

PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR THE TWO-COUNTY CORRIDOR STUDY

Background of the Two-County Corridor Study

Transportation agencies in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties have initiated a major effort to improve transportation between the two counties. The Two-County Corridor Study focuses on the area generally bounded by Interstate 10, Interstate 215, and State Route 60. The main purpose of the Two-County Corridor Study is to identify specific transportation solutions that can help improve mobility between State Route 60 and Interstate 10, with the specific intent of reserving right-of-way for the “preferred alternative.” Construction-level environmental documentation will be prepared at a later date. The preferred alternative is intended to accommodate transit vehicles as well as passenger cars.

The effort is being jointly managed by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG). These agencies are serving as joint lead agencies for the Environmental Impact Report.

The Two-County Corridor Study was initiated in Fall, 2000. Two committees were identified to guide the study, one involving a policy group of elected officials and the other a technical group of engineers and planners to direct the analysis. Public meetings were held in Moreno Valley and in San Bernardino County in April 2001 to obtain input from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in the area. Subsequent discussions were held at the technical and policy levels to determine how to proceed from that point on. It was determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be prepared to identify the right-of-way to be preserved.

Project Description

The “project” to be evaluated in the EIR is as follows:

Preservation of right-of-way for a new transportation corridor that could ultimately connect the SR-60/I-215 interchange in Box Springs (at the west end of Moreno Valley) with Barton Road, connecting to I-10 via existing planned California Street. This will be referred to as the “core” facility. Ancillary elements of the project would include the preservation of right-of-way for connections to this core facility from other arterial roadways in the Reche Canyon area, such as Reche Canyon Road, Reche Vista Ave., and Pigeon Pass Road. This EIR covers only the preservation of right-of-way for the core facility or ancillary elements so that all these alignments may be included in the circulation elements of the appropriate local General Plans. Some of the ancillary facilities are already included in local General Plans, but portions of their alignments may need to be refined to coordinate with the location of the core facility. Identification of the alignment on a General Plan does not necessarily mean that there is funding for such a facility, nor does it suggest the sequencing or phasing of facility construction.

Some of the basic design criteria for the core facility include the following:

- Facility type - a limited access expressway from I-215 to Barton Road, with intersections or interchanges at I-215, Pigeon Pass Road, Reche Canyon Road, and Barton Road, and an arterial roadway from Barton Road to I-10, following California Street. A four-lane tunnel (two tubes of two lanes each) would be constructed under Box Springs Mountain. At-grade intersections may be built at intersecting streets between I-215 and I-10 in an early phase, with interchanges constructed in a later phase. In addition, it is possible that the section from Pigeon Pass Road eastward could be built in an initial phase, with the section from Pigeon Pass Road to I-215 reserved for a later phase, due to the high cost of the tunnel portion.

- Number of lanes – four lanes in the limited access expressway section, with additional lanes as needed at intersections or interchanges; in the arterial section along California Street, six lanes with turn lanes sufficient to accommodate projected left and right-turning traffic.
- Cross-section – In expressway sections, rural-type cross-section (no curbs), consistent with local and/or Caltrans standards, with narrowing in tunnel and mountainous sections to reduce costs and to integrate with the environment; in the arterial section along California Street, comply with cross-section standards of the City of Loma Linda. The maximum right-of-way width required in the expressway section will be approximately 120 feet plus additional width for cut and fill. However, a wider potential right-of-way band may be established for preservation in some areas to allow for flexibility in future alignment decisions that best accommodate facility design features and that avoid and minimize potential impacts. The widest-right-of-way band would be in the range of 500 feet. At the same time, RCTC, SANBAG, and local governments will work with property owners to minimize the band width to the extent feasible so that the actual alignment can be identified as closely as possible at this stage.
- Design speed – 65 mph desired with 55 mph allowable in areas of difficult topography
- Habitat crossings – provide for habitat connectivity at appropriate locations, where feasible.
- No through trucks allowed.
- Access – provide no access to the facility in areas where no development is planned. In general, any access will be at intersections with other roadways, with no direct access to adjacent properties in areas along the expressway section. Access to businesses will be provided along the California Street section.

