

Notice of Exemption

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

From: Bay Area Toll Authority
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 9410

County Clerk
County of: Contra Costa
555 Escobar Street
Martinez, CA 94553

County Clerk
County of: Solano
675 Texas St, Suite 6500
Fairfield, CA 94533

Project Title: Open Road Tolling (ORT) Conversion Northern Bridges Project (04-2W520; 0421000223)

Project Applicant: Bay Area Toll Authority

Project Location - Specific: Antioch Bridge (04-CC-160 PM 0.0/0.8), Benicia-Martinez Bridge (04-CC-680 PM 23.2/24.9), and Carquinez Bridge (04-CC-80 PM 13.7/14.1, 04-SOL-80 PM 0.0/1.1) toll plazas. Please refer to Figures 1 through 4 in **Attachment A**.

Project Location - City: Antioch, Martinez, Oakley, and Vallejo

Project Location - County: Contra Costa and Solano

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA), in coordination with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes ORT systems at the Antioch Bridge (State Route-160 [SR-160]), Benicia-Martinez Bridge (Interstate 680 [I-680]), and Carquinez Bridge (Interstate 80 [I-80]) toll plazas in Contra Costa and Solano counties, California.

The purpose of the project is to replace aging tolling system infrastructure to improve operational efficiency through bridge toll plazas, and improve safety by eliminating the need to pass through existing toll booths. The project is needed to address operational and safety deficiencies for vehicles traveling through the Antioch Bridge, Benicia-Martinez Bridge, and Carquinez Bridge toll plazas. The existing toll collection system is aging and needs to be replaced. The existing toll collection booths and other civil infrastructure are physical barriers that act as fixed objects within the travel way of the road. The existing fanning and merging of travel lanes near the toll plazas increase the potential for collisions.

The proposed project would remove and replace existing toll booths, toll equipment, and canopies with ORT systems at the Antioch Bridge, Benicia-Martinez Bridge, and Carquinez Bridge toll plazas. This includes the construction of new ORT gantries and the installation of toll equipment buildings along SR-160, I-680, and I-80. Northbound I-680 and eastbound I-80 would be restriped to four general-purpose lanes and one high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane through the toll plazas. Northbound SR-160 would be restriped to one lane through the toll plaza. Entrance and exit ramps to and from toll administration buildings and parking lots would be modified. Existing roadway signs would be removed, replaced, or relocated at all three bridge locations, as needed. BATA's toll policy will provide toll discounts to HOVs with FasTrak® Flex tag. All project activities are within State right-of-way, except for minor widening on the maintenance ramp for Bridgehead Road, which lies within City of Oakley right-of-way. Construction is planned to begin in 2026 and is anticipated to take approximately 20 months.

Please refer to the Project Description (**Attachment A**) for further discussion of the project's purpose and need and project components at each toll plaza. Figures 5 through 7 in **Attachment A** show the project's potential impact areas based on the project's conceptual design.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Bay Area Toll Authority

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Bay Area Toll Authority

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 I(c) and Class 2(c) (14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

Categorical exemptions are projects specifically excluded from CEQA consideration as defined by the State Legislature, delineated in 14 CCR 15300 et seq. 14 CCR 15300.2 gives Exceptions to the Categorical Exemptions. A project must clear these conditions to be eligible for a categorical exemption.

This project is eligible for a Class 1 and Class 2 Categorical Exemption, as explained below. Conditions are derived from 14 CCR 15301, 15302, and 15300.2.

The Class 1 "Existing Facilities" exemption from CEQA is intended to allow for "the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use," and may be categorized as one of the examples in 14 CCR 15301 (a)–(p).

- 14 CCR 15301(c) exempts existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety, and other alterations such as the addition of bicycle facilities, including but not limited to bicycle parking, bicycle-share facilities and bicycle lanes, transit improvements such as bus lanes, pedestrian crossings, street trees, and other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes). The project is consistent with the description in the exemption because it would not expand the use of existing highways or streets, nor create additional automobile lanes.

The Class 2 "Replacement or Reconstruction" exemption from CEQA is intended to allow for reconstruction of existing structures and 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 as the structure replaced. These may be in a categorized as one of the projects described in 14 CCR 15302 (a)–(d).

- 14 CCR 15302(c) exempts the replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity. The project would include replacing existing toll booths with new toll gantries, which will serve the same purpose and capacity as the toll booths. Therefore, the project is consistent with the description in the exemption.

Exceptions to categorical exemptions are described in 14 CCR 15300.2. The project does not meet these exception criteria as described below:

- *14 CCR 15300.2(a). Location* – "Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located - a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies."
 - The project does not meet this exception criteria since the project is not considered to fall under Class 3, 4, 5, 6, or 11. As described above, the Project falls under Class 1 "Existing Facilities" and Class 2 "Replacement and Reconstruction."
- *14 CCR 15300.2(b). Cumulative Impact* – "All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant."

