

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: Orange

From: (Public Agency): South Coast Water District
31592 West Street

Laguna Beach, CA 92651

(Address)

Project Title: Local Transmission Main Mateo Flow Control Vault Improvements Project

Project Applicant: South Coast Water District

Project Location - Specific:

See Figure 1, attached

Project Location - City: San Clemente

Project Location - County: Orange

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

See attached.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: South Coast Water District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: South Coast Water 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: CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(b) - Existing Facilities (Class 1)

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

See attached.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Dylan LaFrance, PE, JD Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (949) 342-2178

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: Dylan LaFrance Date: 4/8/26 Title: SENIOR ENGINEER

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: _____

April 3, 2026

Attachment to Notice of Exemption: Joint Regional Water Supply System Local Transmission Main Mateo Flow Control Vault Improvements Project in San Clemente, California

1 Project Description

The South Coast Water District proposes to relocate existing Joint Regional Water Supply System (JRWSS) air/vacuum relief (air/vac) valves that are currently located within an underground concrete vault at the Mateo Flow Control Vault, located within the public right-of-way at the intersection of Avenida Mateo and South El Camino Real in the City of San Clemente (Figure 1, Civil Site Plan). The proposed project would relocate the air/vac valves to above-ground locations adjacent to the existing vault, consistent with current JRWSS standards. Relocating the valves above ground would allow operations staff to access the facilities for inspection, maintenance, and replacement without entering the underground vault.

The existing underground vault and air/vac piping connections to the water transmission main would remain in place. The project would extend the existing air/vac piping from the transmission main through the vault wall and connect the piping to the new above-ground air/vac valves. In addition, the project includes rehabilitation and recoating of existing piping, valves, and fittings within the vault.

Construction activities would be temporary and would involve localized excavation and surface disturbance within previously disturbed roadway and utility areas associated with the existing transmission main, vault, and street improvements, and would not require removal or disturbance of trees or vegetation. Pavement and surface restoration would be completed in accordance with City of San Clemente standards. Any necessary traffic control measures would be implemented in coordination with the City of San Clemente in accordance with applicable standards.

2 Categorical Exemption

The proposed project is categorically exempt under the “Class 1” categorical exemption (CE), Existing Facilities, as outlined in Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. “Class 1” exemptions consist of 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. The key consideration is whether the project involves an expansion of use. One of the examples included under Section 15301 of the CEQA Guidelines is as follows: “Existing facilities of both investor and publicly owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services.” The proposed project involves minor alterations to an existing public water utility facilities with no expansion of use

3 Exceptions to the Use of Categorical Exemptions

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines provides several exceptions that would otherwise preclude the use of a CE:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

The following discussion describes why each of the exceptions to the use of a CE are not applicable to the proposed project. Because none of the exceptions precluding the use of a CE is applicable to the proposed project, the “Class 1” CE is appropriate.

Cumulative Impact

CEs, as defined in Section 15300 of the CEQA Guidelines, are projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. As such, the proposed project would not considerably contribute to cumulative impacts in the greater project region. In addition, other projects in the region would presumably be bound by their applicable lead agency to (1) comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulatory requirements; and (2) incorporate all feasible mitigation measures, consistent with CEQA, to further ensure that their potentially cumulative impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels.

Unusual Circumstances

The proposed project involves minor alterations to an existing utility within a fully developed, urban environment. It would not require the removal of any trees or other natural features or habitats. The proposed project is consistent with the type of period alteration inherent in effectively operating a public utility. No unusual circumstances have been identified related to the project sites or the scope of the project.

Scenic Resources within a State Scenic Highway

The proposed project site is not located within a state scenic highway. Interstate 5 (I-5), which is identified as an eligible state scenic highway, is located approximately 200 feet east of the project site (Caltrans 2026). Construction activities would be temporary and largely confined to the public right-of-way and the existing vault. Due to intervening development and the temporary nature of construction activities, the project would not damage scenic resources associated with a state scenic highway.

Section 65962.5 of the Government Code

Section 65962.5 of the Government Code, also known as the Cortese List, is a compilation of various lists maintained by several state agencies that identify facilities or sites that are impacted by environmental contamination or hazardous waste. The proposed project site is not included on any list compiled pursuant to the requirements of Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (DTSC 2026; SWRCB 2026).

