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Express Lanes Only Option Identified for North Coast Corridor Program

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the 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. To achieve these goals, SANDAG and Caltrans have developed the NCC Program.

The NCC Program offers a balanced transportation system to provide travelers new solutions for the future while enhancing the quality of life for residents. The NCC Program is comprised of three primary focus areas – the Interstate 5 Express Lanes Project, coastal rail and transit enhancements, and environmental protection and coastal access improvements.

In July of 2011, after extensive public outreach and input from the community, resource agencies and key leaders, Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) identified the Express Lanes only option as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the I-5 Express Lanes Project. This option will add two Express Lanes in each direction from La Jolla to Oceanside, separated from the existing general purpose lanes by a striped buffer. The Express Lanes will be free for transit and carpoolers. Solo drivers will be able to pay a fee to use the Express Lanes.

Of the four build alternatives studied in the project's Draft Environmental Impact Report, the Express Lanes only option



The San Luis Rey inlet in Oceanside is one of several natural resources along the North Coast Corridor.



The Locally Preferred Alternative will add two Express Lanes in each direction along I-5, separated by a striped buffer.

offers the best balanced solution. It has the least overall environmental impacts; requires fewest acquisitions of right-of-way; requires fewest property relocations; and has the lowest construction costs – estimated at \$3.5 billion.

The identification of the Express Lanes only option is one of many steps in the development of the NCC Program. The next step will be for Caltrans and SANDAG to finalize a plan to ensure steps are taken to protect and enhance environmental resources, water quality and coastal access. The plan, called a Public Works Plan, creates a programmatic approach for implementing transportation and environmental improvements in a manner that preserves, protects and enhances the corridor's critical coastal resources. As a blueprint for the entire NCC Program, the Plan will provide assurances that the improvements are consistent with the California Coastal Act and are constructed to best balance improvements and minimize environmental impacts.

The I-5 Express Lanes Project is part of the *TransNet* program and is consistent with the recently adopted SANDAG 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

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Program Benefits

The NCC Program improvements represent several billion dollars of investment in the San Diego regional economy over the next few decades. The program:

- Provides four new Express Lanes for I-5 that will offer flexibility to accommodate future demands of the corridor;
- Invests about a half-billion dollars in rail improvements in the NCC Program area in the coming years, of which \$330 million is currently funded and in active engineering and construction;
- 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;
- Enhances coastal access by building or improving 23 miles of pedestrian and bike paths along the corridor; and
- Invests \$200 million in environmental enhancements for our coastal habitats.

Transportation Solutions for the Future



Spotlight on Coastal Rail

The NCC Program is a comprehensive plan comprised of highway, rail, environmental and coastal access improvements along the NCC, which stretches 27 miles along San Diego's coastline, crosses six lagoons and connects the cities of Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Solana Beach, Del Mar and San Diego.

I-5 Express Lanes Project

As a gateway to San Diego County, the I-5 is one of the most traveled highways in the nation. It carries locals and visitors to attractions such as world-renowned beaches and lagoons, Legoland, and the Del Mar Fairgrounds, and to employment centers and communities.

The I-5 has not had any major improvements since it was built in the 1960s and 1970s. Improvements are needed to keep pace with significant population, employment, and travel-demand growth expected in the corridor over the next 40 years. Currently, more than 700,000 vehicles a day travel along I-5 in the NCC.

In order to improve mobility along the corridor, SANDAG and Caltrans have proposed the I-5 Express Lanes Project. The project will provide two Express Lanes in each direction along I-5 in the corridor, accommodating carpools, vanpools, buses and single occupancy vehicles using FasTrak®. The Express Lanes will improve travel times along the freeway and create flexibility for future transportation projects.

Coastal Rail Enhancements

As a component of the NCC Program, the San Diego segment of the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN) plays a critical role in the movement of people and goods. Significant improvements to the rail system will include double tracking eight miles of the rail system over the next 10 years, and most of the corridor from Oceanside to downtown San Diego over the next 20 years.

Coastal rail improvements will result in several benefits for passenger and freight services. Some of these benefits include increased capacity and reliability; reduced travel times due to double tracking; improved integrity due to bridge replacement and modernization; and enhanced access at rail stations due to the expansion of parking options.

The LOSSAN rail corridor is the second busiest intercity rail corridor in the nation supporting commuter, intercity, and freight rail services. The 60-mile San Diego segment of the LOSSAN corridor extends from the Orange County line to the Santa Fe Depot in downtown San Diego. As part of the NCC Program, SANDAG, Caltrans, North County Transit District (NCTD) and Amtrak will invest \$330 million in new coastal rail projects in this segment of the corridor over the next five years.