- As evaluated in the Visual Impact Assessment Memorandum, Noise Technical Memorandum, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis, Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts), Sea Level Rise Memorandum, Water Quality Assessment Report, Initial Site Assessment, Historic Resources Compliance Report, Archaeological Survey Report, Historic Resources Evaluation Report, and Errata Memorandum for Design Refinements prepared for the project, the proposed project would not result in any significant impacts under CEQA nor would it result in cumulatively considerable impacts.
- **14 CCR 15300.2(c). Significant Effect** – “A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.”
 - There are no unusual circumstances creating the possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment pursuant to CEQA. For example, the project will comply with Caltrans Standard Specification Section 14-8 and Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02, which would minimize and/or avoid construction-period noise and air quality impacts; and Best Management Practices, such as soil stabilization and sediment controls, implementation of wind erosion, tracking controls, non-stormwater and waste management, and material pollution to minimize water pollution related to routine construction activity. Mitigation is not required.
- **14 CCR 15300.2(d). Scenic Highways** – “A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.”
 - The project corridors, including the ORT gantries and tolling plazas, are not within any designated state scenic highway. Within the project limits, SR-160 is an eligible state scenic highway. Based on the Visual Impact Assessment prepared for the project, the proposed project would not result in the damage of a scenic resource. The overall visual impact for the project was determined to be low. Mitigation is not required.
- **14 CCR 15300.2 (e). Hazardous Waste Sites** – “A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.”
 - As disclosed in the Initial Site Assessment prepared for the project, the proposed project is not known to be located on a site that is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code.
- **14 CCR 15300.2 (f). Historical Resources** – “A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.”
 - Per the Historic Resources Compliance Report, Archaeological Survey Report, and Historic Resources Evaluation Report prepared for the project, the only historic resource eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) within the project area limits is the San Joaquin River (Antioch) Bridge. Pursuant to Section 106 programmatic Agreement Stipulation X.B.2.a., Caltrans determined a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected is appropriate for this undertaking and that the Antioch Administration Building and Toll Plaza on SR-160 is not eligible for the NRHP. The California Office of Historic Preservation concurred with this determination on December 11, 2024. The proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

Lead Agency

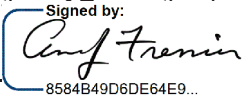
Contact Person: Angela Louie

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (415) 778-6700

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.

2. Has a Notarized document been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Signature:  Date: 9/24/2025 Title: Executive Director

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR _____

Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Revised 2011

ATTACHMENT A:
PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Project Information

DIST-CO-RTE: 04-CC-160	PM/PM: 0.0/0.8
DIST-CO-RTE: 04-CC-680	PM/PM: 23.2/24.9
DIST-CO-RTE: 04-CC-80, 04-SOL-80	PM/PM: 13.7/14.1, 0.0/1.1
EA: 04-2W520	EFIS Project ID: 0421000223
Project Title: Open Road Tolling Conversion Northern Bridges Project	

1 Introduction

The Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA), in coordination with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes Open Road Tolling (ORT) systems at the Antioch Bridge (State Route [SR-] 160), Benicia-Martinez Bridge (Interstate [I-] 680), and Carquinez Bridge (I-80) toll plazas. See Figure 1 through Figure 4 for the Project location and vicinity.

Project documentation is being prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). BATA is the Project Sponsor and Lead Agency under CEQA. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is a Responsible Agency under CEQA.

2 Purpose and Need

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Project is to:

- Replace aging tolling system infrastructure to improve operational efficiency through bridge toll plazas; and
- Improve safety by eliminating the need to pass through existing toll booths.

2.2 Need

The Project is needed to address operational and safety deficiencies for vehicles traveling through the Antioch Bridge, Benicia-Martinez Bridge, and Carquinez Bridge toll plazas. The existing toll collection systems are aging and need to be replaced. The existing toll collection booths and other civil infrastructure are physical barriers that act as fixed objects within the travel way of the road. The existing fanning and merging of travel lanes near the toll plazas increase the potential for collisions.

