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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"


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September 27, 2022

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10408-1-1

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Mark Pestrella, PE 
Director of Public Works

**BOARD MOTION OF DECEMBER 4, 2018, AGENDA ITEM 10
AND SEPTEMBER 13, 2022, AGENDA ITEM 84-B
EMERGENCY MOBILITY OPTIONS IN SANTA CLARITA VALLEY
INTERSTATE 5 FREEWAY – MONTHLY REPORT**

On December 4, 2018, the Board approved a motion instructing the Departments of Public Works, Regional Planning, Fire, and Sheriff to collaborate with the California Department of Transportation, the California Highway Patrol, and the City of Santa Clarita to establish emergency mobility action plans for major disruptions or closures of the Interstate 5 Freeway in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Subsequently, at the September 13, 2022, Board meeting, the Board approved a motion instructing Public Works to report back in writing and in person at the Board's September 27, 2022, meeting on various items discussed in the attachments. The motion also directed Public Works to revise the current quarterly reports related to December 4, 2018, Board action to include September 13, 2022, adopted Board motion Directives 1a through 1f into a single monthly report.

Attached you will find a report entitled "Interstate 5 Emergency Mobility Options in Santa Clarita Valley," which will be updated monthly in response to the adopted September 13, 2022, Board motion.

The next report will be provided on October 27, 2022. If you have any questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Steve Burger, Deputy Director, at (626) 458-4018 or sburger@pw.lacounty.gov.

WR:ja
I-5 Board Report BRT 10408

Attach.

cc: Chief Executive Office, Executive Office, Department of Regional Planning, Fire Department, and Sheriff's Department

I-5 EMERGENCY MOBILITY OPTIONS IN SANTA CLARITA VALLEY MONTHLY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2022

Interstate 5 Corridor (Santa Clarita Valley)

Interstate 5 Freeway (I-5) is a critical north-south primary goods movement artery that connects the western United States to Canada and Mexico. The I-5 Freeway corridor through Santa Clarita Valley is the major north/south freeway connecting the states of California, Oregon, and Washington and a major commuter route from the Santa Clarita Valley into the southern Los Angeles County area. The I-5 Freeway is listed as a "high-priority corridor" on the National Highway System, serving inter-regional commodities and vehicular travel in the north-south direction from California's most southern border with Mexico to its northern border with Oregon. It is also listed on the State Highway Extra Legal Load Route system. These systems list those highways constructed to accommodate the high volume and weight of interstate truck traffic. As a result of these unique characteristics, the I-5 Freeway, within the north Los Angeles County area, frequently experiences high volumes of traffic, including truck traffic in a geographically constrained area with high population and development growth further challenged by climate change events.

Corridor Challenges and Local Impacts

The I-5 Freeway segment through the Santa Clarita Valley is surrounded by mountainous terrain. It is, therefore, a geographically constrained area with no other direct alternative freeway route with limited alternative routes to support good movement and regional traffic. Average daily traffic ranges from 83,000 to 202,000 in this segment of the I-5 Freeway through the Santa Clarita Valley and includes over 20 percent of truck traffic. The freeway traffic is expected to double by 2030. A local arterial, The Old Road, runs parallel and adjacent to the I-5 Freeway.

Santa Clarita, now the third-largest city by population in Los Angeles County, is expected to increase by more than 25,000 people by 2035, as documented in the city of Santa Clarita's One Vision One Valley Plan.

Santa Clarita Valley is desirable to live, work, and play in. With an abundance of open lands developers have come in over the decades and planned, designed, and constructed housing and commercial space drawing many new people into the Valley. The County's General Plan identifies and quantifies where and how that growth can occur. In addition, the General Plan considers and plans for the impacts of that growth.

