

# *Brentwood Community Council*

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Portfolio Management Division Capital Investment Branch (9PTC)  
US General Services Administration (GSA)  
450 Golden Gate Avenue, Third Floor East  
San Francisco, CA 94102

**Re: Inadequate and Flawed Draft EIS for WLA Federal Building Site**

Dear Mr. Angell:

The Brentwood Community Council (BCC)<sup>1</sup> objects to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (“DEIS”), issued on February 24, 2006 and prepared by the General Services Administration (“GSA”) for the proposed Los Angeles Federal Building (the “Federal Building Project”). The DEIS grossly fails to meet the standards established under the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”), rendering the DEIS inadequate to support the Federal Building Project. Consequently, GSA must (1) develop and (2) distribute to the public an amended DEIS addressing these inadequacies and (3) provide the opportunity for thorough public comment on the amended DEIS.

The BCC fully supports the FBI and its mission, as well as its need to expand its facilities on the West Coast. The DEIS, however, not only fails to address the Federal Building Project’s impact on the community – in violation of NEPA – it also fails to meet the FBI’s own objectives. Indeed, the DEIS was doomed to failure from the outset because there is no Federal Land Use Master Plan for the several federal facilities in the area that are in various stages of development planning. The DEIS is necessarily piecemeal, given the lack of a master coordination plan, rendering its analysis of the project’s impact meaningless.

The DEIS not only fails at that macro level – due to the absence of coordination with the other federal projects – it is grossly inadequate at the micro level as well.

**TRAFFIC.** The DEIS fails adequately to analyze the project’s likely impact on traffic and traffic-related infrastructure within the project area – and fails completely to do so with respect to the defined project alternatives.

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<sup>1</sup> The Brentwood Community Council is the broadest based Brentwood Community organization, has been in existence for eight years, is well known as the major Brentwood community forum and represents over 30,000 people. The BCC is composed of 18 voting members representing the following categories: (8) Homeowner Zones which include 14 Homeowner Associations; (2) Chambers of Commerce; (2) Youth Organizations and Schools; (1) Ministerial / Congregational; (2) Volunteer Service Groups; (1) Multi-Family Residential; (1) Public Safety; and (1) Environmental Organizations.

*Wendy-Sue Rosen • Chairwoman*  
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- The proposed site of the Federal Building, 11000 Wilshire Blvd., is within one of the Nation's most congested areas. As conceded in the DEIS, 62 of the 70 intersections studied are projected to operate at failing ("E" or "F") grades by the time of the planned opening of the Federal Building – while 45 of the 70 intersections have already received failing E-F grades.
- Remarkably, the DEIS does not even consider the project's impact on the I-405 freeway or the "on" and "off" ramps that are immediately adjacent to the project site. As anyone using the I-405 can report, the Wilshire ramps and the freeway are already gridlocked during peak travel periods. Yet the DEIS ignores the project's impact on the 405, its already-congested ramps, and the related impact on the area's infrastructure – including emergency services.
- The DEIS does not even consider the impact of the project's high-profile status on traffic in the already-gridlocked traffic corridor. A newly-constructed "*FBI Headquarters*" for the Western United States will instantaneously become the region's primary symbol of the federal government. Placing such a symbolically rich facility within one of the nation's most congested traffic corridors and within close proximity to major hospital facilities and the world-renowned UCLA, as well as business and entertainment centers, will transform the project site into the West Coast's most significant free speech zone – and among the region's most likely targets for terrorism.
  - The FBI Headquarters will become a magnet for symbolic expressions such as protest activity. The existing Federal Building, which lacks the symbolic force of the proposed *FBI Headquarters*, is already the locus of many organized protests – including 32 permitted protests in 2005. Protests slow traffic, sometimes requiring street closures and traffic diversions. Yet the DEIS does not even consider this significant impact on traffic.
  - The symbolic richness of the proposed FBI Headquarters, in conjunction with the Westwood area's significance and population/traffic density, enhances the risk that the building will become a target for terrorism and bomb threats. While there are already numerous bomb threats at the existing federal building, the volume of threats will increase exponentially with the *FBI Headquarters*' heightened profile. Yet the GSA hides its head in the sand by vaguely proposing that security will be enhanced -- without explaining what that means or how it might impact the surrounding community. *Will the threshold for closing Wilshire Blvd. and the 405 ramps be lowered?* Presumably so. But there is *no analysis* of the impact that will have on traffic.
- Remarkably, the DEIS does not even consider Alternative 2's likely impact on traffic. The GSA purports to justify this absence of analysis by claiming that Alternative 2 would actually *reduce the work force even more than taking no action at all*. As Congressman Henry Waxman and County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky explain in their letters, the DEIS's assumption that Alternative 2 would reduce the volume of traffic is based on the presumption that non-FBI workers that will be relocated to other buildings will no longer