Historical Resources

The proposed project does not involve demolition of any structures and therefore has no potential to affect historic built environment resources. Excavation associated with the project would be confined to previously disturbed soils within the public right-of-way and would not result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource. Accordingly, the project would not adversely affect historical resources.

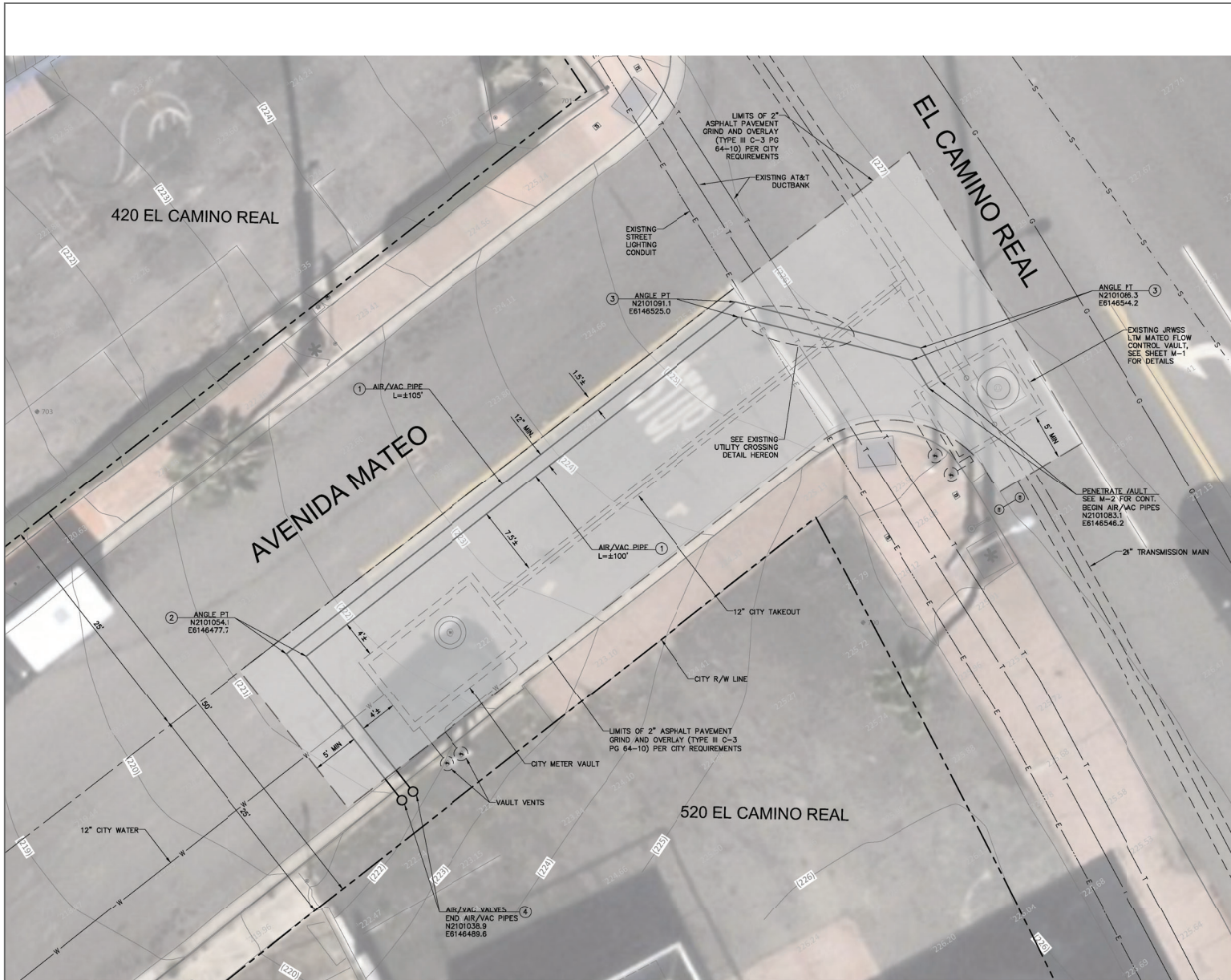
4 References

Caltrans (California Department of Transportation). 2026. "California State Scenic Highway System Map." Accessed April 2026.