As individual development projects are planned and designed by private landowners and their developers, the projects are reviewed by County Departments through the entitlements process. Conditions of approval are imposed to ensure that each project complies with the General Plan and mitigates project impacts on the existing communities and public infrastructure. Individual developments may have relatively small incremental

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impacts on a given infrastructure, like a road, but cumulative impacts from multiple projects can be substantial. The County established several Bridge and Major Thoroughfare Construction Fee Districts to help share the cost of providing a major highway improvement or a new bridge between projects.

The attached map (Attachment 1) titled “Subdivision Activities Santa Clarita Valley” shows the past, current, and future developments in the Santa Clarita Valley area. The master-planned transportation circulation system required with the buildout of the developments will be implemented by the individual projects to accommodate the needs of future development anticipated in the Valley.

The I-5 Santa Clarita Valley corridor with high traffic volumes and current and projected growth is uniquely challenged within this area with constrained transverse mountainous topography, high altitude, steep grades, limited alternative transportation facilities, recurring natural disasters, including flooding, landslides, intense rainstorms, snow events, and resulting landslides, earthquakes, wildland fires, and other temporary closures due to maintenance and construction activities.

Completed and On-Going Initiatives

To optimize local and regional mobility, improve first responders and emergency access and minimize traffic impacts on residents, Los Angeles County has completed many large-scale infrastructure improvements, including the I-5 Hasley project, the State Route 126 Commerce Center Drive project, The Old Road widening projects south of Magic Mountain Parkway. These projects were expedited with developers financing the upfront costs needed to design and construct the projects. The current projects, such as The Old Road multi-modal mobility and congestion relief project, do not have any upfront financing committed by the developers.

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), in collaboration with Caltrans, is administering the I-5 North County Capacity Enhancements projects, which include operational and safety enhancements along the I-5 from the State Route 14 interchange in the Santa Clarita Valley to the south of Parker Road in Castaic, including the addition of one high-occupancy vehicle/carpool lane in each direction, a southbound truck lane from Calgrove Boulevard to State Route 14, and the addition of auxiliary lanes. The project began construction in spring 2021. The construction is anticipated to be completed in 2026.

Caltrans and California Highway Patrol (CHP), in collaboration with other partnering agencies in the area, including the County of Los Angeles actively monitored the corridor

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and have jointly implemented Operation Snowflake to better manage the freeway traffic during inclement weather.

Public Works is also coordinating with Caltrans and CHP on restoration and repair work associated with the I-5 Freeway structural damages resulting from Route Fire in August/September 2022 and ensuring local access and mobility for the area residents.

Comprehensive Integrated Corridor Management Approach

The increased frequency of natural disasters and recent Route Fire response and recovery efforts made it evident that continuous concerted multi-agency efforts and collaboration are needed to minimize impacts on the residents and communities within the Santa Clarita Valley.

The following sections of the report provide a comprehensive plan that will help the safety and mobility needs of the Santa Clarita Valley residents:

Expedited Reconvening of the I-5 Interagency Task Force

On September 22, 2022, Public Works initiated reconvening of a regular I-5 Interagency Task Force in collaboration with the County Office of Emergency Management, County of Los Angeles Regional Planning, Sheriff's Department, County Fire Department, Metro, City of Santa Clarita, Caltrans, and CHP.

The task force will develop and actively coordinate various elements of an Integrated Corridor Management Plan (ICM).

Expediting Public Works Infrastructure Resiliency Projects

The Old Road at Parker Road and Castaic Road at Ridge Route Road (Signal Projects)

The total cost for two signals is currently estimated between \$1.7 million and \$2 million and is anticipated to be completed by June/July 2023. This schedule acknowledges the challenges with the procurement of signals with suppliers, which is up to 26 weeks. Public Works is also investigating installing temporary signals. In order to expedite construction of these two signals, Public Works will do the following:

- Request under an expedited delivery scenario the Board to approve the advertisement and award of the construction contract.
- Procure construction materials in advance of the award of the construction contract and furnish the materials to the contractor. This process is expected to reduce the construction phase move-in duration.

