

Centerline project for transit stations reaches halfway point

Centerline project, which broke ground last summer, will connect street-level transit stations on University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard with freeway-level stations in the median of State Route 15.

By Mark Armao

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Construction on San Diego's first freeway-level transit stations is about 50 percent complete, according to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

The State Route 15 MidCity Centerline project will add two bus stations along the freeway at University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard, and transit-only lanes within the existing median from Interstate 805 to Interstate 8.

A joint effort between Caltrans, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS), the \$65 million project was funded by the Federal Transit Administration and TransNet, the regional half-cent sales tax for transportation projects.

Slated to open in August 2017, the new stations will connect existing bus routes that run on SR 15, such as MTS Rapid 235, with local transit services that run along University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard.

"We're going to connect those [street-level] transit stations to stairs and elevators that will take you down to the freeway level and the transit platform, where the buses will be stopping in both the northbound and southbound direction," said Andrew Rice, project manager for Caltrans.

Both stations will be separated from freeway traffic by concrete barriers and sound walls, which are about halfway complete, Rice said.

Designed by CH2M HILL with architectural services provided by KTU+A, the stations will also include customized shelters, lighting and signage to display passenger wait-times. Granite Construction Co. is overseeing construction as the general contractor. Construction crews recently installed the elevators that will service the stations.

At times, the project will require lane closures and nighttime construction, Rice said. "It is inconvenient for the residents, but it's really in the name of safety and maintaining the safest environment for this work to be done," he said.

To construct the transit-only lanes, builders will pave about 2 miles of roadway in the existing median of SR 15, from just north of its intersection with I-805 to just south of its junction with I-8. Rice said the transit-only lanes will streamline the passage of buses through the corridor and give the vehicles plenty of time to transition between the dedicated lanes and general traffic.

The Centerline project is the latest in a series of improvements along the I15 corridor, including the addition of express lanes and direct access ramps for MTS vehicles and carpools.

"Ultimately, it's about getting people from high-residential areas into places of employment, and making transit a viable option compared to jumping into your car," Rice said. "Inline stations are taking that one step further and making [public transit] more efficient."