

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

County Clerk

County of: Fresno
2220 Tulare Street

Fresno, CA 93721-2600

From: (Public Agency): City of Fresno

2600 Fresno Street, 4th Floor

Fresno, CA 93721

(Address)

Project Title: Blackstone Smart Mobility Project

Project Applicant: City of Fresno Public Works Department

Project Location - Specific:

Blackstone Avenue between McKinley and Shields Avenues in the city of Fresno, CA

Project Location - City: Fresno

Project Location - County: Fresno

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The proposed project includes acquisition of right-of-way (ROW) and construction of a multimodal roadway improvement project along a 1-mile segment of Blackstone Avenue between McKinley and Shields Avenues in the central portion of the city of Fresno. A detailed description of the project is included in Attachment 1.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Fresno

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: City of Fresno Public Works Department

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: Section 15301 - Existing Facilities (Class 1)
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

A Class 1 Categorical Exemption consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing use. Examples include existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety), as well as other alterations such as the addition of bicycle facilities, including, but not limited to, bicycle parking, share facilities, and lanes and transit improvements such as bus lanes, pedestrian crossings, street trees, and other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes. The proposed project would be consistent with the provisions of a Class 1 Categorical Exemption because it would be limited to the acquisition of ROW and construction of a multimodal roadway improvement project along an existing roadway and would not increase the number of vehicle travel lanes or the capacity of the roadway. In addition, the project would not result in potentially significant environmental impacts associated with its location, cumulative impacts, scenic resources, hazardous waste sites, historical resources, energy demand, or otherwise have the potential to result in a significant effect.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Isaac Campos

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (559) 621-8657

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: Isaac Campos Date: 4/15/2024 Title: Engineer II

× Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.

Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

ATTACHMENT 1

**Supporting Memorandum for Categorical Exemption and
Detailed Project Description**

**CITY OF FRESNO
CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. PW00956**

THE PROJECT DESCRIBED HEREIN IS DETERMINED TO BE CATEGORICALLY
EXEMPT FROM THE PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS
PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 19 OF THE STATE CEQA GUIDELINES.

APPLICANT: City of Fresno Public Works Department
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721
Attn: Isaac Campos

PROJECT LOCATION: A 1-mile segment of Blackstone Avenue between
McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue in the city of
Fresno, Fresno County, California

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The proposed Blackstone Smart Mobility between McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue Project (project) includes acquisition of right-of-way (ROW) and construction of a multimodal roadway improvement project along a 1-mile segment of Blackstone Avenue between McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue in the central portion of the city of Fresno. The project would reduce the number of lanes along the northbound and southbound segment of Blackstone Avenue from three lanes to two lanes to allow for the installation of a protected Class IV bike lane in each direction. The Class IV bike lanes would be separated from the existing travel lanes with new marking and conflicting green zones. The project also includes installation of new curb ramps and sidewalks, median nose adjustments, construction of bus platforms for Bus Rapid Transit stations, relocation of one storm drain inlet, pavement reconstruction, slurry seal, traffic signal modifications, new signage, and striping. Implementation of the project would require five ROW acquisitions for the construction of new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant curbs. The project would not require the demolition or removal of existing buildings or structures from parcels proposed for ROW acquisition. The project would also require two temporary construction easements and three permanent pedestrian easements.

This project is exempt under Section 15301/Class 1 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

Staff has performed a preliminary environmental assessment of this project and determined that it falls within the Categorical Exemption set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301/Class 1, which exempts existing facilities under certain conditions. Staff found that the conditions are met:

Section 15301/Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing use. Examples include existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety), as well as other alterations such as the addition of bicycle facilities, including, but not limited to, bicycle parking, share facilities, and lanes and transit improvements such as bus lanes, pedestrian crossings, street trees, and other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes. The proposed project would be consistent with the provisions of a Class 1 Categorical Exemption because it would be limited to the acquisition of ROW and construction of a multimodal roadway improvement project along an existing roadway and would not increase the number of vehicle travel lanes or the capacity of the roadway.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 identifies exceptions that would disqualify a project from being exempt under the State CEQA Guidelines. According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, a project that would be located within an environmentally sensitive area, result in significant cumulative impacts, result in a significant effect on the environment, damage scenic resources within the viewshed of a state scenic highway, be located on a hazardous waste site compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5, or cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource would not qualify for an exemption under State CEQA Guidelines. The proposed project extends along Blackstone Avenue, between Shields Avenue to the north and McKinley Avenue to the south, which was developed as a commercial corridor during the first half of the twentieth century and expanded in the post-war era. In its current form, the properties along the segment of Blackstone Avenue within the project area reflect various property types and periods of construction. This area features commercial properties, including retail storefronts, offices, drive-thru restaurants, and a series of automobile-oriented buildings that date from the mid-century to the present-day, as well as other more unique properties, including the 1920s Ratcliffe Stadium. According to City documents, much of the subject alignment appears to have been previously surveyed as part of the 2012 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Historic Survey. As part of the survey, the following two historic resources were identified:

