



Meeting Date: February 26, 2025

Agenda Item: D.4

AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT

SUBJECT:

CEQA Exemption Bus Charging Infrastructure Project

SUMMARY:

On May 29, 2024, the Board of Directors approved the Mendocino Transit Authority Short-Range Transit Development Plan, which guides goals, objectives, and policies to support MTA decision-making over the next five years. One of MTA's objectives is to adopt fleet procurement practices that contribute to a carbon-neutral goal and meet the minimum standards set forth in the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulation.

Starting in 2026, CARB's ICT regulation mandates that small agencies like MTA ensure that 25 percent of new bus purchases yearly are zero-emission buses (ZEBs). By 2029, all new bus purchases must be ZEBs. The MTA has already begun to convert its fleet to ZEBs; the MTA purchased two electric cutaways in 2022 and one in 2024, and they have since been used to operate local fixed route service. The MTA also has plans to purchase three more electric cutaways and one electric coach bus in the next few years. These new ZEBs will be used to operate Route 5 in Fort Bragg and Route 9 in Ukiah. The MTA plans to upgrade its facilities to meet ZEB charging requirements over the next three fiscal years.

To comply with MTA's objectives and the ICT regulation, MTA must install Battery Electric Bus (BEB) charging infrastructure to meet the future BEB fleet's midday and overnight charging needs. MTA's Bus Charging Infrastructure project plans to install two BEB charging stations and a solar photovoltaic canopy at the Ukiah facility, as well as three BEB charging stations at the Fort Bragg facility. Provisions for future charging stations will be considered at both facilities.

As the lead agency for the Bus Charging Infrastructure project, MTA staff have determined that the project is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines. The project will directly contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adding to the resilience of MTA's energy needs. It can also reduce electric utility costs at the Ukiah facility by using a solar photovoltaic canopy to capture sunlight and generate electricity to charge buses.

An exemption falls under Public Resources Code Section 21080.25(b) (7)(A) for a public project to construct or maintain infrastructure or facilities to charge, refuel, or maintain zero-emission public transit buses, trains, or ferries, provided the project is carried out by a public transit agency in compliance with, the State Air Resources Board's Innovative Clean Transit regulations (Article 4.3 (commencing with Section 2023) of Chapter 1 of Division 3 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations) or any regulations identified by the State Air Resources Board's 2020 Mobile Source Strategy, adopted on October 28, 2021, and the project is located on property owned by the local agency or within an existing public right-of-way or on property owned by a public or private utility.

The Bus Charging Infrastructure project aims to construct zero-emission bus infrastructure and refuel zero-emission transit buses. Further, as the exemption requires, MTA is subject to and in compliance with the ICT regulations, and the project will be located on MTA property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Determine that the Bus Charging Infrastructure Project is classified as a public project to construct infrastructure to charge, refuel, power, and maintain zero-emission public transit buses, is exempt from CEQA, and is exempt under the Public Resources Code Section 21080.25(b)(7)(A); and
- 2) Direct staff to file a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk and the Office of Planning and Research that substantially conforms with the proposed recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS: None