



City of Watsonville

"A Community of Opportunities"

June 21, 2022

Josh Ripp
Head of School
Ceiba College Prep
215 Locust Street
Watsonville, CA 95076

Elizabeth Sanborn Falcon
Benchmark Realty Advisors
900 E. Hamilton Avenue, Suite 100
Campbell, CA 95008

Re: Traffic Operations Study for the Ceiba College Preparatory Academy (App #1737)

Dear Mr. Josh Ripp and Ms. Elizabeth Sanborn Falcon:

Thank you for the submittal of a traffic operations study by Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc. (dated June 8, 2022) for Ceiba College Preparatory Academy located at 215 Locust Street (formerly 260 W. Riverside Drive). This study was undertaken following the April 5, 2022, Planning Commission meeting. During this meeting, members of the public expressed concerns regarding traffic congestion and safety during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up periods. In previous communications with Ceiba and Hexagon representatives, it was staff's understanding that this study would further analyze these issues and provide recommendations on how Ceiba would improve conditions.

The purpose of this letter is to provide staff's comments on the traffic study's recommendations, including whether or not we concur with the request that the City allow the installation of a high-visibility crosswalk at the school driveway. In addition, this letter further clarifies the City's expectation that Ceiba adhere to previous conditions requiring student drop-off and pick-up onsite and avoiding traffic backup onto City streets.

TRAFFIC STUDY

The traffic operations study prepared by Hexagon provides information that confirms the congested conditions caused by parents traveling to and from the school during Ceiba's morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up periods. The study includes intersection turning-movement counts, vehicle queuing observations, and associated congested conditions on a typical school day (Tuesday, May 10, 2022). Based on their observations, Hexagon provides recommendations to

improve traffic operations associated with student drop off and pick up during the peak periods immediately before and after school, which are grouped under the following five headings:

1. High-visibility crosswalk at school driveway
2. Crossing guard/staff duties
3. No double-parking within travel lane
4. Complete Streets to Schools improvements
5. TDM measures

The study has been reviewed by City staff, including the Zoning Administrator, City Engineer and Traffic Operations Manager. Below are staff's comments on the proposed recommendations.

High-visibility crosswalk at school driveway. The high-visibility mid-block crossing on Locust Street is not recommended. City staff do not support this unapproved crossing for a number of interrelated reasons. As noted in the study, the crossing promotes unsafe behavior. Parents were observed double parking to let students out on NB Locust Street. A crossing guard enables use of this unmarked crossing by directing vehicles to stop. As a consequence, this unapproved crossing causes congestion and is contrary to the school's condition of approval requiring onsite circulation for dropping off and picking up children and not allowing traffic to backup onto City streets.

While City staff do not support establishing a mid-block crossing on Locust Street, appropriate street crossings exist nearby. The two nearest Locust Street crossings are at the corners of Riverside Drive (SR 129) and at 2nd Street, approximately 180 feet and 380 feet from the driveway entrance, respectively. *No additional pedestrian crossings are warranted nor recommended by City staff.*

With respects to the Watsonville High School installation, this mid-block crossing is in a very different situation, in that Lincoln Street is closed during school hours, it is not within an active industrial area, any residential access is limited, and the crossing has existed for many decades providing a continuous through pedestrian path (with the curb ramps on each side) to connect existing campus facilities on either side of the street.

Crossing guard/staff duties. As addressed above, the Locust Street mid-block crossing practice is to be discontinued to help reduce congestion. City staff do agree, however, that Ceiba staff should be present at their driveway to ensure parents are following the approved drop-off and pick-up protocol, including not double parking/dropping students off on the street. Crossing guards need to be trained so that they understand their roles and responsibilities and to ensure they are following the best safety practices and understand applicable laws. More information on school crossing guard training is available online at <http://www.casaferoutestoschool.org/adult-crossing-guard-training/>. For further information and advice, please speak with Traffic Operations Manager Adolfo Gonzales.

No double-parking within travel lane. Staff concurs with the recommendation for Ceiba to proactively discourage double parking and enforce no drop-offs or pick-ups from the travel lane.

