

Appendix F
**Barlow Hotel Project CEQA
Transportation Assessment**

Memorandum

Date: June 20, 2024
To: Terri Avila, ESA and Tina Wallis, Law Offices of Tina Wallis
From: Purva Kapshikar and Ian Barnes, PE, Fehr & Peers
Subject: **Barlow Hotel Project CEQA Transportation Assessment**

WC24-4072

Fehr & Peers completed a CEQA vehicle miles traveled (VMT) assessment and CEQA multimodal assessment of the Barlow Hotel project. The proposed project includes an 83-room hotel structure with a restaurant, two bars, retail, a spa, a gym, meeting rooms, and a rooftop pool at the Barlow site in downtown Sebastopol and an associated off-site 242-space partially valet-operated parking lot on Morris Street. The VMT analysis includes two discrete VMT analyses:

- An analysis of countywide VMT change using the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) travel demand model
- A GIS and Big Data-based analysis of net change in VMT considering other hotel uses in the nearby area and travel distances beyond the Sonoma County boundary

The CEQA multimodal analysis includes a review of the project's effects on the pedestrian, bicycle, public transit, and emergency vehicle access modes, as well as a review of the site plan for site access and circulation.

The remainder of this memorandum outlines the assumptions, methods, and outcomes of the analyses described.

CEQA Vehicle Miles Traveled Analysis

Senate Bill 743 (Steinberg 2013) instructed the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to update CEQA Guidelines to eliminate congestion-based analysis (such as level of service analysis) from CEQA Transportation analysis and replace it with a new metric (vehicle miles traveled, or VMT). The intent of SB 743 was to encourage infill development, promote healthier communities through active transportation (e.g., walking and bicycling), and align CEQA Transportation analysis to aid California in meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets set by other pieces of legislation (i.e., AB 32). Ultimately, SB 743 shifted CEQA transportation analysis from measuring the effects of



a project on drivers, to measuring the environmental effects of driving generated by a project. Adopted in December 2018, Section 15064.3 of the CEQA Guidelines notes that VMT is the most appropriate metric for the analysis of impacts in the Transportation section of CEQA documents.

VMT measures the amount of driving a project generates. For example, a project generating 100 total (inbound and outbound) vehicle trips per day which travel an average of 5 miles per trip results in 500 project-generated VMT per day. VMT has historically been used in CEQA as an input for the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas sections, but VMT can also be used to show how efficient the connection between the transportation system and existing or proposed land uses is.

The State Office of Planning and Research provided guidance in its *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* (December 2018) as to how the analysis of VMT could be performed and what CEQA thresholds of significance could be applied. The guidance in the *Technical Advisory* is non-binding. The City of Sebastopol requirements (adopted in 2024) tier from the *Technical Advisory* and use the SCTA countywide travel demand model and metrics, methods, and thresholds provided in the *Technical Advisory*. Based on direction from the City in its capacity as a lead agency for CEQA purposes, the VMT analysis is based on net change in VMT.

The analysis assesses the impacts of shifting hotel demand on VMT. The Barlow Hotel is evaluated on a basis of net change for VMT under the assumption that Sebastopol is underserved by hotels. Nearby hotels along the US 101 corridor in Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park were identified based on characteristics such as location and amenities, and data on their trip distribution and trip length were collected from StreetLight Data's database of "Big Data" location-based services. The analysis is conservative in that hotel data for similar hotels north of Santa Rosa, such as those in Healdsburg, were not used, which would have led to greater negative deltas in trip lengths, and consequently lower VMT calculations.

The "park-once" strategy for the Barlow also guides the analysis assumptions. Because the Barlow development (along with downtown Sebastopol as a whole) includes a diverse selection of land uses including restaurants, stores, and parks, guests and visitors can park their vehicle once and easily walk or bike between their destinations. This contributes to a trip distribution pattern with reduced vehicle trips (and increased walk/bike trips) throughout the downtown area.

SCTA Model Regional VMT Analysis

Regional VMT by speed bin from the most recent version of the SCTA model were output for the Base Year (Year 2019), Base Year plus Project, Baseline Year (Year 2024, interpolated), Baseline Year plus Project (Year 2024, interpolated), Cumulative Year (Year 2040), and Cumulative Year plus Project scenarios. The traffic analysis zones of the selected hotels were adjusted to reflect current hotel capacities and changes in hotel demand resulting from the construction of the Barlow Hotel. The results of the analysis are summarized below in **Table 1**.



Table 1: Net Change in Regional VMT Using SCTA Model

Scenario	Total Regional VMT	Difference due to Project	Impact?
Base Year (Year 2019)	14,016,050		
Base Year Plus Project	14,015,350	-700	No
Baseline Year (Year 2024)	14,534,400		
Baseline Year Plus Project	14,533,830	-570	No
Cumulative (Year 2040)	16,193,050		
Cumulative Plus Project	16,192,990	-60	No

Source: Fehr & Peers, April 2024.

