Notice of Exemption

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

From: California Department of Transportation
500 South Main Street
Bishop, Ca 93514

Project Title: Searles Valley Thin Blanket

Project Applicant: California Department of Transportation

Project Location - Specific: On U.S. Route 395, from postmile 7.0 to postmile T14.94, in Kern County

Project Location - City: Ridgecrest, Ridgecrest Heights

Project Location - County: Kern

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The purpose of this project is to restore and extend the service life of the pavement and improve ride quality for the traveling public on U.S. Route 395 in Kern County near Johannesburg from 1.9 miles north of Garlock Rd to 0.1 miles south of South China Lake Blvd. The pavement within the project limits needs to be rehabilitated to extend its service life and reduce maintenance costs. The project proposes adding a 0.14' hot mix asphalt overlay, placing 3' wide shoulder backing, and installing centerline and edge line rumble strip. Methyl methacrylate paint traffic striping, pavement markings, and recessed pavement markers will also be placed over the hot mix asphalt overlay. Existing signs will need to be removed or relocated in several locations. All work and contractor staging areas will be confined to Caltrans right-of-way.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Department of Transportation

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: California Department of Transportation

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: 15301 Class 1(c)
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project aims to restore and rehabilitate deteriorated existing highway with no expansion of existing use in alignment with CEQA Categorical Exemption 15301 Class 1(c). The proposed work will be conducted on existing pavement and previously disturbed shoulders within Caltrans right-of-way. Similarly, staging areas will be limited to previously disturbed areas within Caltrans right-of-way. By adhering to the environmental commitments required by the technical studies, this project will not impact any known environmental resources. No exceptions to Categorical Exemptions apply.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Kristopher Bason Phone number: 760-784-4056

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: Kristopher Bason Date: 11/03/2026 Title: Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

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Final Audit Report 2026-11-03

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