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- Consider including financial incentives in the construction contract to provide an opportunity for the contractor's early construction finish.

The Old Road Priority Segments

The following is the status update for the continued efforts to address infrastructure resiliency, multi-modal mobility, and congestion on The Old Road along the two priority segments:

Segment 1 – Lake Hughes Road to Hillcrest Parkway

This project will widen The Old Road from two to four lanes between Lake Hughes Road and Hillcrest Parkway (2.27 miles). The proposed widening will require extensive hillside excavation, grading, and drainage facilities. Public Works is evaluating the different options for this project to determine the best approach moving forward, along with possible grant opportunities. Detailed project cost estimates and segment delivery schedule will need to be updated to secure project financing via grant opportunities. Public Works will pursue all Public-Private Partnership and State and Federal grant funding, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. Public Works will provide regular updates on strategies to advance the project delivery schedule of this segment.

Segment 2 – Henry Mayo Road to Magic Mountain Parkway

This project will widen The Old Road from four to six lanes between Henry Mayo Road and Magic Mountain Parkway (2 miles) and includes the replacement of two bridges. The project is currently in the environmental phase and is being expedited. The total project cost is estimated at \$243.5 million. The total project cost, including utility relocation and right of way costs, will be monitored, and updated along with other costs based on the completion of current environmental and design studies. A separate focused study is underway to validate the current cost estimate and determine cost savings that can be achieved through a value engineering review.

To expedite project delivery and minimize local area impacts, this project will be constructed in 2 phases. The first phase, which includes all work from Henry Mayo Drive to the new I-5 Freeway ramps is expected to begin construction in July 2024. The second phase includes all work from the new I-5 Freeway ramps to Magic Mountain Parkway, which is anticipated to begin construction in July 2026. Understanding the high cost and long timeline for this vital project, Public Works has hired two separate third-party consultants to verify project cost estimates and analyze the project for potential efficiencies to reduce the overall project cost and expedite the project schedule.

Public Works is developing a financing plan and will present it to the Board as part of a separate report back directed per the September 13, 2022, Board motion. The high cost

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associated with Phase 2 of the project, estimated at \$200 million, is attributed to the replacement and widening of two deficient bridges along this segment.

Federal Highway Bridge program funds will pay nearly 90 percent of the bridge replacement design and construction costs. Public Works will evaluate all relevant funds, including leveraging Bridge and Thoroughfare funding, Community Funding District bonds, Fifth District available discretionary Transportation Infrastructure funds, secured grants from LA Metro, and Measure R sub-regional funds. In addition, Public Works will aggressively pursue all Public-Private Partnership and State and Federal grant funding, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding.

As noted, a detailed project expedited schedule and financing plan will be provided under a separate report in coordination with the Chief Executive Office as directed by the Board under the September 13, 2022, Board motion.

Operations during Interstate 5 Freeway Events

Public Works developed a concept of operations and implemented a traffic management plan on the weekend of September 5, 2022, to address traffic congestion resulting from the lane closures on the I-5 Freeway in the Castaic area. This traffic management plan was developed by modifying the Operation Snowflake plan and will be further updated as part of the collaborated Interagency Task Force Traffic Management Plan effort. The current traffic management plan included the deployment of traffic signs and changeable message signs to provide Local Access Only to the County-maintained roadways while the lane closures on I-5 Freeway remain in place. Public Works will monitor Caltrans' schedule to restore travel lanes on the I-5 Freeway.

The attached map (Attachment 1c) depicts the sign messages and locations currently in place to manage traffic along the local roadways while the I-5 Freeway Lane closures remain in place. Below is a summary of the local roadways with Local Access Only designations.

