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Endo Engineering *Traffic Engineering* *Air Quality Studies* *Noise Assessments*

November 19, 2014

Mr. Wallace H. Nesbit
Principal Planner
City of La Quinta
78-495 Calle Tampico
La Quinta, CA 92253

SUBJECT: Response to Comments on the Griffin Lake Estates Specific Plan 2168 and Tentative Tract Map No. 36744 Draft Traffic Impact Study

Dear Mr. Nesbit;

Endo Engineering prepared the *Griffin Lake Estates Specific Plan Draft Traffic Impact Study* dated August 20, 2014. On November 18, we received the following comments from the City of La Quinta Public Works Department on that study (letter 4850-001 dated November 14, 2014). Each comment is provided below, followed by the response.

Comment 1: Page 3-1: The dates of when the existing count data information were obtained should be included in the text of the report.

Response 1: The date and hours during which the new traffic counts were made was provided on page 3-1 and the count data was provided in Appendix B. The last paragraph on page 3-1 states:

> *"New peak hour traffic counts were made by Counts Unlimited, Inc. at the two key intersections on Wednesday, April 30, 2014. The traffic counts were made from 5:30 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. and from 2:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m., consistent with the City of La Quinta Engineering Bulletin #06-13. The new peak hour traffic count data is included in Appendix B."*

Comment 2: Table 6-9: The finding that a traffic signal is not justified at the intersection of Madison and Avenue 54 is inconsistent with the City's determination based on several other studies that a traffic signal should be currently installed at the intersection. This finding should be modified in the report.

Response 2: This intersection does not meet the minimum criteria identified in the CA MUTCD traffic signal warrants. Traffic control signals should not be installed at intersections where the CA MUTCD warrants are not met. For a traffic signal to be recommended based on the peak hour traffic volume warrants, the intersection must both meet the minimum volume warrants and demonstrate excessive delay.

Based on the operational analysis performed for this intersection and the available traffic count data, the traffic study correctly concluded that traffic signal control is not justified at the intersection of Madison Street with Avenue 54. This intersection currently meets the City of La Quinta minimum intersection performance standards without traffic signal control. With no change in the existing traffic control, this intersection is projected to continue to provide acceptable levels of service in the year 2017 with the proposed project. There is no evidence of excessive delay during the peak hours. A substantial number of vehicles make right-turn movements at this intersection and experience relatively little control delay. These vehicles do not substantially contribute to the need for signalization.

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The traffic volumes at this intersection have decreased substantially since the previous studies were prepared. The CVAG 24-hour traffic counts for Avenue 54, west of Madison Street, indicate that peak season daily traffic volumes on Avenue 54 have decreased from a high of 15,161 vehicles (in the year 2007) to 8,841 vehicles in the year 2013. In the year 2011, the CVAG count at this location was 7,813 vehicles per day (52 percent of the highest traffic count).

The traffic study projected future traffic volumes by expanding existing traffic volumes to the projected General Plan buildout volumes. To achieve the General Plan buildout volumes by the year 2035, the traffic volumes at the intersection of Madison Street and Avenue 54 were expanded by an annual traffic growth rate of 14 percent between the year 2014 to the year 2017. Even with this growth rate, the year 2017 level of service at this intersection was determined to be acceptable.

Comment 3: Page 6-12: The existing main entrance to the project sight was recently the subject of a complaint about restricted sight distance because of vegetation. The report should comment on changing the landscaping along the Avenue 54 frontage so that it grows to a height of less than 36 inches.

Response 3: As stated in the fifth paragraph on Page 6-12:

> *"Improvement plans for streets and site access gates and parking areas should be stamped and signed by qualified engineers. Improvements should be designed and constructed in accordance with City adopted standards, supplemental drawings and specifications, or as approved by the City Engineer."*

If the plans include landscaping that may interfere with sight distance, the landscaping should be limited to a height of less than 36 inches. As stated on Page 7-3, second item:

> *"Intersection sight distance shall be provided in accordance with City standards."*

Comment 4: Page 6-13: The finding that two-lane roundabouts are not viable at the two key intersections in the study area is inconsistent with the General Plan Update EIR traffic impact analysis. The report should explain why the Griffin Lake Estates study comes to a different conclusion regarding the feasibility of constructing roundabouts.

Response 4: The General Plan Update EIR recommended roundabouts without including an evaluation of the operational delay or level of service that would be associated with those roundabouts. On page 6-13, the traffic study discussed the theoretical capacity of roundabouts and compared the capacity of a two-lane roundabout to the General Plan buildout traffic volumes at the two off-site key intersections. Even on a daily basis, it is apparent that the General Plan buildout traffic projections would exceed the capacity of a two-lane roundabout. When the General Plan buildout peak hour volumes for the two off-site key intersections were evaluated using the Highway Capacity Software (HCS), the intersections were both projected to operate at LOS F. The last two HCS Worksheets in Appendix C provide the level of service and delay projected for the two-lane roundabouts. As shown therein, with the General Plan Update traffic volumes, the future Madison Street @ Avenue 54 two-lane roundabout would operate with 828.67 seconds of average approach delay per vehicle. This level of delay is clearly unacceptable and would not meet the City of La Quinta minimum performance standards.

Comment 5: Page 7-2: The report should be modified to state that the developer should be paying the City the TUMF and the DIF. A figure should be provided that illustrates the striping modifications on Avenue 54 along the project frontage recommended in the study and also include left-turn acceleration lanes in the median on Avenue 54 for both project entrances.

Response 5: As stated on Page 7-3, under standard mitigation required of all developments:

> *"3. The project developer shall participate in the TUMF program and contribute fees prior to the issuance of building permits.*

4. *The project developer may be required to contribute Development Impact Fees prior to the issuance of building permits on a fair-share basis to fund future transportation improvements of regional benefit (such as traffic signals at the two key intersections or the construction of a raised median on Avenue 54 when warranted in the future)."*

A median acceleration lane was not included in the traffic study as a mitigation measure because acceptable levels of service were projected for the site access intersections based on City performance standards without a median acceleration lane. However, a median acceleration lane would improve the operation of the northbound approaches at both site access intersections and should be considered as a condition of approval by the City of La Quinta in the design review process.

On page 6-12 (second paragraph) the traffic study discusses median acceleration lanes (MAL):

"While not required to achieve an acceptable LOS at the proposed Residential Site Access, a far-side MAL on Avenue 54 could improve the peak hour operation of the northbound approach by reducing control delay. Storage for two vehicles in the median refuge lane would facilitate left turns onto Avenue 54 from the project site."

The traffic study also discussed a median acceleration lane on page 7-3, (third paragraph under Section 7.4):

"Consideration should be given to the provision of a far-side left-turn median acceleration/storage lane on Avenue 54 at the proposed Residential Access. A far-side median acceleration/storage lane on Avenue 54 at the Residential Access (Street "D") could improve traffic safety and operations at this intersection upon General Plan buildout."

As stated in the fifth paragraph on Page 6-12:

"Improvement plans for streets and site access gates and parking areas should be stamped and signed by qualified engineers. Improvements should be designed and constructed in accordance with City adopted standards, supplemental drawings and specifications, or as approved by the City Engineer."

We trust that this supplemental information adequately responds to the comments made by the City of La Quinta. If additional questions or comments arise, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
ENDO ENGINEERING

Gregory Endo
Principal