

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

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

**FROM:** San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District  
Maintenance & Engineering Department  
300 Lakeside Drive  
Oakland, CA 94607

☒ Alameda County Clerk-Recorder's Office  
1106 Madison Street  
Oakland, CA 94607

**ENDORSED  
FILED  
ALAMEDA COUNTY**

**MAY 14 2020**

**Project Title:** Measure RR Program Traction Power System Improvements Project

MELISSA WILK, County Clerk  
By CB Deputy

**Project Location (Specific):** Near San Leandro Boulevard/Washington Avenue intersection  
(APN 075-0087-012)

**Project Location (City):** San Leandro

**Project Location (County):** Alameda

**Project Description:** The San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) is an electricity-powered commuter transit line. Electrification is provided by "traction power" substations located along the transit line right-of-way. These substations are comprised of power transformers and switching equipment to step down the high voltage power received from the electric utility service provider (Pacific Gas & Electric Company [PG&E]), which is then distributed to the traction power substations via "switching stations". BART proposes improvements to one of its existing at-grade switching stations, Watson Avenue Switching Station, referred herein as "AWA". AWA is located near Washington Avenue in the City of San Leandro, south of 137<sup>th</sup> Avenue, below an aerial BART track guideway located approximately one (1) mile south of the San Leandro BART Station (1401 San Leandro Boulevard, San Leandro, CA 94577). The project will require facility upgrades, procurement and installation of replacement equipment for the existing switching station which currently supplies power for BART operations. Please see Attachment A for additional information.

This Notice of Exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was prepared based on the content contained in BART's Traction Power Facilities Replacements Conceptual Engineering Report (35% level of design) dated September 11, 2018; the Draft Geotechnical Report prepared by Earth Mechanics, Inc. and Parsons Corporation dated February 1, 2019; the TPF Transformer PCB Level Report prepared by BART dated February 15, 2019; and the engineering drawings contained in BART's Traction Power Facilities Replacement 50% level of design submittal package dated February 26, 2019 and 95% level of design submittal package dated November 1, 2019.

Specific engineering drawings reviewed include:

- Existing Site and Demolition Plan (C201-AWA), dated: 02/26/2019 (50%), 11/01/2019 (95%)
- Construction Staging Plan (C202-AWA), dated: 02/26/2019 (50%), 11/01/2019 (95%)
- Site Plan (C203-AWA), dated: 02/26/2019 (50%), 11/01/2019 (95%)
- Grading and Drainage Plan (C221, C222-AWA), dated: 11/01/2019 (95%)
- Enlarged Site Plan (TP232-AWA), dated: 02/26/2019 (50%)
- Enlarged Grading and Drainage Plan (C222-AWA), dated: 02/26/2019 (50%)
- Right of Way Plan (W201-AWA), dated: 02/26/2019 (50%)
- Site Layout Plan (TP231-AWA), dated: 02/26/2019 (50%)
- Right of Way Plan (C201-AWA), dated: 09/11/2018 (35%), 02/26/2019 (50%), 11/01/2019 (95%)
- Utility Plan (U201-AWA), dated: 09/11/2018 (35%), 02/26/2019 (50%)

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Steve Sims, Traction Power Project Manager, San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

**Exempt Status: (check one)**

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 158268);
- ☐ 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; CEQA Guidelines Article 18, Section 15275(a)

**Reasons why project is exempt:** The proposed replacement of the traction power substation equipment qualifies for a statutory exemption from CEQA, as the project fits into the context of the exemption language and no other significant effects on the environment will result due to unusual circumstances. Statutory exemptions from CEQA are granted by the California Legislature, and apply regardless of the environmental impacts of the project for state policy reasons. A statutory exemption is provided under Section 21080(b)(10) of the California Public Resources Code (also included in the CEQA Guidelines Article 18 Section 15275(a)). This statutory exemption applies to mass transit projects that involve the institution or increase of passenger or commuter service on rail lines already in use. This project proposes removing aging train control equipment and upgrading to a new system, which will support increased capacity and higher service frequencies. Please see Attachment A for additional information.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Steve Sims

**Area Code/Telephone/Extension:** (510) 464-6417

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption filing.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 4/23/2020

Title: Project Manager

- ☒ 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.