- The Old Road north of Hasley Canyon Road
- Ridge Route Road north of Pine Crest Lane
- Hasley Canyon Road north of Commerce Center Drive
- Lake Hughes Road east of Ridge Route Road

Conceptual Design Plan and Cost Estimate Integrated Corridor Management System

Public Works prepared the attached draft conceptual design plan (Attachment 1d) to describe the infrastructure improvements and cost estimates to support the

I-5 EMERGENCY MOBILITY OPTIONS IN SANTA CLARITA VALLEY MONTHLY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2022

implementation of ICM System along The Old Road. The current estimate to implement ICM System along The Old Road is \$16.9 million.

Integrated Corridor Management Strategies

Public Works prepared the attached examples of the ICM strategies for a potential Interstate 5 Connected Corridors project that will be further developed and coordinated with partnering agencies (Attachment 1e).

Coordination with Technology Companies

Public Works staff have coordinated with technology companies such as Waze, Google, and Apple for a well-coordinated traffic navigation guidance system during emergencies. Public Works will continue this collaboration and invite these navigation companies' representatives to engage with the I-5 Interagency Task Force.

Action Items

Public Works will provide an update on the following action items for next month's report.

1. Meetings with the I-5 Interagency Task Force to review additional ICM strategies to address traffic congestion on local roadways during I-5 Freeway closures. A future initiative is the implementation of incident corridor management strategies supported by advanced traffic monitoring and communication systems at new and existing traffic signals in collaboration with private developers and partnering agencies.
2. Collaboration with the County Office of Emergency Management in the development of a Traffic Management Plan for the West Santa Clarita Valley's unincorporated communities that address necessary preparation, traffic management, evacuation methods, concepts, and communication strategies to evacuate the community during life-threatening emergencies.
3. Meetings with the City of Santa Clarita to confirm infrastructure needs to support coordinated traffic signal operations along The Old Road.
4. Preparation of eligible grant opportunities under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to support the implementation of ICM strategies and coordinated traffic signal operations along The Old Road.
5. Collaboration with partnering agencies on Operation Snowflake and with technology companies such as Waze, Google, and Apple to route drivers to

**I-5 EMERGENCY MOBILITY OPTIONS IN SANTA CLARITA VALLEY
MONTHLY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2022**

