

COUNTY CLERK'S USE CITY CLERK'S USE

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
 OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
 200 NORTH SPRING STREET, ROOM 360
 LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT
NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
 (California Environmental Quality Act Section 15062)

Filing of this form is optional. If filed, the form shall be filed with the County Clerk, 12400 E. Imperial Highway, Norwalk, CA 90650, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21152 (b). Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21167 (d), the filing of this notice starts a 35-day statute of limitations on court challenges to the approval of the project. Failure to file this notice with the County Clerk results in the statute of limitations being extended to 180 days.

LEAD CITY AGENCY COUNCIL DISTRICT: 6
City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation

PROJECT TITLE COUNCIL FILE NO:
 SRTS Panorama City Elementary School Project CF 14-0499-S5

PROJECT LOCATION
 The one-quarter mile radius around the Panorama City Elementary School located at 8600 Kester Avenue, in the San Fernando Valley in the City of Los Angeles

DESCRIPTION OF NATURE, PURPOSE, AND BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT:
 Transform a high traffic-stressed, disadvantaged area in the San Fernando Valley around Panorama City Elementary with pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and traffic calming measures

NAME OF PERSON OR AGENCY CARRYING OUT PROJECT, IF OTHER THAN LEAD CITY AGENCY: N/A

CONTACT PERSON AREA CODE | TELEPHONE NUMBER | EXT.
 Jonathan Huang (213) 972-4947

EXEMPT STATUS: (Check One)

	STATE CEQA GUIDELINES	CITY CEQA GUIDELINES
<input type="checkbox"/> MINISTERIAL	Sec. 15268	Art. II, Sec. 2b
<input type="checkbox"/> DECLARED EMERGENCY	Sec. 15269	Art. II, Sec. 2a (1)
<input type="checkbox"/> EMERGENCY PROJECT	Sec. 15269 (b) & (c)	Art. II, Sec. 2a (2) & (3)
<input type="checkbox"/> GENERAL EXEMPTION	Sec. 15060.	n/a
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION	Sec. 15300 <i>et seq.</i>	Art. III, Sec. 1

Class 1, 4 Category 1(3), 1(15), 1(20), 4(13) (City CEQA Guidelines)

OTHER (Statutory Exemption: Public Resources Code Sec. 21080.20.5)

JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT EXEMPTION:
 The project is exempt under *City CEQA Guidelines* and Section 15301 of the State CEQA Guidelines. *City CEQA Guidelines* Class 1(3) states a project is exempt if it involves the operation, repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing highways and streets, sidewalk, and gutter involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing; and does not involve the removal of a scenic resource. *City CEQA Guidelines* Class 1(20) states a project is exempt if modernization of an existing street, or alley by construction of improvements, resurfacing, and reconstruction involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing. Further, *City CEQA Guidelines* Class 4(13) exempts the creation of bicycle lanes on existing rights-of-way while 1(15) exempts the installation of traffic signs, signals, and pavement markings, including traffic channelization using paint and raised pavement markers. None of the limitations set forth in State CEQA Guidelines 153000.2 apply. See Attached narrative (**Attachment A**) for further discussion.

IF FILED BY APPLICANT, ATTACH CERTIFIED DOCUMENT OF EXEMPTION FINDING

SIGNATURE TITLE Transportation Engineer DATE 1/5/2024

FEE: \$75 RECEIPT NO. REC'D. BY DATE

DISTRIBUTION: (1) County Clerk, (2) City Clerk, (3) Agency Record

Attachment A

SRTS Panorama City Elementary School Project

I. Project Description

The proposed project consists of 16 transportation safety elements to be installed across 19 locations in the vicinity of Panorama City Elementary School. The project intends to address transportation conflicts related to pedestrian and vehicle movements by implementing the below roadway changes:

- Green Alley (green alleys include planted strips or public art, striped walkways, repaired street surface, intersection murals, “one-way” sign, and “shared street” sign)
 - Alley between Kester Ave and Willis Ave
- Continental Crosswalks
 - Alley and Cedros Ave
 - Alley and Kester Ave
 - Alley and Willis Ave
 - Parthenia Place and Burnet Ave
 - Chase St and Kester Ave
- Curb Extensions
 - Alley and Cedros Ave
 - Alley and Willis Ave
 - Alley and Kester Ave
 - Parthenia St and Tobias Ave
 - Parthenia St and Kester Ave
 - Parthenia St and Noble Ave
 - Parthenia St and Burnet Ave
 - Napa St and Kester Ave
- Class I Bike Path
 - Parthenia Pl between Columbus Ave and Burnet Ave
- Class III Bike Route
 - Chase St between Pacoima Wash and Tobias Ave
 - Chase St between I-405 and Pacoima Wash
- Curb Ramp Upgrades
 - Chase St and Kester Ave
 - Chase St and Pacoima Wash
 - Chase St and Norwich Ave
 - Napa St and Kester Ave
- Sidewalk
 - Chase St between Kester Ave and Willis Ave
 - Kester Ave between Chase St and Alley
 - Kester Ave between Parthenia St and Rayen St
 - Parthenia St between Pacoima Wash and Kester Ave
- Bus Bulb with Protected Bike Lane
 - Parthenia St and Tobias Ave
 - Parthenia St and Willis Ave
 - Parthenia St and Kester Ave
 - Parthenia St and Noble Ave
- Traffic Circle
 - Chase St and Cedros Ave
 - Chase St and Willis Ave
- Speed Humps
 - Alley between Kester Ave and Cedros Ave
 - Kester Ave between Alley and Chase St
- Bike Boxes
 - Parthenia Pl and Burnet Ave
- Bike Signal
 - Parthenia Pl and Burnet Ave
- Bike Loop Detector
 - Parthenia Pl and Burnet Ave
- Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS)
 - Parthenia St and Kester Ave
 - Parthenia St and Tobias Ave

- Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI)
 - Parthenia St and Tobias Ave
 - Parthenia St and Kester Ave
- Median Extension
 - Parthenia St and Burnet Ave
 - Parthenia St and Kester Ave
 - Parthenia St and Tobias Ave
- School Zone Speed Limit Signs
 - Kester Ave between Parthenia St and Chase St
- HAWK Signal
 - Parthenia St and Willis Ave

II. Project History

The project intends to facilitate safe passage for pedestrian users, particularly for parents and children traveling to and from Panorama City Elementary School as part of a “Safe Routes to School” (SRTS) project. The project elements were selected as part of the SRTS program by Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) staff with engagement, feedback, and support from community members.

III. Environmental Review

Basis for Categorical Exemption

A project qualifies for a City CEQA Class 1, Category 3 and State CEQA Class 1(c) exemption if it consists of operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing street, sidewalk and gutter involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing; and does not involve the removal of a scenic resource. Further, a project qualifies for a City CEQA Class 4, Category 13 exemption if it includes the striping of bicycle lanes on existing right-of-way and a Class 1, Category 15 exemption if it consists of the installation of traffic signs, signals, and pavement markings, including traffic channelization using paint and raised pavement markers. A project also qualifies for a City CEQA Class 1, Category 20 exemption if modernization of an existing street, or alley by construction of improvements, resurfacing, and reconstruction involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that previously existing.

Consideration of Potential Exceptions to Use of a Categorical Exemption

The State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Sec 15300.2) limit the use of categorical exemptions in the following circumstances:

1. Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located -a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies. Portions of the project are exempt under Class 1 (existing facility).

The project features covered under Class 1 categories are not subject to the location exception.

Those project features that include roadway restriping to feature bicycle lanes are eligible for a Class 4 exemption and therefore are potentially subject to the location exception. However, Class 4 exemptions are qualified by the consideration of whether the project is located in a sensitive environment where it would impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern. Specifically, if implementing bicycle lanes were to occur in a sensitive environment that would impact a resource of hazardous and critical concern, then the bicycle lanes would not be eligible to be exempt from CEQA. However, nationwide research has demonstrated effectiveness of channelization, lane reductions, and bicycle lanes in calming traffic. In contrast to impacting a resource of hazardous and critical concern, the project features are expected to reduce severe roadway collisions of all roadway users, including people in vehicles, people who travel by foot, and people on bicycles.

Given that the bicycle lanes are striped on existing street right-of-way, this element of the project would not cause impact on an environmental resource by roadway widening. Additionally, as described in the “Traffic/Transportation” element of Subsection 3: Significant Impact below, the project’s effects on traffic, transportation networks, and mobility also will not impact a resource of hazardous and critical concern in a sensitive environment.

2. Cumulative Impact. This exemption applies when, although a particular project may not have a significant impact, the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

While other similar projects are occurring elsewhere in the City, they have been determined to be happening in

different neighborhoods, locations, and times. Given the nature of the project, it is not anticipated to result in a cumulative impact when included with successive projects in the same place and over time.

3. Significant Effect. This exception applies when, although the project may otherwise be exempt, there is a reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

Aesthetics

This exception applies when a project may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a visual resource. As stated in the Section I. *Project Description*, the project consists of continental crosswalks, curb extensions, curb ramp upgrades, sidewalk repair, bus bulbs, traffic circles, median extensions, speed humps, bike lanes, and bike routes in the vicinity of Panorama City Elementary School in Council District 6. The locations consist of corridors with existing traffic signals, crosswalks, roadway markings and other roadway and traffic control features. As such, this exception does not apply.

Noise

The work shall be performed in accordance with Ordinance No. 144.331, "Noise Regulation" in Chapter XI of the Los Angeles Municipal Code of March 1982. As such, this exception does not apply.

Biological Resources

The proposed project does not involve the loss or alteration to any biological resources. As such, this exception does not apply.