Exhibit 1 illustrates the proposed core facility and ancillary elements as a series of “alignment numbers.” There are several alignment variations for the core facility between I-215 and Barton Road. These are shown as variations of Alignment 1 – A, B, etc. The other alignment numbers represent possible ancillary connections to this core facility. The ancillary connections are proposed as controlled access arterials (i.e. private driveways will be redirected to a possible frontage road and enter at a traffic signal, to the extent possible). The ancillary connections include the following:

- **Pigeon Pass Road** - Widen, pave and realign Pigeon Pass Rd. to a four-lane arterial at the north end of Moreno Valley. Connect to the new core facility at the southeast side of the Riverside County Landfill. If the tunnel section of the core facility is not constructed until a later phase, improvements to Pigeon Pass Road southerly toward SR-60 may need to be considered as part of the interim solution.
- **Reche Canyon Road North** - Widen Reche Canyon Rd. to a four-lane arterial from the core facility to Barton Rd. in Colton; realign across from Hunts Lane and continue north on Hunts Lane to I-10.
- **Reche Vista Dr.** - Widen and realign Reche Vista Dr. from Perris Boulevard to Reche Canyon Rd. The widening would be to a four-lane arterial.
- **Connection from the core alignment northward to Main Street in Highgrove and Riverside Avenue/I-10 in Rialto**-This will be referred to as the Riverside Avenue connection. It would generally proceed from the core alignment across or around the closed Riverside County landfill, circumvent the Spring Mountain Ranch development, connect to Main Street in Highgrove, proceed westerly across I-215 to Riverside Avenue, and follow Riverside Avenue north to I-10. A variation of this alignment would include crossing I-215 at Main Street as stated above, but connecting to Pepper Avenue at I-10 rather than Riverside Avenue.

It should be noted that Interstate 10 and I-215 also link Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in this study area. Both of these facilities will require widening in the future. These improvement projects will

be considered separately from the Two-County Corridor Study. The connections being considered in this EIR are needed as a part of the overall improvement program for these growing areas.

Transportation Issues

A high level of interaction exists between the east San Bernardino Valley and Moreno Valley/eastern Riverside for employment, shopping, health care, and recreation. The primary cities within San Bernardino County with which Moreno Valley and Riverside interact are the Cities of San Bernardino, Colton, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, Redlands, Highland, and Yucaipa. The level of interaction will significantly increase in the future.

There are currently five primary highway route choices within this corridor. 1) SR 60 to the City of Riverside, then I-215 to San Bernardino; 2) SR 60 east to Beaumont then West on I-10 to destinations between San Bernardino and Yucaipa; 3) Pigeon Pass Road to Mt. Vernon Ave. (only a lightly-traveled dirt road in the northern section); 4) Reche Canyon Road; and 5) Moreno Redlands Boulevard to San Timoteo Canyon Road.

The following is a summary listing of transportation issues that exist in the Moreno Valley to San Bernardino County corridor. The "Existing and Future Conditions" section of the EIR discusses these problems and issues in greater detail.

- Population in this corridor is expected to nearly double over the next 20 years. Employment is expected to increase by slightly more than double.
- Travel options to the west and north are very limited for Moreno Valley residents. The most heavily used route is Reche Canyon Road, a two-lane roadway that currently carries approximately 7600 vehicles per day near the county line and 14,000 per day just south of Barton Road. The demand on Reche Canyon Road south of Barton Road is expected to increase to approximately 35,000 vehicles per day in year 2020, or 150 percent.
- Traffic is projected to increase on I-215 at the County line from 150,000 today to approximately 250,000 in year 2020. This 2020 volume is more traffic than is currently carried on SR-91 at the Riverside/Orange County line. Thus, even with improvements on I-215, congestion is expected to continue and increase. This will make the provision of an additional route between Riverside and San Bernardino Counties even more important than it is today.
- March Air Reserve Base (ARB) is planned as a major employment area and goods movement hub with a buildout potential for an estimated 38,000 employees. This will increase the importance to the Riverside County economy of maintaining mobility for this north-south movement. Loma Linda Hospital and ancillary facilities are expected to undergo a major expansion, adding some 5000 employees in the area surrounding the hospital. San Bernardino International Airport is undergoing an expansion as well, with significant increases in employment expected.
- Transit service between Moreno Valley to San Bernardino County is indirect and very limited. A trip from Moreno Valley to San Bernardino requires a transfer in Riverside to the Inland Empire Connection.

Project Objectives

Specific objectives of the project are to:

- Improve safety
- Reduce commute times between Moreno Valley and San Bernardino County
- Relieve existing and future congestion on north-south arterials

- Improve access to employment centers in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties (March ARB, SBIA, Loma Linda medical complex, etc.)
- Improve transit opportunities between the counties
- Support the vision and land use plans in each county
- Protect the environment and community character