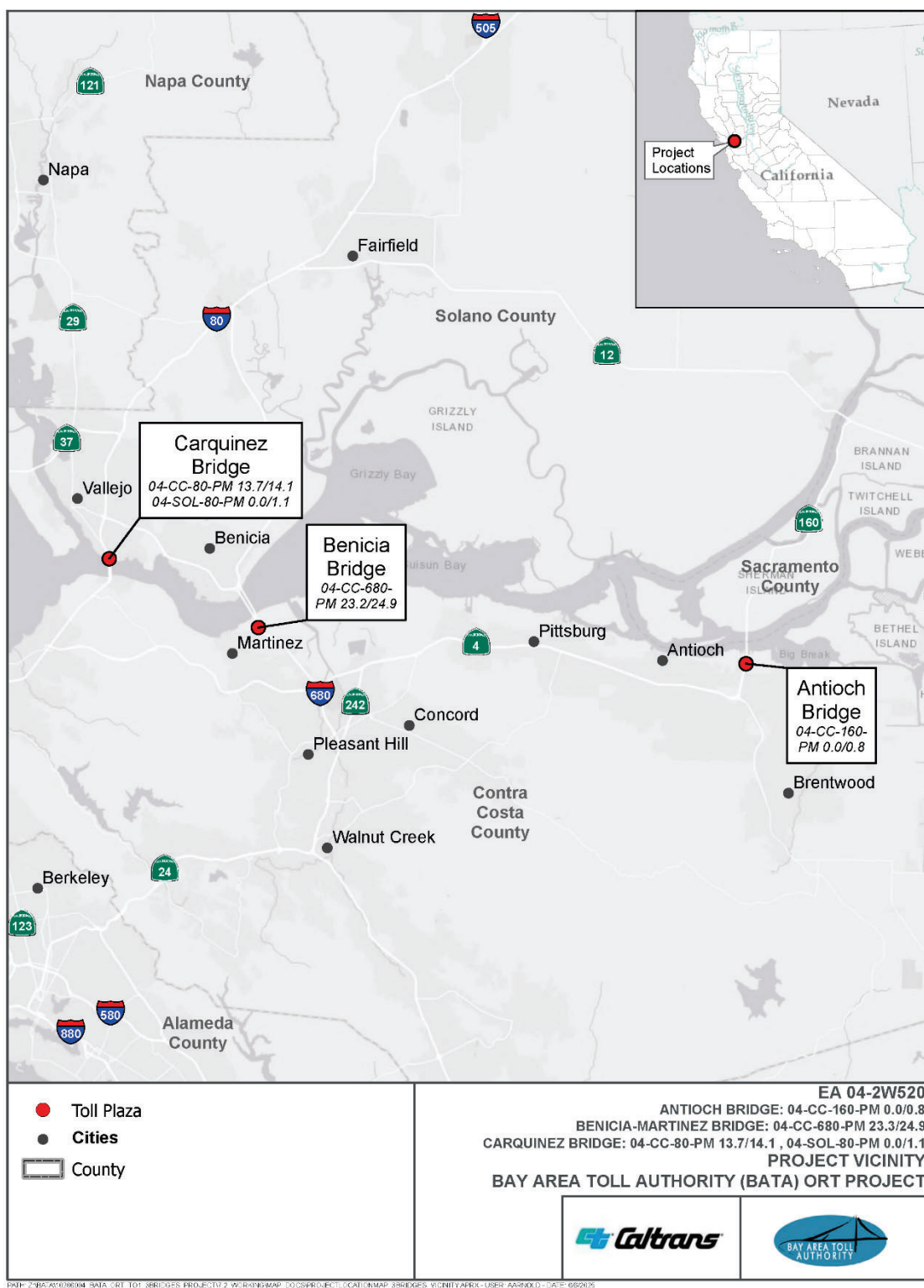


Figure 1. Project Location

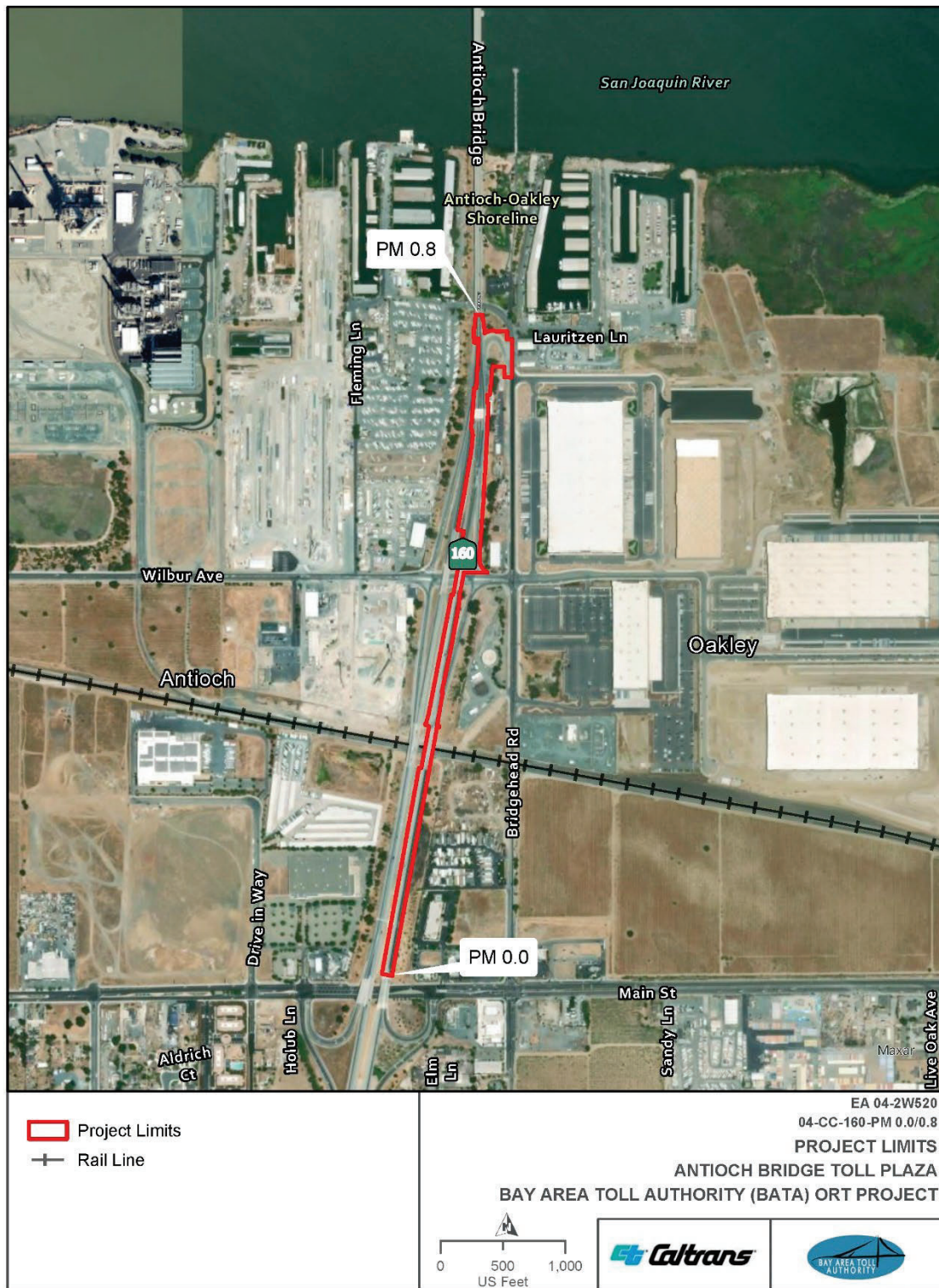


Figure 2. Antioch Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits



Figure 3. Benicia-Martinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits



Figure 4. Carquinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits



The need for the Project includes:

- **Aging Toll Collection System**
 - Toll collection equipment is outdated, and some components are no longer manufactured, making it difficult to maintain;
 - Vendors will no longer support the current toll collection system software;
 - Toll collection system upgrades are needed to support increase in transmitted images; and
 - Current toll equipment is not optimally suited for the higher vehicular speeds of ORT system.
- **Safety**
 - Toll booths and associated traffic safety devices are fixed objects. Drivers currently slow down at the toll booths, resulting in increased potential for congestion related collisions.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a significant impact and strain on innumerable sectors. The effect on travel patterns was substantial during the first few months of the pandemic, resulting in lower travel and traffic demand. However, traffic and congestion has been slowly increasing as the pandemic's impact subsides, and it is expected that the traffic congestion issues that have traditionally plagued the Bay Area's roadway network will return to pre-COVID levels in the near-term future. Above and beyond existing baseline operational and safety deficiencies, it is anticipated that forecasted long-range regional traffic growth from planned future local development will cause incremental operational and safety concerns if not addressed.