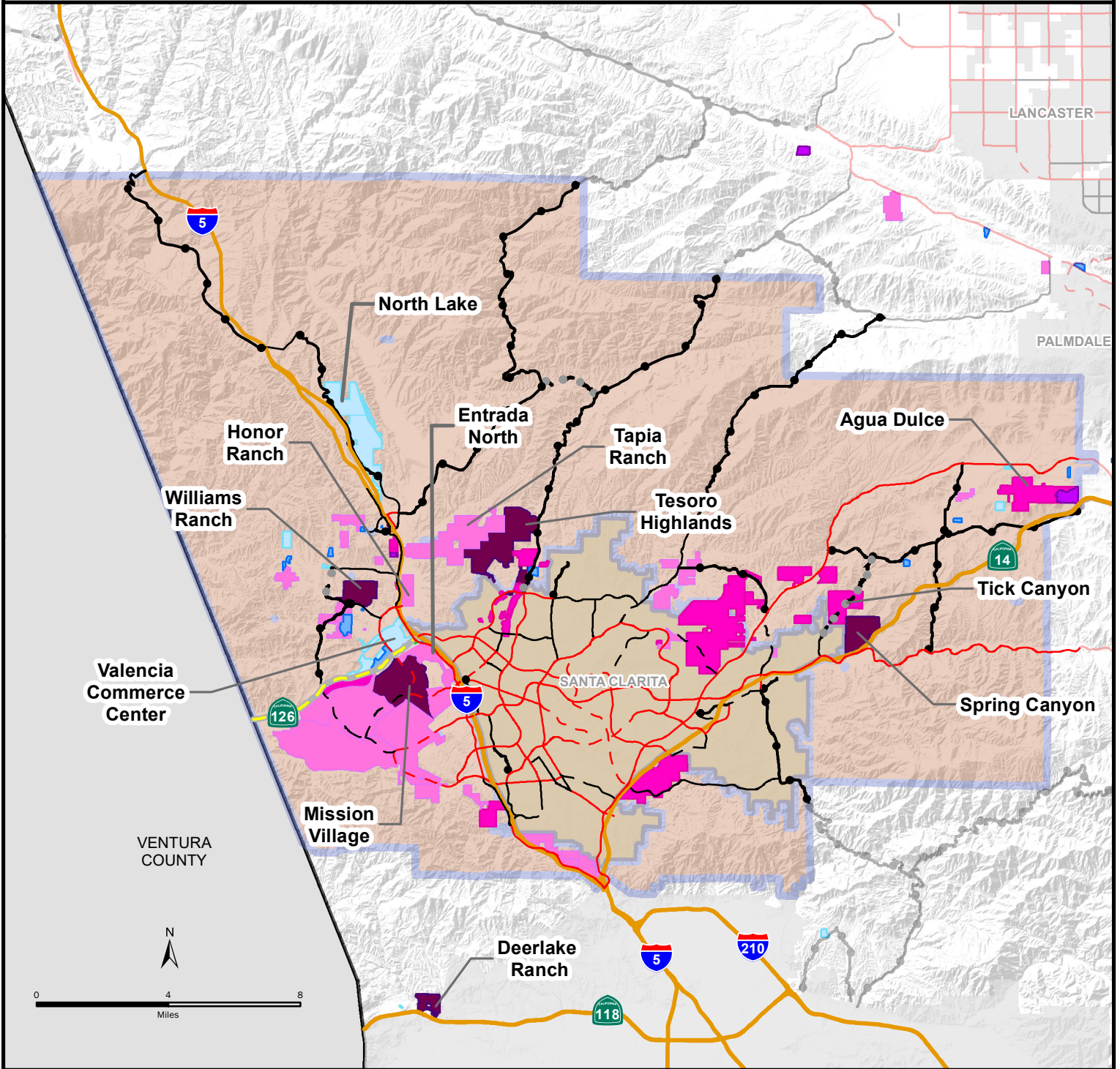
alternative routes and away from residential neighborhoods during emergency events and engage them via I-5 Interagency Task Force.

6. Support of Federal and State funding and appropriations requests for congestion relief and climate resiliency projects for the unincorporated communities of the West Santa Clarita Valley.
7. Entitlements and buildout schedules for all new developments within the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley to offset any cumulative traffic impacts during construction.
8. Incident monitoring during inclement weather, holidays, and expected high travel volumes through the corridor.



