

Interchange



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Local dignitaries participated in the official Caltrans groundbreaking ceremony for the Interstate 5 Roadway Rehabilitation Project. From left: The Gateway Coalition's own Victor Lindenheim, Santa Clarita Mayor Cameron Smyth, Assemblyman Dante Acosta, state Sen. Scott Wilk, Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty, Caltrans District 7 Director Carrie Bowen, U.S. Rep. Steve Knight, state Sen. Henry Stern, Santa Clarita Councilwoman Marsha McLean and Santa Clarita Councilman Bill Miranda.

We're on the Road!

Caltrans groundbreaking ceremony serves as a rite of passage for \$171 million pavement upgrade for northern L.A. County corridor used by 1 million+ vehicles per week.

Local and state officials gathered recently to celebrate the groundbreaking of a highly anticipated \$171 million project to upgrade the roadway on Interstate 5 in the Santa Clarita Valley in northern Los Angeles County.

The I-5 Roadway Rehabilitation Project will replace and repair pavement on nearly 16 miles of the freeway, with an expected completion date in mid-2019.

"This section of Interstate 5 has pavement

that is more than 50 years old and no longer adequate for current and future traffic loads," said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty. "This project is an essential investment to improve transportation infrastructure. I-5 is the major north-south trucking corridor that facilitates the movement of goods and people by providing a connection between the Central Valley and the Greater Los Angeles metropolitan area."

See PAVEMENT, page 4

From the **Executive Director**

Yes, But How Do We Pay for It?

By **Victor Lindenheim**
*Executive Director,
Golden State Gateway Coalition*

There has long existed a consensus that California's roads and other transportation infrastructure badly needed attention... and funding. But how would we pay for it?

New or increased taxes? User fees? Reprioritization of existing resources? And how do we protect dedicated transportation funding sources from "reallocation" for other purposes?

To say that all of California's current and future transportation funding needs will be met is overly optimistic. But, the battles have been fought, and California transportation has scored some dramatic wins that will pay for tangible gains in mobility, safety and goods movement.

There is, for example, the State Highway Operations Protection Program — where your state gas taxes go. These funds paid for the now-completed first phase of Santa Clarita Valley I-5 improvements — truck lanes, retaining walls and a widened roadway footprint to accommodate future capacity enhancements. The \$171 million I-5 pavement rehabilitation under way through the Santa Clarita Valley is funded by the very same state program.

Then there was the passage of Measure R in 2008 — a self-imposed L.A. County sales tax increase approved by the voters. It paid for, among other



Victor Lindenheim

things, the \$30 million design costs for the I-5 carpool lanes to come. Measure M followed with passage in 2016, which included \$240 million in core funding for new I-5 carpool lanes, auxiliary lanes, truck lane extensions, bridge modifications and soundwalls. The new funding expedites this project by as much as 20 years.

SB1, recently passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor, will invest \$5.4 billion annually for the next 10 years in transportation. SB1 funds will be protected by a constitutional amendment (ACA5) which will safeguard new dollars for transportation use only. ACA5 will be on the ballot for voter approval in November 2018. Half of the funds will go toward state-maintained transportation infrastructure; the other half will go to local roads, transit agencies and pedestrian and bicyclist amenities.

SB1 includes \$504.5 million for bridge improvement projects along I-5 from the L.A. River to Templin Highway; \$3.5 million for resurfacing three miles of SR 14 between Newhall Avenue and Friendly Valley Parkway; and, the City of Santa Clarita will receive more than \$3 million a year in discretionary funds for local projects.

The federal government's role in transportation funding has diminished,

'The battles have been fought, and California transportation has scored some dramatic wins that will pay for tangible gains in mobility, safety and goods movement.'

for a number of reasons, including the Highway Trust Fund's impending insolvency. However, there are still USDOT appropriations, grants and loan programs for transportation projects. In fact, a \$50 million grant request from Metro for I-5 capacity enhancements is still pending.

There is talk of a trillion-dollar federal infrastructure program — \$200 billion from the feds, leveraged to a trillion-dollar program with state, local government and private sector involvement. But, that's just talk for now.

A lot can, and will, be done with what we have and with what's to come. Projects will be funded, designed and built. Jobs — thousands of them — will be created. And, ultimately, mobility, safety, and goods movement will be improved.

