

State Route 76 East

Preferred Alternative: Existing Alignment

The Need for an Improved Highway

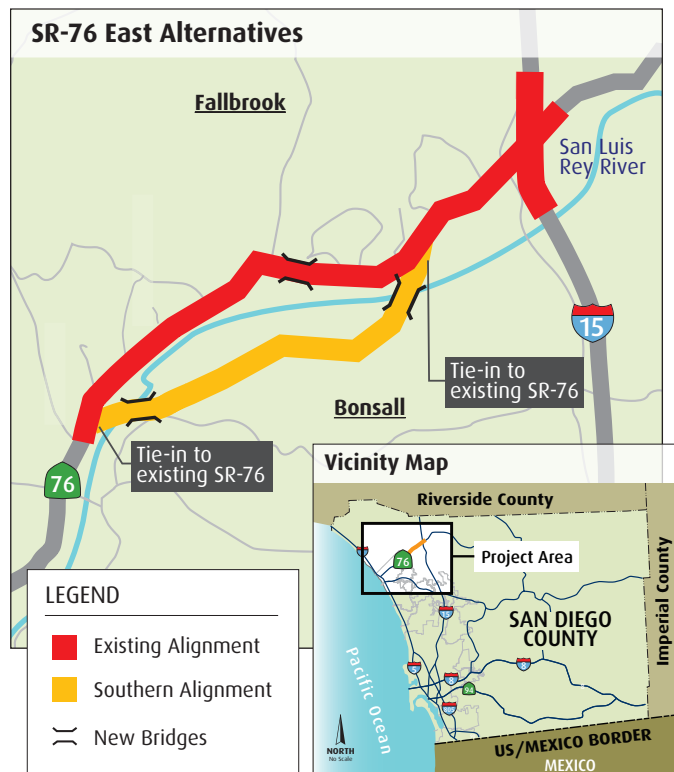
The State Route 76 (SR-76) East Segment extends from South Mission Road to just east of Interstate 15 (I-15) and completes the major link between Interstate 5 (I-5) and I-15. SR-76 is one of the high-priority transportation projects included in the region's *TransNet* Early Action Program. The two alternatives to create a four-lane highway will improve travel, safety and the environment in this segment. These options are currently in environmental review.

The Journey to a Better Highway

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act, a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) was prepared. It compared and analyzed two build alternatives, the Existing Alignment and the Southern Alignment, against the No Build alternative to determine how each would impact the environment and community. The Existing Alignment would widen and realign the current highway and the Southern Alignment would create a new highway south of the San Luis Rey River. The Draft EIR/EIS was circulated for public review and comment in September 2010.



Minimizing environmental impacts is an important component of the decision-making process.



A Balanced Approach: Identification of the Preferred Alternative

After analyzing all of the comments and balancing the environmental effects, costs and project benefits, Caltrans identified the Existing Alignment as the Preferred Alternative.

The Existing Alignment Has Broad Support.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Game concur that the Existing Alignment is the least environmentally damaging. The County of San Diego and adjacent tribal communities also recommend implementing the Existing Alignment.

The Existing Alignment Has the Least Environmental Impacts.

Keeping the East Segment north of the San Luis Rey River eliminates the fragmentation of large, undeveloped critical habitat south of the river. The Existing Alignment does not have the least amount of impacts to wetlands, but it does have the least amount of environmental impacts overall. The Southern Alignment would introduce a new barrier to wildlife, restricting animal movement and disrupting migration corridors. It would also introduce a new transportation corridor, increasing urbanization in a typically rural area.

**A Balanced Approach:
Identification of the Preferred Alternative (continued)**

The Existing Alignment Is the Most Cost-Effective.
Remaining along the north side of the San Luis Rey River, the Existing Alignment eliminates the need for, and cost of, two additional river crossing bridges that are required by the Southern Alignment. The total project cost for the Existing Alignment is \$201 million.

The Existing Alignment Is Consistent with Historical Planning.
The Existing Alignment is consistent with the state's current route adoption and the county's road circulation elements. For decades, regional planning and land use decisions have been made in consideration of an alignment that generally runs north of the San Luis Rey River.

The Project Will Be a Local and Regional Asset

The improvements to SR-76 are part of a vision to:

Improve Travel

- ▶ Increase capacity and reduce congestion by providing a four-lane highway that will meet present travel needs and accommodate future growth.
- ▶ Improve the I-15 interchange.
- ▶ Expand the Park & Ride at Old Highway 395 and SR-76.

Improve Safety

- ▶ Provide a median barrier to separate oncoming traffic.
- ▶ Realign curves for better sight/stopping distance and improved driving conditions.
- ▶ Provide a standard width shoulder in each direction to serve bicycles, pedestrians and emergency parking.



Environmental mitigation efforts protect, preserve & restore native plants like San Diego Ambrosia.

Improve the Environment

- ▶ Provide animal crossings and directional fencing to facilitate wildlife movement.
- ▶ Improve water quality by reducing pollutant run-off from the highway.
- ▶ Provide a net ecological benefit to the San Luis Rey River valley—going above and beyond required mitigation requirements.
- ▶ Collaborate with the County of San Diego and support plans for the San Luis Rey River Park.



Animal crossings & directional fencing facilitate the movement of Coast Horned Lizards & other wildlife.

Next Steps

The next step is for Caltrans to complete the final environmental report, anticipated in fall 2011. Once the final report is approved, the team will determine any necessary land acquisitions and begin negotiations on those properties. Construction will then begin on the following phases:

- ▶ Phase I: Improvements to the I-15/SR-76 interchange, spring 2012.
- ▶ Phase II: Roadway improvements, between South Mission Road and Old Highway 395, spring 2013.

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