

North Coast Corridor A Better Environment for the Future

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) are working to improve mobility, reduce travel times and relieve congestion along the North Coast Corridor (NCC), an economic lifeline for the region. The NCC consists of 27 miles connecting the cities of Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Solana Beach, Del Mar and San Diego. Improvements in the NCC represents several billion dollars of investment in the San Diego economy over the next few decades.



A Balanced Approach

The NCC Program is a balanced transportation system that provides travelers new solutions for the future while enhancing the quality of life within and throughout the NCC. The program is comprised of three primary projects, which benefit the region's many different customers and their different needs.

Four New Express Lanes on the Highway

- Two lanes in each direction that will accommodate carpools, vanpools and single occupancy vehicles using FasTrak®.
- Ensures a reliable travel time along the length of the corridor.
- Provides transportation flexibility to accommodate future demands.

Significant Coastal Rail and Transit Enhancements

- Invests more than \$400 million in new coastal rail projects over the next five years.
- Double tracks eight miles of the rail system over the next 10 years, and the entire length of the corridor from Oceanside to downtown San Diego over the duration of the program.
- Improves train frequency and expands service on the COASTER and Amtrak.

Commitment to Environmental Protection and Coastal Access

- Ensures a regional investment of over \$200 million to preserve and enhance sensitive coastal habitat.
- Safeguards the water quality of the six coastal lagoons along the corridor.
- Constructs and improves 23 miles of bike lanes and pedestrian paths.

I-5 Express Lanes Project Locally Preferred Alternative

Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have identified the Express Lanes Only (8+4 with Buffer/Striping) option as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the I-5 Express Lanes Project after extensive public outreach and consideration of input from the community and resource agencies. This option would add two Express Lanes in each direction from La Jolla to Oceanside, separated from the existing general purpose lanes by a painted, striped buffer.

Of the build alternatives studied in the project's Draft Environmental Impact Report, all of which were a significant improvement over the existing condition, the Locally Preferred Alternative offers the appropriate balance of benefits and costs to the environment and community and:

- meets the purpose and need of the project;
- has the least impacts to natural resources;
- requires the fewest property relocations; and
- has the lowest construction costs (estimated at \$3.5 billion).

The Locally Preferred Alternative includes a proposed Direct Access Ramp (DAR) at Voigt Drive and Manchester Avenue, providing direct access to the Express Lanes. In addition, the scale of the proposed DAR at Manchester Avenue is significantly reduced.

The Locally Preferred Alternative is consistent with Senate Bill 468, assuring balanced transit and highway solutions.

Collaborative Process

As one of many steps in the development of the NCC Program, Caltrans in accordance with state and federal environmental laws, developed and circulated a draft environmental document to address the highway component improvements.

The document analyzed four build alternatives and one no-build alternative. All four build alternatives included construction of two Express Lanes in each direction, auxiliary lanes where needed, Direct Access Ramps (DAR's), and various environmental, coastal and community enhancements. The key difference between the four build alternatives included:

- Should the express lanes be separated by a physical barrier or a four-foot painted buffer?
- Should there be one additional general purpose lane in each direction?

Subsequent to the release of the Draft environmental document, five public meetings were held about project alternatives to determine the best comprehensive regional transportation solution for the future.

Without improvements, the current commute time of 38 minutes along the corridor is expected to nearly double by 2030.

The I-5 Express Lanes Project is part of the TransNet program and is consistent with the SANDAG draft comprehensive regional transportation plan, called the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

Next Steps

Caltrans anticipates the release of a comprehensive coastal protection plan for the project in early 2012. The final environmental report for the project is expected in late 2012. Work will begin on Phase 1 of the project – which will extend high occupancy vehicle lanes, one in each direction, from Manchester Avenue to State Route 78 – in 2013.