Final EIR/EIS Available for 138 Project

Press release from L.A. Metro:

The Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project has been completed by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)

and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The goal of the project is to improve mobility and operations and enhance safety on SR-138 between the I-5 and SR-14 in the northern part of Los Angeles County.

A no build alternative and two build alternatives — alter-

native 1 (freeway/expressway plus Antelope Acres Variation Option) and alternative 2 (expressway/limited access conventional highway) — were evaluated and considered to best meet the purpose and need of the project.

An expressway/limited access conventional highway

(alternative 2) was identified as the project's preferred alternative. The main corridor alignment proposed for the preferred alternative extends generally along or near the existing SR-138 highway for approximately 36 miles from I-5 to SR-14. Portions of SR-

See EIR, page 8

Barger Hosts Transportation Summit

Story and Photos

By Carol Rock

Special to Interchange

The inaugural Santa Clarita Valley Transportation Summit, held Sept. 21 at Santa Clarita City Hall, offered stakeholders from downtown Los Angeles to the Antelope Valley an opportunity to exchange ideas and bring each other up to speed on projects currently under way or planned for the future.

The meeting was hosted by Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger. In attendance were nearly 50 people representing a cross-section of interests: elected officials, city and county staff members, law enforcement, business and development, Caltrans, Metro and public transportation services from trains to bicycles, as well as special interest groups concerned with senior citizens and the environment.

Barger emphasized the importance of planning as a group, citing the One Valley, One Vision plan that blends local and county efforts.

“Working together and sharing resources, we can move forward,” she said.

During a legislative update, a Metro representative said that the most critical legislation passed this year was Senate Bill 1, signed by the governor in April, which could bring \$1.4 billion in transportation funding to Los Angeles County. (See related story, page 6).

A possible referendum of the bill is being monitored, and a repeal of the measure could be before the voters in 2018. The group also dis-



Below: Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, flanked by her Transportation Deputy Dave Perry and Santa Clarita Councilwoman Marsha McLean, hosted her inaugural Santa Clarita Valley Transportation Summit on Sept. 21.

cussed federal funding and public/private partnerships to finance transportation projects, as well as the solicitation of letters of support for specific works. The county’s Department of Public Works offered help in drafting the correspondence.

John Lee of Caltrans gave a report on the I-5 Roadway Rehabilitation project, which is currently under way and involves renewing the pavement on a 16-mile stretch of northbound and southbound lanes from Lake Hughes Road to just south of State Route 14.

The pavement in this section of I-5 is more than 50 years old and no longer adequate for the existing and future traffic loads and the project will extend the service life of the roadway. (Related: See cover story.)

Those in attendance also discussed plans for Phase 2 of the I-5 North Los Angeles



County Capacity Enhancement Project, scheduled to begin construction in 2019 after the pavement rehabilitation project is completed. Phase 2 is planned to include high occupancy vehicle lanes in both directions

from SR 14 to Parker Road. Information on the I-5 projects is available by calling the Caltrans Public Affairs Office at (213) 897-9372 or (213) 897-3656 or visiting the Caltrans website at **See SUMMIT, page 7**

Clockwise from right: Elected leaders share a light moment during the ceremony. Speakers included: state Sen. Scott Wilk and U.S. Rep. Steve Knight.



Pavement

Continued from page 1

The improvements are being made on a segment of I-5 that is used by more than 1 million vehicles a week. The project will provide a smoother roadway with a 40-year design life.

Over the next two years, the improvements will be made on 15.8 miles of I-5 from a half-mile south of State Route 14 to 1.7 miles north of Lake Hughes Road.

Pavement will be replaced in the outside lanes (No. 3 and 4 lanes). In the inside lanes (No. 1 and 2 lanes), broken concrete slabs will also be replaced and lanes will receive profile grinding to ensure a smooth surface.

Stage 1 work is conducted mainly between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. on weeknights.

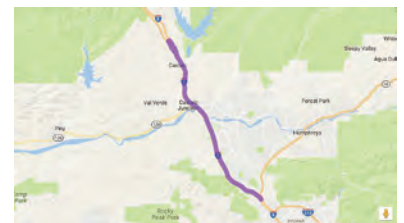
On most nights, at least two lanes will be kept open, except from midnight to 4 a.m. when at least one lane normally will be open. Closure of all lanes is expected to occur infrequently.

