



Major Road Widening Project Finished On North County Highway

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By Alison St John



BY ALISON ST JOHN

A new park and ride lot is built at the state Route 76 and Interstate 15 interchange, May 16, 2017.

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Tuesday marked a milestone for state Route 76 — a key east-west artery in a rapidly growing part of San Diego's North County. Construction is complete on the four-lane highway that connects Interstates 5 and 15.

State Route 76 — a key east-west artery in a rapidly growing part of San Diego's North County —marked a milestone Tuesday.

Caltrans and Sandag officials gathered to mark the end of construction and the opening of the new four-lane state Route 76, connecting Interstate 5 to Interstate 15.

At the opening ceremony, Caltrans District 11 Director Lori Berman said the highway already carries 20,000 trips a day, and is expected to see more than 40,000 trips a day by the year 2030. Berman said the last 10 miles of SR-76 — the middle and east sections — cost \$367 million.

She said the local half-cent Transnet sales tax contributed more than \$120 million to the project, federal funds added \$77 million and \$27 million was state money.

A great deal of new development is taking place around the intersection of SR-76 and I-15. More than 2,000 new homes are already approved, as is a Palomar College campus. More housing is likely to be in the works, as a result of [an agreement with a developer to drop plans for the proposed Gregory Canyon landfill](#), a few miles east of I-15.

Four Native American reservations with casinos east of I-15 also generate traffic.



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San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts, chair of Sandag, at the opening of widened state Route 76, which was largely paid for with the half-cent Transnet sales tax, May 16, 2017.

It was unclear if the Indian reservations, which were partners in the project, contributed financially to the road widening, though Alan Kosup of Caltrans said they contributed to the new freeway interchange.

The highway runs parallel to a long-planned park along the San Luis Rey River, which would eventually allow people to walk much of the stretch between Oceanside and I-15.



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Caltrans and Sandag officials gather at the opening ceremony of new four-lane state Route 76, connecting it to Interstate 15, May 16, 2017.

Approximately 600 acres of habitat have been reserved as mitigation for the road widening, and underpasses have been constructed to allow wildlife to cross below the road.

Accidents used to be common on Route 76. It was a narrow, winding two-lane road that ran next to the San Luis Rey River in Oceanside to Pala Mesa. SR-76 continues east of I-15 to Santa Ysabel. Kosup said there are currently no plans to widen the road further east, since that could encourage more sprawl.