1) What is the I-5/SR-56 Project?

This project will provide a better, less-congested freeway connection between I-5 and SR-56. This project addresses the I-5 South connection to SR-56 East and the SR-56 West to I-5 North connection to help reduce congestion associated with transferring from one freeway to the next.

2) What is the purpose of the I-5/SR-56 Project?

This project would help to improve travel times and address congestion on I-5, SR-56, and local arterials such as El Camino Real, caused by traffic going from Westbound SR-56 to Northbound I-5 or Southbound I-5 to Eastbound SR-56.

3) What are the project's objectives?

- Maintain or improve future traffic levels of service in 2030 over the existing and forecasted level of service.
- Maintain or reduce off peak and peak hour delay for SR-56 traffic moving to and from the north on I-5.
- Maintain or reduce peak hour congestion at the El Camino Real/SR-56 terminal.
- Maintain or reduce freeway related traffic bypassing the congestion traveling through local communities during the peak hour.
- Maintain or reduce congestion on I-5 and SR-56 during peak hours.
- Provide a facility that is compatible with future transit and other modal options.
- Follow the Regional Transportation Plan, Mobility 2030 – The Transportation Plan for the San Diego Region, SANDAG, April 2000 (2003 SANDAG RTP) where feasible and be in compliance with Federal and State regulations.
- Maintain the facility as an effective link in the intra-regional and inter-regional movement of people and goods.
- Avoid and minimize impacts to human and natural environment.

4) Are the I-5/SR-56 connectors included in the I-5 North Coast Managed Lanes Project?

No, improvements to address the I-5/SR-56 interchanges have separate usefulness,

as they address a different need than the managed lanes, and are therefore being pursued as a separate project in partnership between Caltrans and the City of San Diego.

5) Why were only two out of a possible four connectors built originally?

The short answer is that the cost did not outweigh the benefits. The traffic volumes did not warrant the West to North and South to East connectors at the time of the original design as the majority of cars were going East to South and North to West.

6) What studies have been done in this area?

A traffic study, which included traffic counts and volume forecast for the year 2030, has been completed. A bike path feasibility study was also completed in 2007 to review the possibility of extending the SR-56 bike path west of I-5. Preliminary geometrics are under way. Next, an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) will be prepared to compare benefits such as reduction of congestion and improved travel times with construction costs, and right of way and biological impacts.

7) Have any decisions been made on the connectors?

No formal decisions have been made at this point. The project is currently in the environmental studies phase. As part of that phase, alternatives are identified and studied. Selection of a preferred alternative will not occur until those studies are complete and the Draft EIR/EIS is released for public review and comment. Completion of studies and release of a document is currently scheduled for Fall 2010. Once a preferred alternative is selected, the project would compete with other important regional transportation projects for construction funding.

8) Where are the new traffic studies that say the improvements are needed now?

The 2030 Traffic Analysis for the Build, auxiliary Lane and No Build Alternatives will be presented at the May 15, 2008 Steering Committee Meeting.

9) Specifically, what alternatives are being considered?

There are currently five alternatives being considered that will be formally reviewed as part of the Draft EIR/EIS. Note that these alternatives will have significant differences in the level of traffic relief they can provide. The considered alternatives are as follows:

a) No Build Alternative

b) Auxiliary Lane Alternative

Includes widening of the city street and the freeway. This alternative would not construct either the Westbound to Northbound or the Southbound to Eastbound Connector. West of I-5, new retaining walls would be constructed on the existing slopes, but impacts would be east of the existing sound walls.

c) Connector Alternative

This alternative would require the realignment of Portofino Circle. To the North of Portofino Circle, new retaining walls are anticipated in the area of the existing sound walls. This alternative would require easements and would have right of way impacts, **but would not require acquisition of residences.**

d) Hybrid Alternative

Construct the Westbound and Northbound connector and components of the Operational Alternative. The operational components are intended to partially mitigate not building the Southbound to Eastbound connector.

