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

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): State Route 173 Maintenance Improvements

DIST-CO-RTE: 08-SBD-173 **PM/PM:** 12.852 / 23.040

EA: 08-1T510 **PN:** 0826000076 **Federal-Aid Project Number:** N/A

Project Description

Caltrans proposes to perform pavement rehabilitation work and maintenance on State Route 173 (SR-173) in San Bernardino County. Pavement rehabilitation scope will include removing and replacing asphalt (dig outs), crack treatment, slurry seal of the asphalt, and traffic striping. All work will be performed within Caltrans Right of Way.

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 (d)**. (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

Kourtney Graves	Kourtney Graves	10/1/2026
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager

Michael Ristic	Michael Ristic	10/08/2026
Print Name	Signature	Date

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 (26)**
- ☐ **23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (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

Kourtney Graves	Kourtney Graves	10/1/2026
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Michael Ristic	Michael Ristic	10/08/2026
Print Name	Signature	Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): 9/30/2026
Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 9/28/2026

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).

Continuation sheet:

Purpose and Need:

The purpose of this project is to protect existing pavements from moisture intrusion, and to improve friction along SR-173 in San Bernardino County. Small cracks will be filled at various locations within the project limits. The entire pavement within the project will be slurry sealed once cracks are filled. Traffic stripping will be done once cracks are filled and the slurry sealing is done. This project is needed to prolong and extend the life of the highway pavement. This project will not provide any staging areas for the contractors.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Screened Undertaking Memorandum: August 5, 2026

The provisions of PRC 5024 MOU, Attachment 2, have been applied to this Project. This project falls under: Class 1, “Pavement reconstruction, resurfacing, shoulder backing, or placement of seal coats,” Class 10, “Repair of the highway and its facilities,” and Class 14, “Installation, removal or replacement of roadway markings, such as painted stripes, raised pavement markers, thermoplastic tape, or raised bars, or installation of sensors in existing pavements.”

Caltrans’ policy is to use the instructions outlined in the 106 PA attachments, and for state-owned resources in the 5024 MOU attachments for defining Screened Undertakings (Attachment 2).

The cultural resources review was performed by Professionally Qualified Staff (PQS) Shannon Clarendon Principal Investigator-Prehistoric Archaeology, and included a review of the Environmental Study Request, location maps, CCRD, aerial photography, historic topographic and aerial maps, Caltrans Bridge Inventory, and the conceptual design footprint. Based on this review, the undertaking, as currently proposed, has no potential to affect historic properties or historic resources eligible for or listed on the NRHP/CRHR.

As a result, this undertaking is exempt from further review, no additional archaeological or built environment studies are required at this time and the CEQA cultural resources component, and PRC 5024 compliance are complete. This memorandum documents compliance with the agreed-upon historic preservation procedures.

Please note that this assessment could change, and additional studies may be required if the project changes and ensure the following measures found in the Caltrans 2025 Standard Specifications in the Plans (14-2.03A), Specifications, and Estimates apply to this project and are to be included in the Environmental commitments record:

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures:

- **CR-1:** If buried cultural resources are encountered during Project activities, it is Caltrans policy that work stop within 60 feet of the area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find.

- **CR-2:** In the event that human remains are found, the county coroner shall be notified and ALL construction activities within 60 feet of the discovery shall stop. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, if the remains are thought to be Native American, the coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) who will then notify the Most Likely Descendent (MLD). The person who discovered the remains will contact the District 8 Division of Environmental Planning; Gabrielle Duff, Environmental Branch Chief: (909) 501-5142, and Julie Scrivner, DNAC: (909)-260-8265. Further provisions of PRC 5097.98 are to be followed as applicable.

- **CR-3:** Cultural sensitivity training will be provided prior to start of construction.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Email to File: September 15, 2026

Due to the fact this project is within previously disturbed area, no paleontological studies will be required for this project.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Natural Environmental Study, Minimal Impacts (NES-MI): September 23, 2026

All work will be limited to Caltrans Right of Way and does not occur within a MSHCP, Caltrans will implement Standard Best Management Practices (BMPs), and avoidance measures will be followed. Due to these avoidance measures, this project will have *No Effect* and *No Take* of listed species or habitat.

Evidence supporting this conclusion was obtained through two field visits conducted on August 20, 2026, and September 11, 2026, by Environmental Scientists Edward Lamas and Christine Rodriguez, accompanied by Student Assistants Aleio Morales and Ann Beasley. Additional sources of evidence included the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPAC), USFWS Designated Critical Habitat GIS Data, ESRI Sentinel-2 Land Cover Explorer, and the California Native Plant Society Rare Plant Inventory (CNPS).

