

**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT**  
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**DATE:** December 7, 2000

**TO:** Orange County Zoning Administrator

**FROM:** Planning and Development Services Department/Current Planning Services Division

**SUBJECT:** Public Hearing on Planning Application PA00-0092 for Coastal Development Permit

**PROPOSAL:** Modernization, improvements and new additions to the 12.1-acre Laguna Beach Unified School District's El Moro Elementary School site. These improvements include construction of a new administration building, a new classroom building, a new library building and replacement of a portable classroom building. The proposal adds 13,160 square feet of new building area to the 12.1-acre site. Student enrollment will increase by 120 students, from 515 to 635 students. The proposal also includes grading in excess of 5,000 cubic yards.

**LOCATION:** The site is in Planning Area 12F of the Newport Coast Planned Community/Local Coastal Program and is surrounded by Crystal Cove State Park. Fifth Supervisorial District.

**APPLICANT:** Laguna Beach Unified School District

**STAFF CONTACT:** William V. Melton, Project Manager  
Phone: (714) 834-2541 FAX: (714) 834-4652

**SYNOPSIS:** Current Planning Services Division recommends Zoning Administrator approval of PA00-0092 for Coastal Development subject to the attached Findings and Conditions of Approval.

**BACKGROUND:**

The El Moro School site is located inland of Pacific Coast Highway, between Newport Coast Drive and the City of Laguna Beach. The site is located in Planning Area 12F of the Newport Coast PC/LCP and has a land use designation of Recreation. Schools are a principal permitted use in this designation. Crystal Cove State Park surrounds the site. Adjacent to the site to the south is a residential mobile home park. This use is also within Crystal Cove State Park boundaries. To the north is an access road leading to the Crystal Cove State Park Ranger Station, an information center and a parking area.

The Laguna Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) seeks approval of a Coastal Development Permit for new construction and grading of approximately 4,892 cubic yards of cut and 1,078 cubic yards of fill on approximately a 12 acre existing elementary school site. The improvements will include a new administration building, library facility and a new classroom building to replace four existing portable classrooms. The project's improvements will not alter the existing schedule or primary operation of the school. The proposed project will result in addition of 8 new employees, (4 teachers and 4 teacher's aides).

The following is a list of proposed actions, with the expansion and improvements of the project that result from the action:

- Grading in excess of 5,000 cubic yards of earth
- A new Administration Building (Building G)
- A Library Facility (Building H)
- Expansion of existing Building A (Assembly Building )
- A new two-story Classroom Building (Building J)
- Upgrading electrical, mechanical, repainting and plumbing systems, ADA compliance.

Proposed Buildings G, H and A will add a total of 6,683 square feet of new building area. The existing administration building (a smaller footprint at the Building H location) will be demolished to accommodate the library facility. The expansion of Building A will include a new kitchen, bringing the net additional building area in the central portion of the campus for Buildings G, H, and A to approximately 5,000 square feet. These facilities will be one-story structures up to 22 feet high. The new two-story classroom building (Building J) will replace existing portable classrooms (four portables in the east corner of the property). A 28-foot high two-story building will house eight classrooms and will be located in the eastern corner of the site. The majority of the proposed grading occurs at the Building J location.

Also included in this expansion will be campus modernization projects, which would include upgrading electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems, Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance and repainting of the school. The new buildings will be stucco and painted neutral to blend with the other structures. The additional classrooms will replace portable classrooms with permanent buildings, to accommodate up to an additional 120 students. However, the additional enrollment will be dependent upon rate of development/student generation of surrounding residential development and district needs. The future enrollment of El Moro is expected to fluctuate, in which case the additional classrooms may assist in reducing the average classroom size. The future enrollment area for the school will include the southern portion of the Newport Coast Planned Community.

The applicant also proposes to construct an approximately 40' x 40' detention basin to trap sediment and excess floodwaters in the southern corner of the project site. Storm water filtration units (Stormceptors) are proposed within the storm drain at the junctions near the new classroom buildings. These devices will entrap trash, debris, and surface grease or oil.

