



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

Project Information

Project Name: SR 152 Intersection Control Improvement Project

DIST-CO-RTE: 10-MER-152

PM/PM: 15.9/16.5

EA:10-1Q040

Federal-Aid Project Number: N/A

Project Description

See 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). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.

☐ **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

Laura Cook

Print Name

Laura N. Cook

Signature

02/06/2026

Date

Project Manager

Daniel Laurenno

Print Name

Daniel Laurenno

Signature

02/06/2026

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)(27)**

☐ **23 CFR 771.117(d):**

☐ **Activity 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

Laura Cook

Print Name

Laura M. Cook

Signature

02/06/2026

Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Daniel Laureno

Print Name

Daniel Laureno

Signature

02/06/2026

Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion: 2/4/2026

Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 2/4/2026



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Continuation sheet:

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to reduce the number and severity of broadside collisions at the SR 152 and Volta Road intersection, approximately 2.5 miles west of the City of Los Banos in Merced County.

The project is needed due to insufficient existing intersection control and higher than average number of broadside collisions at the SR 152 and Volta Road intersection.

Project Description

The project proposes to construct a roundabout on State Route (SR) 152 from 0.3 miles west of Volta Road to 0.3 miles east of Volta Road (PM 15.9 to 16.5), approximately 2.5 miles west of Los Banos in Merced County. In addition, project work includes sidewalks, bike ramps, curb ramps, drainage features (drainage inlets, culverts, outlets, ditches, and basins) flashing beacons, and street lighting. Additional right-of-way and utility relocation may be required.

A detour would be constructed to the south of the intersection. The roadway would consist of two traffic lanes in both directions, a center left turn lane, and 4 ft shoulders on both sides of the roadway.

General

The project is Categorical Exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act and Categorical Excluded under the National Environmental Policy Act unless: 1) the scope of the project changes to include additional activities or areas; or 2) there is unforeseen discovery of sensitive or cultural resources. Environmental reevaluation will be required if either of these conditions are met.

Air Quality

Per the Air Quality Memo, dated January 12, 2026, the project is not expected to cause any operational effects on air pollutants. During construction, the proposed project will generate air pollutants. Caltrans Standard Specifications pertaining to dust control and dust palliative requirements are a required part of all construction contracts and should effectively reduce and control emission impacts during construction.

Biological Resources

Per the Natural Environment Study with Minimal Impacts report, dated January 16, 2026, the project area is highly disturbed with existing residential activity, agricultural use, and traffic from SR 152/Volta Road. Project activities are not expected to increase the amount of existing disturbance, including noise and vibration. By following best management practices, it is unlikely that project activities would contribute to the spread



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of noxious weeds. By implementing avoidance and minimization measures, the project would avoid impacts on the special status animal species that occur or have the potential to occur within the project biological study area. The following avoidance and minimization measure would be implemented in the project:

Measure 1: Pre-construction Bird Surveys – If construction activities take place within the nesting season (February 1 to September 30), pre-construction surveys for birds and nests will be completed within 14 days prior to the beginning of construction activities. Appropriate no-disturbance buffers will be implemented around any nests that are found. No work will occur in the no-disturbance buffers unless approved by a qualified biologist.

No aquatic resources that qualify as waters of the United States or waters of the State were identified within the project area, so the project would not result in impacts to any waters of the United States, or waters of the State. No special status plant species or natural communities of special concern were observed in the project area. No essential fish habitat is located within the project area, therefore, no consultation with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries is required. No Clean Water Act Section 404 permit or Section 401 Certification is required. No consultation under the Federal Endangered Species Act or California Endangered Species Act is required. No California Fish and Game Code Section 1600 Agreement is required.

Climate Change for CEQA

Per the Climate Change Risk and Adaptation Report, dated January 30, 2026, this type of project generally causes minimal or no increase in operational GHG emissions and will not increase the vehicle capacity of the roadway or the vehicle miles traveled (VMT). While some GHG emissions during the construction period would be unavoidable, no increase in operational GHG emissions is expected.

All construction contracts include Caltrans Standard Specifications related to air quality. Section 7-1.02A and 7 1.02C, Emissions Reduction, requires contractors to comply with all laws applicable to the project and to certify they are aware of and will comply with all ARB emission reduction regulations. Section 14-9.02, Air Pollution Control, requires contractors to comply with all air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes. Certain common regulations, such as equipment idling restrictions, that reduce construction vehicle emissions also help reduce GHG emissions.

The following additional measures will be implemented in the project to reduce GHG emissions and potential climate change impacts from the project.

1. Caltrans will implement energy efficient construction methodologies.
2. Caltrans will implement water efficient construction methodologies.
3. Caltrans will incorporate Complete Streets components that make non-auto modes of transportation more attractive
4. Caltrans will incorporate fire/heat resistant materials for culverts and Complete Street elements (signage, etc)



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5. Caltrans will implement practices for reducing roadway construction /demolition waste.

