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GoNCTD.com

October 11, 2024

Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95814
Sent Via CEQAnet

County Clerk of San Diego
County Administration Center c/o Recorder/Clerk
1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 260
San Diego, CA 92101
Sent Via USPS

Re: NOTICE OF EXEMPTION (NOE) for the Escondido Subdivision SPRINTER
Signal Modernization Project

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed with this e-mail please find the Notice of Exemption (NOE) for the North County Transit District's (District) Escondido Subdivision SPRINTER Signal Modernization Project for posting on the applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) public notification webpages on your respective websites.

Should you have any questions regarding the enclosed, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail to ldoherty@nctd.org or by phone to 760-967-2803.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lillian Doherty', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lillian Doherty
Director of Planning and Development

Attachment(s)

- (1) NOE – Escondido Subdivision SPRINTER Signal Modernization
- (2) NOE – Attachment A
- (3) NOE – Attachment B

cc: Tracey Foster, Chief Development Officer, NCTD
Misty Calder, Deputy General Counsel, NCTD

ATTACHMENT B

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND	
Project Title:	SPRINTER Signal Modernization
Project Location:	The Escondido Subdivision is a 22-mile (35 km) branch railway line between Oceanside, California and Escondido, California, in the North County region of San Diego County.
Project Manager's name and address:	Zachary Taylor, Signal Manager 810 Mission Ave. Oceanside, CA 92054
Is project funded by state or local money?	Multiple funding sources: Federal, State and Local
Federally Funded?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Description of project: (Describe the whole action involved, including but not limited to later phases of the project, and any mitigation required)	Existing signal equipment is deemed to be "obsolete" by the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM). NCTD plans on replacing all obsolete equipment on the Escondido Subdivision from MP 99.3 through MP 121.7 with current generation wayside and crossing controllers. This replacement will generally take the form of removing and replacing existing signal enclosures (typically 6'x8') with new enclosures of similar dimension comprised of new equipment. NCTD will use standards set forth in NCTD's Engineering Standard Drawings and the San Diego Regional Standard Drawings, related to trenching activities for conduit, which calls for a 3' minimum cover for most cables and shallower burial at and around track connection points. NCTD intends to reuse a large majority of the existing underground cable as it has been deemed to have significant life remaining. Some locations are not yet fiber connected, which will require the installation of new subsurface enclosures to add fiber connectivity at all locations.
Surrounding land uses and setting; briefly describe the project's surroundings:	The Escondido subdivision is located in a suburban, developed environment in North San Diego County that has been previously disturbed as part of the initial construction of the rail line. Vegetation is present in surrounding areas as well as such waterways as the Loma Alta Creek. However, all work would be completed outside of vegetated areas and waterways. Work would also occur on previously excavated areas. Minor trenching may be necessary to replace/repair existing conduits.
Other public agencies whose approval is required (e.g. permits)	Coordination with the Federal Transportation Administration, NEPA lead, was initiated in February 2024 and is ongoing. Final determination regarding application of a categorical exclusion will be made concurrent with funding application.

Check the boxes that may apply regarding Potential CEQA exemption:

Is the project covered under any of the following Statutory CEQA Exemptions?	Yes	No	N/A	Notes
1) Emergency Projects: Is the project to maintain, repair, restore, demolish, or replace property damaged or destroyed as a result of a natural disaster in an area proclaimed by the Governor pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act?		X		
2) Emergency Repair: to publicly or privately-owned service facilities necessary to maintain service essential to public health, safety, and welfare?		X		

3) Emergency Repair: Specific action necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency? This exemption does not include long-term projects undertaken for the purpose of preventing or mitigating a situation that has low probability of occurrence in the short-term.		X		
4) Pipeline: Does the project involve installation of a pipeline less than 1-mile long for maintenance, repair, restoration, or removal of existing pipeline?		X		
Is the project covered under any of the following Categorical CEQA Exemptions?				
5) Existing Facilities: Is the project for operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structure, facility, or mechanical equipment involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond existing use?	X			The project will involve repairs to existing infrastructure where feasible. Due to age and normal wear and tear, repairs to existing conduits or physical structures are needed to ensure continued operability of the signal system and provide for the updating of signal equipment to more modern technology and infrastructure.
6) Replacement or Reconstruction: Is the project for the replacement and reconstruction of existing structures or facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity?	X			Signal infrastructure is reaching the point of obsolescence. Replacement equipment is no longer commercially available. New equipment will need to be installed. To accommodate this equipment, signal houses may be reconstructed in immediately adjacent pads with the new equipment installed to ensure continued operations throughout the reconstruction period. New fiber cables, wires and conduits will replace existing wiring infrastructure within the existing footprint of the signal system. All work would occur in the rail Right-of-Way in areas that are currently denuded and frequently traversed.
7) New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures: Is the project for construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures, or conversion of small structures for one use to another where only minor modifications are required to the exterior?		X		
8) Minor Alteration of Land: Does the project involve minor alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees? This exemption includes minor trenching and backfilling and grading of less than 10-percent grade.		X		

9) Information Collection: Is the project for basic data collection, research, experimental management and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource?		X		
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The following conditions may be subject to **Exceptions** to the above referenced Categorical and Statutory Exemptions.