- **2813 North Blackstone Avenue** (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 443-184-20) is a two-story Mid-Century Modern commercial building located at the northwest corner of Blackstone and Princeton Avenues. The building was once the office of Robert W. Stevens, who was a prolific architect that operated in Fresno during the middle of the twentieth century. The building was documented in 2012 as part of the BRT Historic Survey and found to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), thus qualifying as a historical resource under CEQA.
- **2904 N. Blackstone Avenue** (APN 445-101-20) is a two-story Mid-Century Modern building located at the northeast corner of Blackstone and Michigan Avenues. Also known as the Mario Engineers Building, the building was designed by architect Robert W. Stevens. The building was documented in 2012

as part of the BRT Historic Survey and found to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, thus qualifying as a historical resource under CEQA.

Neither of the historic properties would require ROW acquisitions or temporary construction easements. In addition, proposed construction activities would be limited to the project site and would not extend into the identified historic properties in a manner that could result in any direct physical alterations to either historic property. The new project features are primarily small streetscape changes related to the adjacent sidewalks, curb cuts, and drainage inlets and the installation of new bike lanes. These changes would have no impact, visual or otherwise, on the overall setting of either historic property, and the project site would continue to retain its overall character as a commercial corridor that was primarily developed during the middle of the twentieth century. As such, the proposed project would have no impact on historical resources.

The project would not result in potentially significant environmental impacts associated with its location, cumulative impacts, scenic resources, hazardous waste sites, historical resources, energy demand, or otherwise have the potential to result in a significant effect that could constitute an exception to a Categorical Exemption pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2.

Date: April 11, 2023

Prepared by: 

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Senior Environmental Planner
SWCA Environmental Consultants
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Submitted by: 

Isaac Campos
Engineer II
City of Fresno
Public Works Department
(559) 621-8657

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR THE
BLACKSTONE SMART MOBILITY BETWEEN
MCKINLEY AVENUE AND SHIELDS AVENUE PROJECT,
FRESNO, FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Prepared for

City of Fresno Public Works Department
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721
Attn: Isaac Campos

Prepared by

SWCA Environmental Consultants
3426 Empresa Drive, Suite 100
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
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SWCA Project No. 73586-007

April 2024

INTRODUCTION

The City of Fresno’s (City) *Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Strategy Report* (2019) outlines the Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Strategy, which identifies the City’s short- and long-term vision for future multimodal transportation and streetscape improvements along the Blackstone Avenue/Abby Street Corridor to improve safety and comfort conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. The City is proposing the Blackstone Smart Mobility between McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue Project (project) to complete a segment of the planned multimodal transportation improvements identified in the City’s *Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Strategy Report*.

PROJECT LOCATION

The project site consists of a 1-mile segment of Blackstone Avenue between McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue in the city of Fresno, Fresno County, California (Figure 1).

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is located in an urbanized area and is surrounded by commercial, single-family residential, and public facility land uses. The project site consists entirely of previously developed areas containing existing roadways and frontages with some areas of ruderal vegetation and/or scattered landscaped trees.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes acquisition of right-of-way (ROW) and construction of a multimodal roadway improvement project along a 1-mile segment of Blackstone Avenue between McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue in the central portion of the city of Fresno.

The project would reduce the number of lanes along the northbound and southbound segment of Blackstone Avenue from three lanes to two lanes to allow for the installation of a protected Class IV bike lane in each direction. The Class IV bike lanes would be separated from the existing travel lanes with new marking and conflicting green zones. The project also includes installation of new curb ramps and sidewalks, median nose adjustments, construction of bus platforms for Bus Rapid Transit stations, relocation of one storm drain inlet, pavement reconstruction, slurry seal, traffic signal modifications, new signage, and striping.

Implementation of the project would require 5 ROW acquisitions for the construction of new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant curbs. The parcels proposed for ROW acquisitions are listed by Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) below and shown in Figure 2:

<u>Northbound side of Blackstone Avenue</u>	<u>Southbound side of Blackstone Avenue</u>
APN: 446-031-23	APN: 444-094-33
APN: 445-183-19	APN: 443-262-06
	APN: 443-102-20

The project would not require the demolition or removal of existing buildings or structures from parcels proposed for ROW acquisition.

