

activities. The decision of where to locate the transportation corridors also informs government agencies, landowners, and residents so that timely land use policy decisions can be made and appropriate development standards can be implemented.

1.4 Growth Projections

The WT Corridor is located in an area with a population base of nearly 300,000 (source: Western Riverside Council of Governments and SCAG). Approximately 75 percent of the corridor is located within rural, agricultural, or undeveloped areas. The remainder falls within the incorporated areas of Hemet/San Jacinto and Murrieta/Temecula. The Cities of Temecula and Murrieta were both incorporated within the past ten years and have grown rapidly over that period. Combined, the cities account for a population of over 100,000 and for over 30,000 jobs. Development also has been occurring rapidly within the unincorporated portions of the corridor.

Table 1.A shows the year 2000 and projected 2025 population and employment for cities within the study area and for the unincorporated areas of Riverside County, as provided by the cities to the Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG). The table shows the growth for cities as a whole, not just the portion of the cities located within the immediate study area. The growth projection shows increases in population in the range of 8 percent to almost 400 percent, and increases in employment in the range of 32 percent to over 400 percent. The greatest percentage increase is in the City of Beaumont. The Cities of Murrieta and Temecula also show significant growth. The corridor also serves a substantial part of western Riverside County's unincorporated area, where population and employment are expected to nearly double between now and 2025.

1.5 Project Need

The rapid land use conversion from vacant and agricultural to developed subdivisions and commercial properties has outpaced improvements to the transportation infrastructure in western Riverside County. In western Riverside County overall, the population is expected to increase by over one million persons between 2000 and 2025, a more than 70 percent increase. Although currently funded transportation improvements will address some of the current and projected increased future demand, additional transportation improvements are needed to provide for the efficient mobility of goods and people over the long-term planning horizon to 2025 and beyond.

Without transportation improvements beyond those currently planned in western Riverside County, there will be inadequate access to the regional transportation system, increased local and regional traffic congestion, and inadequate mobility on existing facilities, including regional highways and local arterials within the study area in the future. There is a lack of an efficient north-south connection to address the projected movement of people and goods 25 years from now within the interior of western Riverside County.