3 Project Description

The Project would remove toll booths and canopies, and replace with ORT systems at the Antioch Bridge, Benicia-Martinez Bridge, and Carquinez Bridge toll plazas.

BATA policy will provide toll discounts to high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) with FasTrak® Flex tag and three or more occupants (HOV 3+) at all three bridge locations. At the Benicia-Martinez and Carquinez ORT gantries, HOVs with two occupants (HOV 2) would be allowed to use the HOV bypass lane without availing toll discounts. At the Antioch ORT gantry, there would be only one lane and FasTrak® Flex tag would be required to receive the HOV3+ discount.

The following describes the proposed activities for each location:

- **Antioch Bridge Toll Plaza (Northbound [NB] SR-160)**
 - Remove the existing toll booths, toll equipment, and canopy structure at approximately post mile (PM) 0.7.
 - Remove the existing cantilever overhead sign structure between PM 0.6 and PM 0.7.
 - Construct a new ORT gantry.



- Install new toll equipment on the new ORT gantry.
 - Construct a new toll equipment building near the new ORT gantry.
 - Restripe NB SR-160 mainline to one lane.
 - Widen the outside shoulder up to 5-feet wide for about 200 feet in length at approximately PM 0.8.
 - Widen the existing one-way Bridgehead Road maintenance ramp to a bi-directional ramp to facilitate access to and from the upper parking lot. Add concrete barrier between mainline and upper parking lot.
 - Modify NB Wilbur Avenue entrance ramp geometry and reconstruct the gore area.
 - Restripe on rigid pavement approximately between approximately PM 0.0 and PM 0.6.
 - Grind and overlay hot mix asphalt (HMA) pavement between approximately PM 0.5 and PM 0.8.
 - Install overhead and roadside signage.
- Benicia-Martinez Bridge Toll Plaza (NB I-680)
 - Remove the existing toll booths, toll equipment, and canopy structure between PM 24.5 and PM 24.6.
 - Remove the existing cantilever overhead sign structure between PM 24.4 and PM 24.5.
 - Construct a new ORT gantry.
 - Install new toll equipment on the new ORT gantry.
 - Construct a new toll equipment building near the new ORT gantry.
 - Restripe NB I-680 mainline to four general-purpose lanes and one HOV lane.
 - Restripe on rigid pavement between approximately PM 24.2 and PM 24.5.
 - Grind and overlay HMA pavement and restripe between approximately PM 23.2 and PM 24.3 and between approximately PM 24.4 and PM 24.9.
 - Modify entrance and exit ramps to and from the toll administration building and parking lot(s).
 - Install overhead and roadside signage.
 - Carquinez Bridge Toll Plaza (Eastbound [EB] I-80)
 - Remove the existing toll booths, tolling equipment, and canopy structure between PM 0.5 and PM 0.6 in Solano County.
 - Construct a new ORT gantry.
 - Install new toll equipment on the new ORT gantry.
 - Construct a new toll equipment building adjacent to the new ORT gantry.
 - Restripe EB I-80 mainline to four general-purpose lanes and one HOV lane.
 - Widen pavement in the median of I-80, approximately between PM 0.3 and PM 0.5 and approximately between PM 0.7 and PM 0.9 in Solano County.
 - Restripe on rigid pavement between approximately PM 0.0 and PM 0.4.



- Grind and overlay HMA pavement between approximately PM 0.3 and PM 0.9.
- Remove the existing overhead sign structure near PM 0.4.
- Modify entrance and exit ramps to and from the toll administration and maintenance building and parking lot(s).
- Install overhead and roadside signage, and remove overhead signs on the Carquinez Bridge.

Additional work includes removing, replacing, or relocating existing roadway signs at all three bridge locations, as needed, for the ORT conversion. Roadside signpost replacement and installation would require excavation and the disposal of excavated materials and treated wood waste. Ground disturbing impacts for roadway signs could be up to 8 feet in diameter and extend approximately 20 feet below ground surface (bgs). Cast-in-drill hole (CIDH) installation at the Antioch Bridge Toll Plaza location could require excavations up to 30 feet bgs with a diameter of 48 inches. CIDH installation at the Benicia-Martinez and Carquinez Bridge Toll Plaza locations could require excavations up to 40 feet bgs at 60 inches in diameter.

Electrical utilities would be required to power toll equipment buildings, overhead changeable message signs, and toll collection systems. The Project includes installing back-up generators and all necessary equipment for toll collection near proposed gantries. Installing new and extending existing electrical and communication conduit and fiber would require trenching and/or horizontal directional drilling to bring these services to the electronic tolling equipment, signage, and toll equipment buildings. Trenching for electrical and fiber conduit would be between 4 to 6 feet deep and up to 2 feet wide. Auxiliary cabinets may be required between toll equipment buildings and gantries.

Additional Project improvements include modifications to drainage systems, grading, lighting, landscaping, and necessary utility installation and connections/relocations for the new toll collection facilities. Geotechnical investigations will also occur within the Project limits in Caltrans ROW.

