

**CITY OF FRESNO
CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT XC00050**

THE PROJECT DESCRIBED HEREIN IS DETERMINED TO BE CATEGORICALLY
EXEMPT FROM THE PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS
PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 19 OF THE STATE CEQA GUIDELINES.

APPLICANT: City of Fresno
Department of Public Works 2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721

PROJECT LOCATION: The proposed project is located on the south side of West Ashlan Avenue, between North Valentine Avenue and North Feland Avenue with an address of 3315 West Ashlan Avenue, Fresno.

(Council District 1)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project includes Construction of the new Fire Station No. 12. The 1.96 acres currently contains a 7,600 square foot retail building, which will be demolished in order to construct a new 12,000 square foot building on the site. The construction of the Fire Station building is critical to meet the demands of the city's population growth and increase in emergency calls.

This project is exempt under Section 15332/Class 32 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines as follows:

Under Section 15332/Class 32, the proposed project is exempt from CEQA requirements when the project is characterized as in-fill development meeting the following conditions:

- a) The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.

By current standards, the subject site is identified as "in-fill" within an urban setting. This project is located on a site within the City limits and is consistent with the Fresno General Plan designation, policies, and zoning. The existing IL (Light Industrial) zone is consistent with the fire station planned land use designations approved for this site by the Fresno General Plan and the Fresno High-Roeding Community Plan.

- b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses.

The subject property is located on a site of approximately ± 1.96 acres, which is less than the five-acre maximum, and is surrounded by other urban uses.

- c) The project has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.

The project site contains previously disturbed land and surrounding developments consists of a general retail, light industrial, and multi-family residential; therefore, the site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species.

- d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.

Traffic

Senate Bill (SB) 743 requires that relevant CEQA analysis of transportation impacts be conducted using a metric known as vehicle miles traveled (VMT) instead of Level of Service (LOS). VMT measures how much actual auto travel (additional miles driven) a proposed project would create on California roads. If the project adds excessive car travel onto our roads, the project may cause a significant transportation impact.

The State CEQA Guidelines were amended to implement SB 743, by adding Section 15064.3. Among its provisions, Section 15064.3 confirms that, except with respect to transportation projects, a project's effect on automobile delay shall not constitute a significant environmental impact. Therefore, LOS measures of impacts on traffic facilities are no longer a relevant CEQA criteria for transportation impacts.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b)(4) states that “[a] lead agency has discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology to evaluate a project’s vehicle miles traveled, including whether to express the change in absolute terms, per capita, per household or in any other measure. A lead agency may use models to estimate a project’s vehicle miles traveled, and may revise those estimates to reflect professional judgment based on substantial evidence. Any assumptions used to estimate vehicle miles traveled and any revisions to model outputs should be documented and explained in the environmental document prepared for the project. The standard of adequacy in Section 15151 shall apply to the analysis described in this section.”

On June 25, 2020, the City of Fresno adopted CEQA Guidelines for Vehicle Miles Traveled Thresholds, dated June 25, 2020, pursuant to Senate Bill 743 to be effective of July 1, 2020. The thresholds described therein are referred to herein as the City of Fresno VMT Thresholds. The City of Fresno VMT Thresholds document was prepared and adopted consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Sections 15064.3 and 15064.7. The December 2018 Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA (Technical Advisory) published by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR), was utilized as a reference and guidance document in the preparation of the Fresno VMT Thresholds.

The City of Fresno VMT Thresholds adopted a screening standard and criteria that can be used to screen out qualified projects that meet the adopted criteria from needing to prepare a detailed VMT analysis.

The City of Fresno VMT Thresholds Section 3.0 regarding Project Screening discusses a variety of projects that may be screened out of a VMT analysis including specific development and transportation projects. For development projects, conditions may exist that would presume that a development project has a less than significant impact. These may be size, location, proximity to transit, or trip-making potential. For transportation projects, the primary attribute to consider with transportation projects is the potential to increase vehicle travel, sometimes referred to as “induced travel.”

Staff conducted research using the Fresno Council of Governments (COG) Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Screening Tool to determine the VMT for the proposed project. The adopted threshold of significance is 13%, which means that projects that generate VMT in excess of 13% than the existing regional VMT per capita or per employee would have a significant environmental impact; projects that meet the 13% threshold are determined to have a less

than significant effect on regional VMT. Using the COG tool, the proposed office project is located within a low-VMT zone and is estimated to generate 10.1 VMT which is lower than the 22.3 VMT (13%) threshold. Additionally, the project is located in a high-quality transit buffer area pursuant to Fresno COG.

Noise

The project is a new fire station facility. The project site is located in a developed light industrial area, and adjacent to existing general retail, light industrial, and multi-family use residential; therefore, the project would not result in a significant amount of noise compared to other adjacent uses and would be conditioned to comply with any applicable noise standards of the Citywide Development Code.

Air Quality

The project is conditioned to comply with any applicable regulations from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the project is subject to review by the agency regarding air quality during construction and operation. The project as described will not occur at a scale or scope with potential to contribute substantially or cumulatively to existing or projected air quality violations or impacts.

Water Quality

The project is further conditioned to comply with any applicable conditions from Public Works or Utilities Department to ensure the project will not have an effect on water quality.

- e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

Given the surrounding properties have been substantially developed and utilities and public services already exist in the area, the site can be adequately served by all required utilities, including sewer, water, and solid waste, as well as public services.

None of the exceptions to Categorical Exemptions set forth in the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15300.2 apply to the project. Furthermore, the proposed project is not expected to have a significant or cumulative effect on the environment. The project is not located on a hazardous waste site, a historical resource, or adjacent to a scenic highway. A categorical exemption, as noted above, has been prepared for the project and the area is not environmentally sensitive.

Date: March 31, 2023

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City of Fresno

Public Works Department

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