The project is funded by state and federal funds through the State Highway Operation and Protection Program.

U.S. Rep. Steve Knight, R-Palmdale, reminded guests to spread the word about the need to travel safely through the construction zone.

"We are looking forward to this," Knight said. "This 15.8 miles is needed. It's not just the smoother road, but it is the economic impact."

State Sen. Scott Wilk, R-Santa Clarita, said the project will produce long-needed benefits for motorists. "I'm excited about this project," Wilk said.



Project map: Caltrans

"This thing is about more than just California. I-5 goes from Baja California to British Columbia, so B.C. to B.C."

After the roadway rehabilitation project is completed, the second phase of the I-5 North Los Angeles County Capacity Enhancement Project is scheduled to get under way in 2019, with the addition of high occupancy vehicle lanes between the Newhall Pass and Parker Road.



Clockwise from left: Speakers at the ground-breaking ceremony included: Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty, state Sen. Henry Stern, Caltrans District 7 Director Carrie Bowen, Santa Clarita Mayor Cameron Smyth and state Assemblyman Dante Acosta.



I-5 Pavement Rehab by the Numbers

- **\$171 million:** Project cost, derived from state and federal highway funds.
- **15.8 miles:** From a half-mile south of SR 14 to 1.7 miles north of Lake Hughes Road.
- **2019:** Expected completion date.

dot.ca.gov/d7/projects/



SB1: What It Means for North L.A. County

Senate Bill 1, signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in April, promises to improve transportation throughout California by investing \$54 billion in the state's transportation infrastructure over the next decade.

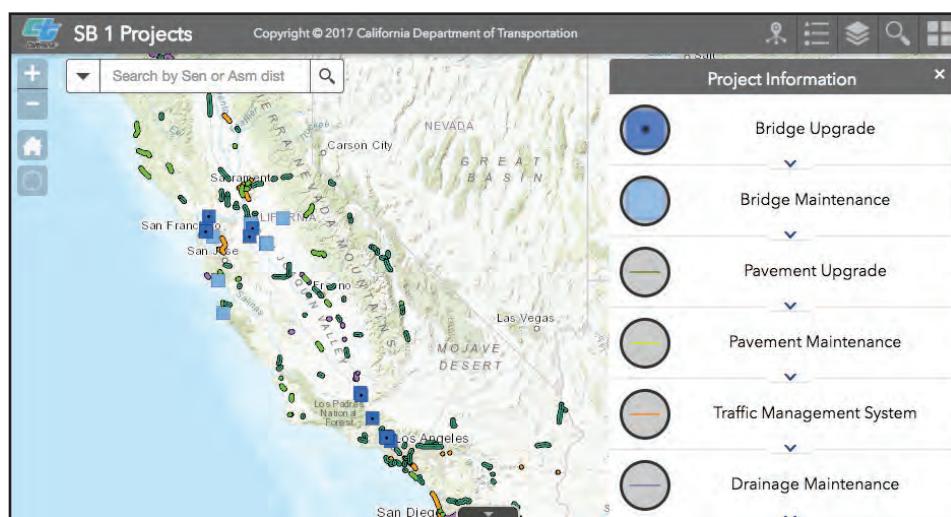
According to the state's SB 1 website, rebuildingca.ca.gov, the legislation will address many much-needed transportation needs throughout the state, including northern Los Angeles County.

"SB 1 is a landmark transportation investment to rebuild California by fixing neighborhood streets, freeways and bridges in communities across California and targeting funds toward transit and congested trade and commute corridor improvements," the site says. "SB 1 is a job creator; the White House Council of Economic Advisors found that every \$1 billion invested in transportation infrastructure supports 13,000 jobs a year. SB 1 is putting people to work rebuilding California."

The legislation "invests \$5.4 billion annually over the next decade to fix California's transportation system. It will address a backlog of repairs and upgrades, while ensuring a cleaner and more sustainable travel network for the future. SB1 funds will be protected under a constitutional amendment (ACA 5) which safeguards new dollars for transportation use only. ACA 5 will be on the ballot for voter approval in November 2018."

What does that mean for North L.A. County?