All proposed work would primarily occur within Caltrans ROW except for minor widening on the maintenance ramp at Bridgehead Road, which lies within the City of Oakley's ROW. Construction is planned to begin in 2026 and is anticipated to take approximately 20 months. Demolition of existing tolling infrastructure would occur following the installation and testing of the new ORT system.

Temporary and permanent impact areas for the Antioch Bridge, Benicia-Martinez Bridge, and Carquinez Bridge toll plazas are shown in Figures 5 through 7, respectively.



Figure 5. Antioch Bridge Toll Plaza Project Impact Areas (Sheet 1 of 3)

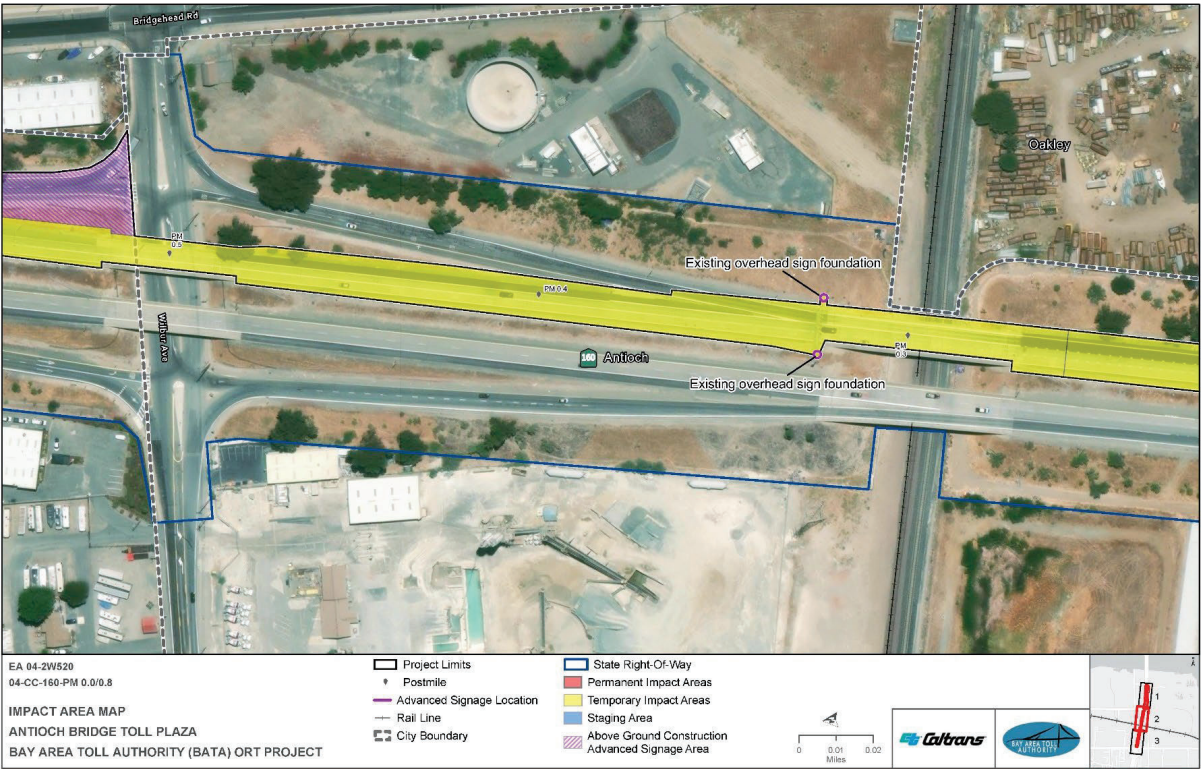


Figure 5. Antioch Bridge Toll Plaza Project Impact Areas (Sheet 2 of 3)

