HEXAGON TRANSPORTATION CONSULTANTS, INC.

May 2, 2012

Mr. Stephen Scott
City of San Mateo
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

**Re: Response to More Traffic Comments on St. Matthew Catholic Parish Master Plan Negative Declaration**

Dear Mr. Scott:

Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc., is in receipt of three comment letters that include traffic comments on the St. Matthew Catholic Parish negative declaration: one letter from Mike Cunningham dated March 13, 2012; one letter from Concerned Citizens of San Mateo dated March 12, 2012; and one e-mail from Diana Stork dated March 9, 2012. Annotated copies of the letters are attached. Responses to the comments are provided below.

**Cunningham Comments**

*Comment 3a:* Study fails to account for 58 church parking spaces reserved during the day.

*Response 3a*: Several field observations were made at the site during the day when school was in session. No reserved spaces were seen. The church does have Mass at noon, and parishioners are allowed to park in the interior area, which otherwise is gated off during the day. The parking demand during school hours is about 70 cars without Mass, 95 cars with Mass. There are 121 parking spaces available during the day, so the supply is adequate.

*Comment 3b:* Church parking was counted during the Summer, with advance notice.

*Response 3b:* There is no evidence that church attendance during the Summer is any less than at other times of the year. Church parking has been counted numerous times for this study; many of the counts are not reported in the study but were conducted to confirm the data. Counts have been conducted at various times of the year, in all seasons. The church never was informed when counts would occur. The counts consistently show around 30 cars parked on neighborhood streets for the busiest Sunday Mass.

*Comment 3c:* The site is underparked based on the City parking code.

*Response 3c*: This comment is correct that the site is underparked for the existing uses based on the current City parking code. The proposal is to build a gymnasium. This proposal does not kick in a requirement to bring the current site up to code. The gymnasium is considered an adjunct to the school, so it does not require any parking spaces of its own, according to the code. In reality, the gymnasium could not be used for events that generate parking demand during the times when Masses are being held because no excess parking exists at those times. Therefore, the applicant has agreed to a condition that the gymnasium would not be used during Mass. Despite the code requirement for no new parking spaces, the applicant is proposing to add approximately 100 new spaces on site. The result is that the parking overflow would be reduced with this project, rather than increased.

*Comment 6:* Reliance on the applicant's Traffic and Parking Management Plan is flawed thinking.

*Response 6*: With respect to the MND the purpose of the Traffic and Parking Management Plan (TPMP) is to insure that school operations do not result in traffic queues blocking public streets. Currently the school has a system in place that accomplishes this goal. The TPMP represents a commitment to continue the program with the proposed parking lot reconfiguration. Regarding the scheduling of activities at the church and school, which also is included in the TPMP, the important measure from the City's perspective is whether the parking demand of the special activity would exceed the proposed parking supply. The current Special Use Permit (SUP) under consideration would allow six such events per year, not counting Sunday

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Masses. The City is not concerned with whether the church accurately predicts parking utilization at other events, provided that the on-site capacity is not exceeded.

*Comment 7a:* The traffic study should consider the intersection of 9th & El Camino, also the driveway on El Camino.

*Response 7a:* San Mateo does not routinely monitor levels of service at the El Camino Real & 9th Avenue intersection. Based on field observations, this intersection operates with very little delay. San Mateo does monitor El Camino Real & 4th Avenue, to the north, and El Camino Real & 17th Avenue, to the south. These are both much busier intersections, and they operate at LOS B and C. The project would add a maximum of 45 inbound trips and 45 outbound trips during the PM peak hour. Not all of these trips would use the El Camino Real & 9th Avenue intersection. Therefore, it can be concluded that the project would have a minimal traffic impact at the El Camino Real & 9th Avenue intersection. At the site driveway on El Camino Real, only right turns are allowed, so traffic impacts would be minimal. No problems were observed at the El Camino Real driveway on site visits.

*Comment 7b:* School lacks adequate on-site queuing; Aragon/El Camino intersection is dangerous.

*Response 7b:* Hexagon has made numerous visits to the school to observe on-site queuing. The most recent observations, conducted in January 2012, showed that the school has addressed their earlier problems that resulted in queuing on Notre Dame. No queuing on Notre Dame was observed. The proposed project would not change the number of students or the drop-off/pick-up operations. Therefore, it can be concluded that the project would not result in safety impacts due to queuing. The Aragon/El Camino Real intersection calculates to LOS F for the outbound left turns from Aragon Boulevard to El Camino Real. This means that left turns face long delays. It does not mean that the intersection is unsafe. The traffic study includes three years of accident data at this intersection that show no accidents. The project would not add traffic to the left turn movement or change the intersection configuration.

*Comment 16:* The Master Plan does not properly show the number of days that the parking capacity will be exceeded.

*Response 16*: The proposed SUP recognizes that parking capacity could be exceeded for Sunday Masses and otherwise restricts activities to 6 large events that could exceed the parking capacity. Carnival would count as one large event, even though it lasts for more than one day.

**Concerned Citizens Comments**

*Comment 4:* The traffic surveys and findings are erroneous.

*Response 4:* Please see the detailed responses at Response 9a - 9e, below.

*Comment 9a:* The church activity list in the traffic study is outdated.

*Response 9a*: The church activity list was provided for informational purposes only, to provide a sense of the types of activities that occur at the church and school. The activity list was not used in any way as input to the traffic or parking study. This comment also states that church vehicles were observed parking in the neighborhood. The traffic and parking study reaches the same conclusion: church vehicles park in the neighborhood.