Community Impacts

Per the Community Impacts Assessment Memo, dated February 4, 2026, the project would have no adverse impact on the local community, or its character or cohesion. No impacts are expected to timberland or emergency services in the project area, and the project would have no significant impacts on existing land use, farmland, or utilities. Growth is not anticipated, and the project would be consistent with all applicable State, regional, and local plans. Therefore, no avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures are proposed at this time.

Cultural Resources

Per the Historic Properties Survey Report, dated January 14, 2026, Caltrans, pursuant to Section 106 PA Stipulation IX.A, has determined a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected is appropriate for this undertaking because there are no historic properties within the project Area of Potential Effect (APE).

Cumulative Impacts for CEQA

Per the Cumulative Impacts Analysis No Effect Memo, dated February 5, 2026, the project is not anticipated to result in any significant or incrementally significant impacts to any natural resources. Therefore, there would be no cumulative impacts as a result of the project.

Energy

Per the Energy Compliance Memo, dated January 6, 2026, due to the scope of this project, it will not increase capacity. As such, this project will not result in changes in traffic volumes, vehicle mix, or any other factor that would cause an increase in energy consumption from that of the No-Build Alternative. Construction impacts to energy consumption would be short and temporary in nature and offset by implementing best management practices. Operational/maintenance impacts to energy would be mitigated via increasing the intervals between future routine maintenance activities and emergency repairs.

Floodplain

Per the Floodplain Analysis dated January 7, 2026, the project location falls within an area in which flood hazards are undetermined, but possible. The project does not consist of a longitudinal encroachment or a significant encroachment on the base floodplain. The project area does not fall under Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPB) jurisdiction, so a CVFPB permit is not required.



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Hazardous Waste

Per the Initial Site Assessment dated January 8, 2026, there are no open or closed remediation site cases within or adjacent to the project area. Therefore, the potential to encounter contaminated soil on this project is considered minimal. Soil surveys for aerially deposited lead (ADL) and organochlorine pesticides (OCPs) shall be conducted prior to construction. Management and disposal of treated wood waste would be required, so include Standard Special Provision (SSP) 14-11.12.

A lead compliance plan (LCP) developed by a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) is required for ground disturbing activities, as stated in Caltrans' Standard Special Provision (SSP) 7-1.02K(6)(j)(iii) - Earth Material Containing Lead. If yellow striping will be removed separately, SSP 14-11.12 is required for proper management of hazardous waste residue and a lead compliance plan.

Noise

Per the Noise Compliance Study dated November 19, 2025, the project is not likely to introduce any potential for long-term traffic noise impacts as a Type I project. Noise from construction activities may intermittently dominate the noise environment in the immediate area of construction. No adverse noise impacts from construction are anticipated because construction would be conducted in a rural setting and in accordance with Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02. Furthermore, implementing the following measures would minimize the temporary noise impacts from construction:

- Do not exceed 86 dBA Lmax at 50 feet from the job site activities from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.
- Equip an internal combustion engine with the manufacturer-recommended muffler. Do not operate an internal combustion engine on the job site without the appropriate muffler.

Paleontological Resources

Per the Paleontological Identification Report dated November 19, 2025, a low potential paleontological resource underlies the project area. The low potential sediments consist of the late Pleistocene to Holocene aged San Luis Ranch Alluvium. Excavation in the San Luis Ranch Alluvium will impact the resource; however, the proposed excavations will reportedly be limited to shallow soils (<5 feet). As a result, scientifically significant fossils are unlikely to be encountered, and paleontological mitigation is not recommended.



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Section 4(f)

Per the Section 4(f) memo, dated January 30, 2026, no Section 4(f) resources exist within 0.5 miles of the project. There would be no impact to Section 4(f) resources as a result of the project.

Visual

Per the Visual Impact Assessment Questionnaire and Landscape Recommendation, dated January 9, 2026, the project is visually highly compatible with the existing project environment. No scenic resources exist within the area of visual effect. No or negligible visual changes to the environment are proposed.

Water Quality

Per the Water Quality Compliance Memorandum, dated January 10, 2025, the project is not expected to result in long-term water quality impacts on nearby surface water and groundwater. Short-term potential impacts to a nearby surface and groundwater could occur due to accidental spills or poor management of handling hazardous materials, fuels, and other potential chemicals used during construction. If the potential water quality impacts are correctly identified and mitigated through the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs), then the potential for adverse effects on surface or groundwater quality would be eliminated. By incorporating proper and accepted engineering practices and BMPs, the proposed project would not have significant impacts on water quality during construction or its operation.