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Left Turn Lane Exception Request and Public Works Department Determination

Chappellet Winery
1581 Sage Canyon Road
St. Helena, California 94574

March 17, 2020

Steven Lederer, Director
Department of Public Works
County of Napa
1195 Third Street, suite 101
Napa, California 94559

SUBJECT: Request for Exception to Napa County Road and Street Standards
(RSS)—Chappellet Winery Application #P18-00307. APN 032-010-090

Chappellet Winery filed an application in August 2018 to increase wine production, daily visitors (by appointment) and the number of employees on property is located at 1581 Sage Canyon Road, St. Helena. A private driveway that intersects with State Highway 128 north of and across from the City of Napa boat dock provides access to the existing winery.

A traffic study (TIS) to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed modification was prepared by W-Trans pursuant to county guidelines. The TIS evaluated the need for a left turn lane at the project driveway's intersection with State Highway 128 under both CALTRANS and County of Napa warrants. While a left turn lane was warranted under County warrants, no left turn lane was warranted at the driveway's intersection with State Highway 128 based on CALTRANS warrant. For the reasons discussed below, Chappellet Winery is requesting an exception to the RSS to eliminate the left turn lane requirement at the intersection of the project driveway with State Highway 128. This request is being filed in conjunction with the pending application for winery permit modification.

Background/Findings of the TIS

In addition to evaluating potential impacts of the project on local street networks and intersections, the TIS also evaluated turning movements into the winery driveway by east and westbound travelers on Highway 128/Sage Canyon Road. The TIS documented that the majority of inbound traffic comes from Napa (eastbound) and turns right into the project driveway. The TIS also evaluated the sight lines at the driveway intersection with State Highway 128. Although Highway 128/Sage Canyon Road is generally curvy in the study area, the project driveway is positioned such that adequate sight distance is available in both directions for drivers exiting the private driveway, allowing drivers to see and react to any westbound vehicle stopped to make a left-turn into the driveway.¹

¹ Traffic Impact Study for the Chappellet Winery Use Permit Modification, W-Trans November 2018, page 24

In addition to concluding that sight distance at the driveway intersection meets or exceeds CALTRANS standards for the design speed of this segment of State Highway 128, the TIS noted the presence of a posted speed advisory of 25 mph as for vehicles traveling westbound vehicles as they approach the subject intersection.

Required Findings

Paragraph 3(d) of the current Road and Street Standards (RSS) list the required findings for the Director to grant an exception for improvements required on a public road or drainage facility. Pursuant to paragraph 3, the Director may grant an exception to the RSS by making at least one of the following findings:

1. The exception will preserve unique features of the natural environment which includes but is not limited to, natural watercourses, steep slopes, geologic features, heritage oak trees, or other trees of at least 6" dbh and found by the decision maker to be of significant importance, but does not include man made environmental features such as vineyards, rock walls, ornamental or decorative landscaping, fences or the like;
2. The exception is necessary to accommodate physical site limitations such as grade differentials; and/or
3. The exception is necessary to accommodate other limiting factors such as recorded historical sites or legal constraints.

Approval of the requested exception will preserve unique features of the natural environment which includes but is not limited to, natural watercourses, steep slopes, geologic features, heritage oak trees, or other trees of at least 6" dbh and found by the decision maker to be of significant importance, but does not include man made environmental features such as vineyards, rock walls, ornamental or decorative landscaping, fences or the like

Section 3(e) requires the Director to make additional findings relating to the provision of defensible space, life, safety, and public welfare.

Based on existing conditions depicted on the attached exhibit and the findings of the TIS we believe that the attached exhibit confirms that the findings required by paragraph 3(d) support the approval of the requested exception.

Existing Conditions

As illustrated by the attached exhibit prepared by Applied Civil Engineering (ACE) State Highway 128/Sage Canyon Road in the vicinity of project driveway is bounded on both the east and west by property owned by the City of Napa. Lake Hennessey and the City's boat dock lies to the west, with steep

wooded slopes, mature oak trees and two unnamed blue line creeks that enter Lake Hennessey southwest of the project driveway.

Factors in Support of Required Findings

We believe the factors below support the granting of the requested exception.

Impact on Heritage Trees and Natural Watercourses

This paragraph allows the director to approve exceptions to the County RSS if granting the exception would preserve natural watercourses, steep slopes, geologic features or if the exception would preserve heritage oak or other significant trees, of at least 6" dbh and protect existing natural features such as natural watercourses. As depicted on the attached exhibit prepared by ACE, granting of the requested exception would preserve existing heritage oak trees, eliminate grading and earthmoving on adjacent, steeply wooded slopes and preserve existing blue line stream. Elimination of the tree removal and grading on steep slopes would also protect one of the City of Napa's drinking water source (Lake Hennessey from any increase in soil erosion and sedimentation that could result for tree removal and grading of adjacent steep slopes.

