5.4 Transportation and Traffic

This section analyzes the potential Project impacts on freeway traffic due to providing and not providing the proposed wall-mounted signage along the southerly, easterly, and northerly building frontages. The analysis is based on the Sign Impact Analysis letter report prepared by Linscott, Law & Greenspan (LLG) dated June 28, 2017 (LLG Report) included as Appendix I herein. In addition, an Analysis of Proposed Freeway-Oriented On-Premise Signage was prepared by Charles R. Taylor, Ph.D., of Villanova University (School of Business) dated September 7, 2016 (Villanova Report). The analysis is included herein as Appendix J.

As detailed in Chapter 3, Project History and Background (beginning on page 19), a legal challenge to the City’s approval of Sign Exception Permit SP 06-402 (SEP) was filed with the County of Orange Superior Court in 2007. The basis for the challenge was that the number of signs permitted in the SEP was significantly larger than analyzed in the Marblehead Final EIR. The 2008 Court judgment required that an updated analysis be provided to include the additional freeway-oriented signage for the Project, including for the approved but unbuilt hotel component. The City, in response to the Superior Court judgement, rescinded its previous approvals of the freeway-oriented signs (Resolution 08-78) in September 2008.

Traffic forecasts and impacts for the Project site were previously analyzed in the Marblehead Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) dated 1998 and further updated in the San Clemente Traffic Model - Marblehead Coastal Traffic Forecast Data report dated August 2003. Both reports were prepared by Austin-Foust Associates, Inc. The previously prepared Final EIR traffic analysis assumed development of 720,000 square feet of retail uses in addition to 440 residential units. As noted herein, the development size for the retail component was reduced via Addenda to the Final EIR to approximately 640,000 square feet. The Addendum approved in 2004 noted that, compared to the original 1998 EIR analysis, the amended Project would generate approximately 18,950 fewer daily trips including approximately 359 fewer AM peak hour and 1,204 fewer PM peak hour trips. The reduction is a result of fewer residences and a reduction in the retail square footage. Therefore, impacts related to the previously analyzed traffic conditions are anticipated to be commensurately less than projected. The Final EIR concluded that with implementation of the standard conditions and mitigation measures identified therein, the traffic impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level.

Based on the reduction in square footage for the retail component of the Project, and the previous finding of “less than significant,” this SEIR does not present new analysis related to traffic. Analysis herein is specific to evaluation of traffic impacts due to the wall-mounted and Icon Tower signage for the Outlets at San Clemente and the unbuilt but approved hotel signage as required by the above-described Court judgment.
5.4.1 **Existing Conditions**

The larger Marblehead project analyzed in the Marblehead Final EIR is not fully built out with the residential portion currently under construction. The retail component, of which the Project is a part, currently consists of the Outlets at San Clemente and fast-food as well as sit-down restaurants. The approved hotel feature, also a part of the retail/commercial component, has not yet been built. The existing sign program, as approved in the Final EIR, proposed at least 10 freeway-oriented signs, including 3 freeway-oriented monuments. None of the approved signage is currently in place. The Project site can be accessed off the I-5 Freeway via Avenida Vista Hermosa and Avenida Pico.

5.4.2 **Performance Criteria**

The LLG Report analysis included the following three impact components:

1. Sign impact evaluation of the proposed Project signage based on the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) criteria under Outdoor Advertising Permit Requirements as it relates to I-5 Freeway traffic
2. Wayfinding impact evaluation, which considers the safety issues associated with distracted/lost Project customers/visitors (based on National Highway Traffic Safety Administration research)
3. I-5 Southbound Freeway egress evaluation based on the weaving condition of the I-5 Freeway between Avenida Vista Hermosa and Avenida Pico

Each component is discussed in greater detail below.

5.4.3 **Thresholds of Significance**

The state encourages local agencies to adopt their own thresholds, but it is not required. Therefore, for purposes of this analysis, the applicable thresholds listed in the CEQA Guidelines will be used in addition to the performance criteria identified above. As noted, a Sign Exception Permit was included in the original approval process for the Marblehead FEIR. Resolution 99-68 detailed the sign consistency with the City’s General Plan, Design Guidelines and Marblehead Coastal Specific Plan. The Resolution noted that the location of the site dictates the need for freeway-oriented signs to allow adequate business identification. The Sign Exception Permit was required to modify the City’s approved sign ordinance to allow specific sign standards that were not permitted in the ordinance existing at that time.

