

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

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

From: (Public Agency) Caltrans Dist. 5
50 Higuera St
San Luis Obispo CA, 94301
(Address)

County Clerk
County of: San Luis Obispo

Project Title: State Route 1 at Highland Operational Improvements

Project Applicant: California Department of Transportation

Project Location—Specific:
Highland Ave and SR 1 intersection, Foothill Blvd. and SR 1 intersection in the City of San Luis Obispo.

Project Location—City: San Luis Obispo Project Location—County: San Luis Obispo

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:
Caltrans proposes improving the signals at Route 1 and Highland Drive intersection and advanced signal loops or cameras at Route 1 and Foothill Blvd. The project proposes replacing existing signals, electrical work, replacing advanced flashing beacon warning sign and guardrail and pavement markings.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Department of Transportation

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: California Department of Transportation

- 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: Class 1. (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
 - Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:
This project is exempt under Class 1 as it is only upgrading, repairing, and maintaining infrastructure.

Lead Agency _____ Area Code/Telephone/ _____
Contact Person: Laura Riccardelli Extension: (805)-319-0163

- 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: Laura Riccardelli Date: 7/31/24 Title: Environmental Scientist

Signed by:
 Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Date received for filing at OPR: 7/31/24
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.



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

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): State Route 1 at Highland Operational Improvements

DIST-CO-RTE: 5-SLO-001

PM/PM: 17.3, 17.8, 18.0

EA: 05-1R440

Federal-Aid Project Number: 0523000294

Project Description

Caltrans proposes improving the signals at Route 1 and Highland Drive intersection and advanced signal loops or cameras at Route 1 and Foothill Blvd. The project proposes replacing existing signals, electrical work, replacing advanced flashing beacon warning sign and guardrail, pavement markings, and signage to upgrade and enhance the safety and operations of the intersections. No Right of Way will be acquired as a part of this project. Temporary traffic control will be incorporated into construction during periods of the project construction period.

Purpose: Improve safety and operational utility at the intersection of Highland Dr and Foothill Blvd. with State Route 1.

Need: The intersections at Highland Dr and Foothill Blvd. on State Route 1 have outdated signalization, guardrails, pavement markings, and signage that should be replaced.

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 1.** (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].)



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM**

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Signature	Date



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM**

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)(8)

23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)

Activity 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

Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Print Name	Signature	Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): 2/23/24

Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 2/23/24



CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION FORM

Environmental Commitments:

Visual

With implementation of the following minimization measures, the project would be consistent with the aesthetic and visual resource protection goals along Route 1 and potential visual impacts would be reduced:

1. Preserve as much existing vegetation as possible. Prescriptive clearing and grubbing and grading techniques which save the most existing vegetation possible should be employed. No tree removal shall occur.
2. If sidewalk features such as curb extensions or bulb-outs and pedestrian refuge islands are included in the project, the aesthetic treatment shall be determined and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture.
3. If pedestrian-scale lighting fixtures such as lighted bollards are included, the fixtures shall be determined and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture.
4. Community involvement is anticipated in the development of the design and aesthetic treatments, to be further developed and approved by District 5 Landscape Architecture in conjunction with Engineering Design.
5. The existing Gateway Monument shall not be modified or changed in any way, including its visibility from Route 1.
6. Following construction, re-grade and re-contour all new construction staging areas and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding pre-project topography.

Biology

1. If vegetation removal is required and conducted during nesting bird season (February 1 - September 30), before any vegetation is removed, a qualified biologist will conduct a focused nest survey for active migratory bird nests in the vegetation to be removed. If an active bird nest is found, an appropriate buffer based on the habits and needs of the species will be established. The nest area would be avoided until the nest is vacated and the juveniles have fledged and are no longer dependent on the nesting area.
2. Staging areas, equipment, and material storage will be located in paved areas, gravel shoulders, existing pullouts, or level areas where grading and vegetation clearing are not required. Before construction takes place, all work staging areas that are not located in existing pullouts or on previously disturbed ground surfaces must be evaluated by Caltrans Environmental for any potential environmental impacts.

Green House Gas

The following measures will be implemented in the project to reduce construction related GHG emissions and potential climate change impacts from the project.



CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION FORM

1. Where feasible, schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours. Traffic operations shall specify this in the lane closure charts.
2. Where feasible, use alternative fuels such as renewable diesel for construction equipment. If use of alternative fuels is not possible, substitute gasoline-powered equipment for diesel-powered equipment. Comply with *Section 3-517-Equipment*, of the Construction Manual.
3. Where feasible, use solar-powered construction equipment.
4. Supplement existing construction environmental training with information on methods to reduce GHG emissions related to construction. This information will be shared using a handout. The information in the handout should include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Limit idling to five minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment not in active operation.
 - b. Reduce construction waste. For example, reuse or recycle construction and demolition waste. Maximize use of recycled materials in the project construction to the extent feasible. See standard spec *Section 14-10-Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling*.
 - c. Use on-road heavy-duty trucks that meet the CARB's 2007 or cleaner certification standard for on-road heavy-duty diesel engines, and comply with the State On-Road Regulation. See standard spec *Section 7-1.02C-Emissions Reduction* and comply with Construction Manual *Section 7-1.04A (1)- Air Quality*.
5. If any of the signs to be replaced are currently illuminated by lighting, use new sign panels made with ultra-reflective sign materials that are illuminated by headlights to reduce energy used by electric lighting where feasible.