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Comment Letter I-129

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Comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Report Comment Period for Newland Sierra (Log No. PDS2015-ER-15-08-001; SCH No. 2015021036, Project Numbers: PDS2015-GPA-15-001, PDS2015-SP-15-001, PDS2015-REZ-15-001, PDS2015-TM-5597, PDSXXX-HLP-XXX)

Sent via email to Smith, Ashley <Ashley.Smith2@sdcounty.ca.gov>

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the DEIR for the Newland Sierra project. I have many concerns about the project and especially the DEIR. I believe mitigation is important to lessen the impacts of a project. Sadly however, mitigation without positive results does not mitigate impacts. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has been in place for 47 years. Over that time, numerous projects have been built and San Diego County allowing it to grow from 1.365 million people to over 3.3 Million(2015). Considering all the impacts from numerous projects and all the mitigation to lessen those impacts, the public need to know why the roads are still so congested, the schools filled beyond capacity, and forced water conservation is needed to prevent shortages. Years ago, during the General Plan update, when Gary Pryor was the Director of what was called Planning and Land Use, he talked about the carrying capacity of the land and how the General Plan need to respect that. He said it was too expensive to maintain development on highly constrained land and noted how the County was struggling to maintain the existing road network and provide services for current residents.

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I believe CEQA is a good tool but it only works if everyone, including the consultants, governmental staff and the decision makers are all honest with themselves and with the public. They also must follow through to make sure the mitigation measures have the desired result.

My comments in this letter will focus on mitigation measures specified in the **Section 7, List of Mitigation Measures and Environmental Design Consideration**. This same comment applies to all mitigation measures in the DEIR that use the terms "Promote" or "Coordinate" because there no actions with data supplied that demonstrate they can be executed and have the intended results.

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I believe mitigation is important to lessen the impacts of a project. Sadly however, mitigation without positive results does not mitigate impacts. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has been in place for 47 years. Over that time, numerous projects have been built and San Diego County allowing it to grow from 1.365 million people to over 3.3 Million(2015). Considering all the impacts from numerous projects and all the mitigation to lessen those impacts, the public need to know why the roads are still

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so congested, the schools filled beyond capacity, and forced water conservation is needed to prevent shortages.

Clearly something has gone terribly wrong if after 45 years we are in the situation we are in today. The Newland Sierra project shows us what is wrong. In 7-8, PDF-8, for instance, the mitigation measure has no means of being measureable or actionable -- it merely promotes a park-and-ride and encourages carpooling with no detail or method measure its success. There is no evidence presented in the DEIR showing it will work. In addition, and this is the real problem, many of the mitigation measures presented in this DEIR are well meaning fuzzy fluff of good intentions but without substance.

Looking at 7-8, PDF-8, although promoting the park-and-ride is a good idea, as someone who on occasion has used the park-n-ride, it will take some work. I can speak from personal experience about the problems of the park n ride and why it likely most of the Newland Sierra residents won't use it.

1. The park-and-ride lots are often full and cars parked some drivers fear their cars will be vandalized. The company I work for is located at Liberty Station and when we go to project job sites in LA and Orange Counties I drive to park-and-ride lots off of I-15 or I-78 where I meet my coworkers to drive north. The I-15 park-and-ride lots are usually full and on occasion there has been a lot of broken clear tempered glass in the lots indicating there has been vandalism of the cars left there. Mine wasn't vandalized but after seeing the El Norte parkway park-and-ride strewn glass a couple of years ago, I opted to drive to a shopping center and leave my car there. The Newland Sierra project will be comprised of mostly upper income buyers with cars in the \$40,000+ price range. I can't see someone with that kind of an investment leaving it in the baking sun, unattended, in park-n-ride lot.
2. In PDF-7, coordination of a ride share shuttle system with SANDAG iCommute is good but there are no details presented in the DEIR that tells you historically how many people use iCommute. The DEIR should list a similar project and state how many people within the project used iCommute so the public and decision makers would have a good idea what percentage of the residents of the Newland Sierra project will use carpool, vanpool or shuttle. I ask this because when my company's office moved to Liberty Station I thought I could easily join a vanpool, shuttle or carpool with someone. I tried for over a year and again recently without success.

Sadly one has only to use the HOV lane during peak morning and evening commute times on the I-15 between to see what is being proposed in PDF-7 likely won't work. The Newland Sierra residents will do what most people do now-- purchase a FasTrak transponder and pay to use the carpool lane.