Subdivision Activities

Santa Clarita Valley

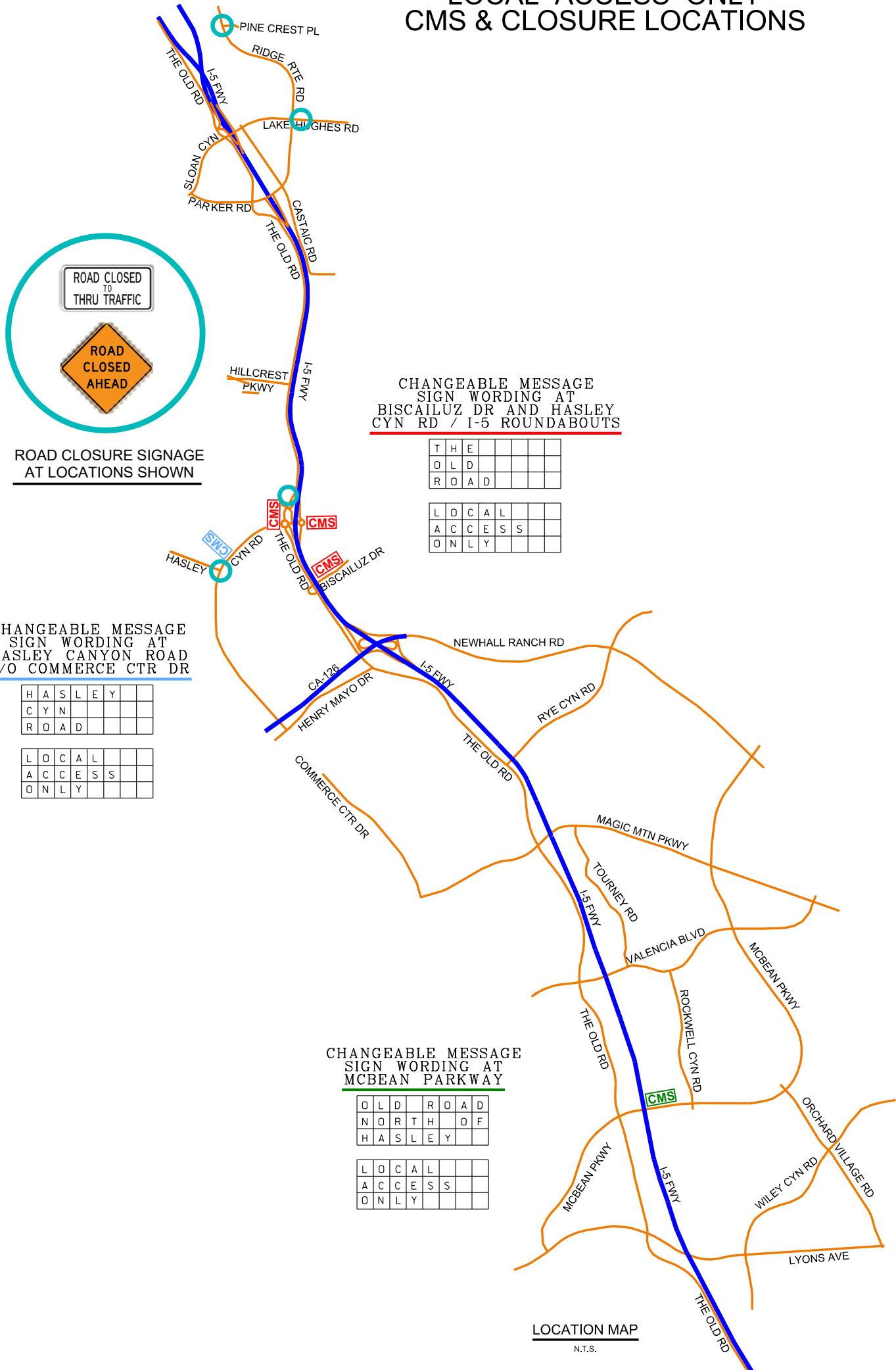


	City of Santa Clarita		Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan
PARCEL MAP STATUS			
	Construction Stage *		Construction Stage *
	Final Map Recorded **		Final Map Recorded **
	Design/Plan Review **		Design/Plan Review **
	Planning Stage **		Planning Stage **
TRACT STATUS			
	Freeway - Existing		Limited Secondary Hwy - Existing
	Major Hwy - Existing		Limited Secondary Hwy - Proposed
	Major Hwy - Proposed		Parkway - Existing
	Secondary Hwy - Existing		Parkway - Proposed
	Secondary Hwy - Proposed		Expressway - Existing
	Freeway - Proposed		Expressway - Proposed

* Based on available permit data from Epic-LA go-live date of 2/20/2017.
 ** Data for tentative, approved, and recorded final maps drawn from 21 years of history (since Jan 2001).

