To:

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County Clerk
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From:

San Diego Association of Governments [Lead Agency]
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San Diego, CA 92101
619-699-1900

Project Applicant: San Diego Association of Governments
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101
619-699-1900

Project Title: San Diego LOSSAN Rail Realignment (SDLRR) Project – Geotechnical and Geological Investigation

Project Location: Cities of San Diego and Del Mar, San Diego County

Description of Specific Location, Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) is evaluating the realignment of a segment of the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor from its existing location along the Del Mar Bluffs to a new location between, approximately, Solana Beach and Sorrento Valley Station. SANDAG is in the process of evaluating the feasibility of conceptual tunnel alignments and must undertake geotechnical analysis to inform preliminary project engineering. SANDAG proposes to undertake geotechnical borings and install monitoring wells in approximately 23 locations within the existing rail right of way and in the City of Del Mar, the City of San Diego, and the State of California (22nd Agricultural District and Caltrans right of way). The initial geotechnical and geological investigations are the subject of this notice of exemption. The geotechnical investigation would be conducted to obtain soil and rock properties along the potential rail alignment alternatives where data have not been previously collected. Geotechnical boring soils samples will be stored in 55-gallon drums and rock core samples will be stored in Conex boxes at an existing municipal storage facility. The work also includes a geological investigation to further characterize the potential of fault rupture hazard where a series of northeast trending faults transect the potential rail alignment alternatives.

Fieldwork is anticipated to take approximately four months and is planned to be performed between July and November 2024.

Geotechnical Investigation

The geotechnical borings include rotary drilling and rock coring and sampling, as well as on site field testing. The field testing would be performed in accordance with American Society for Testing Materials International standards. To inform subsurface hydrogeology, piezometers, which are wells that measure water table surface, would be installed. All borings will be backfilled upon completion of the on-site testing, except for 8 boreholes which would subsequently serve as monitoring wells.

Geological Investigation

The purpose of the geological investigation is to further characterize the potential for fault rupture. This includes additional subsurface investigation which would consist of approximately 2 mud rotary boring, 4 diamond core borings, 30 cone penetration test (CPT) soundings, and a geophysical study consisting of 3 seismic reflection lines.

The two mud rotary borings would extend to depths between approximately 50 to 400 feet below ground surface (bgs), unless impeded by auger refusal on gravel, cobble, or formational/bedrock materials. Additionally, the four diamond core borings would be performed to depths ranging between approximately 200 to 400 feet bgs with a truck-mounted drill rig within the Del Mar Heights area. Further, the 30 CPTs would be performed using a truck

mounted drill rig along the segment of Sorrento Valley Road that is closed to vehicular traffic to depths between 50 to 200 feet bgs, unless impeded by cone refusal on gravel, cobble, or formational/bedrock materials.

The seismic survey would record high-resolution seismic reflection and refraction tomography data to produce profiles to help evaluate the orientation of subsurface fault planes. The seismic reflection lines support the study of mapped northeast trending faults. One seismic reflection line would be positioned adjacent to the segment of Sorrento Valley Road that is closed to vehicular traffic and extend approximately 1,100 feet into the lagoon area. The remaining two seismic reflection lines located within Del Mar Heights would be set up along asphalt-paved parking lanes along Mar Scenic Drive and Recuerdo Drive and extend approximately 850 feet into the dirt trail in the State Park land. Additionally, geologic mapping would be performed at various locations along mapped northeast trending faults.

The CPT soundings and two mud rotary borings are located along the segment of Sorrento Valley Road that is closed to vehicular traffic. These locations can be accessed through the asphalt pavement at the end of Sorrento Valley Road and north of the investigation area. The four diamond core borings are located at Del Mar Heights and on Hidden Pines Drive, Mar Scenic Drive, and Recuerdo Drive. These exploration locations can be accessed via public streets located south of Del Mar Heights Road.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: San Diego Association of Governments

Name of Public Agency Carrying out Project: San Diego Association of Governments

Exempt Status:

☒ Statutory Exemptions: Public Resources Code, sections 21080(b)(1), 21102; California Code of Regulations, title 14 (CEQA Guidelines), section 15262

☒ Categorical Exemptions: CEQA Guidelines, sections, 15304(c), (f); 15306; 15303

CEQA does not apply to ministerial governmental approvals (Public Resources Code, section 21080(b)(1)) or feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions which the agency has not approved, adopted, or funded. Activities such as minor alterations to land, including but not limited to minor trenching and backfilling, filling of earth into excavated lands, data collection that does not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource, and the placement or construction or small structures or equipment are categorically exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15304 (c) and (f) (Class 4),15306 (Class 6), and 15303 (Class 3).

Reasons Why Exempt from CEQA

The activities described above involve ministerial approvals from local jurisdictions and the preparation of feasibility studies that are exempt from the CEQA statute. Additionally, the activities described above are categorically exempt from CEQA for the reasons set forth in the table below explains the reasons why the proposed activities are categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15304 (c) and (f),15306, and 15303.

CEQA Exemption	**Reasons Why Proposed Project Qualifies for Exemption**
CEQA Guidelines, Section 15304 (c) and (f)	
Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Examples include, but are not limited to: *(c) filling of earth into previously excavated land with material compatible with the natural features of the site;* *(f) minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored*	The activities qualify for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption from CEQA because the proposed project involves minor alterations in land where the surface would be restored and filled with material compatible with the natural features of the site. The activities involve geotechnical and geological investigations, which consist of mud rotary and diamond core borings. The proposed project qualifies for this exemption because all borings would be backfilled in accordance with the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health guidelines using a cement-bentonite slurry and the surface would be capped to match the existing ground surface.

CEQA Exemption	Reasons Why Proposed Project Qualifies for Exemption
CEQA Guidelines, Section 15306	
Class 6 exemption consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be strictly for information fathering purposes, or as part of a study leading an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.	The activities qualify for a Class 6 Categorial Exemption from CEQA because project activities include rotary drilling and rock coring, on-site field testing, and geotechnical laboratory testing which would not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.
CEQA Guidelines, 15303	
Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures.	To inform subsurface hydrogeology, piezometers, which are wells that measure water table surface, would be installed flush with the ground surface. The top well box would be 12 inches in diameter with a borehole diameter of 4 to 8 inches. The depth of the piezometers would be determined during drilling. This equipment qualifies for a Class 3 exemption because it would involve minor modifications to surface and subsurface conditions.

Responsible Agency Contact Person: Keith Greer **Area Code/Telephone:** 619-699-1900

Signature:  **Date:** May 31, 2024 **Title:** Chief Executive Officer

☒ Signed by Lead Agency