

The I-5 North Coast Corridor Project Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS

Another Step Closer to Delivering the Integrated Program of Transportation Improvements and Coastal Enhancements along the North Coast Corridor

Overview:

In 2012, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Interstate 5 (I-5) North Coast Corridor (NCC) Project. The I-5 NCC Project is the highway component of the larger North Coast Corridor Program of transit, highway, community, and environmental enhancements planned between Oceanside and Sorrento Valley.

The I-5 NCC Project Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS provides clarifying information and expands on the primary Draft EIR/EIS for the I-5 NCC Project released in 2010.

The supplemental environmental document includes information regarding completed lagoon hydrology studies, measures adopted to address coastal wetlands, proposed community and regional enhancements, and project phasing presented and adopted in the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan. Additionally, the document affirms the selection of the Express Lanes Only option (8+4 with Buffer Alternative) as the Caltrans Locally Preferred Alternative, which was announced in July 2011.

The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS does not substantially change the analysis contained in the highway project's original environmental document and does not include responses to comments received during that comment period. Public comment will be welcome on the new content contained in the supplemental draft.

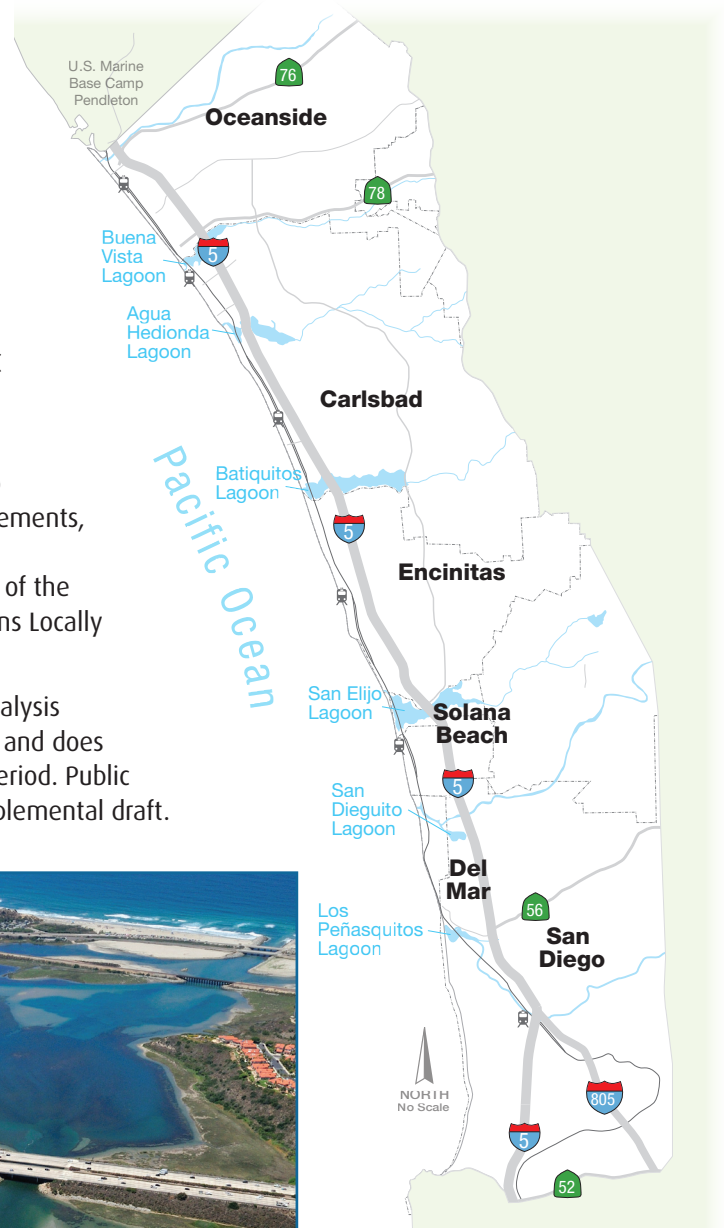
Key Features:

Creating Healthier Lagoons

The supplemental document includes recently completed technical studies that evaluated how enhancements to the corridor's highway and rail bridges could benefit the six coastal lagoons. The studies found that improvement to tidal flow and overall lagoon health could be achieved by lengthening or replacing the bridges, creating a wider opening for the lagoons' east-west connectivity.



Batiquitos Lagoon (shown above), along with San Elijo and Buena Vista lagoons, will include longer bridges for improved tidal flows.



NCC Program Area

Improving Coastal Wetland and Upland Habitats

The supplemental document describes a mitigation strategy for highway impacts to preserve, create and restore hundreds of acres of sensitive wetland and upland habitats. These efforts also will expand or accommodate existing wildlife corridors. This is a component of the comprehensive environmental enhancements in the NCC Program that also provides funds for long-term lagoon maintenance.

Completing a Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Network

The supplemental document further details the access and connectivity for wildlife and coastal resources through regional and community enhancement features. Among them are bicycle routes and pedestrian paths that would fill gaps across the lagoons and between existing trails in the cities along the NCC and connect to other regional routes.

Providing Four New Express Lanes

The selection of the Express Lanes Only option (8+4 with Buffer Alternative) as the Caltrans Locally Preferred Alternative is documented in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS. The Locally Preferred Alternative was identified after extensive outreach and collaboration with the community, resource agencies and the Federal Highway Administration.

Next Steps/Timeline:

The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS was released on August 31, 2012. Members of the public will have 45 days to review and comment on the information presented in the document. The public meeting will be held on September 19, 2012, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the City of Encinitas Community and Senior Center located at 1140 Oakcrest Park Drive in Encinitas. Comments received during the public comment period and at the public meeting will be combined with those collected previously and addressed in the project's Final EIR/EIS, which is scheduled to be complete in early 2013.



The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS describes a comprehensive mitigation program to preserve sensitive wetland and upland habitats.



The I-5 NCC Project includes replacement of the Aqua Hedionda bridge to reduce the number of columns in the lagoon.

Additionally, Caltrans and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) will release for public review a separate document, the Public Works Plan (PWP), for the larger NCC Program early next year allowing the community another opportunity to provide input on projects in the corridor. The PWP establishes the blueprint for the corridor's future that will improve circulation by integrating all forms of transportation including bicycles, pedestrians, trains and cars, as well as environmental enhancements. As a requirement of recent state legislation, Senate Bill 468, there will be two public hearings on the PWP before it is submitted to the California Coastal Commission in Spring 2013.

For more information on the I-5 North Coast Corridor Project Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS and the larger program of improvements planned in the North Coast Corridor, visit KeepSanDiegoMoving.com