

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

SAN DIEGO COAST AREA
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STAFF REPORT: CONSENT CALENDAR

Wed 4c

Application No.: 6-97-72

Applicant: Cal-Trans

Agent: John Rieger

Description: Improvements to the existing I-5/Cannon Road Interchange including widening the existing north and south on-and-off ramps, signalizing the Cannon Road and ramp termini intersections, construction of a 525 foot long and up to 10 foot high retaining wall at the southwest quadrant, and construction of merge lanes on I-5 north and south of the Cannon Road Interchange.

Site: I-5/Cannon Road Interchange, Carlsbad, San Diego County.
APN 210-090-23, 36, 211-010-24

Substantive File Documents: Certified Agua Hedionda Land Use Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends the Commission adopt the following resolution:

I. Approval with Conditions.

The Commission hereby grants a permit for the proposed development on the grounds that, as conditioned, the development will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

II. Standard Conditions.

See attached page.

III. Special Conditions.

1. Revised Landscaping Plan. Prior to the issuance of the coastal development permit, the applicant shall submit a revised, final landscape plan in substantial conformance with the preliminary plan, including replacement trees at a 5:1 ratio, replacement to removal. The plan shall be subsequently implemented and shall indicate the type, size, extent and location of all plant materials, the proposed irrigation system and other landscape features. Drought tolerant native or naturalizing plant materials shall be utilized to the maximum extent feasible. Special emphasis shall be placed on the

placement of at least 50 specimen size trees (24-inch box minimum) within the proposed landscaping to effectively screen the widened interchange and new merge ramp improvements from views from Interstate 5. Said plan shall be submitted to, reviewed and approved in writing by the Executive Director.

IV. Findings and Declarations.

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

1. Detailed Project Description/History. Proposed is improvements to the existing I-5/Cannon Road Interchange, including widening the existing north and south on-and-off ramps, signalizing the Cannon Road and ramp termini intersections, constructing a 525 foot long and up to 10 foot high retaining wall at the southwest quadrant, and constructing merge lanes on I-5 north and south of the Cannon Road Interchange to add capacity and improve operations of the interchange. With the development of Carlsbad Ranch and Legoland, a 447 acre mixed use development located northwest of the subject intersection, an increase in peak period traffic is expected on I-5 in the area over the next twenty years as development of the area continues. Access corridors and staging areas are proposed in the existing freeway right-of-way. At least two travel lanes, one in each direction, of Cannon Road will remain open and available to the public at all times to ensure that the public can access the shoreline to the west of the overcrossing.

The actual installation of the meters and associated improvements is exempt from coastal permit requirements, but the provision of additional travel lanes does require a coastal development permit. Improvement of the I-5/Cannon Road interchange is a component of the Carlsbad Ranch Specific Plan; however, the project site lies partially within the Agua Hedionda plan area and as such requires a coastal development permit from the Coastal Commission.

The surrounding topography is generally flat, typical of a coastal terrace. No environmentally sensitive habitat is present within the project area. Most of the surrounding area to the east will be developed with commercial/retail uses, including Legoland, a theme park. West of the interchange is a mix of office, residential and institutional uses (SDG&E powerplant) as well as undeveloped area providing blue water views of the Pacific Ocean to motorists on the freeway.

2. Visual Impacts/Biology/Public Access. Section 30251 of the Coastal Act requires the preservation of scenic resources and the enhancement of views to and along the shoreline. Policy 8.2 the certified Agua Hedionda Land Use Plan identifies a number of special vista points and viewing areas that shall be preserved and made available to the public. One of them is near the project area near the proposed northbound entrance ramp onto I-5. Additionally, I-5 is a major coastal access route. The applicant has prepared a visual assessment of the project which concludes that while the project represents a substantial visual change, it is not an adverse visual change. The assessment states that the proposed improvements substantially intensify the existing freeway and interchange structures, however, since these structures already exist, the change is one of scale, rather than of new structures.

Landscaping near the existing interchange includes eucalyptus trees, oleander, ice plant, and other drought tolerant shrubs. The widening of existing on-ramps and construction of merge lanes will require the removal of 60 mature trees and associated landscaping. The submitted landscaping plan indicates replacement planting of all disturbed areas with trees being replaced at a 5:1, and shrubs at a 1:1 ratio. The applicant has proposed to augment the landscaping plan by including 50 of the proposed trees as 24" box (36 as Torrey Pines and 14 as Jacaranda) to further mitigate visual impacts. The present landscaping plan will have to be revised to include this provision. Special Condition #1 requires the applicant to provide the revised landscaping plan.

A retaining wall is proposed in the southwest quadrant of the interchange near the proposed southbound merge lane. It is proposed at 525 feet long with a maximum height of 10 feet. Vines will be planted at the base of the wall, within Caltrans right-of-way. The plant material will visually soften the walls, defer graffiti, and allow Caltrans to maintain and care for the vines.