Complete Streets to Schools Improvements. Staff has identified various improvements consistent with the Complete Streets to Schools Plan recommendations as part of the conditions

of approval. Staff supports Ceiba in making a commitment to install further improvements identified in the plan. As identified in the traffic study, these include installing the following:

- New/replaced sidewalk along the east side of Locust Street between the school driveway and Riverside Drive to fill in the sidewalk gap;
- High-visibility crosswalks and curb-extensions at the north leg of Locust Street/Riverside Drive, the north leg of Menker Street/Riverside Drive, the north leg of Walker Street/Riverside Drive, all legs of Locust Street/2nd Street, and all legs of Walker Street/2nd Street; and
- A new raised sidewalk in place of the striped pedestrian pathway along the north side of the school driveway.

Staff will incorporate these recommendations as new or modified conditions of approval, as follows (shown in underlined and ~~striketrough~~ text):

31. **Pedestrian Crossings Upgrades on Nearby City Streets.** Street crossings nearby to the school site shall be upgraded to include high-visibility crosswalks along with appropriate in-street signs per CA MUTCD standards. School Administration staff shall submit an Encroachment Permit to the City of Watsonville for upgrading the following location(s) to provide high-visibility crosswalks and appropriate signage:

- Locust Street and Second Street;
- Walker Street and Second Street;
- Pine Street and Second Street; and
- Pine Street and W. Beach Street. (PWD)

32. **Accessible Ramps and Sidewalks on Nearby City Streets.** School Administration staff shall submit an Encroachment Permit to the City of Watsonville for upgrading ramps at the above location(s), as necessary, to meet current Americans with Disability Act (ADA) standards.

In addition, School Administration staff shall submit an Encroachment Permit to the City of Watsonville for filling in sidewalk gaps along the east side of Locust Street between the school driveway and Riverside Drive. (PWD)

33. **Accessible Path-of-Travel.** School Administration staff shall provide an accessible route from Locust Street to the school building. Pursuant to CBC Chapter 11A, Section 1116A.5, when a walk crosses or adjoins a vehicular way, the walking surface shall be separated from the vehicular area by curbs, railings or other elements, or the boundary between the pedestrian areas and the vehicular areas shall be defined by a continuous detectable warning 36 inches wide minimum. In accordance with the recommendations in the Traffic Operations Study prepared by Hexagon (dated June 8, 2022), the school shall install a raised sidewalk in place of the striped pedestrian pathway along the north side of the school driveway. (CDD-E)

35. **Caltrans Facilities Enhancements: Riverside Drive School Zone Signs, Accessible Ramps, and Crosswalk Upgrades.** Due to the proximity of the school to the State Route 129, School Administration staff shall submit an Encroachment Permit to Caltrans for (a) establishing of a School Zone on Riverside Drive, (b) upgrading existing crosswalk(s) at Riverside Drive and Walker Street to school crosswalks, ~~and~~ (c) upgrading existing ramps at Riverside Drive and Locus Street, and (d) installing high-visibility crosswalks and curb extensions at Riverside Drive and Menker Street to meet current ADA standards. (Caltrans, PWD)

TDM measures. Staff concurs with the recommendations for Ceiba to implement a carpool matching program, provide incentives and/or promotional events encouraging students and staff to use alternative modes of transportation, and implementing a bicycle program to encourage more students and staff to ride bikes. Please note that Condition #44 requires the school to make use of marketing and promotional tools to educate and inform school staff of transportation options and the effects of their travel choices, Condition #45 requires designated five parking spaces near the main entrance to incentivize carpooling, and Condition #46 requires that staff be provided a transit subsidy. Staff will enhance Condition #43 based on Hexagon's recommendations to further clarify that a special focus shall be in implementing a carpooling matching program and bicycle program, as follows:

