Notice of Exemption

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

From: (Lead Agency)
San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District
2150 Webster Street, Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 464-6000

County Clerk, Counties of:
☐ Alameda
☒ Contra Costa
☐ San Francisco
☐ San Mateo
☐ Santa Clara

Project Title: Local Transportation Climate Adaptation Program

Project Applicant: San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)

Project Location - Specific: Multiple locations: 20 miles of BART tracks

Project Location – County: Contra Costa
Project Location – Cities: Antioch, Concord, El Cerrito, Lafayette, Orinda, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, Walnut Creek

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Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:
The Local Transportation Climate Adaptation Program (LTCAP) will take place along 20 miles of BART rail tracks in Contra Costa County. The affected tracks are between the El Cerrito Plaza Station and the Richmond Station (BART Red and Orange Lines) and between the Orinda Station and the Antioch Station (BART Yellow Line). When subjected to temperature extremes, the expansion and contraction of steel rail can introduce stress on the tracks. In cold weather, contraction of the rail can lead to fractures, while hot conditions can induce expansion and cause track buckling. Both scenarios significantly elevate the risk of service disruptions, property damage, and train derailments. Contra Costa County is projected to see a significant rise in the number of days exceeding what is now considered extremely hot for the area. This program will destress the steel rails at a neutral temperature and calibrate them to withstand the anticipated extremities of both high and low temperatures in the region.

Name of Public Agency Approving the Project: San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District
Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Same

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: 15301, Class 1, Existing Facilities
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

None of the exceptions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, which would prohibit the use of a categorical exemption, apply to the project. The program would involve minor alterations to existing rail infrastructure. No expansion of current space or current use is proposed. Construction activity would occur on existing BART tracks within existing BART right-of-way. The Project wouldn't affect access to transit or transit operations.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Donald Dean **Phone/Email:** 510-287-4844 / ddean@bart.gov

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Signature: _____ **Date:** 3/14/2024 **Title:** Mgr. of Environmental Review

Donald Dean

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110. Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 2112.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT
2150 Webster Street, Oakland, CA 94612

NOTICE OF CEQA EXEMPTION

Project Name:	Local Transportation Climate Adaptation Program
Project Address:	Multiple Locations
Counties:	Contra Costa
BART Project No.:	Not Applicable
BART Contract No.:	Not Applicable
Project Sponsor:	San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) BART Track Engineering
Project Contact:	Gregory Shivy GShivy@bart.gov / (510) 464-6323

Date of CE Determination: March 14, 2024

This CE will be filed internally: ☐

This CE will be filed with the County Clerk: ☒
Contra Costa County: ☒
This CE will be filed on CEQAnet: ☒

PROPOSED PROJECT

Project Location

The Local Transportation Climate Adaptation Program (LTCAP) will take place along 20 miles of BART tracks in Contra Costa County. The affected tracks are between the El Cerrito Plaza Station and the Richmond Station (BART Red and Orange Lines) and between the Orinda Station and the Antioch Station (BART Yellow Line). Figure 1 (below) presents the project locations and highlights the affected BART track.

Project Background

BART is the transit backbone of the San Francisco Bay Area, providing crucial transportation to work, services, and leisure, especially for residents from lower income communities. BART connects to the region's major cities, airports, and employment centers, as well as other transit operators and rail systems.

The expansion and contraction of steel rail when subjected to temperature extremes can introduce stress on the tracks. In cold weather, contraction of the rail can lead to fractures, while hot conditions can induce expansion and cause track buckling. Both scenarios significantly

elevate the risk of service disruptions, property damage, train derailments, and even injury or death.

The San Francisco Bay Area, specifically Contra Costa County, has seen an increase in unprecedented heat. According to the Cal-Adapt climate model,[1] Contra Costa County is projected to see a significant rise in the number of days exceeding what is now considered extremely hot for the area. BART has identified 20 miles of track within its operating corridor that have been affected by these conditions and need to be addressed.

Currently, BART enforces speed restrictions on the system to mitigate the risks of extreme weather. However, through the measures proposed in this project, BART anticipates a reduction in the need for such restrictions. This would dramatically improve the reliability and overall safety of the railway system, establishing a more resilient, efficient, and secure transportation network capable of withstanding weather extremes. The reduction of heat-related risks helps to ensure the safety of other critical infrastructure close to the tracks that could be damaged during a train accident. Therefore, this project indirectly contributes to the overall resilience of the Bay Area's rail infrastructure.