**SURROUNDING LAND USE:**

<b>Direction</b>	<b>Newport Coast PC Planning Area</b>	<b>Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Existing Land Use</b>
Project Site	12F	Recreation	El Moro Elementary School
North	17	Recreation	Crystal Cove State Park
South	17	Recreation	Crystal Cove State Park and a residential mobile home park
East	17	Recreation	Crystal Cove State Park including the Ranger station and visitor information center
West	17	Recreation	Pacific Coast Highway Crystal Cove State Park

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

Negative Declaration No. PA000092 (Exhibit 2) has been prepared for this proposal. Prior to project approval, this ND must be found adequate to satisfy the requirements of CEQA by the Planning Commission. Appendix A contains the required CEQA Finding.

**REFERRAL FOR COMMENT AND PUBLIC NOTICE:**

A Notice of Hearing was mailed to all owners of record within 300 feet of the subject site and the park ranger of Crystal Cove State Park. While not required under noticing procedures, a notice of hearing was also sent the manager of the mobile home park adjacent to the school. Additionally, a notice was posted at the site, at the 300 N. Flower Building and as required by established public hearing posting procedures. A copy of the planning application and a copy of the proposed site plan were distributed for review and comment to 6 County Divisions, the City of Laguna Beach and the California Dept. of Transportation.

As of the writing of this staff report, no comments raising issues with the project have been received from other County divisions by staff. There were comments received regarding the Negative Declaration prepared for this proposal. The staff response to those comments is included with this report under Exhibit 2A.

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

The County is not normally involved with permitting of State Public Schools or modifications to existing public schools on school owned property. However the project site is in the Newport Coast LCP, which has been previously certified by the California Coastal Commission. Since the State is not exempt from the Coastal Act, and the property is in a certified LCP, the County is the permitting authority for the required Coastal Development Permit.

Until recently the County did not have responsibility for issuance of any permits associated with a public school. The adoption of new State laws now allows the County or local jurisdiction to have responsibility for the issuance of grading permits for public school grounds. The building permits and all other required permits are handled through the office of the State Architect.

While the County may only issue grading permits, the Coastal Development Permit process does however review all aspects of the project. Three areas of concern are; additional traffic generated by the proposal, increase storm water run-off and sanitary sewage. Following is a discussion of these areas of concern.

Traffic Generation

LSA Traffic Engineers examined the impact that traffic generated by the project's expansion would exert upon the transportation system in the immediate vicinity of the project. LSA used the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) trip rates to determine the project trip generation. The ITE trip rates are based on an average of trip rates of elementary schools throughout the United States. It was determined that the proposed project would generate additional vehicular movement, but not beyond the forecasted regional analysis. The LSA analysis was incorporated by reference into Negative Declaration PA 000092.

The project site is an existing Elementary School, situated on the north side of Coast Highway in an unincorporated area of Orange County between the cities of Newport Beach and Laguna Beach. Coast Highway is classified as a Congestion Management Program (CMP) route in the Orange County CMP. Access to the project site is via a signalized intersection at Coast Highway with a shared access road that also serves the Crystal Cove State Park Headquarters located north of the school. An additional right turn only egress is provided on Coast Highway, north of the existing signalized intersection.

Coast Highway or State Route 1, serves primarily interregional traffic for the coastal cities (Newport Beach, Laguna Beach, Dana Point, etc.). The traffic generated by the proposed El Morro Elementary School expansion will be made up primarily of local trips from the adjacent communities of Laguna Beach and the Newport Coast. Review of the CMP criteria indicates that the potential traffic impacts associated with the school expansion would be insignificant, since the project's contribution of traffic to Coast Highway is one percent or less in the p.m. and/or daily traffic conditions. Therefore, there will be no impact on State Route 1 (SR-1), or Coast Highway

The El Morro Elementary School's current enrollment is 515 students. With the proposed expansion, the school will accommodate up to 635 students. Since the elementary school is currently in operation, trips that are currently generated by the elementary school (primarily students being dropped off/picked up) are already accounted for in the existing traffic flow on the local circulation system. Therefore, these existing

trips have been subtracted from the total trip generation, and the “new” project trips (proposed trips minus existing trips) become the determining factor for potential project traffic impacts.

