



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION  
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 06/2022)**

**Project Information**

**Project Name (if applicable):** Topaz Slip Out/Highway Realignment

**DIST-CO-RTE:** 09-MNO-395

**PM/PM:** 118.4/118.8

**EA:** 09-39930

**Federal-Aid Project Number:** N/A

**Project Description**

This Caltrans Emergency Project was conducted to address damage to US Route 395 in Mono County from Postmile 118.4 to 118.8, 1.9 miles south of the California/Nevada state line. Due to a highway slip out event, deep slippage cracks, a 5ft deep crevice between the shoulder and the pavement, and damage to guardrail post stability on US 395 exposed the traveling public to an unsafe roadway. The project was necessary to prevent or mitigate loss of, or damage to, life, health, property, or essential public services. Work began 7/12/23. *(Continued on Continuation Sheet, Page 3)*

**Caltrans CEQA Determination** (Check one)

- Not Applicable** – Caltrans is not the CEQA Lead Agency
- Not Applicable** – Caltrans has prepared an IS or EIR under CEQA

Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, the project is:

- Exempt by Statute.** (PRC 21080[b]; 14 CCR 15260 et seq.)
- Categorically Exempt. Class** Enter class. (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
  - No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.
- Covered by the Common Sense Exemption.** This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15061[b][3].)

**Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief**

Stephen Pfeiler

Print Name

Signature

1/23/2024

Date

**Project Manager**

Jeremy Milos

Print Name

Signature

1/23/24

Date



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Caltrans NEPA Determination (Check one)

Not Applicable

Caltrans has determined that this project has no significant impacts on the environment as defined by NEPA, and that there are no unusual circumstances as described in 23 CFR 771.117(b). See SER Chapter 30 for unusual circumstances. As such, the project is categorically excluded from the requirements to prepare an EA or EIS under NEPA and is included under the following:

23 USC 326: Caltrans has been assigned, and hereby certifies that it has carried out the responsibility to make this determination pursuant to 23 USC 326 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated April 18, 2022, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

- 23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)(9)(i)
23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)(Enter activity number)
Activity Enter activity number listed in Appendix A of the MOU between FHWA and Caltrans

23 USC 327: Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under 23 USC 327. The environmental review, consultation, and any other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 327 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated May 27, 2022, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Stephen Pfeiler
Signature: Stephen Pfeiler
Date: 1/23/2024

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Jeremy Milos
Signature
Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): 1/23/24
Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 1/23/24



## CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION FORM

### Continuation sheet:

#### **Project Description**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

This slip out affected approximately 1/3 mile of highway causing the failure of the eastern embankment slope, downslope movement of the northbound lane, large cracks and potholes in the existing pavement, and guardrail posts to sink and lean away from the roadbed. Due to these developments, the northbound lane was closed to traffic. After loss of the northbound lane, emergency work was deemed necessary to avoid the loss of the southbound lane and a full closure of US 395.

US Route 395 is a major interstate supply route. The closure of the northbound lane impacted public and commercial travel. Full closure of this highway would have resulted in major impacts to communities and the traveling public along this route. It was essential to take measures to keep this highway open and prevent communities and the traveling public from being cut off and isolated from essential public services. Continued failure of the shoulder and guardrail also posed a threat to the safety of the traveling public.

After the closure of the northbound lane on 3/19/23, the southbound lane remained open while work was conducted, and two-way traffic continued under reversible traffic control. On 10/31/23 the project was completed, and the northbound lane was reopened.

Work included the construction of a 1:1 cut slope 100ft in height on the west side of the roadway in order to shift the centerline of the highway 12 feet to the west. An additional 5 feet of unpaved shoulder was added adjacent to the southbound travel lane, below the cut face. The slope was draped with wire mesh to impede the bounce and roll out of rocks from the cut face and reduce impact to travel lanes. Cracks on the current highway elevation were filled and repaired with material from the cut slope. All other excess material generated from the slope cut operations was exported and disposed of off-site. Slope rounding was performed to limit future infiltration of water into the subsurface and reduce potential downslope movement of the embankment face.

Right of Way was acquired from Walker River Irrigation District for the work to conduct work in a manner that substantially conforms to the preexisting design, function, and location as the original facility. With the incorporation of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Caltrans as the CEQA/NEPA lead agency determined that the project would result in a less than significant impact to Environmental resources.