Print Form

2020030465

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: Santa Clara County

From: (Public Agency): Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority
300 Lakeside Drive, 14th Floor East
Oakland CA 94612
(Address)

Project Title: Santa Clara Siding Project

Project Applicant: Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority

Project Location - Specific:

Union Pacific Railroad Tracks between Agnew Road and Tasman Blvd.

Project Location - City: Santa Clara Project Location - County: Santa Clara

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

Construct one additional track (the "Siding") approximately 2,600 feet long to allow trains to meet and pass at the project location.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Union Pacific Railroad

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: 15303
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

The proposed project involves the construction of a new siding track along the existing railroad track. Construction activities would be conducted within the existing railroad ROW. The proposed project would not change the operational characteristics of freight and passenger rail traffic within the railroad corridor. No change in the population or land uses would occur as a result of this project.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Joel Cox Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 510-874-7493

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: March 11, 2020 Title: Engineering Officer

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

MAR 16 2020

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

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:

Revised 2011

Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority Santa Clara Siding Project
Notice of Exemption (NOE)

The Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA), as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), proposes the installation of siding track to the existing railroad corridor (proposed project).

Project Location:

The proposed project would be located within the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) corridor along Lafayette Street between Tasman Drive and Agnew Road in Santa Clara County. The proposed project would occur within the existing right-of-way (ROW).

Existing Conditions:

The existing railroad track is located adjacent to a developed residential neighborhood. Surrounding land uses are primarily single-family residential development. In addition, Santa Clara Youth Soccer Park and Levi's Stadium are located to the west of the project site.

Description of Project:

The proposed project would include the installation of a siding track to the west of the existing mainline track. The existing mainline track would be shifted approximately five feet to the east. Both the proposed siding and shifted mainline track would remain within the existing railroad ROW.

The proposed project would increase scheduling flexibility for existing freight and passenger rail traffic and would not increase the number of train operations. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in an increase in population; nor will the project result in an increase of employees at the project site. The new track would serve the existing freight and passenger rail traffic and would not encourage additional vehicles. In addition, there would be no off-site circulation or traffic changes and construction activities would take place within the existing ROW.

Applicability of Exempt Status:

The proposed activity is a project subject to CEQA. However, the proposed project is Categorically Exempt under CEQA Guidelines §15303 – New Construction of Conversion of Small Structures. The proposed project is considered categorically exempt because of the following considerations:

<u>New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (Class 3)</u>
The Class 3 exemption includes construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure (CEQA Guidelines §15303).

The proposed project involves the construction of a new siding track along the existing railroad track. Construction activities would be conducted within the existing railroad ROW. The proposed project would not change the operational characteristics of freight and passenger rail traffic within the railroad corridor. No change in the population or land uses would occur as a result of this project.

Reasons Why the Project Is Exempt:

The following summarizes the determination that the proposed project does not have the potential to trigger any of the exceptions identified in State CEQA Guidelines §15300.2 prohibiting the use of a categorical exemption.

a. **Location.** The proposed project would be developed within the existing railroad ROW in an urbanized community. As such, all areas within the project site are either paved or disturbed, and therefore are not environmentally sensitive. Surrounding land uses consist of residential and recreational uses.

However, the proposed project would not extend into any offsite areas. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

b. **Cumulative Impact.** There are no known future projects within the project area that when combined with the proposed project would result in a cumulatively considerable effect on the environment. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the project.

c. **Significant Effect.** There is no reasonable possibility that the proposed activity would have a significant effect on the environment as a result of unusual circumstances. The proposed project would increase schedule flexibility for existing freight and passenger rail operations but would not increase the number of freight or passenger rail trains.

   Construction of the proposed project would not require the removal of any healthy, mature, or scenic trees. The proposed project would not require substantial land alterations. Best management practices would be employed during construction to minimize the potential for erosion. Stationary and mobile air pollutant emissions generated from construction activities would be *de minimus*.

d. **Scenic Highways.** The City of Santa Clara is served by four freeways including U.S 101, SR 237, InterState 880, and InterState 280, none of which are designated State Scenic Highways. The proposed project would not result in the construction of new facilities that would directly or indirectly affect an officially designated scenic highway or scenic resources near a scenic highway. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the project.

e. **Hazardous Waste Sites.** A search of the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker website and the Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor website was conducted on January 2, 2020. Although the project site is located near sites that are on lists compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5, these sites are not anticipated to cause a significant hazard to the public or the environment because they are closed or not significant. The proposed project would be constructed on previously disturbed areas within the ROW of the existing railroad tracks. The hazardous materials sites identified are listed as closed or no further action, and construction would be in compliance with applicable regulations, therefore the proposed project would not result in a significant impact related to hazardous materials.

f. **Historical Resources.** There are no known historic, archaeological, or paleontological resources within the project site. In addition, the project site has been significantly disturbed by grading activities associated with development of the site over time. Limited soil disturbance is anticipated, and the envelope within which construction activities would occur is expected to occur within previously disturbed soil. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines, and this exception does not apply to the project.