It should be noted that other trips, such as employee/staff and visitor trips, are inherent in the observed rates compiled by ITE. According to the ITE trip generation studies, approximately 60 percent of elementary students are bused to school. Based on discussions with the District, approximately 65 to 75 percent of the students are currently bused to school. The District operates four 83-person buses to bring students to and from the elementary school from their enrollment area. The District anticipates that the percentage of bused students would not change with the school expansion. Approximately 300 students are currently bused to school. This equates to approximately 60 percent of the current student population, which is consistent with the ITE trip rates. The trip generation for the elementary school expansion is shown in Table A.

<b>Table A</b>											
<b>El Moro Elementary School Trip Generation</b>											
Land Use	ADT	A.M. Peak Hour 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.			P.M. Peak Hour Generator 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.			P.M. Peak Hour 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.			
		In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
<b>EXISTING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 515 Elementary School Students, 52 Staff</b>											
TRIP RATES	1.02	0.17	0.12	0.29	0.12	0.14	0.26				
TRIP GENERATION	525	88	61	149	62	72	134	Nominal			
<b>PROPOSED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXPANSION- 635 Elementary School Students, 60 staff</b>											
TRIP RATES	1.02	0.17	0.12	0.29	0.12	0.14	0.26				
TRIP GENERATION	648	109	76	184	76	89	165	Nominal			
<b>NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRIPS (Proposed – Existing)</b>											
	122	21	14	35	14	17	31	Nominal			
Source: <i>Trip Generation, Sixth Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers, 1997.</i>											

As shown in Table A, the proposed 635 student enrollment (120 new students) for the proposed school expansion is estimated to generate approximately 122 new average daily trips, with approximately 35 new trips occurring during the a.m. commute peak hour (21 inbound and 14 outbound), and 31 trips during the afternoon peak hour of the school (14 inbound and 17 outbound).

According to the school’s hours of operation (8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.), there would be no school-related trips during the p.m. commute peak hour (5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.). However, there would be a nominal amount of traffic exiting the school in the p.m. commute peak hour associated with youth sports activities (AYSO soccer and little league baseball). According to the District, these activities would be seasonal, and would occur occasionally during the week between the hours of 3:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Based on review of the current traffic volumes on Coast Highway,<sup>1</sup> approximately 35,000 average daily trips were counted by Caltrans on this segment of Coast Highway. Approximately 2,650 trips were counted for the peak hour at the same segment. Application of the new project trips to the existing traffic volumes on Coast Highway indicates a less than one percent project contribution to the average daily traffic, and a one percent project contribution to the peak hour traffic. According to the CMP significance criteria, a project would have a significant impact if it contributes to an increase of 0.10 (volume-to-capacity [v/c] ratio) over the base condition. V/C ratio increases beyond 0.10 above the base condition will be considered not to comply with CMP LOS objectives. Since the project's contribution of traffic to Coast Highway is one percent or less in the p.m. and/or daily traffic conditions, the potential traffic impacts associated with the school expansion would be insignificant.

### Surface Drainage

Project implementation will not alter overall drainage patterns or affect the course of a stream or river. Implementation of the proposed project and related drainage improvements will improve onsite collection and control of surface runoff. The off-site storm water that currently drains onto the school site along the northeastern property boundary from the State Park will be collected in a concrete V-ditch, which will connect to an existing 18" diameter Reinforced Concrete Pipe (RCP). The project-generated surface runoff and roof drainage from classrooms will be collected by the same 18" RCP, which will convey the drainage southerly across the site to an existing drainage system that conveys drainage under Pacific Coast Highway. The drainage for the parking lot will not change and will continue as normal by flowing to Pacific Coast Highway and then into Muddy Canyon.

The project site is located within a sensitive coastal zone. The Newport Coast area has been designated as an Area of Special Biological Significance. These areas were established to protect biological communities by maintaining natural water quality conditions. Direct discharge of wastes to this area is prohibited.