As noted in **Table 1**, the proposed project results in a net decrease in VMT in all scenarios. Therefore, the project’s impacts to VMT for the CEQA Transportation section analysis is **less-than-significant** and no mitigation measures are required.

GIS/Big Data-Based Regional VMT Analysis

The GIS/Big Data-based VMT analysis approach considers the locations of comparable hotels to establish a sample trip distribution pattern for the Barlow Hotel.¹ Then, based on the relative distances between the sample hotels/Barlow Hotel and common destinations, a delta in trip length is computed; for many West County destinations, the trip length delta is negative (indicating that Barlow Hotel trips are shorter), but for other destinations (like San Francisco), the trip length delta is positive (indicating that Barlow Hotel trips are longer). Ultimately, the net change in VMT was calculated using the following equation:

$$VMT\ Change = \sum_{All\ Destinations} Project\ Trip\ Generation * Trip\ Distribution\ \% * Trip\ Length\ Delta$$

Sample trip data was collected at the Census block group level. The block groups of the selected sample hotels were used as origins and destinations for typical hotel guest trips in the area, including both access trips (traveling between one’s home and the hotel) and tourist trips (traveling between the hotel and attractions in the area). The data included trip volumes and lengths in an origin-destination format, which were consolidated to create trip distributions for typical hotels in the area. Access and tourist trip distributions were developed and combined following the assumption that, on a typical average day, 20 percent of trips generated by the Barlow Hotel would be access trips and 80 percent would be tourist trips. Following the “park-

¹ Hotels analyzed include Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country, Courtyard by Marriott Santa Rosa, AC Hotel by Marriott Santa Rosa Sonoma Wine Country, DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Sonoma Wine Country, Oxford Suites Sonoma County – Rohnert Park, Graton Resort and Casino, and Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Santa Rosa Sebastopol.



once” strategy for the Barlow development, the analysis also assumed 25 percent of trips would remain within the Barlow area and would not directly contribute to VMT.

Project trip generation was calculated to be 664 daily weekday trips using ITE Land Use Code 310 from the 11th Edition of the *ITE Trip Generation Manual*, which reflects hotels with associated public uses interior to the hotel, such as meeting rooms and restaurants. This is in alignment with the SCTA model VMT assessment above, as the model also uses Code 310 for its hotel analysis. The *ITE Trip Generation Manual* includes additional codes for specific hotel types, but Code 310 contributes to a higher and more conservative trip generation calculation than other applicable codes such as Code 330 (Resort Hotel), so we have used it in our Big Data analysis.

Shortest path trip lengths between block groups were calculated in GIS. The final calculation was a reduction of 185 vehicle-miles, which suggests the addition of the Barlow Hotel has the potential to reduce VMT in the area.

Table 2: Net Change in Regional VMT

Scenario	Difference due to project	Impact?
Existing Plus Project	-185	No

Source: Fehr & Peers, April 2024.

As noted in **Table 2**, the proposed project results in a net decrease in VMT in the Existing plus Project scenario. Therefore, the project’s impacts to VMT for the CEQA Transportation section analysis is **less-than-significant** and no mitigation measures are required.

CEQA Multimodal Assessment

Throughout this section, recommendations are made to address potential deficiencies in the transportation system resulting from the project. These recommendations are *not* mitigation measures. They are improvement measures or strategies that are not required to be implemented, as they do not pertain to CEQA impact analyses on the transportation system. Fehr & Peers provides these non-binding recommendations for improvements to enhance multimodal circulation, mobility, and access.

Site Access and Circulation

Vehicle access to the project site will be provided via McKinley Street and SR 12. The existing 87 parking spots directly in the Gravenstein Court parking lot will be reconfigured to accommodate 90 proposed parking spaces. The project also includes an off-site parking lot of 242 partially valet-operated parking spaces on Morris Street, of which 84 are reserved for use by the Barlow Hotel.



The posted speed limit along McKinley Street in the vicinity of the project is 15 miles per hour while the posted speed limit along SR 12 in the vicinity of the project is 25 miles per hour. According to Table 201.1 of the *Caltrans Highway Design Manual*, the stopping sight distance is 100 feet at 15 miles per hour and 150 feet at 25 miles per hour. The observed sight distance along both streets is greater than 100 and 150 feet in both directions. The posted speed limit along Morris Street is 25 miles per hour, and the observed stopping sight distance is also greater than 150 feet in both directions. Additionally, per Table 405.1A of the *Caltrans Highway Design Manual*, the corner sight distance is approximately 165 feet for left-turning vehicles at 15 miles per hour and 143 feet for right-turning vehicles. The corner sight distance is approximately 275 feet for left-turning vehicles at 25 miles per hour and 238 feet for right-turning vehicles. Thus, the project site access points at the hotel and off-site Batch Plant parking lot include sufficient stopping sight distance and corner sight distance so long as landscaping at the project site access intersections is maintained.