Attachment 1c

LOCAL ACCESS ONLY CMS & CLOSURE LOCATIONS



Attachment 1d

Emergency Mobility Options in the Santa Clarita Valley I-5 Integrated Corridors Management (ICM) ITS Infrastructure Improvements

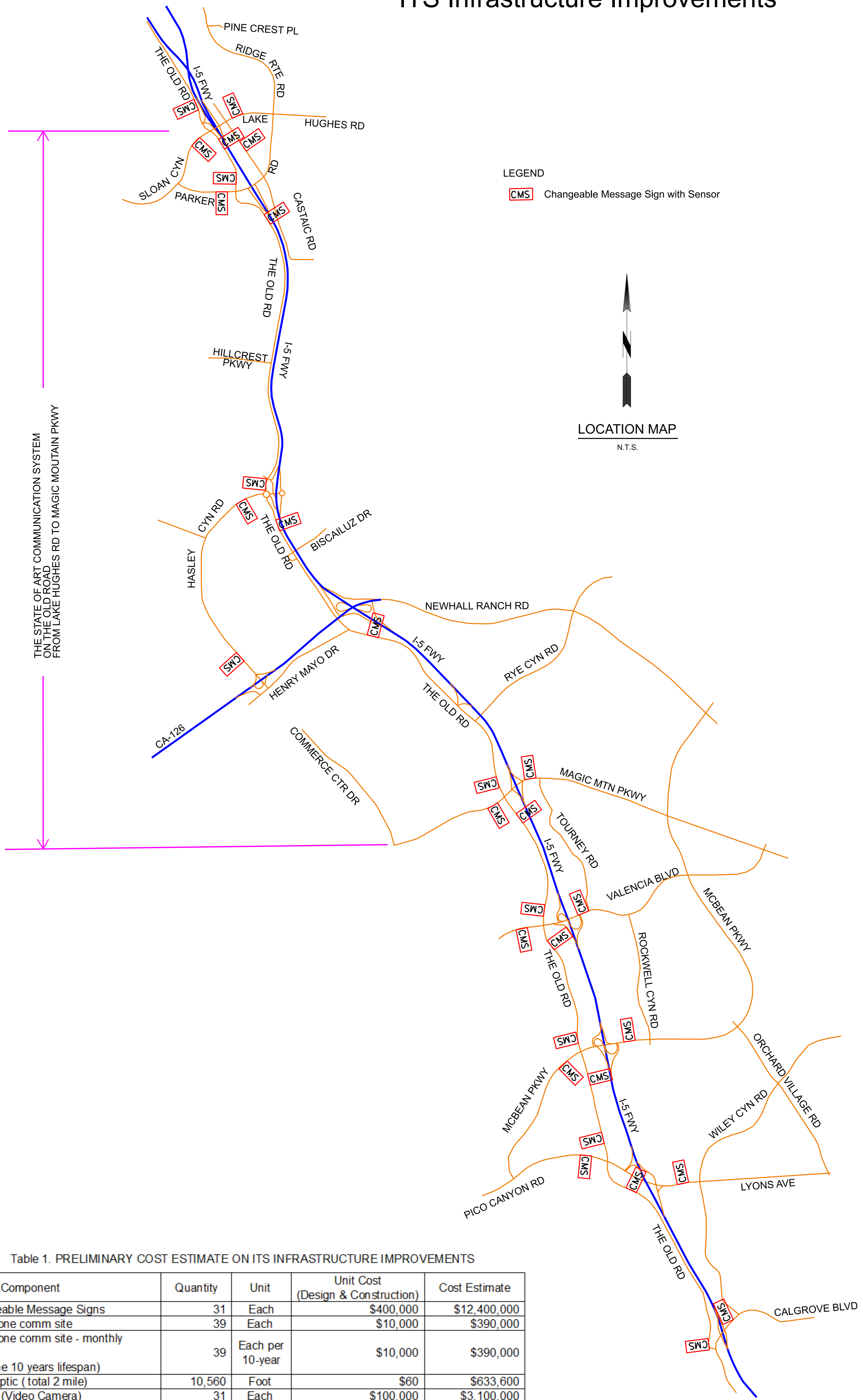


Table 1. PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE ON ITS INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Project Component	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost (Design & Construction)	Cost Estimate
Changeable Message Signs	31	Each	\$400,000	\$12,400,000
Cell phone comm site	39	Each	\$10,000	\$390,000
Cell phone comm site - monthly charge (Assume 10 years lifespan)	39	Each per 10-year	\$10,000	\$390,000
Fiber Optic (total 2 mile)	10,560	Foot	\$60	\$633,600
Sensor (Video Camera)	31	Each	\$100,000	\$3,100,000
TOTAL COST:				\$16,913,600