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

**Jun 22 2020**

**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT  
MEASURE RR PROGRAM:  
TRACTION POWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

**AWA – WATSON AVENUE SWITCHING STATION  
CEQA STATUTORY EXEMPTION**

**ATTACHMENT A**

**FEBRUARY 2020**

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

- 1. Project Title:**  
Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Measure RR Program Traction Power System Improvements Project  
AWA – Watson Avenue Switching Station
- 2. Lead Agency Name and Address:**  
San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District  
Maintenance & Engineering Department  
300 Lakeside Drive  
Oakland, CA 94607
- 3. Contact Person and Phone Number:**  
Steve Sims  
Traction Power Project Manager  
(510) 464-6417

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Notice of Exemption was prepared based on the content contained in BART's Traction Power Facilities Replacements Conceptual Engineering Report (35% level of design) dated September 11, 2018; the Draft Geotechnical Report prepared by Earth Mechanics, Inc. and Parsons Corporation dated February 1, 2019; the TPF Transformer PCB Level Report prepared by BART dated February 15, 2019; and the engineering drawings contained in BART's Traction Power Facilities Replacement 50% level of design submittal package dated February 26, 2019 and 95% level of design submittal package dated November 1, 2019.

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### **PROJECT LOCATION**

The project site is located approximately 150 feet northwest of the existing Watson Avenue switching station, below the aerial BART tracks, near the San Leandro Boulevard and Washington Avenue intersection in the City of San Leandro, CA (see Figures 1 and 2). The existing switching station is located at-grade, below the BART aerial track guideway, adjacent to an existing Pacific Gas & Electric



Company (PG&E) electrical substation. The closest BART station in proximity to the project site is the San Leandro BART Station, which is located approximately one (1) mile north from the project site. The existing facility is located in APN 077B-1225-10. The project site will be located in the adjacent APN 075-0087-012.

A systemwide map of BART stations and routes is provided in Figure 3 for reference to the regional passenger rail system.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS ON THE PROJECT SITE**

AWA is an existing, at-grade and outdoor switching station that supplies electrical power for BART trains. The project site and the facilities it contains are owned, operated, and maintained by BART.

The project site is zoned "Industrial General" per the City of San Leandro's zoning map. The zoning designation conditionally permits major utility uses, which includes electrical substations. Because the project will be replacing an existing conditionally permitted use, there will be no conflicts with the City of San Leandro's land use plans, policies, or regulations.

Neighboring uses around the project site include industrial uses to the north and west, public/institutional uses to the south (existing PG&E electrical substation), and medium-high density residential uses to the east.



AWA - Switching Station  
 Regional Location

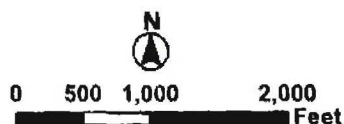


Figure 1. Regional Location



Project site boundaries depict approximate project area and are not exact.