It is recommended that the final site plan be reviewed prior to the issuance of building permits for potential sight distance impediments including new signs, above ground utility boxes, or landscaping proposed in the sight triangle.

Transit Assessment

Sonoma County Transit and Mendocino Transit Authority both provide transit service in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. The following routes operate in the vicinity of the project site:

- Sonoma County Transit: Route 20 (Russian River Area, Forestville, Sebastopol, Santa Rosa)
- Sonoma County Transit: Route 24 (Sebastopol Shuttle)
- Sonoma County Transit: Route 26 (Sebastopol, Cotati, Rohnert Park)
- Mendocino Transit Authority: Route 95 (South Coast/Santa Rosa)

The Sonoma County Transit routes run along Sebastopol Avenue (SR 12), SR 116, Morris Street, McKinley Street, and Laguna Parkway, while the Mendocino Transit Authority route runs along Bodega Avenue and Sebastopol Avenue (SR 12). All transit stops are within one half-mile radius of the project site.

The project would create a significant impact to transit service if the following criteria are met:

- The project interferes with existing transit facilities or precludes the construction of planned transit facilities.

The project proposes no features which conflict with existing or planned transit services, and increases in ridership on local or regional transit facilities that would cause them to exceed their capacity are not expected. Thus, the project's effect on the public transit system is ***less-than-significant***.



Emergency Vehicle Assessment

Several factors determine whether a project has enough access for emergency vehicles, including the following:

- Number of access points (both public and emergency access only)
- Width of access points
- Width of internal roadways

Emergency response within the City of Sebastopol is provided by the Sebastopol Fire Department. Emergency vehicle access to the site is provided by McKinley Street and Sebastopol Avenue (SR 12). As the project has multiple access points, and the width of access points and internal roadways appears to be sufficient to accommodate emergency vehicles, the project's effect on emergency vehicle access is ***less-than-significant***.

It is recommended that the final site plan be reviewed and approved by the City's Fire Chief prior to issuance of building permits. Temporary congestion along the project driveways during periods of peak loading and unloading at the site could present delays to emergency vehicle response.

Pedestrian Assessment

Pedestrian facilities in the study area include sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals. Crosswalks are provided at signalized and unsignalized intersections. Pedestrian push-button actuated signals are also provided at signalized intersections. Twelve-foot sidewalks are provided on both sides of Sebastopol Avenue, and eight- to nine-foot sidewalks are provided on both sides of McKinley Street. The project would create a significant impact related to the pedestrian system if any of the following criteria are met (would the project):

- Disrupt existing pedestrian facilities; or
- Interfere with planned pedestrian facilities; or
- Create inconsistencies with adopted pedestrian system plans, guidelines, policies, or standards.

The proposed site plan indicates existing sidewalks will remain intact. The project proposes no features that would be hazardous to pedestrian travel and does not conflict with any pedestrian facilities plans or programs. Therefore, the project's effect on the pedestrian system is ***less-than-significant***.

Bicycle Assessment

Morris Street, Laguna Park Way, and Petaluma Avenue include Class II bicycle facilities while Sebastopol Avenue includes a Class III bike route.



The project would create a significant impact related to the bicycle system if any of the following criteria are met (would the project):

- Disrupt existing bicycle facilities; or
- Interfere with planned bicycle facilities; or
- Create inconsistencies with adopted bicycle system plans, guidelines, policies, or standards.

While the project does not propose any designated bicycle paths, bicycles would be permitted on site along with 16 proposed bike parking spaces. The project proposes no features that would be hazardous to bicycle travel and does not conflict with any bicycle facilities plans or programs. The project's effect on the bicycle system is **less-than-significant**.

Conclusions

Results of the VMT analysis indicate that the project would result in a net VMT decrease when using either the SCTA model or a Big Data/GIS method as a basis for the analysis, and thus the project's CEQA Transportation section impact with regards to VMT is **less-than-significant**. The project has the potential to encourage more active forms of travel in alignment with the park-once strategy, which emphasizes the need for quality multimodal access and infrastructure in the area. The project is anticipated to result in **less-than-significant impacts** for bicycle, pedestrian, public transit, and emergency vehicle access modes.

This concludes the transportation assessment of the Barlow Hotel CEQA transportation assessment. Please call Purva Kapshikar or Ian Barnes at (925) 930-7100 with any questions.