References

City of Santa Clara. *General Plan*. Available at: https://www.santaclaraca.gov/home/showdocument?id=57824. Accessed on January 2, 2020.

EnviroStor. 2020. *Sites and Facilities*. Available at https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?myaddress=lafayette+street+santa+clara. Accessed on January 2, 2020.

Geotracker. 2020. *Sites and Facilities*. Available at https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=T0608500866. Accessed January 2, 2020.

Noise and Vibration Analysis Memorandum

To:	Adam Halls, Railpros
From:	Jason Volk, Principal Noise Analyst
Date:	February 11, 2020
Re:	**Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority Santa Clara Siding Project Noise and Vibration Analysis Memorandum**

Summary

This analysis examines potential noise and vibration effects of a proposed new section of rail siding between Tasman Drive and Agnew Road in Santa Clara, California. The siding would be located within the right of way parallel to the existing rail mainline, and the existing rail mainline would be shifted slightly eastward.

No noise or vibration impacts are expected to occur for operation of the proposed siding, based on FTA criteria. This memo contains a brief analysis of noise and vibration from operation of trains on the new siding.

Noise from Train Operations

A noise and vibration assessment was conducted in accordance with guidelines provided in the FTA Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual (FTA Manual) (FTA 2018). The FTA Manual specifies that criteria are to be applied to compare future project noise with existing noise, rather than future project noise with projections of future "no-build" noise exposure. A general assessment level of analysis as defined by FTA was conducted to calculate project noise and vibration levels under the build alternative. Project noise contributions from rail vehicles were calculated using the noise source levels for at-grade rail transit vehicles operating on welded rail as outlined in the FTA Manual. Calculated project noise levels were then compared with the "moderate impact" and "severe impact" criteria according to existing ambient levels at a given receptor location.

For assessing noise from transit operations, FTA defines three land use categories.

- Category 1: Tracts of land where quiet is an essential element of their intended purpose, such as outdoor amphitheaters, concert pavilions, and national historic landmarks with significant outdoor use.
- Category 2: Residences and buildings where people normally sleep, including homes, hospitals, and hotels.
- Category 3: Institutional land uses (e.g., schools, places of worship, libraries) that are typically available during daytime and evening hours. Other uses in this category can include medical offices, conference rooms, recording studios, concert halls, cemeteries, monuments, museums, historical sites, parks, and recreational facilities.

Worst-case noise level calculations for train operations are shown in Table 1. Since train traffic under the future project would be the same as existing conditions, the analysis focuses on changes in the cumulative noise level resulting from a slight shift in the location of the track to the east, further away from noise-sensitive receptors, which would correspondingly shift noise generated from rail traffic further away from these receptors.

The project would add two switches for diverging train movements onto the new siding. One switch would be located adjacent to the intersection of Second Street and Bassett Street near apartment homes along the frontages of Bassett Street and Lafayette Street. The other switch would be located near the intersection of Calle de Primavera and Lafayette Street, near an apartment complex and Levi's Stadium. The new switches would potentially result in an increase in levels of noise due to wheels crossing gaps in the switch rail surface. As a wheel passes through the gap, a pounding noise is produced, and impulsive vibration propagates through the ground as the wheel impacts against the rail surface. Due to the design of the siding, this pounding noise is only expected to occur for trains making diverging movements into the siding. A spring frog may be used, which would reduce noise levels from pounding at the switches. In addition, trains are expected to travel at reduced speeds through switches (below 30 mph) and would use the siding only on an as-needed basis, such as when trains are running late (Buzz Berger pers. comm. 2020). The effects of noise from new switches that would be installed at each end of the siding is not expected to substantially affect Ldn values, as use of the siding is expected to be infrequent.

As indicated in Table 1, existing noise levels at receptors have a range of values from 65.6 to 76.3 Ldn for Category 2 receptors, and 70.9 for one Category 3 receptor. The levels shown account for wayside noise, combining noise levels from locomotives and cars, as well as horn noise where indicated in the table. Noise exposure from double-tracking of the project would result in an increase of 0.1 dB or less in terms of Ldn at Category 2 land uses along the alignment, and no change in terms of Leq at a Category 3 land use. The project changes would result in no impact under FTA noise thresholds for all sensitive receptors in the project area.