Specifically, construction of the left turn lane at the project driveway's intersection with State Highway 128/Sage Canyon Road would necessitate grading and removal of mature oak and other mature vegetation on slopes between 30% & 50%. While the total number of trees to be removed is not known precisely, ACE has estimated that as many twenty (20) oak trees over 12" dbh will be removed if the left turn lane is required. This preliminary estimate is based on aerial photos and Google earth street view. These trees are within the watershed of Lake Hennessey. Their removal even with erosion control could increase the flow of sediment into the public water supply.

As further depicted on the attached exhibit, construction a left turn lane would impact two natural blue-line watercourses that supply water to Lake Hennessey. Both watercourses are routed beneath State Highway 128/Sage Canyon Road by two existing culverts. The existing culverts would have to be removed, reconstructed and extended to reach the flow line of Lake Hennessey. Vegetation removal, and extensive grading would be necessary to reconstruct and extend the two culvers. Like tree removal on steep slopes to the west, reconstruction of these two culverts has the potential to increase sedimentation to the public water supply. Further it is unclear if the City of Napa or the State Department of Fish and Wildlife would grant the necessary

permits to accomplish this task. Other Limiting Factors

As noted on the attached exhibit prepared by ACE, improvements necessary to construct a left turn lane would require acquisition of property or easements from the City of Napa. The City was approached for additional right of way to improve the existing project driveway without success. Acquiring additional right of way from non-project property owners is a legal constraint to constructing the left turn lane as the applicant does not own or control the property along the length of the left turn lane. In addition, earthmoving/grading necessary to replace and reconstruct the two existing culverts may also require stream setback exceptions from Napa County. Exceptions to stream setbacks are discretionary in nature with outcomes uncertain.

Paragraph 3 (e)

Section 3(e) requires the Director to make additional findings relating to the provision of defensible space, life, safety, and public welfare prior to approving a request for an RSS. Sight distance at the project driveway intersection with State Highway 128 meets or exceeds required site distance. This factor together with limited westbound traffic on State Highway 128 in the vicinity of the subject intersection, and the 25 mph advisory together ensure that winery traffic exiting the project driveway can turn left (westbound) safely onto State Highway 128 even without a left turn lane

Conclusions and Recommendations

The TIS prepared by W-Trans concludes that while additional traffic generated by the proposed modification would warrant a left turn lane under County criteria, no left would be required under the warrant used by CALTRANS. The TIS notes that most of project-generated traffic is expected to approach the site from the west and make a right turn into the project driveway. The TIS goes on to state that the Napa County left-turn lane warrants methodology does not take turning movements into consideration so does not reflect the actual need for a left-turn lane in this instance. Finally the TIS notes that the sight distance at the project driveway with State Highway 128/Sage Canyon road meets or exceeds the required site distance for the posted 40-mph speed limit. Based on a review of field conditions, sight distance at the driveway extends more than 400 feet to the east and approximately 325 feet to the west, which is more than adequate for the posted speed limit. The project driveway is situated near a horizontal curve with a posted advisory speed of 25 mph, so drivers would likely be traveling well below 40 mph adjacent to the project driveway's intersection with State Highway 128.

In order to approve an exception, one or more of the findings below must be made:

1. The exception will preserve unique features of the natural environment which

includes but is not limited to, natural watercourses, steep slopes, geologic features, heritage oak trees, or other trees of at least 6" dbh and found by the decision maker to be of significant importance, but does not include man made environmental features such as vineyards, rock walls, ornamental or decorative landscaping, fences or the like;

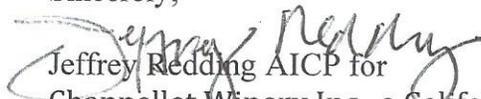
2. The exception is necessary to accommodate physical site limitations such as grade differentials; and/or
3. The exception is necessary to accommodate other limiting factors such as recorded historical sites or legal constraints.

As illustrated by the ACE exhibit, construction of the required left turn lane would necessitate:

1. Removal of mature vegetation, including as many as twenty (20) heritage oak trees all exceeding the 6" dbh threshold;
2. Require grading on steep slopes in excess of 30% with concomitant removal of mature vegetation;
3. Require the acquisition of additional right of way or easements from the City of Napa to construct improvements associated with the left turn lane. A left lane and associated improvements cannot be accommodated within the existing right of way. Acquisition of additional right of way is beyond the purview of the application; and construction of the left turn lane cannot proceed with this additional right of way, a significant legal constraint.