<https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>.

DTSC (California Department of Toxic Substances Control). 2026. EnviroStor Hazardous Waste and Cleanup Sites Database. Accessed April 2026. <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/>.

SWRCB (State Water Resources Control Board). 2026. GeoTracker Cleanup, Leak, and Underground Storage Tank Database. Accessed April 2026. <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/>.

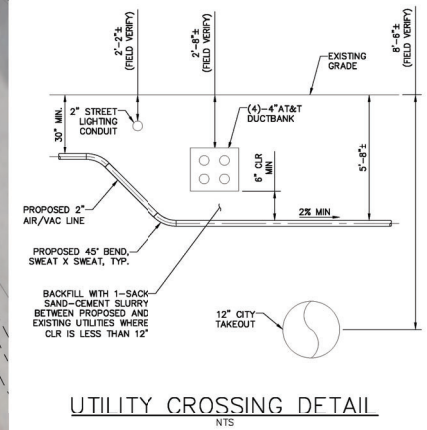


CONSTRUCTION NOTES

- ① 2" RIGID COPPER PIPE, TYPE K, SWEAT JOINTS, TRENCH PER SOWD STD DWG W-5, 30" MIN COVER
- ② 2" RIGID COPPER, TYPE K, 90° BEND, SWEAT X SWEAT
- ③ 2" RIGID COPPER, TYPE K, 45° BEND, SWEAT X SWEAT
- ④ 2" COMBINATION AIR RELEASE & VACUUM RELIEF VALVE ASSEMBLY PER SOWD STD DWG W-8

GENERAL NOTES

1. BEFORE BEGINNING WORK, CONTRACTOR SHALL CLOSE EXISTING 2" ISOLATION VALVE TO ISOLATE OUTLET FROM TRANSMISSION MAIN
2. ANY STANDING WATER IN VAULT SHALL BE PUMPED OUT BY CONTRACTOR PRIOR TO STARTING ANY WORK.
3. MAINTAIN POSITIVE SLOPE IN PIPING FROM TRANSMISSION MAIN TO PROPOSED COMBINATION AIR/VAC VALVE.
4. CONTRACTOR SHALL SWAB PROPOSED AIR/VAC PIPING AND FITTINGS WITH SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE SOLUTION PER THE PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS.
5. FLUSHING OF PROPOSED AIR/VAC PIPING SHALL BE PERFORMED BY OPENING THE EXISTING ISOLATION VALVE ON THE TRANSMISSION MAIN AND DISCHARGING FLUSHED WATER TO THE ADJACENT STREET CUTTER.
6. PRESSURE TESTING OF PROPOSED AIR/VAC PIPING SHALL CONSIST OF VISUAL OBSERVATION OF ANY LEAKAGE AFTER PIPING IS PRESSURIZED.
7. CONTRACTOR SHALL POTHOLE ALL UTILITY CROSSINGS PRIOR TO BEGINNING OF CONSTRUCTION. CONTRACTOR SHALL ALSO FIELD VERIFY THE EXACT LOCATION, SIZE, DEPTH, AND TYPE OF ALL UTILITIES AND INTERFERENCES SITUATED ALONG THE ROUTE OF THE PROPOSED PIPELINE PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF EXCAVATION, PROCUREMENT, AND INSTALLATION.
8. CONTRACTOR SHALL OBTAIN AN ENCROACHMENT PERMIT FROM THE CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE FOR ALL WORK WITHIN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY.
9. ALL PAVEMENT REPLACEMENT SHALL BE PER CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE STANDARDS.
10. PIPE COORDINATES REFER TO THE MIDPOINT OF THE TWO PROPOSED AIR/VAC LINES.
11. FINAL LOCATION OF AIR/VAC VALVES SHALL BE DETERMINED IN THE FIELD BY THE DISTRICT INSPECTOR.



NOT TO SCALE

Plan: 2' Proposed

SOURCE: South Coast Water District, 2026