**Figure 2. Project Location (Aerial Photo)**



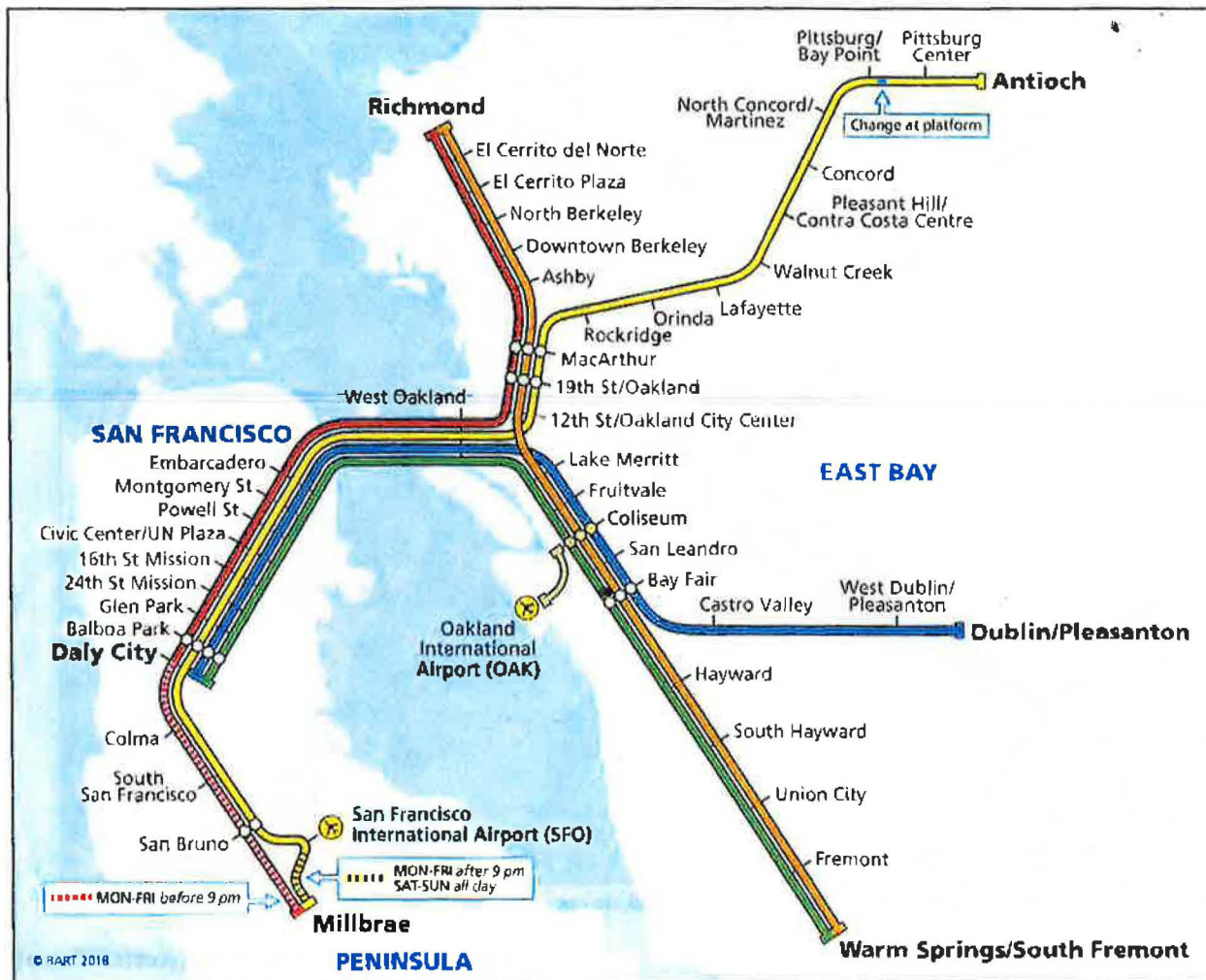


Figure 3. BART Systemwide Map

## PROPOSED PROJECT AND CONSTRUCTION ELEMENTS

This project includes demolition of the existing switching station equipment and construction of a new switching station facility on property owned by BART. During the design process, it was determined that a new water service application will need to be submitted to the East Bay Municipal Utility District for water connection to the project site. Additionally, an encroachment permit from the City of San Leandro is required for a new storm drain connection. The construction contractor will be responsible to verify and obtain all the necessary permits for the construction of the project's facilities.

The new switching station will continue to serve as the feeding point for the third rail. The associated equipment upgrades are necessary to continue the conversion of electricity to be utilized by the BART trains for propulsion and auxiliary power supply need.

Given the scope of this project, key environmental considerations pertaining to construction and operation of the project is provided below.



### **PROPERTY NEEDS**

Union Pacific Railroad (UP) currently owns, operates, and maintains right-of-way approximately 15 feet south of the project site (see Figure 2 for location of UP tracks). During the pre-construction phase of this project, BART will coordinate with UP to receive a right-of-entry permit to conduct construction activities near the UP right-of-way, if needed. No temporary or permanent easements will be required to construct the proposed project outside of BART right-of-way.

### **AESTHETICS**

Given that this project will construct new traction power facilities at-grade would replace the existing outdoor switching station and a currently vacant area, potential impacts with aesthetics and visual quality was considered. The project is located in an industrial, developed location within the City of San Leandro. Existing views surrounding the project and nearby areas are generally urban and defined by industrial and commercial buildings. No scenic vistas are within the project area and the project site is not within or adjacent to a state scenic highway. The project is not designated or identified as a scenic resource and it does not contain a scenic resource.

The project will alter the visual landscape of the study area by adding traction power substation equipment at-grade approximately 10-15 feet above grade. However, the height of the traction power equipment will generally be screened by a new 10-foot concrete perimeter wall, resulting in a less than significant impact for viewers in the project area.

### **UTILITIES**

A new water line connection will be required to supply water to the project site to support an emergency eye wash for maintenance personnel (requirement of BART facility standards). The proposed connection will not result in a conflict to existing water lines and relocation of this utility type will not be required. Prior to construction, BART will submit a new water service application and water capacity fee to the East Bay Municipal Utility District to support this new connection.

Surveys of telecommunication lines within the project area are still being evaluated. If it is determined at a later time that potential conflicts or relocations may result, BART will work with the affected utility owner(s) and additional evaluation may be necessary.

### **GRADING, DEMOLITION, AND TREE REMOVAL**

The scope of work to construct AWA does not require tree removal. However, activities that will occur prior to construction will include demolition of the existing AWA traction power substation equipment, site clearing, and grading of the project site within BART owned, operated, and maintained right-of-way. BART will work with the City of San Leandro to obtain the necessary permits/approvals prior to the start of the pre-construction activities, as needed.

### **GEOLOGICAL HAZARDS**

Geological hazards consist of fault rupturing, landslide, subsidence, expansive soils, flooding, scouring, liquefaction, lateral spreading, and inundation. According to USGS, the project site runs parallel to the Hayward Fault and is located less than 2 miles to the west. The project site does not intersect with the Hayward Fault, its fault zone or any other known faultline; therefore, there is no fault rupture hazard associated with the project site. The California Geological Survey does not map this site within a landslide-prone region.

