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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: COUNTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
105 E. ANAPAMU STREET
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93101

FROM: CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PLANNING DIVISION
P.O. Box 1990
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93102-1990

Project Title: Cliff Drive Vision Zero Project

Project Applicant: City of Santa Barbara

MST Number: PLN2025-00297

Assessor's Parcel Number: N/A

Land Use Zone: P-R, RS-7.5, R-2, R-3, R-MH, R-4, C-P, C-R, R-O, C-G, and C-2.

Projection Location (Specific): Cliff Drive from Arroyo Burro County Beach Park to Castillo Street.

Project Location: City of Santa Barbara

Project Description:

The Cliff Drive Vision Zero Project (Project) is a safety project on Cliff Drive from the Arroyo Burro Beach County Park to Castillo Street. Construction of a 3.1-mile-long path, 14 new crosswalks, safety enhancements at 4 existing crosswalks, curb extensions, lighting, pedestrian activated rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs), pedestrian refuge islands, 4 new traffic signals, and new bicycle parking. The Project is located in the Coastal Zone and within the public right-of-way (ROW), with the exception of approximately 560 combined linear feet (LF) of the path located on Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) property (West Campus: 185 LF. East Campus: 375 LF). The Project will address community needs to improve safety by transforming this high-speed urban highway (formerly State Route 225) into a neighborhood-serving street by providing safe, high-quality pedestrian and bike facilities to improve mobility and connectivity to schools, parks, neighborhood services, employment, and retail. The Project is part of the 30-mile long regional Coastal Bike Route (Ventura to University of California Santa Barbara).

New traffic signal locations with high visibility crosswalks: Intersection of Cliff Drive and Camino Calma; Mid-block between Camino Calma and Meigs Road (within the commercial corridor); the SBCC West Campus entrance; and the SBCC East Campus entrance.

New high visibility crosswalks and safety enhancements: Mesa Lane; Fellowship Road; Oliver Road; Camino Calma; Mid-block between Camino Calma and Meigs Road (within the commercial corridor); Salida Del Sol;

Santa Cruz Boulevard; Terrace Road / San Rafael Avenue; La Marina Drive; Oceano Drive; SBCC West Campus; SBCC East Campus; and Rancheria Street.

There are 322 existing street trees, comprised of 62 native and 260 non-native trees within the Project corridor. Of the 322 existing street trees within the Project corridor, a total of 23 non-native trees within the public ROW are proposed to be removed. It is a Project goal to design around and retain as many of the existing street trees as feasible within the Project corridor. The trees proposed for removal conflict with the proposed new path and sidewalk. 70 new street trees will be planted. The City Parks and Recreation Commission approved the proposed tree removals, planting 70 (minimum) new street trees, and approved a street tree master plan species designation list recommending eleven tree species for the Project corridor.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Santa Barbara
Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: City of Santa Barbara
Lead Agency Contact: Kaitlin Mamulski Telephone: (805) 897-2685

Exempt Status: Exempt under CEQA Section § 15301 (c)

Reason Why Project is Exempt:

CEQA Categorical Exemption 15301 Existing Facilities. This Project meets § 15301 (c) Existing Facilities categorical exemption which covers the operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing facilities involving no or negligible expansion of existing or former use. This Project meets the criteria of subdivisions (c) as the separated-bike paths, new and enhanced crosswalks, widened sidewalks, new traffic signals, rapid flashing beacons, lighting, and street tree removal and plantings will not result in an expansion of existing use.

Archaeology. Portions of the Project area located within the Prehistoric Sites & Watercourses Buffer Area, American Period (small portion on Montecito Street) and the Hispanic-American Transition period (small portion on Montecito Street). All work is proposed within the City’s existing ROW that has been previously disturbed.

Rincon Consultants prepared a Confidential Letter Report confirming archaeological resources are not present on behalf of the City’s Public Works Department. With adherence to the Avoidance and Minimization Measures outlined in the Confidential Letter Report, the effect on archaeological resources is considered less than significant.