In a nutshell, it means local projects



The state's SB 1 website, rebuildingca.ca.gov, includes an interactive map of the "Fix it First" projects throughout the state.

will be funded under the "Fix it First" provisions of SB 1, and the "SHOPP" will remain in operation for major projects to improve goods movement and mobility in the region.

The \$171 million I-5 pavement rehabilitation project now under way was principally funded by existing state and federal gas tax revenues, most notably the State Highway Operations Protection Program (SHOPP). This was preceded by the first phase of I-5 improvements through the Santa Clarita Valley — \$70 million worth — also paid for by SHOPP.

SB 1 will funnel \$14.894 billion into the SHOPP program for much-needed similar projects to improve roadway safety and mobility in the next decade.

Local projects in North L.A. County that are expected to be funded under SB

1 include:

- The City of Santa Clarita will receive more than \$3 million a year in discretionary funds for local road maintenance.
- "Fix-it-first" repavement projects include \$3.5 million for resurfacing of nearly three miles of State Route 14 between Newhall Avenue and Friendly Valley Parkway
- A \$504.5 million project is included to lower roadways or replace 10 bridges to meet vertical clearance or truck load capacity standards on Interstate 5 from the L.A. River to the Templin Highway.

In short, local leaders say, SB 1 will bring noticeable and significant improvements to the transportation infrastructure throughout the state, and in particular in northern Los Angeles County.

Metro Releases \$85.8 Million for North County

The board of directors of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority has released \$85.8 million in unspent construction funds remaining from the Interstate 5-State Route 14 HOV direct connect project — a decision that clears the way for the funds to be spent on other highway improvement projects in northern L.A. County.

The I-5/SR14 direct connect HOV project linked the two freeways with a carpool lane that enables vehicles to

transfer from one freeway to the other without leaving the carpool lane.

The project was completed in 2012, but the remaining unspent funds have been in limbo because of a loose end: the yet-to-be-completed \$5 million relocation of Southern California Edison utility lines associated with the project.

“In a letter dated May 26, 2017, Caltrans requested Metro to leave \$5 million of the original programmed funds in the Project to pay for the SCE utility relocation costs and approved release of

the remaining balance,” says a Metro staff report. “Upon Board approval of the staff recommendation an amendment to the funding agreement with Caltrans will be executed to maintain \$5 million in the Project. The remaining \$85.8 million will be released from the Project and reprogrammed to other eligible highway improvement projects in North County.”

The funds are expected to benefit North L.A. County projects in the third decade of Measure R (2030-2039).

Civil Engineers’ Grade for U.S. Infrastructure: D+

The American Society of Civil Engineers has issued its 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, and the findings are, as “Car and Driver” put it, unsurprising but depressing:

“Yes, the roads you drive on probably are that bad.”

The magazine adds: “The ASCE cites a \$2 trillion funding gap as a major cause of decay. A cornerstone of that gap is our federal fuel tax, 18.4 cents per gallon on gasoline and 24.4 cents on diesel, which hasn’t been raised in nearly 25 years.”

Painting a picture of roadways and other infrastructure either deficient or in disrepair, the report also points out

that some of the states with the highest gasoline taxes are among those whose roads need the most help.

Among them, California has a 38.1 cent gas tax yet 50 percent of its roads are in bad shape, according to the ASCE report.

The report’s California section says: “While the nation’s infrastructure earned a ‘D+’ in the 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, California faces infrastructure challenges of its own. For example, driving on roads in need of repair in California costs each driver \$844 per year, and 5.5 percent of bridges are rated structurally deficient.”



2017 INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARD

American Society of Civil Engineers

See the full report online:
www.infrastructurereportcard.org

Summit

Continued from page 3

www.dot.ca.gov/d7/projects.

Projects within the Santa Clarita Valley (unincorporated areas) completed in Fiscal 2017-18 included storm repairs/shoulder reconstruction on Vasquez Canyon Road and Hasley Canyon Road and pavement preservation on Hasley Canyon Road near Cambridge Avenue, at the cost of \$447,000. Ongoing projects in the Santa Clarita Valley include repairing pavement and realigning the roadway on Sand Canyon Road and the grade separated interchange of State Route 126 at Commerce Center Drive,

at a total cost of \$55.5 million.