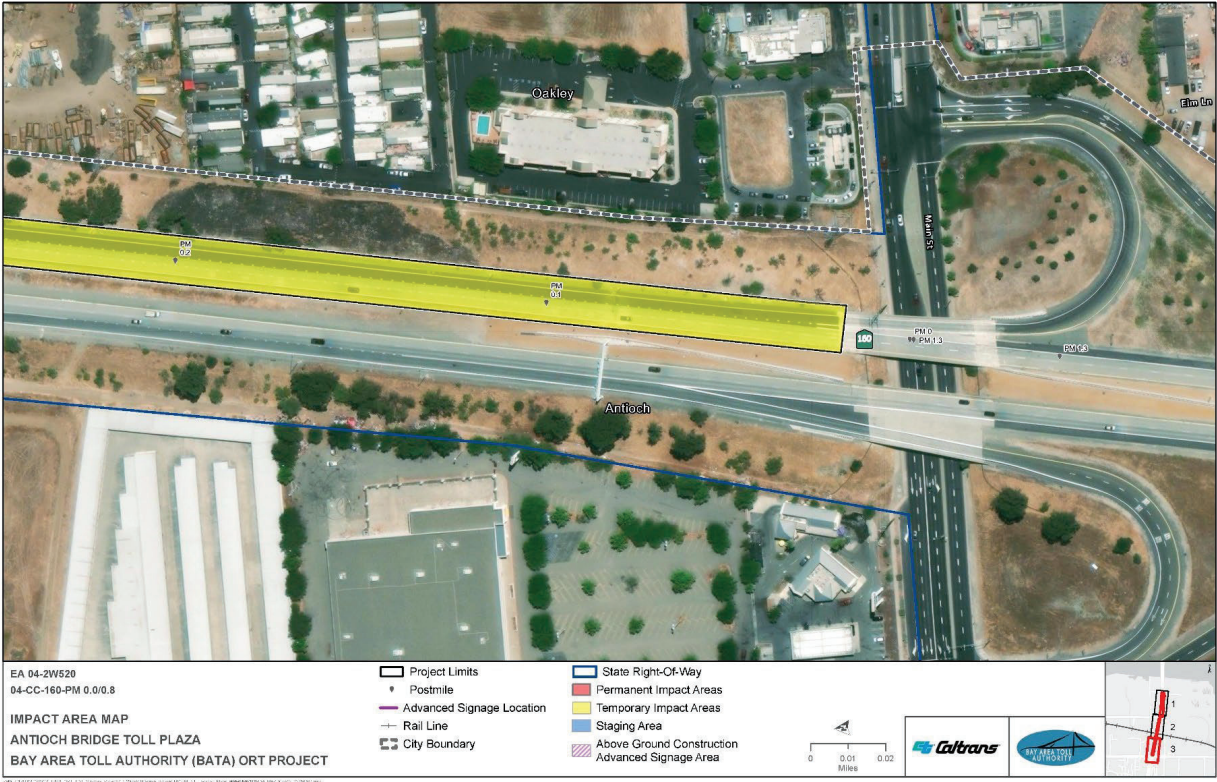


Figure 5. Antioch Bridge Toll Plaza Project Impact Areas (Sheet 3 of 3)

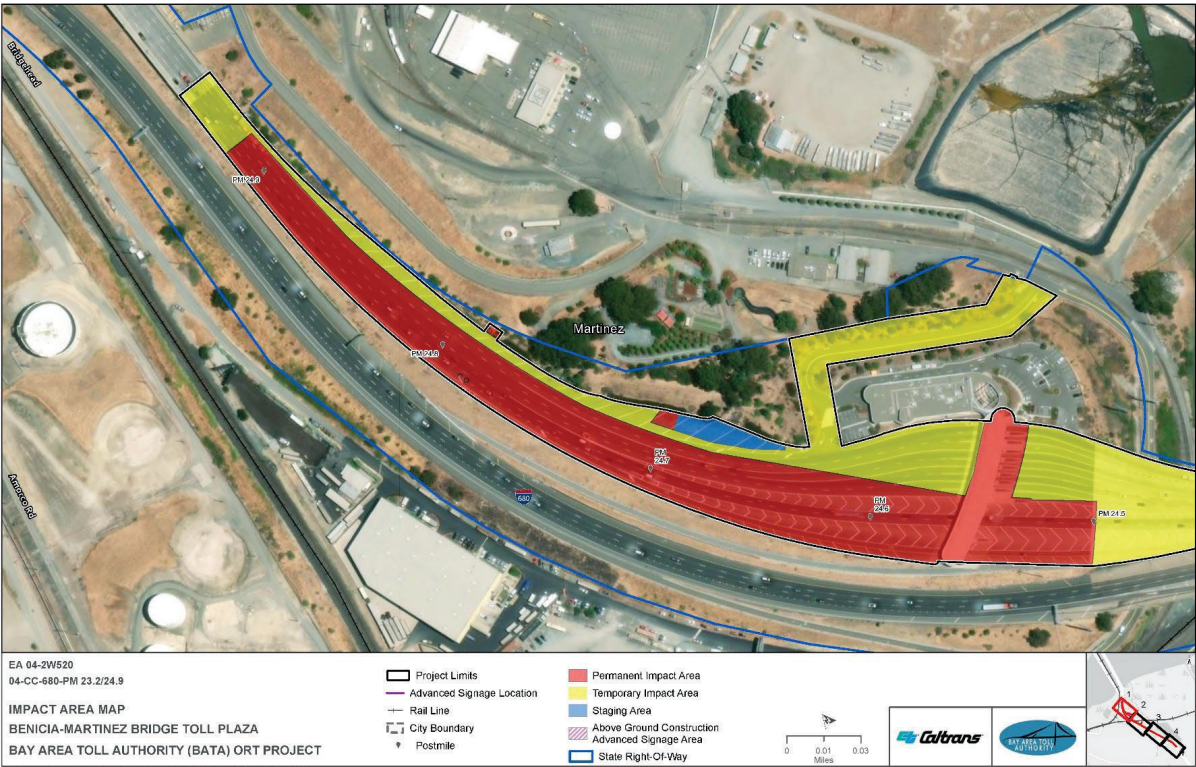


Figure 6. Benicia-Martinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits (Sheet 1 of 4)