Biological. The Project areas are located entirely in existing paved roadway facilities where no important biological resources occur. The Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) identifies no biological resources in the public ROW. There are small sections of sensitive species and Special Wildlife areas near the roundabout (along West Cliff Drive and Las Positas Road) and adjacent to the Arroyo Burro County Park; adjacent to SBCC (West Campus) and Beach City apartments (801 Cliff Drive). Additionally, there is Coast Live Oak Woodland habitat near West Montecito Street and Rancheria Street. No native oak trees are proposed to be removed or impacted. Given that the work will occur within the existing paved roadway or sidewalk areas and not within any Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs), the effect on biological resources is considered less than significant.

Creeks. The following segments of the proposed separated bike path are located near a creek/drainage area:

- Arroyo Burro County Park
- Adjacent to SBCC (West Campus) and Beach City apartments (SW corner of Cliff and Loma Alta Intersection – 801 Cliff Drive)

Standard construction-related best management practices for dust and equipment controls, water quality protection, and nesting bird protections would be applied as applicable through contractor specifications. With adherence to these measures the Project would have a less than significant impact on creeks.

Coastal Zone. The Project boundaries are located within the limits of the appealable and non-appealable jurisdictions of the Coastal Zone. The Project consists of mostly flat work for the new separated bike path. This work consists of excavations of approximately 3-feet in depth for the foundations and 18 to 24 inches depth for the conduit. Four new traffic signals and pedestrian level streetlighting will be installed along the path, which is anticipated to result in 3 to 11 feet of ground disturbance, and 3.5-feet in diameter. The proposed scope of work is located within areas of previously disturbed ROW. An application for a Coastal Exemption has been submitted for the work within the Coastal Zone. Given that the work is confined to the ROW and that the work qualifies for a Coastal Exemption, the effect on coastal resources is considered less than significant.

Floodway. One small segment of the Project is located within the AE flood zone, located adjacent to the Arroyo Burro County Park. The Project largely consists of flatwork involving pedestrian, cyclist, and traffic safety infrastructure. The Project construction will be in compliance with required flood measures and therefore the Project impacts are considered less than significant.

Geology. The Project is not located within a Fault Hazard Zone. In November 2024, expansive index testing was performed on a shallow bulk soil sample. The test result was 77 and indicates the soil is in the medium expansion range (51-90) per ASTM D4829. Groundwater is not anticipated within the estimated depths of excavation for this Project. Groundwater was encountered during the November 2024 testing at depths of 29 feet (elevation 145) and 30 feet (elevation 130).

Overall, the Project is limited to surface reconfiguration of existing public roadway facilities (i.e., construction of the new path, and installation of curb extensions/realignments, RRFBs, traffic signals, and streetlights) that involve standard engineering design standards for geophysical conditions. Soil and groundwater conditions are feasibly addressed with standard engineering techniques, and all construction shall conform to the requirements of the Caltrans Standard Specifications to meet standards for public safety. The code also requires best management practices to minimize any potential erosion effects during construction. The Project does not have the potential to exacerbate geologic or soil hazards. Project impacts are considered less than significant with adherence to the measures outlined in the Geotechnical Report.

Hazardous Materials. GeoTracker, EnviroSTOR (Cortese List) and CalGEM are hazardous materials resource web applications that the City is required to review in the environmental process.

There are nine known Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Cleanup Sites, as indicated in GeoTracker and all are closed and are located on private property outside of the Project area.

There are 17 abandoned oil wells adjacent to the vicinity of the Project (all on private property) as indicated by Geologic Energy Management Division's (CalGEM) online mapping application. It is unlikely that the Project will encounter an abandoned oil well. The engineering specifications will have standard avoidance and minimization measures in collaboration with CalGEM in the event a well is encountered. With the Project's standard engineering specifications incorporated there is a less than significant impact to hazardous materials.