Project Description

Under this project, the steel rails will be destressed to a neutral temperature and calibrated to withstand the anticipated extremities of both high and low temperatures in the region. This procedure will significantly alleviate the stress caused by thermal expansion and contraction in the tracks, enhancing their stability, and drastically reducing the likelihood of train derailments.

Destressing is a rail engineering process; it is used to minimize the temperature-induced stress after installation of continuous welded rail. Approximately 1,000 feet of rail would undergo destressing at a time. During the destressing process, a section of the rail (as much as 6 inches) is cut and the rail is mechanically stretched with hydraulic tensors, then rewelded to close the gap. In addition to the hydraulic tensor machines, cutting equipment and welders, impact wrenches (or similar) are used to loosen and tighten the bolts holding the rails to the ties. Typically, work would be conducted during BART's longer overnight non-revenue hours on weekends. In some cases, BART will single-track its trains to allow longer work periods. The LTCAP program in Contra Costa County is expected to take approximately 3 to 5 years to complete.

Once the initial work has been completed, the project also includes ongoing field verification to monitor the rail's neutral temperature, gathering essential data for risk analysis and maintenance prioritization.

[1] Cal-Adapt. Data: LOCA Downscaled CMIP5 Climate Projections (Scripps Institution of Oceanography), Gridded Observed Meteorological Data (University of Colorado Boulder), LOCA Derived Products (Geospatial Innovation Facility.

References

- San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, Expansion and Contraction of Steel Rail in Contra Costa County, Local Transportation Climate Adaptation Program, 2023.

EVALUATION

The LTCAP would involve minor alterations to existing BART rails. The cutting, welding, and track destressing that are the heart of the project are similar to BART's ongoing track activities and do not represent new or substantially different type of work. Track destressing is performed regularly when rails are replaced. Construction activity would occur on existing BART tracks within existing BART right-of-way, reducing potential impacts to adjacent communities. The program would improve BART's reliability and would not represent an expansion of use or change to transit operations. There would be no visual change to the rails. The LTCAP work would be conducted during BART's overnight non-revenue hours, which would be consistent with current BART practice.

The transportation sector currently produces over 40 percent of California's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. BART's service is helping to reduce GHG emissions with an electrified passenger rail fleet, using 100 percent greenhouse gas-free generated electricity. By enhancing the reliability of the railway system, especially during extreme weather conditions, BART expects to encourage more people to use trains for their daily commutes and travel needs. The reduction in car usage will subsequently decrease greenhouse gas emissions and criteria pollutants, thereby advancing California's air quality and climate goals, resulting in an environmental benefit.

Possible Exceptions to CE

If a project is ordinarily exempt under any of the potential categorical exemptions, CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 provides specific instances where exceptions to otherwise applicable exemptions apply. In these cases, the CEQA exemption would not apply to a project.

Yes	No	Would the project be precluded from a Categorical Exemption due to the following exception per Guidelines Section 15300.2?
	X	(a) 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 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.
	X	(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

	X	(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.
	X	(d) 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. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.
	X	(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
	X	(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

Relevant Exemptions

The project would meet the criteria of CEQA Guidelines Section 15301-Existing Facilities: a Class 1 exemption.

	Statutory Exemption
	Ministerial Exemption
X	Categorical Exemption: 15301, Class 1, Existing Facilities
	Emergency Exemption
	Other Exemption

15301. Existing Facilities

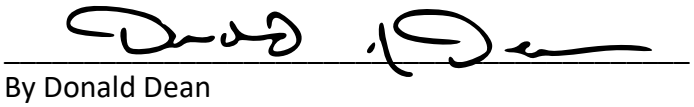
Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.

The project is determined to meet the qualifications for a Categorical Exemption for the following reasons among others:

1. None of the exceptions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, which would prohibit the use of a categorical exemption, apply to the project.
2. The program would involve minor alterations to existing rail infrastructure.
3. No expansion of current space or current use is proposed.
4. Construction activity would occur on existing BART tracks within existing BART right-of-way.
5. The Project wouldn't affect access to transit or transit operations.

DETERMINATION

No further environmental review is required. The project is categorically exempt under CEQA. An exemption from environmental review pursuant to the provisions of CEQA has been considered and approved:



3/14/2024

By Donald Dean
BART Manager of Environmental Review

Date

Figure 1: Contra Costa County BART Stations and LTCAP Rail Tracks