Comprehensive site visits were conducted to thoroughly document preconstruction conditions through a detailed photo log and to systematically assess potential habitats.

These in-person surveys confirmed that rare plant species were not observed along the unpaved shoulder during the evaluation. Furthermore, cross-referencing with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) data verified that there are no historical occurrences of protected plant species overlapping with the project footprint.

CDFW CNDDB identified several historical observations within the project area. All observations, except for a bald eagle sighting on the south shore of Lake Arrowhead in 2008, were recorded prior to 1980. Given the proximity of these observations to the project site, appropriate avoidance measures will be implemented. Additionally, CDFW CNDDB records indicate a Spotted Owl (Strix occidentalis) activity center, designated as SBD0147, observed in 1993. However, subsequent surveys—36 in total, conducted between 2005 and 2010 resulted in negative findings, with no confirmation of presence according to the metadata.

Review of the USFWS Designated Critical Habitat GIS data indicates that no designated critical habitat borders or overlaps the project footprint. This finding is corroborated by the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPAC) report, which confirms that no critical habitats are identified in proximity to or overlapping the project area.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures:

- **BIO-1:** Preconstruction Nesting Bird Survey: If project activities cannot avoid the nesting season, generally regarded as Feb 1 – Sept 30, then preconstruction nesting bird surveys must be conducted 5 days prior to construction by a contractor supplied biologist to locate and avoid nesting birds. If an active avian nest is located, a no construction buffer may be established and monitored by the contractor supplied biologist and the Caltrans Biologist and Resident Engineer must be notified.
- **Bio-2:** Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP): A contractor supplied biologist must present a biological resource information program/WEAP for nesting birds prior to project activities to all personnel that will be present within the project limits for longer than 30 minutes at any given time.
- **Bio-3:** Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA): To avoid potential impacts to spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*) delineate this area as an ESA as shown on the plans, the off-pavement area between PM 15.4 – 15.6.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Initial Site Assessment: August 5, 2026

This is a maintenance project. The project description suggests that the work is limited to the paved roadway from EP to EP, and no excavations or soil disturbance will occur, and hence, no aerially deposited lead (ADL) survey is required for the project. This project was determined to have a low risk for hazardous waste.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures:

- **Haz-1:** SSP 6-1.03: Conditions for use of local materials from non-commercial sources.

- **Haz-2:** SSP 36-4: Residue Containing Lead from Paint and Thermoplastic; requires a lead compliance plan (LCP) and item 070030 for LCP.

NOISE

Noise Memorandum: September 14, 2026

This project falls under Type III project categories of 23CFR772.7 in the Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol dated April 2020. Per the Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol, "Type III projects do not require a noise analysis." Thus, it is considered an exempt project. Hence, no noise study is needed.

AIR QUALITY

Air Quality Memorandum: September 9, 2026

The project's purpose to protect existing pavements from moisture intrusion, fill small cracks, and improve surface friction has been reviewed and determined to qualify as an exempt project from all air emissions analysis as it falls under the broad category of "Pavement resurfacing and/or rehabilitation" as outlined in Table 1 of the Caltrans Carbon Monoxide Protocol and Table 2 of 40 CFR 93.126; and therefore, no air quality study is needed.

Air Quality Checklist: September 9, 2026

This project is exempt from all project level Conformity requirements per 40 CFR 93.126: Pavement resurfacing and/or rehabilitation.

GREENHOUSE GASES (GHG)/CLIMATE CHANGE

Construction GHG Emissions Analysis: September 9, 2026

Based on the project information provided by the Generalist of Environmental Planning, the Cal-CET air modeling software CAL-CET2021 Upgrade (v1.0.0) was used to estimate construction and Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are summarized below. The GHG estimates for construction emissions on-road/offsite operations have been deduced as Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO2e) averaging 1.30 Metric Tons and **64.84** Metric Tons during the 50 days of construction activity.

Project Construction GHG as CO_2e (CO_2 Equivalent) during the 50-days construction activity = **64.84** Metric Ton.

PERMITS and AGREEMENTS

According to the NEM Memo, there are no permits for this project.

In conjunction with the results of the above technical documentation, the Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measure(s) included in the Environmental Commitments Record (ECR), are expected to be implemented, as applicable. Changes to the project's scope of work will require that the District's Division of Environmental Planning be notified in a timely manner, to determine if an Environmental Re-Evaluation will be required to confirm that the environmental documentation for NEPA/CEQA compliance, remains valid.

Updates to the original Technical Studies, or preparation of new Technical Studies may be required, and/or a new CE/CE Determination Form may need to be completed, and/or an Environmental Document may need to be prepared and approved, to document the project's compliance with all applicable NEPA/CEQA requirements.