High Fire Hazard Areas. A portion of the Project is located within the Coastal High Fire hazard area where the project abuts the Douglas Family Preserve and Elings Park and about a block of the Project is adjacent to the Coastal Interior High Fire hazard area (Cliff Drive between San Rafael Ave to Vista del Playa). The proposed scope of work is located within the City's public ROW and a small portion of SBCC East Campus. Performance of work in High Fire hazard areas will not be permitted on "Red Flag Alert" days for the portion of the Project that is within the Coastal High Fire hazard limits. With adherence to these measures the effect on Fire Hazards is considered less than significant.

Historic Site/Structures. There are two identified historic structures adjacent to the Project corridor (McKinley Elementary School, and a private residence at 1528 Cliff Drive). The proposed Project construction, including the new path, the addition of streetlights, traffic signals, and high visibility crosswalks are located within the City's ROW. No work is proposed on the parcels identified with a historic resource. The Project will not be obscuring or altering the historic resources. The Project will not result in a significant impact on the historic resources within the Project corridor is therefore considered less than significant.

Noise. The proposed Project intersects the following areas of noise greater than 65 A-weighted decibels (dBA): adjacent to the Arroyo Burro County Park (buffer around the roundabout) and the Montecito and Castillo intersection. The remaining part of the Project is located within the 60-65 dBA noise areas. Noise sensitive receptors, such as McKinley Elementary School, Monroe Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, SBCC, Arroyo Burro County Park and Villa Santa Fe Senior Housing Apartments are Project adjacent. Noise from construction activities associated with the Project will be increased (up to maximum of 92 dBA) temporarily during construction but will comply with the City construction noise guidance and criteria. Noise from construction personnel vehicle trips during the construction phase will also contribute to a temporary yet negligible noise increase along roadways. Construction noise levels to sensitive receptors will be noticeable but temporary, occur within limited hours, and construction activities will avoid and minimize impacts to sensitive receptors to the maximum extent feasible.

The Noise Ordinance (Chapter 9.16 of the SBMC) governs short-term or periodic noise, such as construction noise, operation of motorized equipment or amplified sound, or other sources of nuisance noise. Ordinance establishes limitations on hours of construction and motorized equipment operations and provides criteria for defining noise nuisance in general. The Project, including night work, will comply with Noise Ordinance regulations, therefore the short-term construction related noise impacts are considered less than significant


Parks & Recreation. A portion of the Project borders the Arroyo Burro Beach County Park, Douglas Family Preserve and Elings Park Project Boundary Park access will be maintained throughout construction. The contractor is required to have a City approved traffic management plan and measures will be in place to maintain park access during construction. In operation, the Project provides access for all modes of transportation to get to park facilities, which is a community benefit and will enhance access to the adjacent parks and therefore the Project impact is considered less than significant.

Trees. There are 322 existing street trees, comprised of 62 native and 260 non-native trees. Of the 322 existing street trees within the project corridor, a total of 23 non-native trees within the public ROW are proposed to be removed. The trees proposed for removal conflict with the proposed new path and sidewalk. The Project will implement the tree protection measures identified in the Arborist Report for the existing trees

The Project will plant at least 70 new street trees along the Project corridor (located within the proposed landscape buffer to the protected path and along the north side of the street). The Project team will continue to work with the City's Arborist throughout construction of the Project. The net addition of new street trees along the Project corridor will benefit the community, and therefore the impacts are considered less than significant.

Visual. The above ground safety features of the Project include placement of new street lighting, traffic signals, high visibility crosswalks, pedestrian activated RRFBs along the Project corridor. The addition of traffic safety elements will improve circulation safety within the existing Cliff Drive corridor. The Montecito and Castillo Street intersection is the only segment of the Project located within the historic El Pueblo Viejo District. The project location was originally constructed by Caltrans as a highway (State Route 225). The Project will convert the high-speed highway into a local street with safety enhancements that are consistent with the rest of local street aesthetics (trees, lighting, hardscape) within the City. The Project scope will have a less than significant effect on visual resources.

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Environmental Analyst Signature: 

Date: 07/29/2025