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travel within the impacted area. That assumption ignores the high probability that the non-FBI workers will simply be relocated to another federal facility along the Wilshire Corridor. That sleight-of-hand renders illusory Alternative 2's purported "beneficial" impact on traffic.

- Finally, the DEIS fails to consider the project's likely impact on the area's planned underground rapid-transit system, which is desperately needed to reduce gridlock on Wilshire Blvd. Local government officials have been engaged in serious planning discussions about extending the Red Line Subway along Wilshire Blvd. to the ocean – passing in front of the proposed FBI Headquarters. The DEIS fails to consider the likelihood that the FBI would prohibit the subway from being built along the Wilshire Corridor, in front of the FBI Headquarters because DEIS standards provide that railroad tracks cannot border or cross the site, a rule designed to prevent their use for terrorist incursions. This too is a likely adverse impact that the DEIS improperly ignores.

**SECURITY.** While the DEIS acknowledges that the project will adversely impact the provision of emergency services in the area, it fails to acknowledge the likely severity of this adverse impact.

- The Los Angeles Fire Department ("LAFD") has already determined that the area is not within the range of safe emergency response. Traffic is the main problem. The project will have a significantly adverse impact on traffic, which means it will also degrade emergency response times.
- The DEIS does not even consider the fact that the FBI's own emergency deployment will be dramatically impaired by gridlock conditions on Wilshire, the neighboring surface streets, and the 405 and 10 freeways.
- The DEIS ignores the project's heightened impact on safety for those working and residing in the area – including the project's impact on *emergency evacuation* within an area that is routinely gridlocked in normal, non-emergency situations.
- The DEIS fails to consider the project's likely adverse impact on the nearby UCLA Trauma Center or the VA Medical Center, which would be needed for emergency care in a crisis situation. This is the type of bureaucratic myopia that has recently subjected federal emergency-response agencies to harsh but deserved criticism.

The **PROJECT WAS IMPROPERLY DEFINED TO ELIMINATE CONSIDERATION OF VIABLE ALTERNATIVES.** The criteria for the project are not related to preserving critical operational objectives. The criteria were improperly established to guarantee that no site other than 11000 Wilshire would be deemed adequate. NEPA does not permit such reliance on criteria designed to satisfy pre-determined results.

The circular nature of the project criteria is best illustrated by the requirement that the FBI Headquarters be located within "*a prime commercial office district with attractive prestigious professional surroundings.*" WHY? The DEIS does not explain why the FBI Headquarters must be located within "*a prime commercial office district with attractive prestigious professional*

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*surroundings*” – it just announces this as a project requirement, thereby begging the question of whether this purported objective should trump concerns about the safety of neighboring residents and workers within the gridlocked area. The Project criteria must therefore be expanded to identify viable project site alternatives in an amended DEIS.

The **NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE IS ALSO INADEQUATE**. The skewed nature of the DEIS is also illustrated by the comparison of Alternative 2 with the “No Action” Alternative. As Congressman Waxman explains, the “No Action” Alternative described in the DEIS overstates the volume of traffic if no action is taken and understates the volume of traffic if Alternative 2 is adopted. The amended DEIS must be more accurate and realistic.

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For these reasons, and those stated by the other objectors, the GSA must (1) develop and (2) distribute to the public an amended DEIS addressing these inadequacies, including the elimination of improper “criterion” that unduly restrict the GSA’s consideration of alternative project sites, (3) provide the opportunity for thorough public comment on the amended DEIS, and (4) prepare a Federal Land Use Master Plan for the area before any federal project is approved.

Sincerely,



Wendy-Sue Rosen, Chairwoman  
Brentwood Community Council