Approximately 0.1 acre of land currently used for agricultural purposes adjacent to the 45 acre SDG&E south shore property is proposed for development in association with interchange improvements located within the northeast quadrant of the project area. Policy 2-1 of the Agua Hedionda LUP provides that conversion of agricultural property shall be consistent with Coastal Act policies and the policies of the LUP. Policy 2-2 of the LUP designates this land as "Open Space" and Policy 2-3 provides that conversion of this parcel is subject to several conditions including a finding that agriculture is no longer feasible and that prior to development a permanent open space easement shall be recorded over the remaining agricultural lands in favor of the City of Carlsbad. The project offers no mitigation for the impacts to the small amount of agricultural lands needed to construct the project. However, the Commission finds the impacted agricultural lands are within existing Caltrans right-of-way, on the perimeter of the main agricultural lands, and the proposed removal of this land from agricultural use will not affect the continued viability of agriculture on the adjacent SDG&E property. The Commission notes these lands, designated as right-of-way, have been identified as appropriate for conversion to urban uses for necessary public works projects designed to improve public safety and circulation and are not subject to the above policies of the LUP. Thus, the Commission can find the proposed project consistent with the resource protection provisions of the Coastal Act and the certified LUP.

3. Growth Inducement/Local Coastal Program. As a result of the City's policy of actively promoting and encouraging development in the project area, much of the planned development is occurring and will continue to occur in the future with the buildout of Carlsbad Ranch and Legoland. This will lead to dramatic increases in traffic volumes on both Cannon Road and I-5 in the vicinity. Therefore, the project is designed as part of the support system that would allow orderly buildout of the City of Carlsbad to the land use designations of its General Plan and certified Local Coastal Program. Because it is part of the City's planned growth, the proposed project will not

encourage uncontrolled growth, growth that will tax other community facilities, or growth that is inconsistent with City plans and policies. Therefore the Commission finds that the proposed project will not generate adverse growth inducement, and is consistent with Section 30254 of the Coastal Act and the certified Local Coastal Program.

STANDARD CONDITIONS:

1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgement. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
2. Expiration. If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date on which the Commission voted on the application. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.
3. Compliance. All development must occur in strict compliance with the proposal as set forth below. Any deviation from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the staff and may require Commission approval.
4. Interpretation. Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
5. Inspections. The Commission staff shall be allowed to inspect the site and the development during construction, subject to 24-hour advance notice.
6. Assignment. The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.
7. Terms and Conditions Run with the Land. These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the permittee to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

