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

Project Information

Project Name: SBD Digouts FY 27/28

DIST-CO-RTE: 08-SBD-I-15 & I-40 **PM/PM:** 15: R125/R140; 40: R114/R129

EA: 08-1T471 **PN:** 0826000148 **Federal-Aid Project Number:** NA

Project Description

This project proposes to improve pavement conditions through pavement digouts consisting of approximately 4,000 CY of replace asphalt concrete surfacing (HMA-A) as well as object marker installations, the removal/replacement of existing roadside sign panels/signposts and new roadside sign locations on Route 40 from PM R114 to PM R129 and on Route 15 from PM R125 to PM 140 in San Bernardino County. All work is within State 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 (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

Kourtney Graves	Kourtney Graves	10/20/2026
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager

Michael Ristic	Michael Ristic	Oct 20, 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 (c)(26)**
- ☐ **23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)()**
- ☐ **Activity Enter 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

Kourtney Graves	Kourtney Graves	10/20/2026
Print Name	Signature	Date

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Michael Ristic	Michael Ristic	Oct 20, 2026
Print Name	Signature	Date

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): 10/6/2026
Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: 10/20/2026

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 preserve and extend the service life of the existing roadway, in spot locations along Interstate 15 (I-15) and Interstate 40 (I-40) in San Bernardino County. Asphalt will be replaced and resurfaced.
The need for the project is several locations within the project limits have experienced asphalt deterioration and distress that may negatively impact long term pavement quality, performance, ride performance, and maintenance operations if not addressed.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Screened Undertaking Memorandum: September 15, 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 4, "Establishment of chain control areas, park-and-ride lots, or maintenance pullouts," Class 10, "Repair of the highway and its facilities," 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," Class 19, "Any work on Category 5 bridges, including rehabilitation or reconstruction," and Class 22, "Replacement of existing highway signs."

The cultural resources review was performed by Professionally Qualified Staff (PQS) Shannon Clarendon Principal Investigator-Prehistoric Archaeology and included a review of the original Environmental Study Request and revisions, 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.

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 nature of this project, no paleontological studies will be required for this project.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Natural Environmental Study, No Effect Memo (NES-NEM): September 28, 2026

The portion along I-40 intersects the Fenner Spring, West of Flattop Mountain and Flattop Mountain USGS 7-minute quads. The ecoregion is Mojave Desert. The ecoregion subsections are Providence Mountains and the Lanfair Valley/Piute Valley- Sacramento Mountains. Terrestrial connectivity rank (ACE) in this area ranges from a connectivity rank of 1 (limited connectivity opportunity) through 4. Most of the Project being within areas of rank 4, which signifies conservation planning linkages. The area surrounding the Project Impact Area (PIA) and the Biological Survey area (BSA) is a part of the California Essential Habitat Connectivity (CEHC). Between PM R114 through R123.7, the Project intersects Mojave Desert Tortoise critical habitat. Vegetation throughout this area is a variety of creosote, cat claw acacia, cacti and saltbush.

The I-15 portion intersects West of Soda Lake, Soda Lake North, and Baker USGS 7-minute quads. The ecoregion at this location is also Mojave Desert. The ecoregion subsections are Silurian Valley – Devil's Playground and Mojave Valley – Granite Mountains. Terrestrial connectivity rank (ACE) in this portion of the Project area range between rank 3 (connections with implementation flexibility) to rank 4. The PIA and BSA at this location is also surrounded by CEHC. Desert Tortoise critical habitat exists approximately 2.49 miles away from the PIA but does not intersect it. Vegetation at this location also consists of creosote, buckwheat and brittlebush.

Disturbance will occur off pavement during the installation of new signs, which will all be located on previously disturbed and regularly maintained shoulders and median gore areas. This disturbance will reach a maximum of 5 feet in depth. Project activities will be minimally disruptive, as the vibrations and noise produced would be similar to what is produced by daily traffic. In addition, proposed sign locations are in areas that are highly disturbed. Staging areas will be determined by the contractor. In order to avoid impacts to sensitive areas or species, Caltrans will implement BIO-General-1.

One location proposed for sign installation is on I-40 at PM R115.20. This location is within Mojave Desert tortoise critical habitat. Mojave Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) are a federally threatened species and a State endangered species. Desert tortoise are often found in habitats that include desert scrub, desert washes, and Joshua Tree habitats. They require friable soil for burrow and nest construction. The most recent occurrence of Mojave Desert tortoise was in 2007 approximately 1.15 miles away from the PIA. Desert tortoise fencing has been previously installed along this portion of I-40 and is currently in good condition, however, due to proposed off-highway work within critical habitat, Caltrans will implement BIO-General-6, BIO-General-7, and BIO-Reptile-1, to avoid any potential impacts.

Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*) is a state candidate threatened species often observed near desert washes, Mojavean desert scrub or Sonoran desert scrub. They usually nest within cholla cactus or other desert shrubs, approximately 3 feet above the ground. Breeding typically occurs between January and June. Le Conte's thrasher tend to be exceptionally wary of humans. Although habitat is present within the BSA, the most recent occurrence of Le Conte's thrasher near the proposed project area is recorded to be in 1986. It is unlikely that proposed project activities will have an impact on this species. However, Caltrans proposes pre-construction nesting bird surveys (BIO-Avian-1) be completed prior to construction if project activities are set to occur between January and June.

Project locations along I-40 and I-15, include various desert plant species covered by the California Desert Native Plants Act. This act prohibits the harvest, transport, sale or possession of specific native desert plants, unless a valid permit has been obtained. Desert species such as teddybear cholla (*Cylindropuntia bigelovii*), Engelmann's hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus engelmannii*) and Mojave yucca (*Yucca shidigera*) are all covered by this act and were observed within the Project BSA. No vegetation removal is proposed for the Project, therefore, no impacts to any native desert plants are expected.

Work will be limited to Caltrans right of way, within previously disturbed areas, void of suitable habitat. Caltrans will implement Standard 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.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures:

- **Bio-General 1: Equipment Staging, Storing & Borrow Sites.** All staging, storing, and borrow sites require the approval of the Caltrans biologist.
- **Bio-General 6: Species Avoidance.** If during project activities a Mojave Desert tortoise is discovered within the project site, all construction activities must stop within 200 meters and the Caltrans biologist and Resident Engineer must be notified. Coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be required prior to restarting activities.
- **Bio-General 7: Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP).** A Contractor supplied biologist must present a biological resource information

program/WEAP for Mojave Desert tortoise 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-Reptile 7: Equipment Flagging.** Project personnel must attach surveyor flagging tape to a conspicuous place on each piece of equipment to remind the operator to check under the equipment for Mojave Desert Tortoise before operating equipment at any time.
- **Bio-Avian 1: Preconstruction Nesting Bird Survey.** If project activities cannot avoid the nesting season, between January through September, then preconstruction nesting bird surveys must be conducted 3 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.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Initial Site Assessment Checklist: September 28, 2026

In coordination with District Environmental Engineering, this project was assessed on September 28, 2026. The Initial Site Assessment determination of this project has a Low Risk for the potential of hazardous waste involvement.

Depending on the striping removal method, the SSP for Haz-3 needs to be included in the project's Special Provisions and requires a Lead Compliance Plan (LCP).

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures:

- **Haz-1: Use of local material.** SSP 6-1.03B: Conditions for use of local material from non-commercial source, or source not regulated under California jurisdiction.
- **Haz-2: Management of Treated Wood Waste.** SSP 14-11.14: Store treated wood waste at the jobsite until transported to the CA permitted disposal site.
- **Haz-3: Removal of Yellow Traffic Striping.** SSP 14-11.12 7-1.02k(6)(j)(ii): "Submit the lead compliance plan as an informational submittal;" requires bid item #070031 *"Lead Compliance Plan (Informational)"*

Note: The Division of Environmental Analysis (DEA) GIS Library maps indicated possible Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) at the I-40 Eastbound between PM 127.50 and 127.75. However, since the project work is confined between the Edge of Traveled Way (ETW), this presence does not present a substantial risk to project operations. This information is provided solely for situational awareness to ensure the contractor is aware of the presence of NOA within the project area.

NOISE

Noise Memorandum: September 24, 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 24, 2026

The scope of this project has been evaluated as exempt project that falls under exempt project type "Pavement resurfacing and/or rehabilitation" listed under Table 1 of Caltrans Carbon Monoxide Protocol or Table 2 of 40 CFR 93.126. Thus, no Air Quality study is needed.

Transportation Air Quality Conformity Findings Checklist: September 14, 2026

The project is exempt from all project-level conformity requirements per 40 CFR 93.126.

GREENHOUSE GASES (GHG)/CLIMATE CHANGE

Construction GHG Emissions Analysis: September 28, 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 (CO_2e) averaging 4.53 Metric Tons and **136** Metric Tons during the 30 days of construction activity.

Project Construction GHG as CO_2e (CO_2 Equivalent) during the 30-days construction activity = **136** Metric Tons.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures:

- **GHG/CC-1:** Limit idling to 5 minutes for delivery and dump trucks and other diesel powered equipment (with some exceptions).
- **GHG/CC-2:** Schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours.
- **GHG/CC-3:** For improved fuel efficiency from construction equipment:

- Maintain equipment in proper tune and working condition
- Use right sized equipment for the job
- Use equipment with new technologies.

PERMITS and AGREEMENTS

According to the NES-NEM, 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.