

Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: University of California, Irvine
Physical & Environmental Planning
4199 Campus Drive, Suite 380
Irvine, CA 92697-2325

Project Title: Hydrogen Fueling Station

Project Applicant: University of California, Irvine

Project Location – Specific: Academic Core of the University of California, Irvine

Project Location – City: Irvine

Project Location – County: Orange County

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: Refer to attachment.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: University of California, Irvine

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: University of California, Irvine

Exempt Status (check one):


- Ministerial (Sec. 21080 (b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a);
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 3, Section 15303
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number:
- General Exemption (Sec. 15061(b)(3)).

Reason Why Project is Exempt:

Refer to attachment.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Richard Demerjian

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (949) 824-7058

Signature:  354AE512CC1C424...

9/15/2020

Date: _____ **Title:** Asst. Vice Chancellor

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Hydrogen Fueling Station Notice of Exemption Attachment

Project Description

The Hydrogen Fueling Station project (proposed project) would construct a fueling station with an observation room on a 0.9-acre site located at the northeast corner of California Avenue and Academy Way. The station would dispense gaseous hydrogen through four individual pumps. Two driveways would be constructed, one on California Avenue and one on Academy Way, to provide access to the project site. Additional scope of work includes earthwork and installation of utilities, lighting, and landscaping. The proposed project would be utilized for research and teaching by the UCI Advanced Power and Energy Program (APEP).

Reasons the Project is Exempt

The CEQA Guidelines Section 15300 describes Categorical Exemptions as the classes of projects which have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and which shall, therefore, be exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

The project meets the conditions described under Section 15303, Class 3 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures:

“A Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure.

- c) A store, motel, office, restaurant or similar structure not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances, and not exceeding 2,500 square feet in floor area. In urbanized areas, the exemption also applies to up to four such commercial buildings not exceeding 10,000 square feet in floor area on sites zoned for such use if not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances where all necessary public services and facilities are available and the surrounding area is not environmentally sensitive.”

As discussed in the project description above, the proposed project would be located in the urbanized Academic Core, which has been predominantly built-out with existing development; would consist of approximately 2,000 square feet of built space; and would have sufficient public services to support operation. The project site is designated as Open Space - General in the 2007 UCI Long Range Development Plan (LRDP), which allows for green initiative projects and field research facilities.

The proposed project would have hydrogen stored, but not generated, on-site. Hydrogen is considered non-toxic, but high concentrations of hydrogen gas can create an oxygen-deficient environment. However, the proposed project is a fueling station and the pumps are located outside where gas would disperse immediately due to the buoyancy of hydrogen. Additionally, an approximately 800 kg storage tank would be installed for the four pump station; therefore, the proposed project would not require a significant amount of hazardous substances to be stored on-site.

Review of Possible Exceptions to the Categorical Exemption

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines provides conditions where Categorical Exemptions are inapplicable. The proposed project has been reviewed for characteristics or circumstances that might invalidate findings that the project is exempt under CEQA.

- a) **Location.** The proposed project is consistent with the Open Space - General land use designation, which allows for green initiative projects and field research facilities. Surrounding uses include the Beckman Center across California Avenue to the west, Crawford Athletics Complex to the east, undeveloped land across Academy Way to the south, and undeveloped land and University Drive to the north. Although the project site is currently undeveloped, it does not contain any known cultural resources. Additionally, biological resources, jurisdictional delineation, and noise reports were prepared for the proposed project to confirm that the project site is not environmentally sensitive.

Biological resources. Project-specific biological resources report and jurisdictional delineation were prepared for the project. The reports determined that no sensitive species, wetlands, or riparian habitat would be impacted by the proposed project.

Noise. A project-specific noise report was prepared for the proposed project. It was determined that operation of the proposed project, including noise associated with the traffic generated, would not exceed the City of Irvine¹ noise standards.

- b) **Cumulative Impacts.** Although projects are ongoing throughout the UCI campus, no further projects for the site is planned. Additionally, all campus projects would undergo project-specific CEQA review and mitigate, to the extent feasible, any significant impacts. Construction and operation of the proposed project would implement best management practices (BMPs) and adhere to State and federal regulations. No significant cumulative effects are anticipated during construction or operation.
- c) **Significant Effects.** The proposed project does not have unusual circumstances regarding the proposed use or regarding the project site that would cause a significant impact on the environment. Air quality/greenhouse gas emissions and hazards memos were prepared for the proposed project to confirm that no significant effects would occur with the construction of the proposed project.

Air quality. A project-specific air quality and greenhouse gas memo was prepared for the proposed project. The report determined that the construction of the proposed project would not exceed South Coast Air Quality Management District's (SCAQMD) thresholds for air quality or greenhouse gas emissions.

Hazards. A project-specific hazards memo was prepared for the proposed project. The report determined that the amount of hydrogen stored on-site, and because it would be stored and dispensed outdoors, it would be considered less than significant.

- d) **Scenic Highways.** Pacific Coast Highway (SR-1), approximately 3.1 miles southwest of the project site, is designated as an Eligible State Scenic Highway – Not Officially Designated

¹ Although UCI is autonomous and not subject to local regulation, the City of Irvine noise standards are used for the analysis as UCI does not have adopted noise standards.

through Orange County. Due to distance and lack of visibility of SR-1 from the project site, no impact to scenic resources within a state scenic highway would occur.

- e) **Hazardous Waste Sites.** No hazardous waste sites were identified on the project site with review of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control's EnviroStor and the State Water Resources Control Board's GeoTracker websites, which includes Federal Superfund sites (NPL), State response sites, voluntary cleanup sites, school cleanup sites, permitted sites, corrective action sites, and leaking underground storage tank (LUST) sites.
- f) **Historical Resources.** The project site is currently undeveloped with only existing ornamental landscaping. No buildings would be demolished as part of the proposed project.