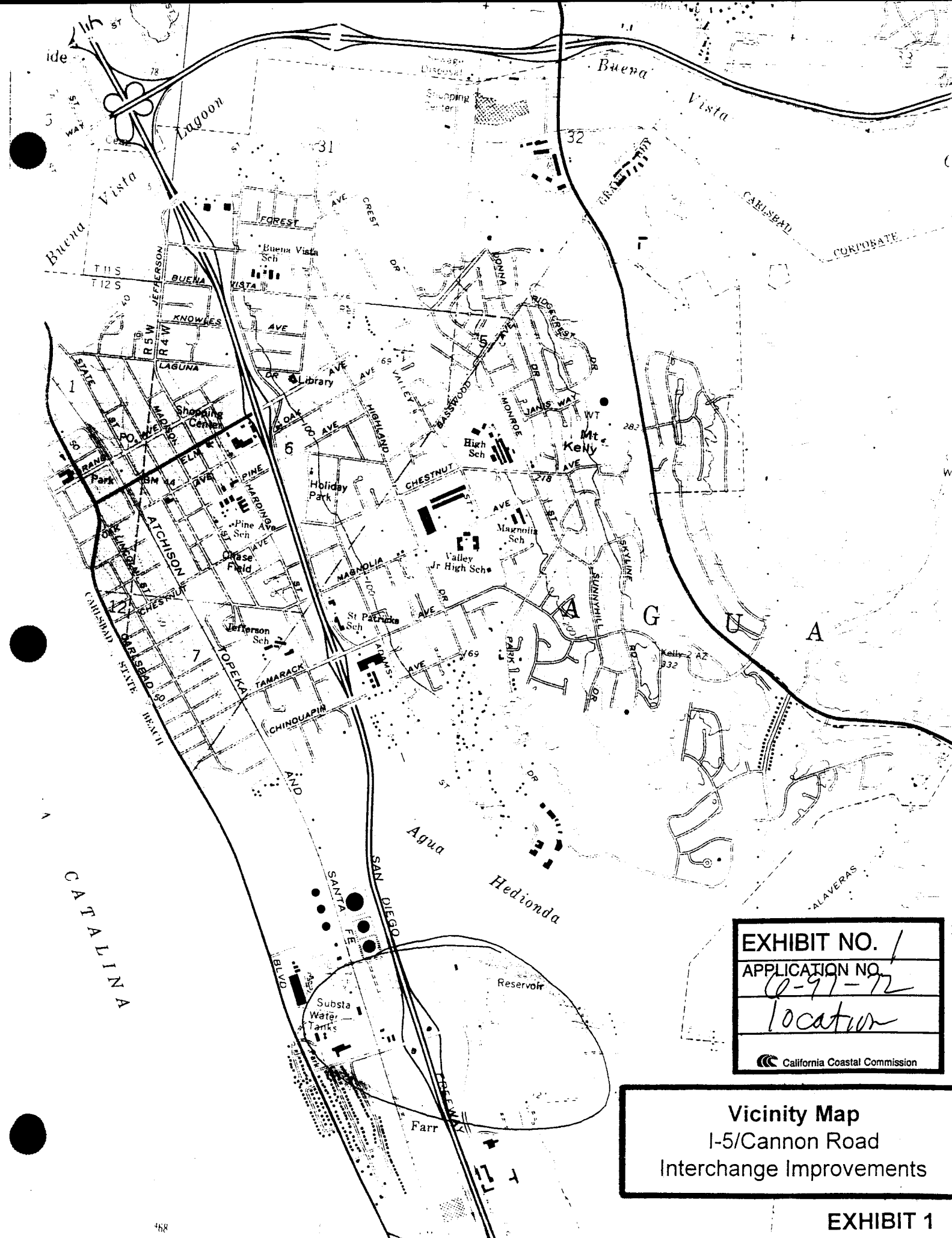


EXHIBIT NO. 1
APPLICATION NO. 0-91-72
Location
California Coastal Commission

Vicinity Map
I-5/Cannon Road
Interchange Improvements

INDEX OF SHEETS

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PROJECT PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTION ON
STATE HIGHWAY

IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY
IN CARLSBAD FROM 1.0 KILOMETERS
SOUTH TO 1.0 KILOMETERS NORTH
OF CANNON ROAD UNDERCROSSING

To be supplemented by Standard Plans dated July, 1992

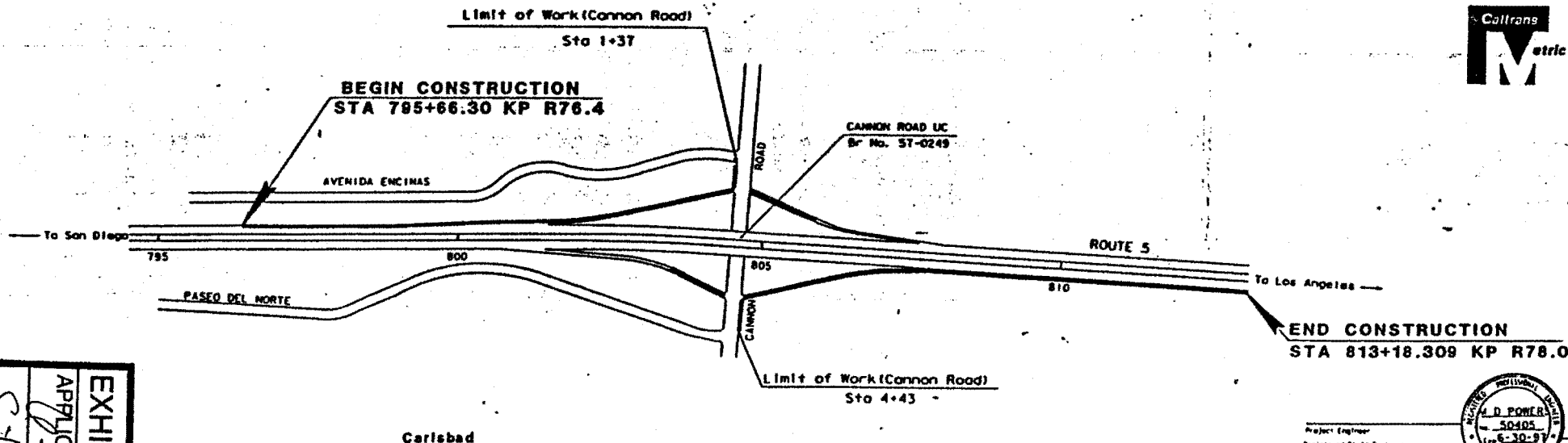


EXHIBIT NO. 2

APPLICATION NO. 994-92

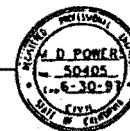
Site Plan

California Coastal Commission

Assess the Class for classes of license
office to Contractors on page 1 of the

Project Engineer
Registered Civil Engineer

Date: _____



PROJECT LAYOUT SHEETS
EXHIBIT 2