The I-15 for those like myself who commute from North County south to one of the many job centers near Mira Mesa or downtown, is extremely congested. Single car drivers use either the regular lanes or if they can afford to purchase a FasTrak pass which costs about \$8:00 each way during traffic times. Vehicles with more than one person use the HOV lane. In May of this year, I started using the HOV lane and noticed how few vehicles in the HOV lanes have more than one person in the car. Over the last couple of weeks I started counting the total numbers of vehicles

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that either I passed or passed be on my commute to and from work, noting how many of them had more than one person in the car. I travelled between 65 and 75 MPH from where I entered the HOV lane at SR78 and I-15 and where it ends at the 163. I counted both private and commercial vehicles. The only vehicles I did not count were the Rapid Express bus or motorcycles. I visually looked into vehicles as I either passed them or they passed me and noted if there was someone in the car besides the driver. If there was a car seat, even if I couldn't confirm it was occupied, I counted that vehicle as having more than one person. Oddly, I saw few vanpools or shuttles and about half of them I did see had no passengers. The data below is my observation.

Date	Aprox.Time at entry to HOV at I-15/SR78 or at I-15 /163	Total vehicles observed	Those vehicles with 2 or more riders	% of people carpooling
8-3	6:30am	46	12	26
8-3	5:45pm	53	13	24.5
8-4	6:40am	57	9	16
8-7	6:45am	46	9	19.5
8-7	6:20pm	44	14	31.8
8-8	6:45am	71	15	21
8-8	6:10pm	47	11	23.4
8-9	6:50am	46	9	19.6
8-9	6:00pm	48	11	23
8-10	6:15am	49	12	24.5
8-10	6:15pm	57	19	33.3
8-11	6:50am	62	13	21
8-11	5:00pm	68	12	17.6

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My small sampling shows that approximately 23% of the people in the HOV lane were commuting with someone else in the car. Therefore I think we can expect only 23% of the people in the Newland Sierra project would use some form of carpooling, vanpooling or shuttle. Since most of the other freeways near the project do not have HOV lanes there is little incentive to carpool, especially if the residents of the Newland Sierra Project work in San Marcos or in one of the Coastal cities. Therefore the number of people likely using the park-n-ride or carpooling will be below 23%. Since the Fastrack system logs each car and notes even those cars without transponders there should be data available that is far more precise than my small sampling

The DEIR needs to demonstrate the mitigation measures proposed actually work. It should provide a level of detail beyond simple "promoting", "coordinating" or "encouraging". It should provide data to illustrate how other projects similar to the Newland Sierra project successfully mitigated impacts. The bottom line is, carpooling and leaving your car at a park-n-ride is not an attractive idea to most people and I recommend the below mitigation measures be added to the Newland Sierra project.

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1. **Make it Safe:** Integrate a park-in-ride into the retail or commercial area where there is good eyes-on or provide police presence substation so residents are more likely to feel their cars will not be vandalized when they are left unattended over an eight to ten hour period.
2. **Provide Amenities:** Offer covered parking with a solar roof would provide shade, independent detailer or some other attractor so the park-in-ride has some amenities that would actually attract a resident who values their vehicular investment. By having the park-n-ride combined or next to a retail center the project could specify that there is coffee shop with Wi-Fi nearby where residents can wait for their ride or passenger.
3. **Provide Monetary Incentives:** The DEIR needs to consider what incentives would be provided to encourage people to use the park-in-ride or carpool during peak traffic commutes and measure the use so that there is proof there is real mitigation happening.
 - a. Create a cell phone application using GPS tracking to log in the cars from the project each time they use the park-in-ride so that data can be collected to verify use.
 - b. Provide a point system managed by the HOA to be used towards a free smoothie or sandwich at a nearby, walkable store located in the shopping area.
4. **Provide a Failsafe Alternative:** If after 25% of the construction is completed and residents aren't decreasing the traffic from the project by a specified percent per the mitigation measures, the project will stop construction until there is a solution that will work to mitigate the impacts.

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Summation:

The DEIR fails to show the mitigation measures listed in **Section 7, List of Mitigation Measures and Environmental Design Consideration** will work and it is imperative that they do. The DEIR needs to look at mitigation measures, talk about how they will be done and demonstrate they will be effective. There should be data supplied to show that each measure will likely work to lessen impacts. Without this level of detail the mitigation measures of mere boilerplate fluff.

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This same comment applies to all mitigation measures in the DEIR that use the terms "Promote" or "Coordinate". The DEIR needs to resolve this problem and recirculate the EIR so the public can review the mitigation measures and have some confidence that the EIR has done its job.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sandra Farrell