Development as proposed will result in a minimal increase in surface runoff due to a slight increase in impervious surface area related to the construction of the new classroom buildings (approximately 4,800 square feet). A detention basin has been designed within the southern portion of the site to collect and detain storm water prior to discharge into the existing drainage system that conveys drainage under Pacific Coast Highway. There will be no increase in surface runoff discharged from the project site. The project applicant has submitted a preliminary hydrology study to the County.

Grading and construction activities on the site will potentially result in short-term water quality impacts from temporary grading operation. In the long-term, slopes currently at a 1.5:1 gradient will be modified to a gentler slope of 2:1, thereby reducing sediment discharge. Long-term operational impacts on the new buildings at the site are not anticipated to appreciably affect water quality.

The two-story building will replace four existing portable classrooms in the northeast corner of the property. The other buildings will be constructed within the courtyard area of the campus, which is currently paved with concrete. The following measures will be incorporated into the project to reduce the discharge of pollutants to storm water during construction activities and ongoing operations use.

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<sup>1</sup>1998 Traffic Volumes on California State Highways, June 1999.

### Sanitary Sewer

The existing school is served by septic tanks. As part of the proposed project, the existing facilities and new buildings will be connected to the Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) sewer system. The school will generate wastewater, which will not exceed the treatment requirements of the IRWD and Orange County Sanitation District. The wastewater will be collected by the sewer system and will be treated at IRWD plants to meet applicable water quality standards prior to being released to the Orange County Sanitation District or released to water bodies. Connection to the public sewer will represent an improved wastewater collection/treatment system for the site now served by septic tanks and will reduce potential adverse impacts to water quality.

The District anticipates that the school will be connected to the Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) sewer line in the near future. However, the IRWD sewer line currently terminates at Sand Point, north of the school, in the Newport Coast Planned Community. The school will not connect with the line until a planned sewer lift station is constructed on State Park property at the adjacent El Morro mobile home park. Connection costs are anticipated to be shared with the State Park. In the event that connection with the sewer line cannot occur until after construction of the proposed school improvements, the existing septic tank and leach field system will be reconfigured to accommodate the additional demand generated by the expanded facilities.

The incremental generations of wastewater from the school site will not adversely impact wastewater collection and treatment facilities provided by IRWD due to the relatively small incremental increase in wastewater flow. Improvements required providing a wastewater collection system at the site will be located primarily within the school property and at the IRWD collection system within PCH. These improvements will not result in significant environmental effects.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The proposed modification and additions to the existing El Moro Elementary School with incorporation of the recommended Conditions of Approval have no significant long term impacts to traffic on Pacific Coast Highway, existing drainage patterns and/or increased surface run-off, or will the project overburdening the existing sanitary sewer facilities. Grading impacts are minimal and should not affect the adjacent property, Crystal Cove State Park. The existing on-site parking should be adequate to handle the increase in student and teacher population. Staff supports the proposal and make its recommendation as follows.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Current Planning Services Division recommends the Zoning Administrator:

- a. Receive staff report and public testimony as appropriate; and,
- b. Approve Planning Application PA00-0092 for Coastal Development Permit subject to the attached Findings and Conditions of Approval.

Respectfully submitted

C. M. Shoemaker, Chief  
CPSD/Site Planning Section

WVM

Folder: D/Newport Coast/PA00-0092 Staff

**APPENDICES:**

- A. Recommended Findings
- B. Recommended Conditions of Approval

**EXHIBITS:**

1. Applicant's Letter of Explanation
2. Environmental Documentation
  - 2a. Response to Comments
3. Site Plans

**APPEAL PROCEDURE:**

Any interested person may appeal the decision of the Zoning Administrator on this permit to the Orange County Planning Commission within 15 calendar days of the decision upon submittal of required documents and a filing fee of \$760.00 filed at the Development Processing Center, 300 N. Flower St., Santa Ana.

In addition, this project is within the Coastal Zone and is not an "appealable development". Approval of an appealable development may be appealed directly to the California Coastal Commission (telephone number 562-560-5071), in compliance with their regulations, without exhausting the County's appeal procedures.