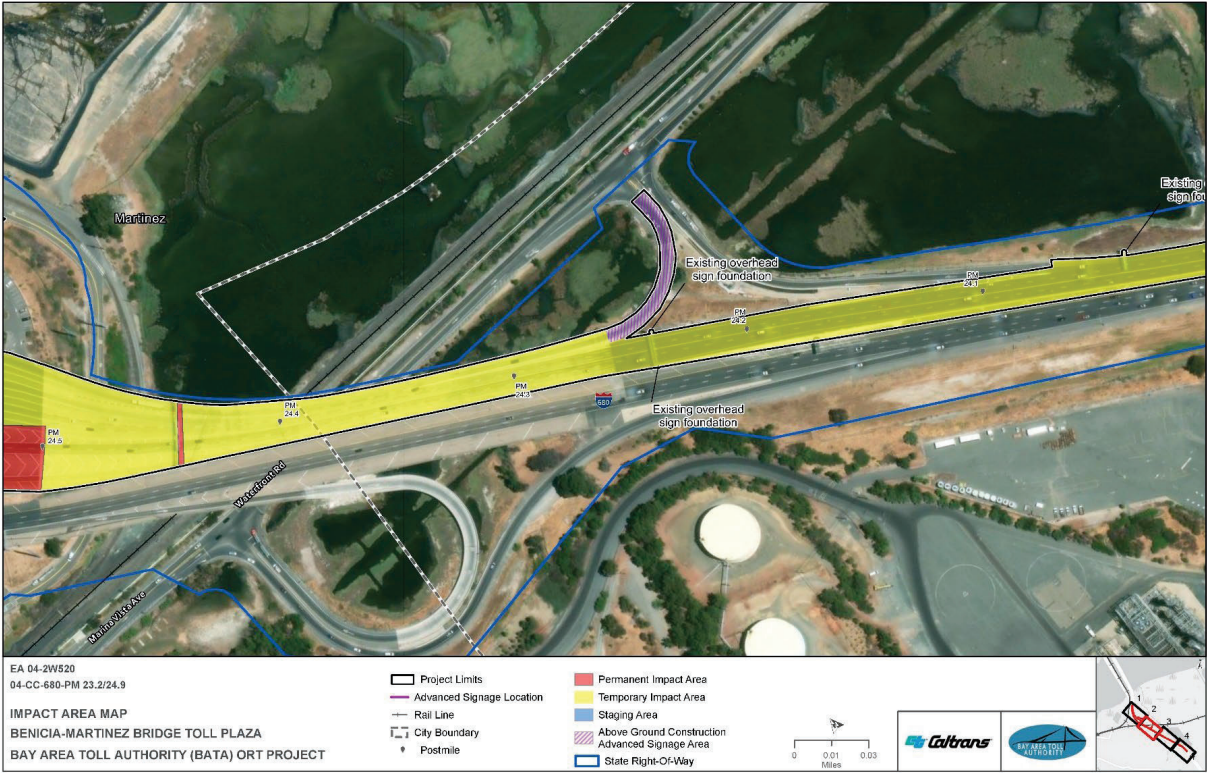


Figure 6. Benicia-Martinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits (Sheet 2 of 4)



Figure 6. Benicia-Martinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits (Sheet 3 of 4)



Figure 6. Benicia-Martinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits (Sheet 4 of 4)

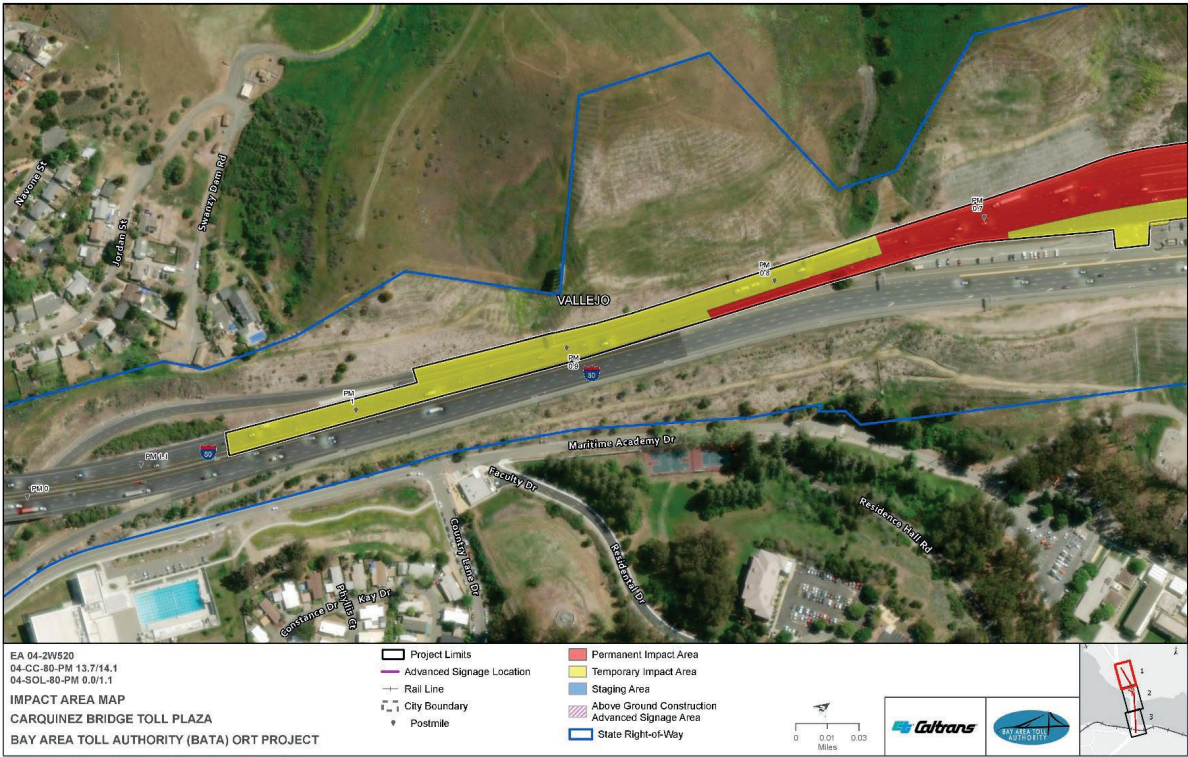


Figure 7. Carquinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits (Sheet 1 of 3)