Please note:

while studies are required for both Westbound/Northbound and Southbound/Eastbound connectors, if the cost and impacts of one significantly outweighs its benefits, that factor can cause only one to be constructed.

e) Modified Hybrid Alternative

The Hybrid with Flyover Alternative is a variation of the Hybrid Alternative. This alternative includes a proposed flyover structure that would connect eastbound Carmel Valley Road to the eastbound SR-56 fast lane, in addition to the westbound SR-56 to northbound I-5 connector featured in the Direct Connector Alternative.

10) Is it possible to get the West to North connector built without the South to East connector?

Both connectors need to be studied to the same level of detail during the environmental phase. Based on the determinations made from the studies, we will be able to determine whether we can possibly only construct one connector.

11) Have other alternatives been looked at?

Yes, numerous efforts have been undertaken by Caltrans, the City of San Diego, and the community to identify a range of feasible alternatives. Unfortunately, because of the numerous constraints in the area and impacts on the environment, many of those alternatives were found to not be feasible.

12) How will the alternatives be evaluated?

Selection of a preferred alternative will be based on balancing transportation benefits with costs, environmental and community impacts. Finding a solution that minimizes the impacts to the environment and to the communities in the area while still providing an acceptable level of service for the hundreds of thousands of people who use these facilities, is a challenge. Direct freeway-to-freeway connectors typically provide the highest level of service; however, these benefits must be balanced against the costs and project impacts.

13) Will noise be considered when evaluating these alternatives?

Yes, noise will be evaluated as part of the EIR/EIS study. Sound walls would be installed if they met the criteria for being reasonable and feasible during the EIR/EIS study.

14) What agencies are responsible for choosing an alternative?

As an interstate project, Caltrans and Federal Highway Administration are the lead agencies on the EIR/EIS. As such, they are responsible for selecting a preferred alternative in the environmental document. However, there are still many other permits and agreements required before a project like this can be conducted. Ultimately, funding and the timing of that funding will also be a significant issue. Identification of funding and funding priorities for these types of projects are primarily the responsibility of SANDAG.

15) When would this project be constructed?

There is no planned start date for construction. When construction begins is a function of which alternative is ultimately selected and how SANDAG prioritizes it for funding (compared to other transportation projects in the region).

16) How long does this process take from design to completion?

The length of time is contingent on the type of funding, environmental impacts, right of way impacts, complexities, and size of the project. For more information please go to, www.dot.ca.gov/hq/oppd/proj_book/overview.pdf

17) Where can I find more information on this project?

You can find more information by going to:
http:// www.keepsandiegomoving.com/I-5-project-5-56

18) How can I get more involved?

The best way to voice your opinion and stay up-to-date is to contact your Steering Committee representative. Steering Committee meetings provide a forum for input from community representatives, Community Planning Board members, the City of San Diego, Caltrans and other stakeholders. The meetings are an opportunity for the exchange of information that will be considered while determining design alternatives during the environmental approval process.

19) Why is the project being studied now?

Improvements at I-5/SR-56 are being studied for several reasons:

- The City of San Diego requested in August of 1997 that given the completion of the middle segment of SR-56 and the pending voter decisions to allow

development to occur in the "Future Urbanizing Zone", that Caltrans reassess their decision not to construct the "missing connectors".

- Prior to the full development of Pacific Highlands Ranch, passage of Proposition M in 1998 required that ramps for westbound SR-56 connecting with I-5 North and I-5 South and connecting with eastbound SR-56 be constructed and operational.

- In 2003, SANDAG identified the missing connectors at I-5/SR-56 in their 20-year transportation plan as the region's top priority for "missing connectors" projects.

- In 2004, San Diego voters included the project in the 40-year extension of TransNet – a regional half-cent sales tax collected to finance transportation improvements.

- The region is also studying the expansion of the I-5 Corridor. A decision on the ultimate configuration the I-5/SR-56 interchange is needed to avoid construction of expensive elements for the I-5 corridor improvements that would ultimately need to be removed and replaced to accommodate any improvements in the interchange area.

- $14 million in federal funds have been appropriated by Congress to complete the study.