

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 Barbara

1100 Anacapa St

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

From: (Public Agency): Caltrans District 5

50 Higuera Street

San Luis Obispo CA, 93401

(Address)

Project Title: State Route 154/Foxen Canyon Intersection Improvements Project

Project Applicant: Caltrans District 5

Project Location - Specific:

SR 154 at the intersection of Foxen Canyon Rd, Steel St, and Ballard Canyon Rd.

Project Location - City: Los Olivos Project Location - County: Santa Barbara

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project's purpose is to reduce serious and/or fatal collisions and enhance safety for all roadway users by installing a roundabout at the intersection.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Caltrans District 5

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Caltrans District 5

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

Reasons why project is exempt:


The project is exempt under PRC 15301(C) as it involves the alteration of an existing highway for safety purposes.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Lucas Marsalek Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (805) 458-5408

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: 4/1/26 Title: Senior Env Scientist (Sup)

▪ 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: _____



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

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): State Route 154 and Foxen Canyon Intersection Improvements Project

DIST-CO-RTE: 05-SB-154

PM/PM: 2.386

EA:05-1S110

Federal-Aid Project Number: 0524000170

Project Description

The proposed project will occur on SR-154 at PM R2.386, at the northwest edge of Los Olivos where SR-154 intersects Foxen Canyon Road, Ballard Canyon Road, and Steele Street in Santa Barbara County. The existing intersection at SR-154 is two-way stop controlled and is equipped with two 12-foot wide left-turn deceleration lanes on State Route 154 for Foxen Canyon Road. The proposed project is a .010 Safety project which would create a roundabout at the existing intersection to improve traffic operations by reducing the number of conflict points between vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists (project description continued in continuation sheet).

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(c)** (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).
- 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].)

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Lucas Marsalek

3/23/26

Print Name

Signature

Date

Project Manager

Joe Arnold

03/23/2026

Print Name

Signature

Date



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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)(4)
23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)
Activity number 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

Lucas Marsalek
Print Name
Signature
Date 3/23/26

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Joe Arnold
Print Name
Signature
Date 03/23/2026

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): N/A
Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 3/19/2026

Briefly list environmental commitments on continuation sheet if needed (i.e., not necessary if included on an attached ECR). Reference additional information, as appropriate (e.g., additional studies and design conditions).



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Continuation sheet:

Project Description Continued –

Other project components include installing sidewalks for bikes and pedestrians, installing splitter islands to alter the approach geometry, and adding street lighting for increased visibility and safety. Additional work activities may include utility verifications, utility relocation, and undergrounding of existing overhead utilities within the project limits. Vegetation removal is anticipated in the northwest and northeast portions of the intersection. During the project's design phase, the Caltrans project development team will evaluate design options that include both a landscape and hardscape roundabout center island. Stormwater Treatment Best Management Practices (TBMPs) will be required for this project and will include the use of Design Pollution Prevention Infiltration Areas (DPPIAs) at the southeast quadrant of the roundabout.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Avoidance and Minimization Measures –

- **GHG-1:** Specify Long-Life Pavement. Minimize life-cycle costs by designing long-lasting pavement structures. Consider future climate conditions in decisions.

The following GHG reduction measures will be implemented during construction:

- **GHG-2:** Limit idling to 15 minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel-powered equipment when not in active operations.
- **GHG-3:** Schedule longer-duration lane closures to reduce number of equipment mobilization efforts.
- **GHG-4:** For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:
 - a) Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition
 - b) Use right sized equipment for the job
- **GHG-5:** Select pavement materials that lower the rolling resistance of highway surfaces as much as possible while still maintaining design and safety standards.
- **GHG-6:** Produce HMA using warm mix technology.

Biological Avoidance and Minimization Measures –

- **BIO-1:** If feasible, vegetation removal and tree trimming shall be scheduled to occur between October 1 and January 31, outside of the typical nesting bird season, which is February 1 to September 30. If it is not feasible to conduct this work outside of the nesting bird season, nesting bird surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 7 days prior to the start of construction or vegetation removal. If active bird nests are found within the project area, no-work zones shall be designated 100 feet around active bird nests and 500 feet for active bird of prey or raptor nests, or a monitoring strategy may be implemented. These exclusion zones or monitoring strategies shall be established by a qualified biologist or designee until nesting activity has ceased.



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Cultural Resources Avoidance and Minimization Measures –

