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UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

I-5 widening is essential / Looming gridlock would hobble region's economy

By [Union-Tribune Editorial Board](#),

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Ah, the glories of San Diego County's coastline on a sunny summer day.

If you have lived in this region for any length of time, you surely have experienced many of them.

And, if you have, then you surely have experienced the less than glorious vagaries of traveling Interstate 5 between La Jolla and Oceanside on such fine days.

Whether you were going north and found yourself backed up for miles behind the swells and the sharps heading to the Del Mar races or were heading south with all the vacationers to the beaches in Carlsbad or trying to get onto state Route 78 to go inland or simply making your daily commute, you have suffered through the delays, harrowing bumper-to-bumper lane changes and all-around frustration that comes with traveling one of the region's most congested corridors.

Caltrans says that 700,000 vehicles, on average, travel the 30-mile stretch of I-5 between San Diego and Oceanside every day.

By 2030, the agency estimates, there will be a million cars and trucks a day making that drive.

If that happens without major increases in the freeway's capacity, the congestion described above will be recalled fondly as only a mild irritant compared to the gridlock of 2030.


That is why we welcome the ambitious plans of Caltrans and the San Diego Association of Governments – the regional agency in charge of long-term traffic planning – to study and eventually undertake an expansion of up to six lanes.

The cost of the project, between \$3.3 billion to \$4.5 billion, is daunting. But, officials say, half of it would come from TransNet revenue, the half-cent sales tax levy for transportation approved by voters in 2004. SANDAG believes the other half can be secured from state and federal sources.

More daunting than those costs, however, would be the losses in private-sector productivity, commerce in general, and tourism-related business in particular, if the region's major coastal artery becomes effectively gridlocked for much of every day.

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