*Comment 9b:* Traffic conditions were based on 2006, 2007, and 2008 data.

Response 9b: Hexagon has conducted numerous traffic counts throughout San Mateo up through 2012. There has been no identifiable trend of increasing volume since 2006. Similarly, parking conditions at the church appear to be little changed since the first observations in 2007.

*Comment 9c:* Church parking counts were done in Summer and not more recent than 2010.

*Response 9c*: There is no evidence that church attendance during the Summer is any less than at other times of the year. Church parking has been counted numerous times for this study; many of the counts are not reported in the study but were conducted to confirm the data. The most recent counts were conducted

in Fall 2011. Counts have been conducted at various times of the year, in all seasons. The church never was informed when counts would occur. The counts consistently show around 30 cars parked on neighborhood streets for the busiest Sunday Mass.

*Comment 9d:* The number of families at St. Matthews is actually 4,500, not 2,500 as reported.

*Response 9d*: The number of families at St. Matthews is not a statistic that is used in any way in the traffic or parking study. The relevant statistic is the number of parked cars, which was counted in the field.

*Comment 9e:* The numbers of 1,000 Mass attendees and 3 persons per car are unverified assumptions.

*Response 9e*: The number of 1,000 Mass attendees was provided by St. Matthews. It was not independently verified. The number of 3 persons per car is based on other church studies conducted by Hexagon. Hexagon did not conduct a vehicle occupancy study at St. Matthews. However, these numbers were used only to double-check the reasonableness of the parking counts. When counting on-street parking, Hexagon used best practices to determine whether or not cars were parked for the church. Not all cars parked on the street on Sunday morning are going to the church. Based on the parking counts, Hexagon determined that about 340 cars typically are parked for the busiest Mass. This number seems reasonable given the stated Mass attendance and the typical vehicle occupancy for churches.

*Comment 11a:* Usage of the bank parking lot is not permanent.

Response 11a: The parking spaces at the bank across El Camino Real have been referenced as available off-site parking for Sunday services; they have not been counted as existing parking for the project. There was previously an informal agreement with the owner of the bank property for the use of those spaces on Sundays. The applicant has now entered into a formal lease agreement with the bank for those spaces. There are termination conditions under the terms of the lease, and should those terms be exercised, staff recommends that the applicant make a bona fide effort to find other off-site parking within the vicinity to replace those spaces. Church vehicles do not use the dental office parking lot.

*Comment 11b:* The agreement allows for a replacement for the bank parking within ½ mile of the site. That is too far.

Response 11b: The Negative Declaration recommends a condition of approval that says should the bank parking go away, the applicant needs to make a good faith effort to replace it. The Negative Declaration references some specific locations, such as 901 S. El Camino Real and 500 S. El Camino Real. The 500 S. El Camino Real site, which is known as the Westlake Building, is less than 1,000 feet from St. Matthew. Other locations that satisfy the requirements also could be pursued.

*Comment 11c:* Valet parking will not work.

*Response 11c:* Valet parking is not being proposed by the applicant. The applicant did prepare a diagram to illustrate how 356 vehicles could fit onto the site in response to a Planning Commission question. However, accommodating that number of vehicles would require some form of assisted or enhanced parking management. Valet parking, in the manner typically thought of, would not be recommended by Hexagon nor City staff.

*Comment 11d:* The site already has more parkers than spaces. There is no room for valet stacking.

*Response 11d:* With the project the parking lot will be reconfigured to provide an additional 108 parking spaces. This will be accomplished by striping spaces in areas where they don't exist today and generally by making the layout more space-efficient. Little could be gained with valet parking.

*Comment 11e:* Changing full-size spaces to compact will not work.

*Response 11e*: The revised parking lot layout includes 95 compact stalls out of 306 total spaces, which calculates to 31% compact spaces. The San Mateo Parking Code allows up to 40% compact spaces.

*Comment 11f:* Off-site parking and shuttles failed at Carnival in 2009 and was not attempted in 2010 or 2011.

*Response 11f:* St. Matthews' proposed Parking Management Plan, which is not a mitigation measure or part of the MND, suggests that they will use signage to direct Carnival attendees to off-site parking lots. The plan does not mention a shuttle. Parking within the neighborhood during Carnival would not be a significant project impact because it is an existing condition that would not be exacerbated by the project.

**Stork Comments**

*Comment 2*: Has a single point of ingress and egress on El Camino Real been considered?

*Response 2:* Given the location of the traffic signal at El Camino Real and 9th Avenue, the only location along the church site frontage where signalized access could be provided is directly opposite 9th Avenue, forming a four-legged intersection. However, a driveway could not be installed at this location on the church property without removing almost all of the existing buildings. Access to the church site both for school and church services is adequate under existing conditions, and the proposed project would not create any changes.

*Comment 3*: Existing and additional traffic should be funneled onto El Camino Real.

*Response 3*: The proposed application is to add a gymnasium building, which would not increase school enrollment or church attendance. The gymnasium could result in increased traffic to and from the site after school when it is being used for sports team practice or games. However, the traffic volume at those after school times would be much less than the before school drop-off traffic or after school pick-up traffic. Since school access functions adequately with regard to traffic operations under existing conditions, there is no need or requirement to make changes with this application.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these responses to comments. Please do not hesitate to contact us if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

**HEXAGON TRANSPORTATION CONSULTANTS, INC.**

Gary Black, President