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines states that the project would have a potential significant impact with respect to transportation and traffic if it would:

a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking not account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths and mass transit

b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other
standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways

c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that result in substantial safety risks
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g. sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g. farm equipment)
e) Result in inadequate emergency access
f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle or pedestrian facilities or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities.

In addition, analysis will include compliance with three areas of performance criteria listed above including:

- Caltrans signage criteria
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration safety issues for wayfinding
- Egress evaluation based on weaving conditions on I-5

5.4.4 Project Impacts Prior to Mitigation

The Marblehead EIR evaluated traffic impacts for a regional commercial center of up to 750,000 square feet and 440 residential dwelling units. The analysis concluded that the long term (operational) impacts would result in a potential capacity deficiency at Avenida Pico west of the I-5 Freeway. The location was included in the City's Regional Circulation Financing and Phasing Program (RCFPP) and the improvement identified was the widening from four to six lanes financed in part by development fees for each new development. Mitigation Measures were included in the EIR requiring payment of fair share fees to the RCFPP (MM 4.2-1 and MM 4.2-2). The conclusion in the EIR was that with implementation of standard conditions and mitigation measures included therein, traffic impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. The Project proposed in this SEIR does not involve the addition of traffic or an increase in the severity of impacts previously identified. The following analysis is specific to the addition of Project-related freeway-oriented signage to the previously analyzed retail/commercial component of the larger project included in the Marblehead EIR.

In addition to the Sign Impact Analysis by LLG, an analysis was prepared for the Outlets at San Clemente Freeway-Oriented Signage by Charles R. Taylor, Ph.D., of Villanova University (School of Business), dated September 7, 2016 (Villanova Report). The analysis is included herein as Appendix J. The analysis discussed:

1. Traffic safety regarding properly constructed and placed signs
2. Economic need regarding on-premise signs being critical to the viability of retail business
3. Profitability related to illuminated signage
4. Public opinion polls supporting the importance of signage as beneficial to businesses and consumers
In addition to the CEQA Guidelines thresholds listed above, this section in the SEIR specifically focuses on the traffic safety factor for the proposed freeway-oriented signage along the I-5 Freeway segment between Avenida Vista Hermosa and Avenida Pico. The Villanova Report states that:

Years of research clearly indicate that on-premise signs are not a traffic safety hazard. In fact the best research evidence suggests that properly constructed signs of adequate height that are readable can actually enhance traffic safety.

The Report further notes that if signage is readable and conspicuous, dangerous situations can be prevented such as drivers straining to see signs, making quick lane changes across traffic to turn or becoming frustrated because they did not see the sign in time to make the appropriate turn. With specific regard to The Outlets at San Clemente, the author notes that:

...there is no evidence that the signs will constitute a traffic safety hazard provided that the signs have sufficient visibility, which includes being large enough and sufficiently illuminated to be visible and conspicuous to the viewer.

The following information is based on the LLG Report impact analysis under the current condition of no freeway-oriented signage at the Outlets at San Clemente.

1. **Caltrans Sign Impact Evaluation**

Caltrans criteria/requirements are presented in Table 5-9 below. As shown, Caltrans Outdoor Sign Requirements include requirements related to both the display location and the display itself. LLG applied the requirements to the signage for The Outlets at San Clemente as currently proposed for the wall-mounted signage and tower icon/hotel freeway signage. Of the nine Display Location requirements, the Project is consistent with seven, one is pending and one is not applicable.

Six requirements for Display are included in the Table. Of the six, the Project is consistent with two and four are not applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Display Location:</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must be outside the right of way of any highway</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be outside of any stream, or drainage channel</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There must be an existing business activity within 1000 feet of proposed display location on either side of the highway</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of property where display is to be placed must be zoned industrial or commercial</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must have current property owner consent, in writing, to place the display at desired location</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must have written permission (building permit) from the local government having jurisdiction where the display is to be located</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Pending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location may not be adjacent to a landscaped freeway</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location may not be adjacent to a scenic highway</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If adjacent to a bonus segment of an Interstate freeway, copy, size, and spacing is more restrictive</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Outdoor Advertising Permit Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Display:</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Display must be 500 feet from any other permitted display on the same side of any highway that is a freeway</td>
<td>Nearest freeway-oriented sign is 905' away</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display must be 300 feet from any other permitted display on the same side of any primary highway that is not a freeway in an unincorporated area</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display must be 100 feet from any other permitted display on the same side of any primary highway that is not a freeway and is within the limits of an incorporated city</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display must be 500 feet from an interchange; intersection at grade or safety roadside rest if the highway is a freeway and the location is outside the limits of an incorporated city and outside the limits of an urban area</td>
<td>Within City Limits</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An electric changeable message center display must meet the above spacing requirements and be 1000 feet from another electronic message center display</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum height for the advertising display area is, 25 feet in height and 60 feet in length, not to exceed an overall maximum of 1,200 square feet</td>
<td>200 Square Feet</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Caltrans (www.dot.ca.gov)