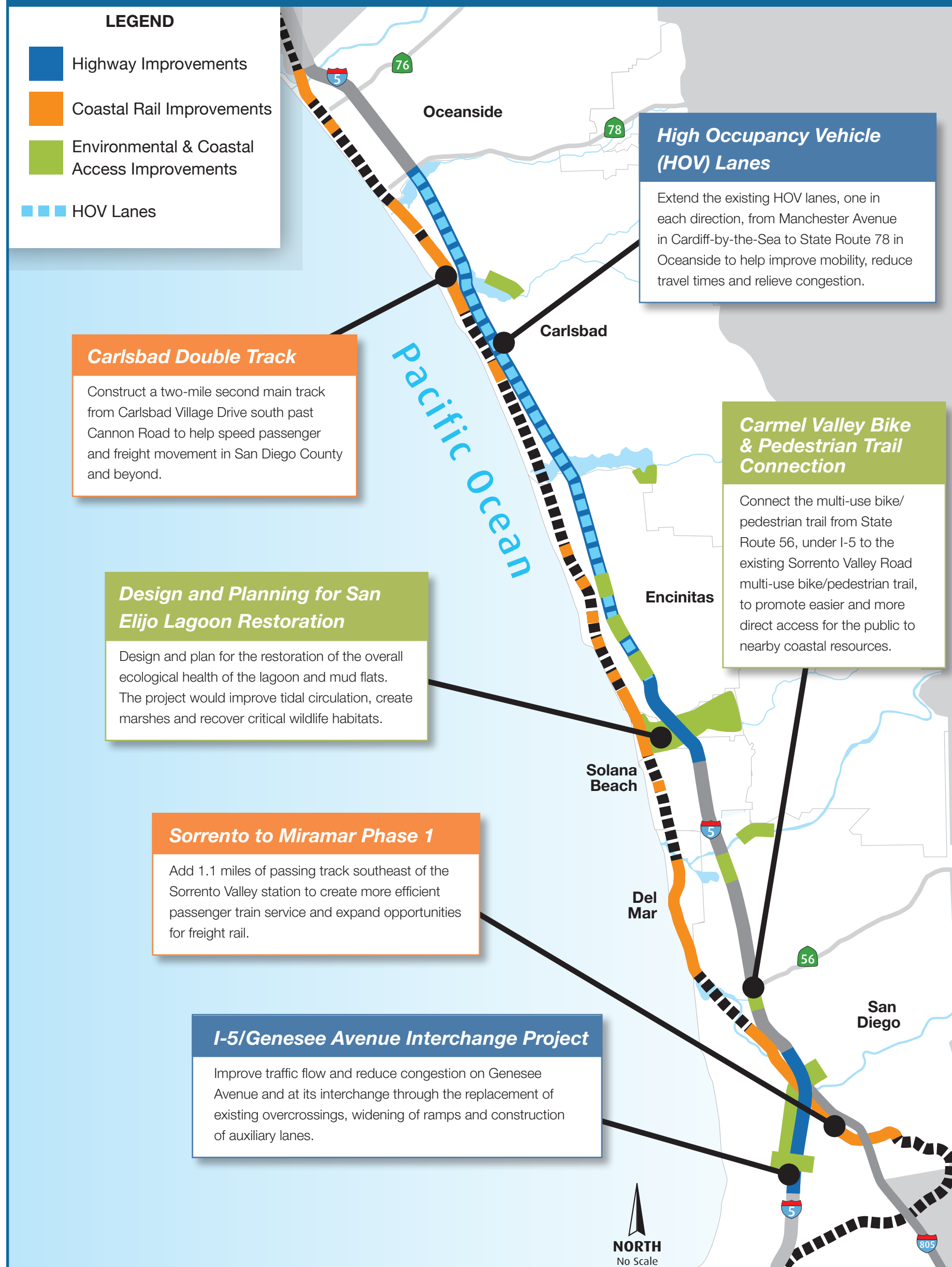
Environmental Protection and Coastal Access

Meeting the region's transportation needs in an environmentally responsible manner is a top priority of SANDAG and Caltrans. The NCC Program will ensure a regional investment of more than \$200 million to preserve and enhance sensitive coastal habitat and improve coastal access.

The NCC Program will safeguard the water quality of coastal lagoons along the corridor through the installation of runoff-capture devices. The project will improve tidal circulation by lengthening bridges, creating marshes and returning critical wildlife habitats to their natural state. In addition, it will result in the construction or improvement of 23 miles of bike lanes and pedestrian paths to promote public access to coastal resources.

Near-Term Projects

The NCC Program spans several decades. The map below highlights a few of the near-term highway, coastal rail, environmental protection and coastal access improvements.



Carlsbad Double Track Project to Improve Transit Efficiency

Construction crews have made significant progress on the Carlsbad Double Track project since beginning work in October 2010. The project, led by Amtrak in collaboration with SANDAG and NCTD, includes a two-mile second main track from Carlsbad Village Drive south past Cannon Road and the construction of a second rail bridge over Agua Hedionda Lagoon. Slated for completion in early 2012, the project will result in the creation of a five-mile stretch of continuous double track in Carlsbad.

Adding a second main track will significantly improve efficiency of the coastal rail system, leading to increased capacity and service. When combined with other double tracking efforts, passengers will see improved reliability and decreased travel times.

The project includes the addition of a second rail bridge over Agua Hedionda Lagoon.