7) Sensitive Environment: Is the project located in a sensitive environment that would impact an environmental resource designated as threatened or endangered pursuant to federal, state, or local law?		X		
8) Cumulative Impact: Will the project result in a cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same location over time?		X		
9) Significant Effect: Will the project have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances?		X		
10) Scenic Highway: Will the project result in damage to scenic resources within a highway designated as a "scenic highway"?		X		
11) Hazardous Waste: Is the project a new construction project located on a site which is considered a hazardous waste site?		X		
12) Historical Resources: Will the project result in substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource?		X		
13) Does NCTD have any cause to believe that the project will raise concerns among stakeholders, members of the public or the broader San Diego Community?		X		

Project Manager Signature: _____

Date: _____

9/19/24

Director of Planning and Development Signature: _____

Date: 09/19/2024

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: San Diego

County Administration Center c/o Recorder/Clerk

1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 260 San Diego, CA 92101

From: (Public Agency): North County Transit District
810 Mission Ave.

Oceanside, CA 92054

(Address)

Project Title: Escondido Subdivision SPRINTER Signal Modernization

Project Applicant: North County Transit District

Project Location - Specific:

22-mile (35 km) railway line between Oceanside, California and Escondido, California.

Project Location - City: Escondido, San Marcos, Oceanside, Vista Project Location - County: San Diego

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

See Attachment A - " Project Description and Benefits"

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: North County Transit District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: North County Transit District

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: C.C.R. Title 14 §15301 & §15302
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

See Attachment B_ CEQA Checklist

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Lillian Doherty Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 760-967-2803

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: 9/25/24 Title: Chief Development Officer

■ 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: _____

MEMO

810 Mission Avenue
Oceanside, CA 92054
GoNCTD.com

**Attachment A - SPRINTER Signal Modernization
Project Description and Benefits**

I. Project Description

The Escondido Subdivision is a 22-mile (35 km) branch railway line between Oceanside, California and Escondido, California, in the North County region of San Diego County. It is primarily used today by the SPRINTER "hybrid rail" and local freight trains serving Escondido industries. The line utilizes temporal separation to operate either the NCTD SPRINTER passenger fleet of Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) or operate freight traffic serviced by BNSF Railway. Dual-control power-operated Derails are utilized to isolate the alignment from the operation of either the passenger or freight equipment while the other service is in use. The Escondido Subdivision does not currently utilize Positive Train Control (PTC).

Wayside signal devices are currently controlled by Alstom Vital Processor Interlocking (VPI) devices. All crossings on the Escondido Subdivision currently utilize Alstom Harmon Crossing Processor (HXP-3) devices for predictive train approach warning. Both types of equipment are deemed to be "obsolete" by the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM).

NCTD plans on replacing all obsolete equipment (VPI, HXP-3, and Grade Crossing Processor (GCP3000)) on the Escondido Subdivision from MP 99.3 through MP 121.7 with current generation wayside and crossing controllers as detailed in Figure 1-1. This replacement will generally take the form of removing and replacing existing signal enclosures (typically 6'x8') with new enclosures of similar dimension comprised of new equipment. NCTD will use standards set forth in NCTD's Engineering Standard Drawings and the San Diego Regional Standard Drawings, related to trenching activities for conduit, which calls for a 3' minimum cover for most cables and shallower burial at and around track connection points. NCTD intends to reuse a large majority of the existing underground cable as it has been deemed to have significant life remaining and will reduce the cost of the project significantly. Some locations are not yet fiber connected, which will require the installation of new subsurface enclosures to add fiber connectivity at all locations. Due to the nature of the work, there would be a need for disruption to SPRINTER and freight services for cutover activities. These cutovers would likely take place over planned Absolute Work Window (AWW) outages. The length of each AWW would range from eight hours to 48 hours depending on the complexity of the planned cutover.

NCTD will not implement PTC immediately on the Escondido Subdivision, but the project will be designed and constructed to provide Wayside Interface Units (WIU) for future PTC implementation.

II. Project Benefits

Replacing obsolete components to bring the signal system to a state of good repair will enhance safety, reliability, and maintainability of the rail corridor. System upgrades will support seamless integration with newly installed fiber optic cabling, which will mitigate risk of communication failures. Upgrades will also provide PTC compatibility that can be used strategically or system-wide, enhancing safety of the system. Reconfigured installations will enhance operations and facilitate maintenance.