### Wayfinding Impact Evaluation

The LLG wayfinding impact evaluation was prepared based on the physical characteristics of the Project site, the adjacent freeway, and the surrounding roadway system. This analysis was provided to determine the impact and potential safety implications of providing, or not providing, wall-mounted signage to assist customers in finding the Project site. Analysis includes the likely routes that will be used and consequences that will occur depending on whether customers know exactly where they are going and whether there is wall-mounted signage for the Project. The analysis was aimed specifically at customers and visitors traveling southbound on the I-5 Freeway. The report notes that vehicles traveling northbound on the I-5 Freeway could use either the Avenida Vista Hermosa or the Avenida Pico off-ramp, but at the I-5/Pico interchange they may still face the same lost/distracted safety issues that southbound traffic faces if wall-mounted signage is not installed.

Exhibit 5-72 graphically depicts the assumed path of travel for southbound motorists exiting at Avenida Pico with wall-mounted signage in place. The driver would correctly exit at Avenida Pico turning right, travel west, and turn right on Avenida Vista Hermosa, followed by another right turn into the Project.

Under a no-signage scenario, where the exact destination is not known, southbound travelers exiting on Avenida Pico would likely turn at the first right and incorrectly presume the buildings with no signage are the outlet center. Exhibit 5-73 through Exhibit 5-75 depict the various routes an unfamiliar driver might take if there is no signage to identify the buildings at the outlet center. The analysis considered that these drivers assumed the appropriate exit is Avenida Pico and not the drivers who missed the exit from the freeway for either lack of reaction time or lack of recognition of the buildings due to no signage. The exhibits are taken from the Sign Impact Analysis prepared by Linscott, Law & Greenspan dated June 28, 2017 and included herein as Appendix I.
Exhibit 5-72 – I-5 Southbound Path of Travel (With Signage)
Exhibit 5-73 – I-5 Southbound Path of Travel (Without Signage, Route Option 1)
Exhibit 5-74 – I-5 Southbound Path of Travel (Without Signage, Route Option 2)
Exhibit 5-75  – I-5 Southbound Path of Travel (With Signage, Route Option 3)
The Project is not clearly visible from Avenida Pico, and drivers could become distracted trying to use GPS or other navigational devices to locate the outlet center, thereby creating potentially unsafe conditions. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), operation of a vehicle while using a cell phone or other electronic device is considered “distracted driving.” The LLG Report notes that the NHTSA states that distracted driving “occurs when drivers divert their attention from the driving task to focus on some other activity.” Further, “…distracted driving is a risky behavior that poses a danger to vehicle occupants as well as non-occupants such as pedestrians and bicyclists.”

As a result, it is our finding that, due to the wayfinding function of the proposed wall-mounted signage, providing the proposed wall-mounted Icon Tower and hotel freeway signage will not significantly adversely impact traffic safety on the adjacent I-5 Freeway.

3. Freeway Egress Evaluation

The LLG Report used the Highway Capacity Manual 2010 (HCM 2010) Freeway Weaving Analysis to analyze whether customers/visitors can safely egress southbound I-5 at Avenida Pico under the with signage and without signage scenarios. The segment analyzed is on the I-5 Freeway between Avenida Vista Hermosa and Avenida Pico and is based on the assumption that the proposed wall-mounted signage would be visible just prior to the end of the southbound I-5/Avenida Vista Hermosa on-ramp junction with the freeway mainline.

The without wall-mounted signage scenario reflects a condition where the customer/visitor does not decide, at the earliest point, to exit the Avenida Pico off-ramp, and if at all, until being even with the northerly edge of the Project buildings. This is based on the presumption that the sign-less buildings are not apparent as a retail center until adjacent to the driver’s eye/vehicle. The freeway segment between the two exits is depicted on Exhibit 5-76 and is approximately 565 feet in length.

