

Caltrans gives back land to Oceanside, horse trail planned

By **PROMISE YEE**
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OCEANSIDE — Caltrans will give back a stretch of land along state Route 76 to Oceanside and add native plants and a horse trail to the property.

The 1,600-foot horse and pedestrian trail will be added between Melrose Drive and Jefferies Ranch Road.

The trail site is unique because city utility workers need access to the property, and it sits between existing horse trails.

“The city can get at utilities, the trail reconnects with the trail system in Jefferies Ranch, to let the city have access to the road (horse trail) made perfect sense,” Carl Savage, Caltrans project manager, said.

Oceanside City Council voted to accept the land on Aug. 20.

Currently the area between the expressway and homes consists of dirt and some trees.

“It’s weedy brush, it doesn’t look like much of anything,” Gary Kellison, city senior civil engineer, said. “With landscaping of native plants and a irrigation system it will definitely look better.”

Caltrans will plant buckwheat, poppies, native sages and live oak trees beginning in Oceanside and continue through Bonsall as part of the required plant reestablishment, following the roadwork.

Savage said care is given to place native, self-sustaining plant species that do not require extra watering after they are established with temporary irrigation systems. He added that Caltrans digs the irrigation lines out of the ground once the plants reach maturity.



Caltrans will plant poppies, native sages and live oak trees along the expressway from Oceanside to Bonsall. The landscaping is required plant reestablishment following roadwork.

Photo by Promise Yee

The trail added will be wide enough for city and maintenance vehicles to access it, Kellison said. “And it has a good firm foundation where pretty much any kind of the public’s non-motorized use — horses, pedestrians, dirt bikes — would have no trouble using,” Kellison said.

During the City Council meeting David DiPierro, city traffic engineer, said the trail could also serve as an emergency exit road. The Jefferies Ranch Community

currently has one road to access the expressway.

Work on the trail is slated to start in January, with the expectation of being opened to the public in January 2016.

Caltrans retains the right to reclaim the land if the expressway needs to be expanded in future decades. Estimates for any expansion wouldn’t take place until 2050.