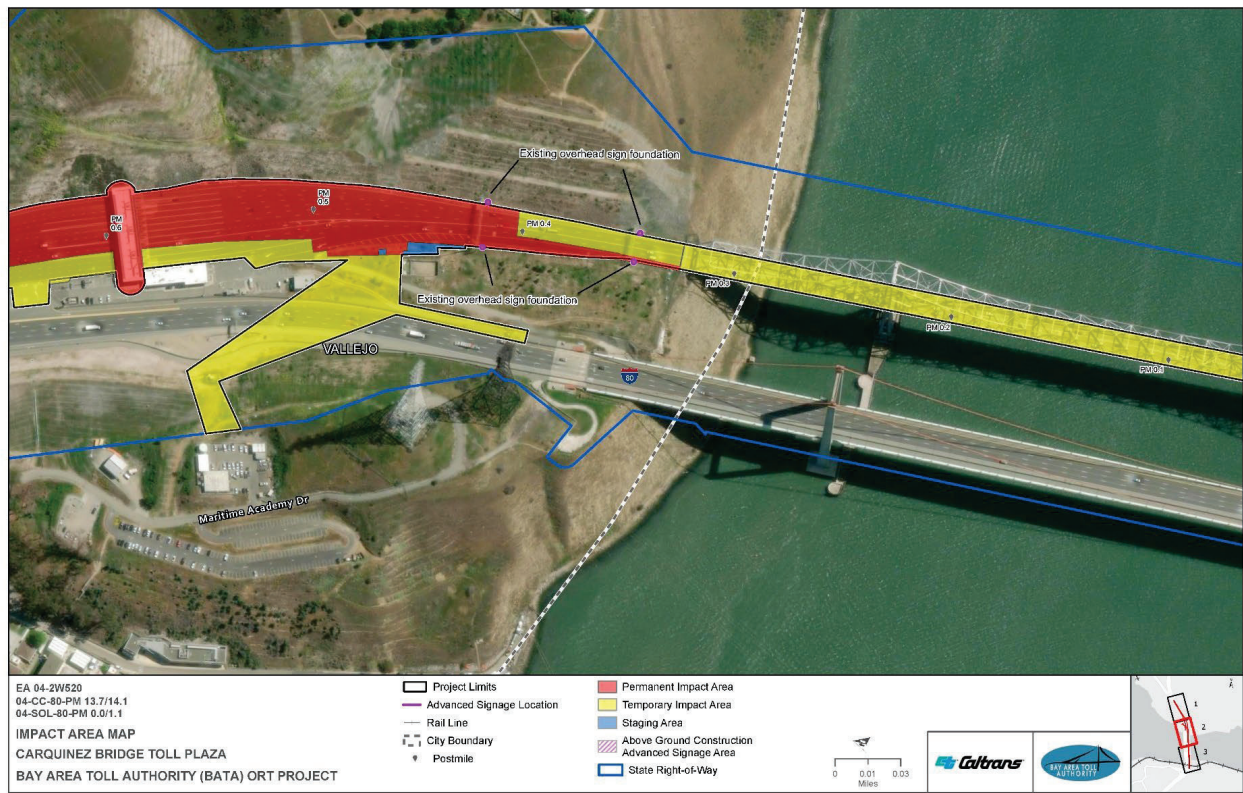


Figure 7. Carquinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits (Sheet 2 of 3)

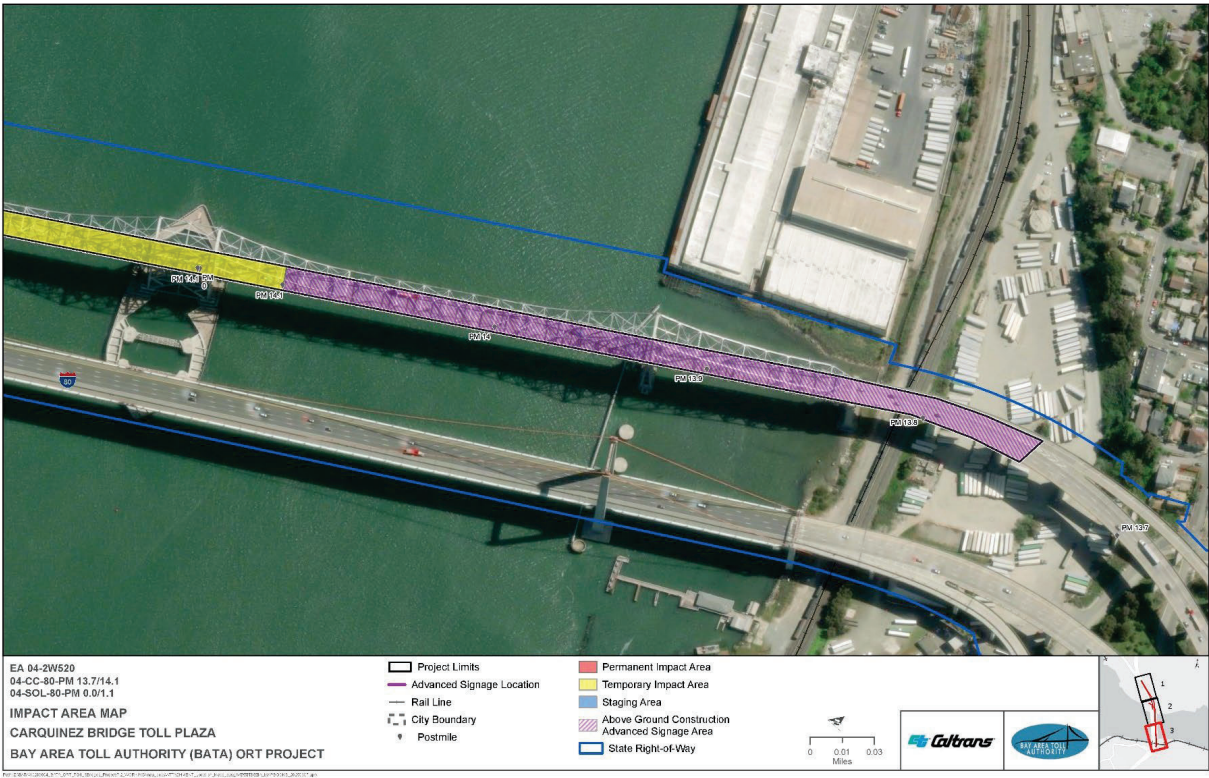


Figure 7. Carquinez Bridge Toll Plaza Project Limits (Sheet 3 of 3)