Table 5-10 below depicts the peak hour Level of Service results of the weaving analysis with wall-mounted signage traffic conditions, including Project traffic. The table presents a summary of the AM and PM peak hour traffic conditions for the with signage condition, which is based on the freeway lane geometry. The freeway weaving segment for this scenario operates at an acceptable level of service (LOS) during both AM and PM peak hours compared to the LOS standards defined in the LLG Report. Providing wall-mounted signage and, therefore, advance visibility of the Project site, results in adequate distance to safely exit the I-5 Freeway. The Highway Capacity Software (HCS) 2010 Freeway Weaving Analysis worksheets are included in the LLG Report as Appendix B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Freeway Weaving Segment</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>With Wall-Mounted Signage Traffic Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-5 Southbound between</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Avenida Vista Hermosa and Avenida Pico</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>7,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>6,918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exhibit 5-76  – Weaving Analysis
The *without* wall-mounted signs scenario where the Project is not recognized until after the Avenida Pico on-ramp gore results in the determination that adequate distance/spacing is not provided to safely egress the freeway at Avenida Pico. This is based on the weaving analysis which shows an LOS of D which is approaching the boundary between LOS E or F. The Report states that reducing the weaving distance would result in an unacceptable LOS E or worse. In addition, based on the short distance and time to recognize the sign-less Project buildings as The Outlets at San Clemente, it is likely that many drivers will miss the Avenida Pico off-ramp completely, which creates additional potential safety issues while attempting to find the Project, similar to the lost/distracted driver evaluation.

### 5.4.5 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measures were provided in the Marblehead EIR addressing the identified traffic-related Project impacts. As currently proposed, the additional signage will enhance wayfinding for customers/visitors. No additional or more severe traffic-related impacts will result from implementation of the proposed freeway-oriented signage program, and no mitigation measures are required.

### 5.4.6 Level of Significance After Mitigation

The addition of signage to the existing outlet center and the approved but unbuilt hotel component will not conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance, or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system. As analyzed herein, the signage will not affect the amount of traffic or the circulation system other than to enhance wayfinding, thereby potentially improving circulation system conditions.

Similarly, the proposed signage would not conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including level of service standards, or other standards established by the Orange County Congestion Management Agency. The freeway-oriented signage will comply with and be consistent with Caltrans standards for Outdoor Advertising Permit Requirements as it relates to I-5 Freeway traffic. In addition, development fair share fees required with the original Marblehead EIR will provide funds to implement improvements to the deficiency identified on Avenida Pico and to improve circulation. There will be no additional traffic as a result of the proposed Project’s increase in signage from that analyzed in the original EIR and, therefore, no impacts to the previously analyzed level of service standards will occur.

The Project will not result in any impacts related to the remaining CEQA thresholds including:

- Changes in air traffic patterns, increases in air traffic levels, or changes in location that result in substantial safety risks. The Project is not located near a local or regional airport, and the nature of the proposed signage would not interfere with air traffic.
- Increases in hazards due to design features, sharp curves or dangerous intersections. The Project is limited to provision of signage for the retail outlet center and does not include roadway additions or modifications that would result in hazards.
• Impacting emergency access or resulting in inadequate emergency access. The signage will enhance wayfinding in the event of an emergency. Emergency access to the Project site will remain the same as currently exists.

• Conflicts with adopted policies, plans or programs regarding public transit, bicycle or pedestrian facilities or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities. The Project only consists of the addition of wall-mounted and tower-mounted signage to the existing retail outlet center. The Project does not involve plans related to public transit, bicycle or pedestrian facilities.

With respect to the impact analysis components of the LLG Report, the Project will be consistent with the Caltrans criteria under Outdoor Advertising Permit Requirements, compliant with safety issues identified in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration research and provide adequate safety related to the weaving condition of the I-5 Freeway with implementation of the proposed signage program.

The report further notes that “providing wall-mounted and Icon Tower icon/hotel freeway signage will not significantly impact traffic on the adjacent I-5 Freeway.”

As noted herein, subsequent reductions in total Project site for the residential and retail components from the original 1998 analysis result a commensurate reduction in average daily trips. The addition of the proposed signage is not anticipated to result in additional or new impacts related to traffic volumes, because no new or additional traffic-generating uses are proposed, and no mitigation is required.

5.4.7 Cumulative Impacts

The proposed Project signage is specific to the Project site and will not induce additional freeway-oriented signage along the I-5 Freeway. There will be no cumulative impact, because the Project site is in a substantially built-out area with very little opportunity for new development. The original EIR evaluated the potential impacts of a regional commercial center of up to 750,000 square feet. The signage was anticipated for a fully operational center. The increase in the number of signs has been analyzed as a benefit to safety and wayfinding for the Outlets at San Clemente and the approved but unbuilt hotel component.

5.4.8 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

No unavoidable adverse impacts related to transportation and traffic are associated with the proposed Project.