



Frequently Asked Questions

In preparation to switch operations from the widened median to the outside shoulders of I-5 in early 2020, crews are removing trees and plants along the freeway in the City of Encinitas. By working together early, the Caltrans and SANDAG Build NCC project team were able to limit the project and construction footprint and minimize the number of trees and plants required to be removed. Please see a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** below:

1) Why is tree and vegetation removal necessary along Interstate 5?

As part of the ongoing Build NCC project, I-5 will be widened an average of eight to ten feet on each side of the existing freeway, in order to add a new carpool lane in each direction. It is necessary to remove vegetation and trees within the Caltrans Right of Way in order to accommodate the widening of the highway.

2) What efforts were made to minimize the number of trees that need to be removed?

Caltrans and SANDAG took great care in developing a design that reduced the footprint of the project and limited construction access within vegetated areas. Grading was designed to minimize removal of significant vegetation. Slopes were designed to be slightly steeper to reduce the project and construction footprint as well, using a ratio of 1.5:1 (horizontal/vertical) slopes instead of a typical 2:1 slope. Additionally, retaining walls were designed to reduce the amount of slope disturbance.

During the design process, large, established trees within the project footprint were evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if they could be protected in place and incorporated into the final design plans. Additionally, during active construction, trees just outside the construction zone are specifically marked for protection purposes and are continuously monitored to ensure their roots have not been impacted. In some cases, trees just alongside the construction area may need to be removed for safety purposes. Additionally, any trees and plants are being removed will take place prior to the start of bird nesting season in mid-February.

3) How many trees will be replanted?

Plans call for approximately 1,550 new trees and thousands of new plants and groundcover to be replanted along I-5, within the cities of Solana Beach, Encinitas and Carlsbad, by the end of construction in 2022.

4) What types of trees and vegetation will be replanted?

The California Coastal Commission approved the project’s planting plan, which is comprised of only drought-tolerant, non-invasive native species including: Torrey Pines, Coast Live Oaks, Coastal Sagebrush, Lemonade Berry, Toyon, and more. Build NCC crews also will hydroseed a coastal sage scrub seed mix on disturbed areas. Images of some of these plants can be viewed in the [Interstate 5 North Coast Corridor Design Guidelines](#).

5) How did Caltrans and SANDAG determine what type of trees and vegetation to replant?

As I-5, within north San Diego County, is entirely within the coastal zone, Caltrans and SANDAG are required as part of their



Example of a mature Torrey Pine tree

November 2019



California Coastal Commission permit to replant only native, drought-tolerant, and non-invasive species. As a result, the trees and vegetation types chosen through the [Interstate 5 North Coast Corridor Design Guidelines](#) considered the local topography, weather, existing vegetation, and the unique native species found in north coastal communities. The landscape plan was also designed to be sustainable, require low maintenance and minimal irrigation, promote fire safety and weed suppression, blend with native slope vegetation and urban landscapes, control erosion and improve water quality, and use appropriate native plants with long life spans.

6) When will replanting begin?

In southern Encinitas, Build NCC highway crews have already started planting trees and shrubs and sprayed hydroseed in areas near the San Elijo Lagoon to take advantage of winter rains which will support new plant growth. Build NCC is a “Construction Manager General Contractor (CMGC)” project model, which provides great flexibility for Caltrans and SANDAG to work with the contractor to advance aspects of the project.



New plantings along southbound I-5

The Build NCC contractor is actively advancing planting in areas that that will no longer be disrupted by construction, therefore allowing plants more time to grow and acclimate, giving each new tree, shrub, and seeded area the best chance at establishing itself in the coastal environment.

7) What type of water will be used for these plants?

All newly planted trees and shrubs in Encinitas and Carlsbad will be irrigated with 100 percent recycled water and maintained by the contractor for five years after construction is completed.

8) What happens if plants do not survive after construction is completed? Who is responsible for plant maintenance?

All trees, shrubs, and seeded slopes will be maintained through a five-year plant establishment period. A plant establishment period is a contractual agreement that outlines the amount of time that a contractor is responsible for maintaining the health of the trees and plants after construction is completed. If a plant fails, the contractor is responsible for replacement. Additionally, Caltrans and SANDAG will be replanting trees on “stepped” slopes. Steep slopes require more time and care to construct, but also protect the slope from erosion and support a replanted tree in establishing itself

9) What happened to the oleander shrubbery located within the I-5 median? Will it be replaced?

As part of construction, Caltrans and SANDAG Build NCC highway construction crews cleared and removed oleander located within the highway median. Once construction is complete within the highway median, crews will construct a new concrete barrier and plant a native shrub species called broom baccharis (colloquially referred to as desert broom). This flowering shrub is self-sustaining and drought tolerant and is expected to grow to approximately two feet in height above the highway median, serving as a visual barrier between opposite freeway traffic.

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