43. **Mandatory Travel Behavior Change Program.** The applicant shall implement a mandatory travel behavior change program to reduce the number of staff members from driving along to and from work. Key components include: (a) developing a travel behavior change program that targets individuals' attitudes, goals, and travel behaviors; (b) educating participants on the impacts of their travel choices and the opportunities to alter their habits; and (c) providing a web site that allows employees to research other modes of transportation for commuting. In accordance with the recommendations in the Traffic Operations Study prepared by Hexagon (dated June 8, 2022), the school shall implement (a) a carpool matching program incentivize carpooling and (b) a bicycle program to encourage more students and staff to ride bicycles to and from the premises. The applicant shall provide the City with the contact information for the School Administration staff member responsible for implementing the travel behavior change program. (CDD-P)

Staff will also include the three recommended measures as new conditions of approval as follows:

- [#] **Carpool Matching Program.** To help facilitate carpooling, School Administration staff shall distribute a carpool matching application to all students/parents and staff. The application shall be used to match people who live in the same area who may be able to carpool together. An objective of this project is to reach parents or staff who may be reluctant to reach out individually to find carpool partners and may be more likely to fill out a form that will be administered by the school. (CDD-P)

- [#] **Incentives or Promotional Events.** To encourage students and staff to use alternative modes of transportation, such as biking and carpooling, School Administration staff shall provide incentives or host promotional events. Such incentives shall include, but are not limited to, providing subsidized transit passes or cash stipends for carpooling. Promotional events could include a monthly raffle or a point system for those who use alternative modes. TDM measures encouraging active modes of transportation will be more effective if implemented in combination with the Complete Streets to Schools Plan improvements. (CDD-P)
- [#] **Bicycle Program.** To encourage more students and staff to ride bicycles, School Administration staff shall provide a free bikeshare program, or give away bicycles to the students. Ceiba School currently provides bike racks located at the front entrance with a capacity of 30 bikes. During Hexagon's field observations, seven bikes were observed parked on the racks during the school day. As of May 2022, school staff reported that at most 15 to 20 people have been observed to bike to school. (CDD-P)

CITY EXPECTATIONS

In accordance with the school's conditions of approval, Ceiba is responsible for providing information to parents on appropriate drop-off and pick-up procedures. Staff notes that a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) document with drop-off and pick-up procedures was prepared in 2014 and shared with the City at that time (Attachment 1). There is no record, however, that a SRTS document has been maintained or provided thereafter to families at the beginning of each school year to inform them of appropriate, designated safe routes to school. Please note that Condition #28 specifies that this document shall be provided to the City Engineer and/or Traffic Operations Manager for review and approval and posted on the school's website where parents can access it throughout the year. Condition #29 also includes the stipulation that school staff, crossing guards and volunteers shall adhere to the SRTS plan to ensure appropriate onsite drop off and pick up locations. Further, school staff, crossing guards and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the queuing of vehicles are onsite and traffic does not back up onto City streets, thereby avoiding causing traffic congesting and unsafe conditions. Any issues arising from poor traffic control shall be remedied by the school upon notification from City staff.

City staff did not find a reference to the 2014 SRTS document or any subsequent updates online or available to families for their information. In parallel to bringing the request to establish the school use on the premises on a permanent basis, please coordinate with City Engineer Maria Esther Rodriguez and Traffic Operations Manager Adolfo Gonzales in preparing an update to the 2014 SRTS document to better address ongoing traffic congestion issues identified in Hexagon's traffic operations study and discussed in this letter.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will move forward with preparing your application for consideration by Council at a public hearing, including making changes to the above conditions of approval. Please note that an agenda packet typically is prepared three weeks prior to a meeting, to allow sufficient time for

review by City staff, including the City Manager and Attorney. Staff will make every effort to prepare the item for the July 12 Council meeting. Staff will also respond to any further requests or additional information, which may delay further the project. If you have any questions regarding the contents of this letter, please contact me at justin.meek@cityofwatsonville.org or 831-768-3077. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Justin Meek, AICP, Principal Planner / Zoning Administrator
Community Development Department

Maria Esther Rodriguez, P.E., Assistant Public Works Director / City Engineer
Public Works and Utilities Department

Adolfo Gonzales, Traffic Operations Manager
Public Works and Utilities Department

Cc: City Manager
City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Ceiba Safe Route to School (SRTS) Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures (August 27, 2014)