A direct connection between the SCV and the Burbank airport is a priority project of Metrolink and was lauded by Santa Clarita City Councilwoman Marsha McLean, who has worked on this effort.

Barger added her support to streamlining service between Santa Clarita and the local airport as well as the entire line between Union Station and the Antelope Valley.

“We are the only community that does not have a direct connection between rail and airport,” she said, acknowledging Metrolink’s challenges and attempts to improve service. “I will fight to make this system more efficient.”

The possibility of double tracking the Antelope Valley rail corridor was discussed as a safety measure as well as a way to improve speed and efficiency and avoid disrupting communities.

The need for Metrolink to add evening and additional weekend service was also brought up, as many residents have complained that they cannot complete round-trip travel outside of traditional weekday commuter hours.

Barger concluded the meeting thanking the participants for the healthy exchange of information and ideas and proposed setting another summit for six months in the future, vowing that her office would help address concerns that might come up in between meetings.

Next on the Coalition's Agenda...

By **Tom DiPrima**

Chairman,

Golden State Gateway Coalition

Progress on I-5 improvements through the Santa Clarita Valley is where it needs to be.

No accident, it is the product of the hard work of the Coalition leadership, the support of its membership and allies, its consultants and its partners — most notably Caltrans and Metro.

Our elected officials' advocacy and support for the project was invaluable, as well, led by Metro Board members Kathryn Barger and Ara Najarian.



Tom DiPrima

A 16-mile, \$171 million pavement rehabilitation project is in construction, to be followed by an I-5 capacity enhancement project valued at \$784 million. The challenges of environmental clearance, design and funding

are complete for the pavement rehabilitation project. The environmentally cleared capacity enhancement (carpool lane) project is in design, with core funding in place from Measure M, authorizing the county sales tax for transportation purposes.

Metro is working diligently to complete the funding package, in preparation for a 2019 construction start, following the current pavement replacement and upgrade project.

As always, the strategic team members from the Gateway Coalition will continue to be there to do what we can to enable and ensure that the process remains on schedule.

Consistent with our mission — to improve safety, mobility and goods movement on north L.A. County roads — the Gateway Coalition will be focusing on other opportunities. For example, we are working with Metro and Caltrans to move forward with safety and capacity improvements on the western segment of SR 138. It is a significant east-west goods movement corridor with a spotty safety record, connected to the I-5 at

'Consistent with our mission — to improve safety, mobility and goods movement on north L.A. County roads — the Gateway Coalition will be focusing on other opportunities.'

its western terminus, and connected to the planned High Desert Corridor to the east.

There are other needs: SR 126 widening, The Old Road bridge and thoroughfare improvements, and I-5 ramp relocations. The Gateway Coalition will be there to help improve north L.A. County transportation, its economy and quality of life.

EIR

Continued from page 2

138 not used for the proposed improvements would remain and serve as a road for local access.

The locally preferred alternative includes:

- Freeway (six-lane divided): I-5 interchange to Gorman Post Road
- Expressway (six-lane divided): Gorman Post Road to 300th Street West; access limited to intersections
- Expressway (four-lane divided): 300th Street W to 240th Street West; access limited to intersections
- Limited Access Conventional Highway (four-lane): 240th Street West to SR-14; limited access restrictions
- Other improvements to the I-5/SR-138 and SR-138/SR-14 and to the structure that crosses over SR-14



To view the final FEIS/R document go to metro.net/nw138.

The study was funded by Measure R, the 2008 voter approved half-cent sales tax for L.A. County transportation improvements. Funding for final design and construction has not been identified at this time — although the project is eligible for several local and state funding sources. The project will be built in phases or as needed, based on demand and identi-

fication of funding. Short- and mid-term improvements will focus on operational and safety improvements, including intersection improvements, shoulder widening and curve corrections.

This section of the 138 is located in the northwest corner of Los Angeles County. The highway is the main east-west route in the Antelope Valley and connects with Lancaster, Palmdale and other High Desert communities. The corridor is used as a bypass for goods movement and commuters when emergency closures occur on the I-5 or SR-14. Among the goals of the project is to alleviate issues associated with growing traffic and the mix of heavy-load trucks and smaller vehicles. The proposed improvements were developed to help accommodate future demand, emergency access and enhanced connections to residential and business properties located along the corridor.