Notice of Exemption

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

From: Caltrans District 2
1657 Riverside Drive
Redding, CA 96001

Project Title: Caltrans Encroachment Permit 02-25-6-BB-0476 for the ADF-F12-CD2-UG1

Project Applicant: American Dark Fiber, LLC

Project Location - Specific: State Route 97 in Siskiyou County from post mile 33.905 to 12.121

Project Location - City: near Weed and Macdoel Project Location - County: Siskiyou

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

American Dark Fiber, in coordination with the California Department of Technology, proposes installation of approximately 80,899 linear feet of three 1.25-inch high-density polyethylene (HDPE) conduits with fiber optic cable within Caltrans right-of-way along State Route (SR) 97 in Siskiyou County, California. Installation methods include horizontal directional drilling (HDD) as the primary method, with rock saw or trenching methods potentially used where HDD is infeasible due to subsurface conditions, subject to Resident Engineer and Caltrans approval. Work also includes placement of temporary traffic control devices and signage and installation of 89 vaults, each approximately 36 inches wide by 60 inches long by 24 inches deep. All work will take place within the Caltrans right-of-way.

This project would include the installation of approximately 10,000-miles of broadband infrastructure throughout California within the State Highway System, including Interstate routes.

Due to the varied topography and locations of the 10,000-mile broadband infrastructure across the State of California, the design would be dependent on project site features. Work would include the installation of subsurface broadband conduit and fiber, the installation of network repeater hubs at approximately 50-mile intervals, as well as the installation of vaults (Pull, Splice, and Buried) at various locations.

All work will take place within 30-feet of highway rights-of-way except where not feasible. The areas of project impact in most areas will be limited to the existing paved surfaces, disturbed shoulders, and maintained Caltrans right-of-way.

Purpose: This Middle-Mile Broadband Network project will install the broadband infrastructure along the State Highway System (SHS) necessary to connect to a third-party operated Last Mile Broadband Network which will bring internet connectivity to homes, businesses, and community institutions.

Need: In July 2021, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law Senate Bill (SB) 156 to create an open-access middle-mile network to bring high-speed broadband service to all Californians.

The lack of available middle-mile broadband infrastructure has been a major issue in connecting California's communities. The statewide open-access middle-mile network included in SB 156 is a foundational investment to ensure every Californian has access to broadband Internet service that meets the connectivity needs of today, and well into the future. This project intends to support providing critical statewide broadband infrastructure to enhance access to and increase the affordability of high-speed internet for all Californians.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Caltrans (for issuance of encroachment permit)

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: American Dark Fiber, LLC

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: _____
- ☒ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Public Resources Code Section 21080.51

Reasons why project is exempt:

Senate Bill 156 (chaptered July 21, 2021) added section 21080.51 to the California Public Resources Code (PRC) to exempt by statute Middle Mile Broadband Network projects. As such, Caltrans has determined that the project is exempt by statute in accordance with PRC Section 21080.51. The project would have no significant effect on the environment.

Lead Agency Contact Person: David DeMar Phone number: (530) 759-3406

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: Date: 11/4/2026 Title: Branch Chief

☒ 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.