The project would also require two temporary construction easements and three permanent pedestrian easements from the following parcels:

Northbound side of Blackstone Avenue

Temporary Construction Easements:

APN: 446-031-23

APN: 445-183-19

Permanent Pedestrian Easements:

APN: 446-031-23

APN: 445-183-20

APN: 445-183-18

Construction activities are anticipated to result in approximately 1.41 acres of ground disturbance, including 256 cubic yards of cut and fill. Construction of the proposed project is expected to occur over a 3-month period beginning in October 2024. The project is anticipated to require the installation of temporary pedestrian detours; however, proposed construction activities would occur in segments to avoid full roadway closures.

Blackstone Smart Mobility between McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue Project
Project Description

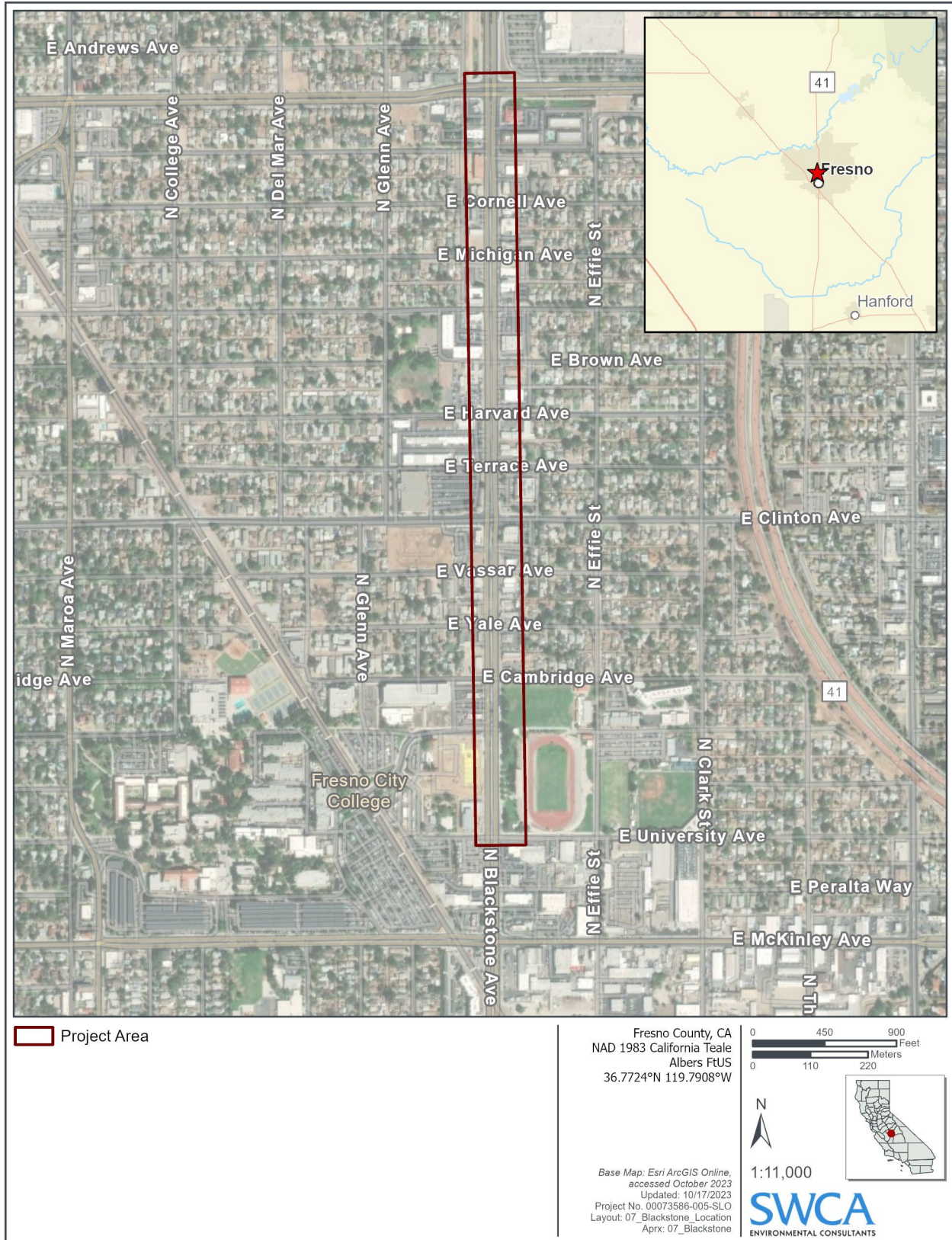


Figure 1. Project Location Map

Blackstone Smart Mobility between McKinley Avenue and Shields Avenue Project
Project Description



Figure 2. Proposed ROW Acquisition Map