According to the Draft Geotechnical Report prepared for this project, no significant land subsidence is known to have occurred in the past and the risk associated with land subsidence is considered low. In

addition, the Draft Geotechnical Report states that the project site has low risks associated with flooding, scouring, and expansive soils.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map does not map this site in a flood or an inundation zone. The Draft Geotechnical Report notes that the proposed traction power substation will not be located at a river, stream or creek crossing and therefore susceptibility to scour will not occur. The California Geological Survey maps the project site in a liquefaction zone and therefore, may be subject to lateral spreading. AWA will be built in compliance with BART facility standards based on its seismic zone and the class level of the project site.

#### **HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Recent tests have confirmed that existing traction power substation transformers may contain elevated levels of carbon monoxide, methane, ethylene, and ethane gases or a PCB level (ppm)  $\geq 50$ , which are considered hazardous. For AWA, levels of hazardous materials were not detected because the switching station does not contain transformers.

The project will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations governing the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials during construction. Operation of the project will involve the occasional use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials that could include limited quantities of battery acid, vehicle fuels, oils, transmission fluids, paints, solvents, cleaners, and pesticides. No industrial uses or activities are proposed that will result in the use or discharge of unregulated hazardous materials and/or substances, or create a public hazard through transport, use, or disposal, and the project will not generate large amounts of hazardous materials that will require routine transport, use, or disposal. Use and transport of hazardous materials will be regulated by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, local fire codes, and all other federal, state, and local regulations. All hazardous materials will be required to be contained, stored, and used in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and handled in compliance with applicable standards and regulations.

#### **HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY**

The project will incorporate design features to address water quality impacts. Stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces will be routed through a new overflow inlet and catch basin on-site. The inlet and catch basin constructed as part of AWA will filter stormwater runoff from the project site prior to discharge into the stormwater drainage system. The project will result in an increase in impervious surface but this increase will be minor (less than 1 acre in size). The project will not rise to the level of causing or contributing runoff water which will exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.

#### **TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PARKING**

During construction, construction vehicles will access the project site through a private driveway on the 2400 block of Washington Avenue, located approximately 100 feet north of the project site. Coordination with the adjacent property owner will take place during construction to keep the driveway clear of vehicles. At the completion of the project, four (4) new maintenance parking stalls will be provided per BART facility design standards. The parking stalls will be provided immediately east of the project site on BART right-of-way below the aerial guideway, off-site from public right-of-way.

#### **PUBLIC TRANSIT CONSIDERATIONS**

During construction, disruptions to BART operations will not occur because a portable switching station will be installed to be kept energized during the replacement of the AC house. There are no bus or rail stops within the immediate vicinity of the project site; therefore, potential impacts to outside transit

providers are not anticipated. After construction, the rehabilitated switching station equipment will support increased capacity and higher service frequencies on the BART system.

### **SPECIAL DISTRICT PARAMETERS**

BART was formed as a county-based special district in 1957 by the California State Legislature. The special district formation was made in response to identifying the transit needs in the San Francisco Bay Area Region. Special districts are defined as local government agencies that provide public infrastructure and other essential services, including transportation, water, and recreation and parks. Special districts operate within a defined boundary that can include areas as small as neighborhoods to areas as large as multi-county regions, depending on the demand of services being provided.

California Government Code Section 53090 states that local agencies that provide governmental or proprietary function within limited boundaries, such as rapid transit districts like BART, are exempt from complying with local land use plans, policies, zoning ordinances and building ordinances (including building permits).

Although BART's transportation facilities may be exempt from some local regulations, the District will comply with the overall intent of the local regulations to the extent feasible and will work closely with the local jurisdictions to ensure that they are included in the overall project development process.

### **STATUTORY EXEMPTION APPLICABILITY**

Article 18 of CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15260 to 15285), includes a list of classes of projects that have been determined by the California Legislature to be statutorily exempt from environmental review under CEQA. Due to the nature of the proposed project, the proposed replacement of the traction power substation equipment qualifies for a statutory exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Article 18 Section 15275(a) - Specified Mass Transit Projects.

CEQA Guidelines Article 18 Section 15275(a) states that CEQA does not apply to mass transit projects that involve the institution or increase of passenger or commuter service on rail lines or high-occupancy vehicle lanes already in use, including the modernization of existing stations and parking facilities<sup>1</sup>.

The analysis contained in this document provides substantial evidence that the proposed project qualifies for an exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15275(a) as a Specified Mass Transit project as it will involve the institution or increase of passenger or commuter service on rail lines already in use. Modernizing BART's 45+ year old train control is an important component in addressing critical capacity, reliability and safety needs as BART places 775 new train cars into service. This project entails removing aging train control equipment from the BART system and upgrading to a new system.

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<sup>1</sup> Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; Reference: Section 21080(b)(11), (12), and (13), Public Resources Code.