- **CR-1:** Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Establishment. Two resources will be protected from adverse effects through the establishment of an ESA, in accordance with the project's Environmentally Sensitive Area Action Plan and Section 106 PA Stipulation VIII.C.4.
- **CR-2:** Construction Phase Monitoring. All construction workers must complete a preconstruction Worker Environmental Awareness Program training. An archaeological and Native American monitor must observe initial ground disturbance and excavation during the construction phase.
- **CR-3:** Treatment of Native American Remains if Discovered. Human remains and related items of Native American origin discovered during the implementation of the terms of the Programmatic Agreement and the proposed project will be treated in accordance with State Health and Safety Codes and Public Resources Code Section 5097.98(a) through (d). All activities within the vicinity of the discovery will be stopped and the Caltrans Archaeologist will be notified immediately and consulted on how to proceed. A written report shall be prepared within 48 hours of notification of the Caltrans Archaeologist. A reburial plan will be developed in consultation with the Most Likely Descendent and implemented prior to construction as a condition of treatment in the event human remains are encountered.
- **CR-4:** Discovery of Unanticipated Cultural Effects. If during construction activities Caltrans determines that either the undertaking would affect a previously unidentified property that may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or affect a known historic property in an unanticipated manner, Caltrans will address the discovery or unanticipated effect in accordance with Stipulation XV.B of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. Caltrans at its discretion may, pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations Section 800.13(c), assume any discovered property to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
- **CR-5:** Discovery of Native American Remains. If any unanticipated pre-historic cultural resources are discovered during project construction, all earth-moving activity around the immediate discovery area would be diverted until a qualified archaeologist can assess the nature and significance of the find. If human remains are discovered, California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that further disturbances and activities should stop in any area or nearby area suspected to overlie remains, and the County coroner should be contacted. If the coroner thinks that the remains are Native American, the coroner shall notify the Native American Heritage Commission representative, who, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, would then notify the Most Likely Descendent. At this time the person who discovered the remains would contact Terry Joslin, Caltrans' District 5 Native American Coordinator, to coordinate with the Most Likely Descendent on the respectful treatment and disposition of the remains. Further provisions in Public Resources Code 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.



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Paleontological Resources –

Caltrans will comply with Standard Specification 14-7.03 (Discovery of Unanticipated Paleontological Resources). If unanticipated paleontological resources are discovered at the job site, do not disturb the resources and immediately:

1. Stop all work within a 60-foot radius of the discovery
2. Secure the area 3. Notify the Engineer The Department investigates the discovery and modifies the dimensions of the secured area if needed.
3. Do not move paleontological resources or take them from the job site. Do not resume work within the radius of discovery until authorized.

Visual and Aesthetic Resources Avoidance and Minimization Measures –

The following environmental commitments can avoid or minimize adverse visual effects and enhance aesthetic quality along the corridor:

- **VIS-1:** Preserve existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible. Prescriptive clearing and grubbing techniques which save the most existing vegetation possible shall be employed.
- **VIS-2:** Grading shall be designed to minimize cut and fill by fitting the roundabout to the existing topography to the maximum extent feasible. Techniques such as slope rounding, contour grading, and natural landform transitions shall be employed to soften engineered edges and blend new slopes into the surrounding terrain.
- **VIS-3:** Replacement planting shall include functional and aesthetic considerations as well as the inherent biological goals as determined by the Caltrans Biologist and Caltrans District 5 Landscape Architect.
- **VIS-4:** Splitter islands shall be designed with aesthetic treatments, including textured surfaces and natural earth-tone colors, to ensure visual compatibility with the surrounding rural and scenic setting.
- **VIS-5:** The apron of the roundabout shall be designed with aesthetic treatments, including textured surfaces and natural earth-tone colors, to ensure visual compatibility with the surrounding rural and scenic setting.
- **VIS-6:** The elongated center island of the roundabout shall be mounded to reflect forms compatible with the surrounding rolling hills, and design options shall include both landscaped and hardscaped treatments to ensure visual integration with the corridor.
 - a) The landscaped center island option shall incorporate a mounded form planted with native trees, shrubs, and groundcover that are compatible with the surrounding natural features of the Officially Designated State Scenic Highway.
 - b) The hardscaped center island option shall incorporate a mounded form with context-sensitive colors and varied textures, including elements such as natural boulders, rock cobbles, gravel mulch, or decomposed granite, designed to be compatible with the surrounding natural features of the Officially Designated State Scenic Highway.



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- **VIS-7:** During the design phase, features such as transportation art or community gateway elements shall be considered in collaboration with the local community to enhance visual interest and reinforce the corridor's cultural and scenic character.
- **VIS-8:** Existing and proposed utilities shall be placed underground where feasible.
- **VIS-9:** Streetlights, if required, their quantity, height, style, and color temperature shall be limited to the minimum necessary to meet safety and operational requirements.
- **VIS-10:** Streetlights shall be fully downward-directed to minimize light spill and glare, ensuring that no direct illumination is visible from adjacent parcels and maintain compatibility with the scenic corridor.
- **VIS-11:** Streetlights shall be galvanized to match establish corridor aesthetics.
- **VIS-12:** Electrical service cabinets shall be carefully located to reduce visibility, avoid becoming focal points, and ensure they remain as unobtrusive as possible within the scenic corridor.
- **VIS-13:** Retaining walls, if required, shall be aesthetically treated with texture and/or color consistent with the surrounding scenic corridor and natural landscape character.
- **VIS-14:** Culvert headwalls, if required, shall be colored and cable railings shall be stained to blend in with the existing corridor aesthetics.
- **VIS-15:** Sidewalks, curbs, and gutters shall be integrally colored with a salt finish, to match established scenic corridor aesthetics.
- **VIS-16:** ADA detectable warning panels shall utilize brown-toned materials to maintain consistency with the established scenic corridor aesthetic and reduce visual contrast within the rural setting.
- **VIS-17:** Highway signage shall be limited in number and size to the maximum extent feasible to reduce visual clutter and prevent the introduction of new sources of glare along this Officially Designated State Scenic Highway.
- **VIS-18:** Following construction, decompact and revegetate all construction staging areas and other temporary uses as necessary to match the surrounding pre-project landscape.