



June 25, 2025

Secretary Wade Crowfoot, California Natural Resources Agency
715 P. St. Sacramento, CA 95814
Re: Agency Responsible for Related Transportation Facility (RTF)

To Whom it May Concern:

The City of Merced is the responsible agency for the existing RTF at M Street Circle. The RTF was completed in 2023 and serves as a parking lot for regional transit for the community, specifically students traveling to and from UC Merced. The RTF was originally supposed to be a parklet with parking for transit commuters, but in 2021 the decision was made to make the whole area into a needed parking lot to mitigate the on-street parking in the Bellevue Ranch community for students and staff traveling to UC Merced and various destinations.

The RTF is located just 0.14 of a mile south of Bellevue Road on M Street. It is a circular plot of land surrounding a section of M Street in a circular pattern. It is approximately 0.63 miles northeast of the EEM site.

Originally the RTF was part of the Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan completed in May of 1995. The site was planned as a park and transit center however, there was built-in flexibility, with the park space, should an in-lieu fee be paid, or if at the tentative map stage, an increase or decrease in park area may be needed based on actual units constructed during each phase. An EIR was done at that time. In January of 2021, as plans changed for the site and the RTF was considered, a Preliminary Environmental Document Classification (NEPA) determined the project to warrant a Mitigated Negative Declaration. There was no State Clearinghouse Number applicable to this NEPA determination. Mitigation was not required.

Construction began on the RTF on September 15, 2022, and the project was completed on May 11, 2023. The project was funded by a combination of a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) grant and Measure V match funds.

The EEM project being proposed is the General Vang Pao Park and an urban forestry project associated with the site. The RTF currently has contributed to negative environmental externalities such as transit pollution and heat magnification in the surrounding area. The transit concentration contributes to the production and concentration of GHGs in the area, in addition to the traffic created by the residential area surrounding the project location. As a result of paving the area for motor vehicle usage, the area creates a heat island due to the absence of trees and grass to mitigate increasing

temperatures due to climate change. The area's proximity to waterways and increasing seasonal rainfall are also concerns for flooding, which necessitate further development to strengthen its usage as a storm basin for water storage and distribution. The EEM project helps to mitigate the negative effects of the large black top parking lot of the RTF in the middle of a suburban neighborhood. Creating an urban forest, helps increase the oxygenated air offsetting the effects of CO₂ with carbon sequestration. The effects of the RTF although allowed under the mitigated negative declaration did reduce available park space. The EEM project will not interfere with the purpose and operation of the RTF. The RTF site is located .66 miles from the planned location of the EEM General Vang Pao Park. The City of Merced and its residents are committed to the project and are ready to begin construction in Winter 2025/2026. The project will be overseen by the Department of Parks and Community Services.

Sincerely,

_____ Date: _____

Scott McBride,
City Manager,
City of Merced
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