed Project.

An alternative was also considered that would additionally reduce the Project's contribution to the cumulative impact at the intersection of San Pablo Avenue / Hill Street / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard such that the Project would contribute less than 5 seconds of delay to this intersection (the threshold of significance for contribution to a cumulatively impacted intersection). Such an alternative would allow for an increase of 182 students, which is 47% of the proposed enrollment increase under the Project. While the Project's impact at this intersection would be reduced to less than significant levels, the intersection would still operate below acceptable LOS without improvements. Additionally, the Project's fair share contributions to planned improvements under the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan would not be required as mitigation under this Alternative. Thus, the result of this potential Alternative would be to avoid contribution to a planned improvement and would not ultimately substantially improve the operations of the impacted intersection. Therefore, this alternative has been rejected as it does not substantially contribute to a meaningful comparison of impacts.

Every possible alternative to the Project cannot be fully evaluated. Alternatives A and B satisfy the requirement to consider and discuss "a range of reasonable alternatives to the project" pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6. As discussed in the descriptions above, these alternatives were chosen as reasonable alternatives at this site and no additional alternatives were identified that would substantially contribute to a meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison of the project to possible alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE A: NO PROJECT, ENROLLMENT TO CURRENT APPROVALS

Impact Analysis

The enrollment allowed under the existing Condition Use Permit, as represented by Alternative A, would result in new vehicle trips in the vicinity, but these would equate to approximately 27% of the trips assumed under the proposed Project.

The intersection of Key Boulevard and Cutting Blvd operates acceptably at LOS C during the PM peak hour under existing conditions and would continue to operate acceptably with the addition of trips from Alternative A. Therefore, Project Impact Traffic-2 would be avoided and Mitigation Measure Traffic-2, requiring the Project to restripe that intersection, would not be implemented.

However, even with the enrollment allowed under Alternative A, this alternative would result in significant contributions to cumulative impacts at the Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard intersection. Therefore, Impact Traffic-2 would only be avoided under existing conditions, and would become a cumulative impact without Project improvements proposed under Mitigation Measure Traffic-2. Because no additional approvals would be required, there would be no mechanism for requiring fair share funding from the Project to fund improvements specified under Traffic-2 to mitigate the cumulative impact and the contribution to a cumulative impact at this intersection would remain significant and therefore worsened compared to conditions under the proposed Project with mitigation implemented.

Under Alternative A, the contributions to cumulative impacts at the San Pablo Avenue / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard / Hill Street intersection would also remain significant (Impact Traffic-4). Because no additional approvals would be required, there would be no mechanism for requiring fair share funding from the Project to contribute to improvements specified under Mitigation Measure Traffic-4. However, because these improvements are planned under the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and therefore will be implemented with our without funding from this Project, implementation of the improvements can be assumed under future cumulative conditions.

At enrollment of 347 students under Alternative A, the potential maximum queue during morning drop-off would be 11 vehicles, which would be accommodated within the existing unloading capacity of approximately 20 vehicles. The potential maximum queue during afternoon pick-up would be 22 vehicles, which would fit within the available capacity of 37 vehicles. Therefore, Alternative A would avoid Impact Traffic-5 and Mitigation Measure Traffic-5, requiring queue monitoring and abatement, would not be warranted.

Alternative A would otherwise result in marginal reductions to already less-than-significant impacts in other topic areas, including noise.

Ability to Accomplish Project Objectives and Feasibility

Alternative A would have the following ability to meet project objectives:

1. Alternative A would meet to a lesser degree the City's objective to allow for continued viability of a historically institutional site.

2. Alternative A would meet to a lesser degree the City's objective to encourage the use of public transportation by concentrating more and older students at a school site in close proximity to a major transit hub.

3. Alternative A would not meet the Applicant's objective to foster a consistent culture and learning environment by operating a middle and high school out of the same campus.

The reduced enrollment under Alternative A would meet both of the City's Project Objectives, though to a lesser degree than would the proposed Project, as the enrollment level and age of the students would not be higher than could be expected under existing approvals. Alternative A would not meet the Applicant's Project Objective to locate the middle and high school together for a consistent culture and learning environment, because the existing Conditional Use Permit does not allow high school students. While the financial feasibility of Alternative A has not been analyzed in detail at this time, it is anticipated the financial feasibility would have been considered by the Applicant before seeking the prior approvals and would remain financially feasible, though to a lesser degree than the proposed Project.

ALTERNATIVE B: REDUCED ENROLLMENT (85% OF PROPOSED)

Impact Analysis

The reduced enrollment proposed under Alternative B would result in new vehicle trips in the vicinity, but these would equate to approximately 85% of the trips assumed under the proposed Project.