Table 1. Noise Impact Assessment for Category 2 and 3 Land Uses

Receptor Name	Land Use Category	Description/Notes	Location	Existing Ambient Level	Future Noise Level with Project	L_{dn} or L_{eq}	Change, Future vs. Existing	Impact Category
R3	2 - Nighttime Use	SFAH - 115'	Plaza Escuela	71.1	71.1	L_{dn}	0.0	No Impact
R4	3 - Institutional Use	Levi's Stadium field - 120'	Athletic field	70.9	70.9	L_{eq}	0.0	No Impact
R5	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 135'	Avenida De Las Flores	70.3	70.2	L_{dn}	-0.1	No Impact
R6	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 120'	Fairway Glen Drive	70.8	70.6	L_{dn}	-0.2	No Impact
R7	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 100'	Gianera Street	65.6	65.6	L_{dn}	0.0	No Impact
R8	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 110'	Payne Place	71.2	71.0	L_{dn}	-0.2	No Impact
R9	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 110'	Eisenhower Drive/Lafayette Street	71.2	71.1	L_{dn}	-0.1	No Impact
R10	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 75'	Third Street	66.8	66.9	L_{dn}	0.1	No Impact
R11	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 130'	Bongiovanni Place [a]	76.3	76.2	L_{dn}	-0.1	No Impact
R12	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 140'	Agnew Street/Lafayette Street [a]	75.9	75.9	L_{dn}	0.0	No Impact
R13	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 85'	Second Street/Bassett Street [a]	74.9	74.9	L_{dn}	0.0	No Impact

[a] This receptor is located within 1/4 mile of a grade crossing where horns are sounded. The effects of horn noise are included in the future calculations for this site.
SFAH = Single Family Apartment Homes
SFH = Single Family Home
MFH = Multi-Family Homes

Vibration from Train Operations

As with rail noise, the potential for vibration impacts from train operations was determined by evaluating the shift in the track location, and therefore the proximity of vibration-generating rail traffic with respect to receptor locations. If train traffic in the new track location would exceed the vibration criteria for "occasional events" or increase vibration levels by 3 VdB or more, this would result in an impact. In general, the future double-tracking would be within approximately 10 to 15 feet of the existing track in locations that include sensitive land uses.

As discussed above for noise, the project would add two switches for diverging train movements onto the new siding. The new switches would potentially result in an increase in levels of vibration due to wheels crossing gaps in the switch rail surface. Due to the design of the siding, this pounding vibration is only expected to occur for trains making diverging movements into the siding. A spring frog may be used, which would reduce vibration levels from pounding at the switches. In addition, trains are expected to travel at reduced speeds through switches (below 30 mph), and would use the siding only on an as-needed basis, such as when trains are running late (Buzz Berger pers. comm. 2020).

Vibration level calculations for operation of the new siding are shown in Table 2. As indicated in Table 2, vibration levels are expected to increase by less than 3 VdB relative to existing conditions. In contrast to noise, the values here are presented in terms of instantaneous vibration levels, rather than a 24-hour average day-night level (Ldn). An increase of this magnitude in would result in no impact under FTA vibration thresholds for all sensitive receptors in the project area. Further, vibration from diverging movements through switches is anticipated to be infrequent.

Table 2. Vibration Impact Assessment for Category 2 and 3 Land Uses

Receptor Name	Land Use Category	Description/Notes	Location	Existing Vibration Level (VdB)	Future Vibration Level with Project (VdB)	Change, Future vs. Existing	Impact Category
R3	2 - Nighttime Use	SFAH - 115'	Plaza Escuela	76.0	78.6	2.6 [2]	No Impact
R4	3 - Institutional Use	Levi's Stadium field - 120'	Athletic field [1]	73.4	76.0	2.6 [2]	No Impact
R5	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 135'	Avenida De Las Flores	75.2	75.2	0.0	No Impact
R6	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 120'	Fairway Glen Drive	76.4	76.4	0.0	No Impact
R7	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 100'	Gianera Street	78.0	78.0	0.0	No Impact
R8	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 110'	Payne Place	77.2	77.2	0.0	No Impact
R9	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 110'	Eisenhower Drive/Lafayette Street	77.2	77.2	0.0	No Impact
R10	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 75'	Third Street	81.0	81.0	0.0	No Impact
R11	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 130'	Bongiovanni Place [a]	75.6	75.6	0.0	No Impact
R12	2 - Nighttime Use	MFH - 140'	Agnew Street/Lafayette Street [a]	74.8	77.4	2.6 [2]	No Impact
R13	2 - Nighttime Use	SFH - 85'	Second Street/Bassett Street [a]	80.0	82.6	2.6 [2]	No Impact

Notes:
SFAH = Single Family Apartment Homes
SFH = Single Family Home
MFH = Multi-Family Homes
[1] Outdoor use is not considered vibration sensitive.
[2] Location is near a proposed switch. Assumes a spring frog would be used, reducing vibration levels from diverging train movements by at least 3 VdB, and that trains would reduce speed to enter/exit the siding.

References

Buzz Berger pers comm. Email dated 1/7/2020

Federal Transit Administration. 2018. Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual. September. U.S. Department of Transportation. Available: https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/research-innovation/118131/transit-noise-and-vibration-impact-assessment-manual-fta-report-no-0123_0.pdf Accessed: March 12, 2019.