Based upon the factors above, we respectfully request approval to eliminate the construction of a left turn lane at the intersection of the project driveway with State Highway 128/Sage Canyon Road. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,


Jeffrey Redding AICP for
Chappellet Winery Inc., a California Corporation

CC: Syed Ahsan Kazmi, Department of Public Works
Jason Hade, project planner
Dave Pirio, Chappellet Winery
Mike Muelrath, ACE

Enclosures:

- Schematic of Left Turn Lane, prepared by ACE

CHAPPELLET WINERY

LEFT TURN LANE CONCEPT EXHIBIT



LOCATION MAP

SCALE: 1" = 2,000'

PROJECT INFORMATION:

PROPERTY OWNER & APPLICANT:

CHAPPELLET WINERY INC.
c/o CYRIL CHAPPELLET
1581 SAGE CANYON ROAD
ST. HELENA, CA 94558
(707) 286-4219

SITE ADDRESS:

1581 SAGE CANYON ROAD
ST. HELENA, CA 94558

ZONING:

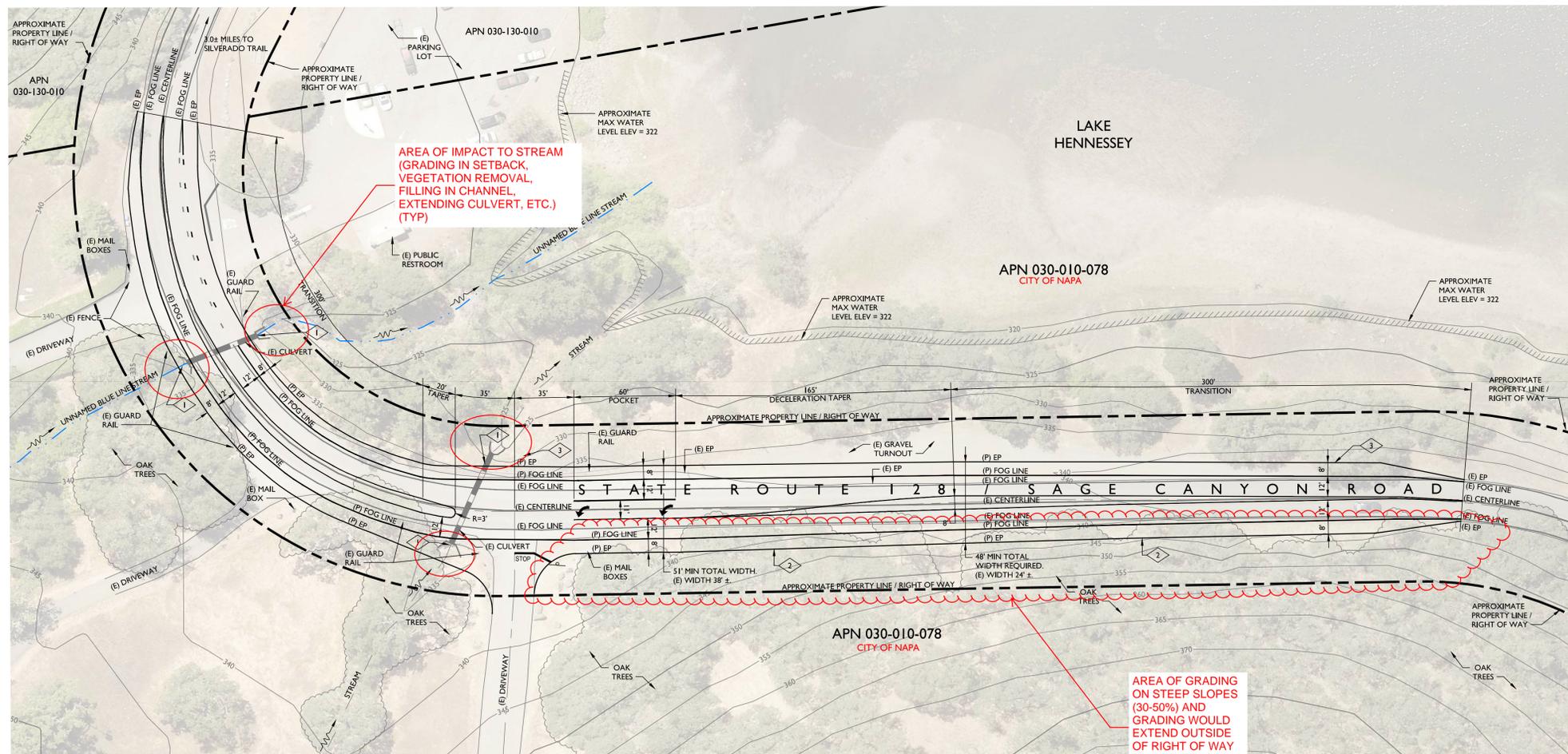
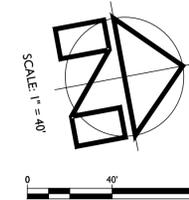
AGRICULTURAL WATERSHED (AW)