Because this is an active rail line with up to 70 trains per day, some of the track work must be performed at night. Construction crews are working to minimize noise impacts to residents and will direct lighting away from residential structures to the greatest extent possible.

The total cost of the project is projected to be \$20.8 million. It is funded primarily by Amtrak, with additional funds from the state Traffic Congestion Relief Program and local TransNet revenues.

The Carlsbad Double Track project is one of several coastal rail improvement projects that are included in the NCC Program. Caltrans, SANDAG, NCTD and Amtrak are dedicated to improving our coastal rail system in order to enhance regional mobility and offer new transportation choices.



Congestion Relief Coming to Genesee Avenue Interchange

An unparalleled partnership was forged recently among state and local agencies and area businesses to bring long-awaited traffic congestion relief to the I-5/Genesee Avenue interchange. When it's finished in fall 2014, the I-5/Genesee Avenue Interchange Project will improve traffic flow in the University City area and complete a critical piece of the broader NCC Program of improvements.

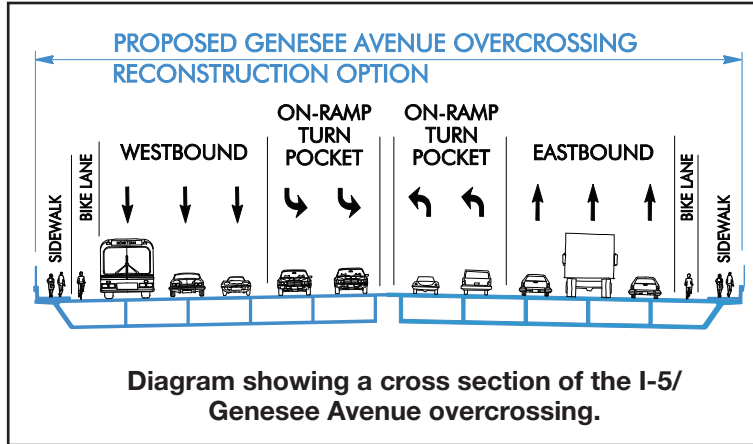
The \$94 million project was fully funded through contributions from Caltrans, SANDAG, the City of San Diego and area businesses. The partnership is a model for similar transportation projects around the region.

As part of the I-5/Genesee Avenue Interchange Project, the existing overcrossing at Genesee Avenue will be replaced with an improved bridge to

accommodate additional vehicle lanes, sidewalks and bicycle routes. The freeway on- and off-ramps at Genesee Avenue will also be widened to ease access to the freeway and to area businesses, UCSD and nearby hospitals.

An added improvement will include the construction of approximately three miles of bicycle paths in both directions from Roselle Street to Voigt Drive. The bicycle paths will be wide and separated from the freeway by a concrete barrier providing a much-needed link from the Sorrento Valley COASTER Station to the University City area.

Work on the I-5/Genesee Avenue Interchange Project is scheduled to begin in early 2013. The project is slated to open to traffic at the end of 2014.



SANDAG Working to Protect, Preserve and Restore Habitats

The SANDAG Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) will play an integral role in the development of the NCC Program by providing a blueprint for the restoration and preservation of environmental sites throughout San Diego County. The NCC Program includes several environmental enhancement projects such as the restoration and preservation of coastal lagoons and recreation areas.



The California Gnatcatcher is one of several species that inhabits coastal San Diego County.

Meeting the region's transportation needs in an environmentally responsible manner is a top priority of SANDAG. In a collaborative effort with local, state and federal agencies and nonprofit groups, SANDAG purchases, conserves and restores native habitats in conjunction with regional transportation plans. These land acquisitions are part of the EMP. The goal of the EMP is to mitigate impacts of regional and local transportation projects while helping to implement the region's habitat conservation plans.



The Los Peñasquitos Lagoon will see upland habitat restoration and wetland creation due to the Environmental Mitigation Program.

The EMP was established as part of *TransNet*, a regional half-cent sales tax for transportation projects approved by San Diego County voters in 2004. *TransNet* sets aside \$850 million to fund the EMP. The EMP has become a model for other agencies.

For more information on the Environmental Mitigation Program, visit KeepSanDiegoMoving.com/emp.

NEXT STEPS/TIMELINE

The public review period and public meetings for the NCC Program's Public Works Plan are scheduled for summer 2012. The final environmental document for the I-5 Express Lanes Project is expected in late 2012. Caltrans anticipates review by the California Coastal Commission in early 2013. Work will begin on Phase 1 – which will extend High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, one in each direction, from Manchester Avenue to State Route 78 – in late 2013.

For more information about the NCC Program, please visit KeepSanDiegoMoving.com, contact Caltrans Public Affairs at (619) 688-6670 or scan the QR code to the right using your smartphone's code reader app.



Nota: Para recibir este boletín de noticias en español por favor visite KeepSanDiegoMoving.com.



North Coast Corridor

A better environment for the future

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Welcome! to the first in a series of newsletters to keep you informed about the North Coast Corridor Program.