The intersection of Key Blvd and Cutting Blvd operates acceptably at LOS C during the PM peak hour under existing conditions without the addition of the Project trips. With the addition of trips from the enrollment increase specified in Alternative B, this intersection would continue to operate acceptably (at LOS D). Therefore, Project Impact Traffic-2 would be avoided and Mitigation Measure Traffic-2, requiring the Project to restripe that intersection would not be implemented.

However, even with the reduced enrollment under Alternative B, this alternative would result in significant contributions to cumulative impacts at the Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard intersection. Therefore, Impact Traffic-2 would only be avoided under existing conditions, and would become a cumulative impact without Project improvements proposed under Mitigation Measure Traffic-2. The City could require fair share funding from this and other Projects to fund improvements specified under Traffic-2 to mitigate the cumulative impact.

Under Alternative B, the contributions to cumulative impacts at the San Pablo Avenue / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard / Hill Street intersection would also remain significant and require fair share contributions to improvements planned under the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, as under the proposed Project (Impact and Mitigation Measure Traffic-4). While the impact would remain effectively the same, the Project traffic volume and therefore fair share contribution funds would be reduced to about 85% of that under the proposed Project.

At enrollment of 571 students under Alternative B, the potential maximum queue during morning drop-off would be 18 vehicles, which would be accommodated within the existing unloading capacity of approximately 20 vehicles. The potential maximum queue during afternoon pick-up would be 37 vehicles, which would fit within the available capacity of 37 vehicles. Therefore, Alternative B would avoid Impact Traffic-5 and Mitigation Measure Traffic-5, requiring queue monitoring and abatement, would not be warranted.

Alternative B would otherwise result in marginal reductions to already less-than-significant impacts in other topic areas, including noise.

Ability to Accomplish Project Objectives and Feasibility

Alternative B would have the following ability to meet project objectives:

1. Alternative B would meet, to a marginally lesser degree, the City's objective to allow for continued viability of a historically institutional site.

2. Alternative B would meet, to a marginally lesser degree, the City's objective to encourage the use of public transportation by concentrating more and older students at a school site in close proximity to a major transit hub.

3. Alternative B would meet, to a marginally lesser degree, the Applicant's objective to foster a consistent culture and learning environment by operating a middle and high school out of the same campus.

The reduced enrollment under Alternative B would meet all of the Project Objectives, though to a marginally lesser degree than would the proposed Project. While the financial feasibility of the reduced enrollment has not been analyzed in detail, due to the historic usage of the site, it is anticipated this alternative would be financially feasible, though to a lesser degree than the proposed Project.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

In addition to the discussion and comparison of impacts of the proposed Project and the alternatives, Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an "environmentally superior" alternative be selected and the reasons for such a selection disclosed. In general, the environmentally superior alternative is the alternative that would be expected to generate the least amount of significant impacts, while still achieving the basic project objectives. Identification of the environmentally superior alternative is an informational procedure and the alternative selected may not be the alternative that best meets the goals or needs of the City.

No significant and unavoidable impacts were identified under the proposed Project. All Project impacts are either less than significant or can be reduced to those levels through implementation of the mitigation contained in this Draft SEIR. Because of the low impact of the proposed Project, differences between it and the Alternatives are marginal and confined to reductions in already less than significant impacts or avoidance of the need for mitigation.

Alternative B, Reduced Enrollment (85% of Proposed) would be the environmentally superior alternative. Alternative B would meet all Project Objectives, though to a marginally lessened degree than would the proposed Project. Alternative B would avoid the Project's only intersection impact under existing conditions (at Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard) and the potential for queuing hazards. The Project's contribution to cumulative impacts at the intersections of Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard and San Pablo Avenue/Peerless Avenue/Eastshore Boulevard/Hill Street would remain significant and require mitigation. It

should also be noted that the reduction in the level of significance of impacts would also reduce this Alternative's contribution toward mitigation measures that, when implemented, would improve operating conditions to better than what would be experienced without the addition of Project trips. Specifically, improvements to Key Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard would be fully funded by the Project under the proposed Project whereas Alternative B would only be required to contribute a fair share contribution to these improvements. Similarly, the fair share contribution toward funding improvements at the San Pablo Avenue / Peerless Avenue / Eastshore Boulevard / Hill Street intersection would be approximately 15% less under Alternative B than under the proposed Project. As noted in the Initial Study and this Draft SEIR, all other impacts of the Project would be less-than-significant and Alternative B would have the same or only marginally reduced impact in other topic areas.

Because Alternative A represents continued operation under the existing Conditional Use Permit with no new approvals required, there would be no mechanism to require mitigation under this Alternative. Therefore, the traffic impacts under Alternative A would remain significant and Alternative A would not be environmentally superior to the proposed Project.

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This Draft SEIR has been prepared for the City of El Cerrito as Lead Agency by Lamphier-Gregory in affiliation with Illingworth & Rodkin Inc. and W-Trans.

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