NOTES:

1. FADED BACKGROUND REPRESENTS EXISTING TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURES. TOPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION WAS TAKEN FROM THE NAPA COUNTY GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM DATABASE. APPLIED CIVIL ENGINEERING INCORPORATED ASSUMES NO LIABILITY REGARDING THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE TOPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION.
2. AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS WERE OBTAINED FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO ESTUARY INSTITUTE (SFEI) SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA ORTHOPHOTOS DATABASE, DATED JUNE 2018 AND MAY NOT REPRESENT CURRENT CONDITIONS.
3. CONTOUR INTERVAL: FIVE (5) FEET, HIGHLIGHTED EVERY TWENTY FIVE (25) FEET.
4. BENCHMARK: NAVD 88
5. THE PROPERTY LINES SHOWN ON THESE PLANS DO NOT REPRESENT A BOUNDARY SURVEY. THEY ARE APPROXIMATE AND ARE PROVIDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.

ENVIRONMENTAL NOTES:

1. WIDENING TO ACCOMMODATE A NEW LEFT TURN LANE REQUIRES FILLING IN OF TWO NATURAL STREAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF EXISTING CULVERTS AND REMOVAL OF NATURAL VEGETATION ALONG THE STREAMS.
2. WIDENING TO ACCOMMODATE A NEW LEFT TURN LANE REQUIRES GRADING ON STEEP SLOPES (> 30%) AND REMOVAL OF OAK TREES.
3. WIDENING TO ACCOMMODATE A NEW LEFT TURN LANE REQUIRES NATURAL VEGETATION REMOVAL AND NEW PAVING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO LAKE HENNESSEY.



LEFT TURN LANE CONCEPT EXHIBIT

SCALE: 1" = 40'

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF:



DRAWN BY: BT DRAFTING

CHECKED BY: MRM

DATE: JANUARY 2020

REVISIONS: BY:

JOB NUMBER: 10-139

FILE: 10-139CON_LTL.DWG

ORIGINAL SIZE: 24" X 36"

SHEET NUMBER:

OF



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A Commitment to Service

Napa County Public Works

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Napa, CA 94559-3092
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Steven E. Lederer
Director

March 24, 2020

Mr. Jeff Redding
Representative for Chappellet Winery
1581 Sage Canyon Road
St. Helena, CA 94574

Subject: Left Turn Exception Request; Chappellet Winery Use Permit Modification Request #P18-00307; APN 032-010-090

Dear Mr. Redding:

Thank you for your letter dated March 17, 2020, requesting an exception from the Napa County Road and Street Standards, which would otherwise require installation of a left turn lane at the entrance to the project driveway at 1581 Sage Canyon Road (also known as State Route 128). The requirement is prompted by the property owner's request for a Use Permit Modification (#P18-00307) to increase wine production, daily visitors, and employees. Private driveway improvements are also included.

Basis for Request:

In support of your request, you offer that:

1. A code compliant left-turn lane will require work within the banks of two stream crossings.
2. Installation of the left turn lane would (because of the needed widening of the road) result in the removal of several Oak trees, some of them very large, on slopes exceeding 30%.
3. The majority of the traffic accessing the site would be coming from the Napa area and turning right into the private driveway; very few trips would be coming from the east (Berryessa/Pope Valley).
4. For those cars that do need to make a left turn into the driveway, there is adequate sight distance to allow cars to see a turning vehicle and stop to avoid it.
5. Installation of the turn lane would require purchase of additional right of way from the City of Napa, and it is not clear that this could be done.

Discussion:

The standards for waiving a left turn requirement are difficult to meet. The County has one opportunity to ensure the needed facilities are installed, even though the project will exist many decades into the future. As such the findings to waive the left turn requirement are challenging. Significant hardship needs to be showed, including the presence of natural water courses, steep slopes, geological features or heritage trees, etc. Neither minor earthmoving, reasonable cost, nor inconvenience is a factor to be considered.

Determination:

I tentatively find that the left turn lane need not be installed for this project based on items 1 through 5 listed above. This decision shall automatically become final upon the Planning Commission's final action on the underlying use permit, and this determination relies on the project's CEQA analysis.

While not directly connected, I do note that the project applicant has proposed to pay into the upcoming traffic impact fee program. This is a valuable contributions to the greater good and is appreciated.

This decision may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors following the Planning Commission's decision on your project as a whole and based on the record before the Planning Commission. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Steven E. Lederer
Director of Public Works

Cc: David Morrison, Director, Planning, Building, and Environmental Services
Jason Hade, PBES Project Planner
Laura Anderson, Deputy County Counsel