Traffic/Transportation

The work shall be performed in accordance with work area traffic control handbook (WATCH). City construction crews will coordinate with schools and Department of Transportation according to WATCH and provide flaggers when required. When the activity site encroaches upon a sidewalk, walkway or crosswalk area, pedestrians shall be provided advance warning if they are detoured away from the activity site. Advance notification of sidewalk closures shall be provided according to WATCH. At least one lane of traffic in each direction will be maintained at all times.

Upon adopting SB 743 into law, the legislature and Governor directed the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) replaced delay and capacity-based metrics such as level of service (LOS) when lead agencies are evaluating transportation impacts under CEQA. The legislature further found that new transportation analysis under CEQA was needed to promote the State's goals of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and traffic-related air pollution, promote the development of a multimodal transportation system (including bicycle lanes), and provide clean, efficient access to destinations. The California Natural Resources Agency certified and adopted the CEQA Guidelines in December of 2018, and are now in effect.

In its document, 'Revised Proposal on Updates to the CEQA Guidelines on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA', the OPR recommended that a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita metric replace delay-based metric throughout the State when identifying transportation impacts under CEQA. OPR finds that a VMT per capita metric is in direct correlation with the State's goals of reducing GHG emissions and traffic-related air pollution, promoting the development of a multimodal transportation system, and providing clean, efficient access to destinations.

In its 'Revised Proposal on Updates to the CEQA Guidelines on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA', OPR has further indicated that both active transportation projects (which include bicycle lanes), and transportation projects that reduce number of lanes should generally not lead to substantial increase in VMT, and further not be considered to contribute to a significant impact under CEQA. In the presumption of less than significant impacts for active transportation projects, OPR finds that streamlining active transportation projects align with three of the statutory goals of SB 743, which include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing multimodal transportation networks, and facilitating mixed-use development.

In summary, the actions of the California Legislature in adopting SB 743, as well as the record of evidence and preliminary guidance as provided by OPR, Caltrans, and the Natural Resource Agency support the conclusion that travel delay is not considered an exception of hazardous and critical concern that would disqualify the application of a Class 1 Exemption pursuant to Section 15300.2 (c) of the CEQA Guidelines.

Standard conditions and construction practices are anticipated for this project. No unusual construction noise or traffic effects are anticipated. The project elements are expected to result in reducing conflicts of vehicles and pedestrians by providing greater protective crossing control and will not materially alter transportation patterns that would result in an impact under CEQA. No reasonable possibility has been

identified that the project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances. As such, this exception does not apply.

4. Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.

Sepulveda Boulevard between Rayen Street and Devonshire Street is a designated Scenic Highway, according to Appendix B of the Mobility Plan 2035. Although the project is near this Scenic Highway, the project will not involve modifications to Sepulveda Boulevard and the extent of changes to the street will be limited to elements such as roadway markings, traffic control devices, and transportation safety features, many of which already exist in the project vicinity and will not alter or damage this Scenic Highway. As such, this exception does not apply.

5. Hazardous Waste Sites. This exception applies when a project is located on a site listed as a hazardous waste site under Government Code Section 65962.5.

As of November 16, 2023, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) data management system (<http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov>) does not reflect sites of concern in the immediate area in which the project will take place. All project work will be limited to minor sidewalk and curb work as well as striping and signage changes within existing right-of-way. Therefore, this exception has no application here.

6. Historical Resources. This exception applies when a project may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. The addition of continental crosswalks, curb extensions, curb ramp upgrades, sidewalk repair, bus bulbs, traffic circles, median extensions, speed humps, and other transportation access and safety measures will not affect any known local historical resources. The proposed Project would occur on existing streets and with no more than two feet in depth of excavation. The depth of demolition and excavation is not anticipated to exceed the depth of previously disturbed soil.

In case of any historical artifacts being encountered, City Engineer Standard Specifications, Section 6-3.2, (Greenbook, 2012) states: "If discovery is made of items of archaeological or paleontological interest, the Contractor shall immediately cease excavation in the area of discovery and shall not continue until ordered by the Engineer." Therefore, during activities in which there will be ground disturbances (i.e., digging, drilling, etc.) if any evidence of archaeological, cultural, or paleontological resources are found, all work within the vicinity of the find shall stop until a qualified archaeologist can assess the finds and make recommendations. No excavation of any finds should be attempted by project personnel unless directed by a qualified archaeologist. Construction activities may continue in other areas. If the discovery proves significant under CEQA (Section 15064.5f; Public Resources Code or PRC 21082), additional work such as testing or data recovery may be warranted.

The discovery of human remains is always a possibility during ground disturbances; State of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the Los Angeles County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98. The Los Angeles County Coroner must be notified of the find immediately. If the human remains are determined to be prehistoric, the Coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission, which will determine and notify a Most Likely Descendent (MLD). The MLD shall complete the inspection of the site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials.

In case of unforeseen discovery of cultural resources, measures are in place to manage unanticipated cultural resource finds or discovery of human remains. Therefore, no substantial adverse impact to cultural resources is anticipated.