

1.5.1 Problem of Limitations in North-South Access to Current and Future Employment Locations

Transportation infrastructure improvements are necessary within the WT Corridor to address the projected job growth in western Riverside County.

The co-location of jobs and housing, or a jobs/housing balance, is supported by the policies in the new Riverside County General Plan. For example, Land Use policy 7.12 is “Improve the relationship and a ratio between jobs and housing so that residents have an opportunity to live and work within the County.” Other Land Use Element Policies support the development of a balance of land uses that maintains and enhances the County’s fiscal viability and economic diversity (Policy LU 7.1), and promotes the development of businesses that would result in a better balance between housing and employment opportunities in the County (LU7.2, 7.3, 7.6, 7.7, and 7.8). However, while western Riverside County will experience a growth in employment, the imbalance of job opportunities relative to housing between western Riverside County and Orange County will continue in the future. Transportation infrastructure will be needed to accommodate the movement of a growing population in Riverside County to jobs both within and outside of Riverside County.

Adequate transportation infrastructure is needed to support the projected job growth in the Hemet/San Jacinto, Temecula, Murrieta, and the I-215 Corridor areas. The particular need in the WT Corridor is for high-speed access to Interstate 10 and Interstate 15, allowing for better access to markets, customers, and suppliers in San Diego, Mexico, the Coachella Valley, and points to the east along Interstate 10.

1.5.2 Problem of Inadequate Future Mobility on Existing Facilities Within the Study Area

One of the fundamental goals of CETAP and RCIP is to provide the transportation infrastructure needed to support the substantial increase in population and employment expected in Riverside County in the future. Year 2025 traffic projections in the WT Corridor indicate that many transportation facilities, including SR-79, SR-74, I-215, and I-15, will be operating at deficient levels of service (LOS), as defined by Caltrans. Most are projected to be operating at LOS F.¹ While many of these facilities have improvements planned or programmed in the next 20 years (refer to Section 2.5), regional traffic

¹ The quality of traffic is defined in terms of terms of a “level of service” scale, from A to F (Year 2000 edition of the *Highway Capacity Manual*, Transportation Research Board, Washington D.C., Chapter 1). Level of service (LOS) “A” means very good traffic flow; level of service “F” means very poor flow. Caltrans additionally defines degrees of level of service F by estimating the number of hours of traffic flow at LOS F. An “F⁰” means flow is at LOS F for up to one hour in the peak period. LOS F¹ means that flow is at F for one to two hours. LOS F² means that flow is at F for two to three hours, etc. Caltrans and Riverside County Transportation Commission policy for urban areas is to design freeways and arterials to accommodate projected traffic volumes 20 years after completion at a level of service (LOS) no less than “E” (Congestion Management Program, Riverside County Transportation Commission). See Figure 3.15.3 for an illustration of LOS.

forecasts indicate that additional transportation capacity will be needed to serve the long range build out of the new Riverside County General Plans and the General Plans of the cities in western Riverside County.

Sections of particular concern are SR-79 (Winchester Road) in the City of Temecula and the I-15 in the cities of Temecula and Murrieta. As development occurs in this corridor, traffic will increase well beyond the capacity of SR-79 to accommodate it. Just east of I-15, projected volume for year 2025 on SR-79 is 100,000 vehicles per day, representing LOS F for seven hours per day. In addition, through traffic in this area has little choice but to use SR-79 through the core commercial area of the City. Over time, as the interior of western Riverside County develops commercially, through truck traffic will increase on SR-79. The commercial nature and volume of through traffic is not compatible with SR-79 as an arterial street serving local commercial properties.

I-15 between SR-79 and I-215 is projected to carry over 250,000 vehicles in year 2025, operating at LOS F. This level of congestion will result in substantial spillover traffic to city streets.

I-15 is also a critically important goods movement corridor, linking San Diego and Mexico with the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties) and the greater Los Angeles region. Trucks make up approximately 15 percent of the traffic volume on I-15.¹ One of the major reasons for the high level of traffic demand on I-15 near Temecula is the convergence of major roadways (I-15, I-215, and SR-79). The I-215 and SR-79 terminate within three miles of each other at the I-15. With the I-15 already carrying heavy volumes as the main north-south freeway for this portion of western Riverside County, the problems are intensified by the convergence of these roadways in the same area. I-15 is an eight lane to ten lane freeway in this area and can accommodate the current volumes of traffic; however, LOS F conditions will occur in 2025. Relief of future traffic congestion on I-15 through Temecula has been a consideration in the development of alternatives for this corridor.

As a six lane facility, SR-79 east of I-15 in Temecula (Winchester Road) is currently carrying 34,000 vehicles per day. With few other existing east-west roadways in the City of Temecula, mobility is severely hampered for motorists during the peak periods. This specific lack of east-west mobility will increase pressures on existing east-west roadways and unnecessarily increase travel on north-south facilities. This will exacerbate both the local and regional traffic problems as traffic volumes on both the SR-79 and I-215 corridors increase.

The City of Temecula estimates that 25 percent of the workers living in that city travel to jobs in the San Diego region (source: commuter surveys of Temecula residents conducted by City of Temecula). As the San Diego region expands northward, this trend is expected to continue. Likewise, as growth moves northward from the Temecula/Murrieta area, the amount of travel through the cities to the San Diego region will increase. This will create an increasing problem of through traffic, including through truck traffic, traveling on the local streets of the cities of Temecula and Murrieta.

¹ Caltrans Annual Traffic Volume Report, 1999, and data on truck volumes from Caltrans web site, accessible through www.ca.gov.