Figure 1-1 Escondido Subdivision Signals Inventory

Milepost	Location Name	City
99.50	CP Ocean	Oceanside
99.70	Wisconsin Ave	Oceanside
100.10	Oceanside Boulevard	Oceanside
100.30	Coast Highway & CP Wye	Oceanside
100.90	Parkwood Lane	Oceanside
101.10	Commerce Street	Oceanside
101.20	State Tree Drive & Intermediate	Oceanside
101.50	Crouch Station PED	Oceanside
101.60	Crouch Street	Oceanside
102.00	Intermediate - 102 Signal	Oceanside
102.60	CP True	Oceanside
102.82	El Camino West PED	Oceanside
102.82	El Camino East PED	Oceanside
102.90	El Camino Real & EC Eastbound Hold Signals	Oceanside
103.00	Relay Case	Oceanside
103.20	Intermediate - 103 Signals (WB)	Oceanside
103.60	Evergreen Nursery	Oceanside
103.70	Intermediate - 103 Signals (EB)	Oceanside
104.10	Rancho Del Oro PED	Oceanside
104.10	Rancho Del Oro & Intermediate - 104 Signals	Oceanside
105.10	Intermediate - 105 Signals (EB)	Oceanside
105.40	College Blvd West PED - 105 Signals (WB)	Oceanside
105.50	College Blvd East PED	Oceanside
105.60	CP School & College Boulevard	Oceanside
105.90	CP School	Oceanside
106.40	Intermediate - 106 Signals	Oceanside
106.90	Temple Heights Drive	Oceanside
107.20	Intermediate - 107 Signals	Oceanside
107.50	Melrose Drive & MA Eastbound Hold Signal	Vista
108.00	North Ave & CP Angel	Vista
108.20	West Los Angeles Drive & AN Westbound Hold Signals	Vista
108.50	Intermediate - 108 Signals (EB)	Vista
108.80	Intermediate - 108 Signals	Vista
109.10	Vista Transit Center West PED & Intermediate - 109 Signals (WB)	Vista
109.20	Vista Transit Center East PED & VI Eastbound Hold Signals	Vista
109.20	Vista Village	Vista
109.30	Main Street (AUX house)	Vista
109.35	Main Street	Vista

Milepost	Location Name	City
109.60	Guajome Street	Vista
110.10	Civic Center Drive & EA Westbound Hold Signals & 110 Signals (EB)	Vista
110.20	Civic Center PED	Vista
110.80	Intermediate - 110 Signals	Vista
111.20	Mar Vista Dr	Vista
111.40	CP Avenue	Unincorporated
111.95	South Santa Fe Ave (West House)	Unincorporated
112.00	South Santa Fe Ave (East House)	Unincorporated
112.40	Buena Creek Road & WB Hold Signal & Intermediate - 112 Signal (EB)	Unincorporated
112.40	Buena Creek PED	Unincorporated
112.80	Estrelita Dr. & Intermediate - 112 Signal (WB)	Unincorporated
113.70	Intermediate - 113 Signals	San Marcos
114.50	Mission Rd. & MS Eastbound Hold Signal	San Marcos
114.60	CP Missy	San Marcos
114.75	Relay Case 11475 (Las Posas Road)	San Marcos
114.80	Las Posas & CP Missy	San Marcos
114.90	Electric Lock WL1149	San Marcos
114.95	Palomar College West PED	San Marcos
115.10	Palomar College East PED & PC EB Hold Signals	San Marcos
115.30	Intermediate - 115 Signals (WB)	San Marcos
115.70	Knoll Road	San Marcos
115.90	Marcos Street PED	San Marcos
116.10	Pico Ave & Intermediate - 115 Signals (EB)	San Marcos
116.40	San Marcos Civic Center Station PED West & WB Hold Signals	San Marcos
116.50	San Marcos Boulevard & CP Loop West	San Marcos
116.60	CP Loop West	San Marcos
117.30	CSUSM PED & Intermediate - 117 Signals	San Marcos
117.70	CP Shelly	San Marcos
118.40	CP Loop East	San Marcos
118.80	Rancheros Drive & Intermediate - 118 Signals	San Marcos
119.20	Barham Drive & ND Westbound Hold Signal & Nordahl West PED	San Marcos
119.20	Nordahl West PED - DOT Only	Escondido
119.24	Nordahl East PED - DOT Only	Escondido
119.30	Auto Parkway & ND Eastbound Hold Signal & Nordahl East PED	Escondido
119.60	Intermediate - 119 Signal Westbound	Escondido
119.90	Enterprise Avenue	Escondido

Milepost	Location Name	City
120.20	Electric Lock WL1203	Escondido
120.40	Andreason Drive & CP Holdout	Escondido
120.60	J&W Redwood	Escondido
120.70	Electric Locks WL1205, DR105, WL1207, DR1207	Escondido
120.80	Hale Avenue	Escondido
121.10	CP Yard West	Escondido
121.20	CP Yard East & Escondido Creek Bike	Escondido
121.25	Escondido Transit Center PED	Escondido
121.30	CP Thomas & Valley Parkway	Escondido
121.40	Grand Avenue	Escondido
B116.7	Bike Trail 1 PED	San Marcos
B117.4	Bike Trail 2 PED & Electric Locks WL1173 and DR 1173	San Marcos
B117.6	Bike Trail 3 PED	San Marcos
B117.7	Woodland Parkway (Remote @ CP Loop East 118.40)	San Marcos