ATTACHMENT 1e

**INTEGRATED CORRIDORS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
FOR A POTENTIAL INTERSTATE 5 CONNECTED CORRIDORS PROJECT**

LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS

Date: 9-27-2022

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INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, August 31, 2022, the Route Fire spread to both sides of the I-5 Freeway in the Santa Clarita Valley area, which required Caltrans to close the freeway for safety reasons and to accommodate first responders' quick access to the location. Regional and commuter traffic and commercial vehicles were detoured off the freeway due to the closure to stop the fire. After the fire was contained, Caltrans District 7 determined that there was substantial damage to a retaining wall supporting northbound lanes of the I-5 Freeway. Out of an abundance of caution, Caltrans closed the right-hand through lanes while further analysis and investigations could confirm the structural stability of the road. This left the I-5 Freeway with only 2 northbound lanes open during the Labor Day holiday weekend (September 2-5, 2022). This significantly impacted Santa Clarita Valley communities in the vicinity of the I-5 Freeway as commuters and big rigs hauling cargo tried to avoid the congestion on the I-5 North by traversing local streets. Due to its parallel route to the I-5 Freeway, one of the most impacted local roads is The Old Road.

INTEGRATED CORRIDORS MANAGEMENT DEFINITION

The Federal Highway Administration defines Integrated Corridors Management (ICM) as "the coordination of individual network operations between adjacent facilities that creates an interconnected system capable of cross-network travel management."

PROPOSED ICM STRATEGIES

The proposed ICM strategies will enable the project stakeholders to cooperatively manage the freeway and arterial highways as a multimodal system and make operational decisions which benefits the network.

Public Works will collaborate with Caltrans, California Highway Patrol, and the City of Santa Clarita to develop opportunities to redirect freeway traffic during I-5 Freeway closures (partial or full), which minimizes impact on local traffic circulation.

STAKEHOLDERS

Public Works is collaborating with Caltrans, California Highway Patrol, and the City of Santa Clarita to develop and implement ICM strategies to address traffic congestion on the local roadways in the unincorporated Castaic area during I-5 Freeway closures.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the ICM strategies is to guide motorists diverted from the I-5 Freeway to roadways designated for diversion and minimize the impacts to local traffic circulation in the unincorporated Castaic area. Public Works intends to implement traffic management plans and signal operations along the designated roadways to accommodate diverted motorists' access to the alternative freeways.

Another objective is to partner with traffic navigation companies to provide users of their system with guidance to travel along the roadways designated for diversion.

PROPOSED ICM STRATEGIES

In fall 2019, Caltrans installed a Snow Gate in the median of the I-5 Freeway north of Lake Hughes to accommodate motorists' U-turns on the I-5 Freeway, from northbound to southbound (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). The Snow Gate allows motorists to turn around on the freeway rather than using the local roadways when snow or ice conditions through the Grapevine cause the I-5 Freeway to be closed.

Figure 1



Figure 2



(Source of photo: KTLA)

Similar to what was implemented in September 2022 after the I-5 Freeway northbound lane closures, Public Works proposes the actions described below to re-route traffic during I-5 Freeway future closures and minimize traffic circulation impacts on local roadways.

- Exit northbound I-5 Freeway at Parker Road off-ramp, travel westbound on Parker Road bridge, and turn left onto southbound I-5 Freeway at Parker Road on-ramp (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



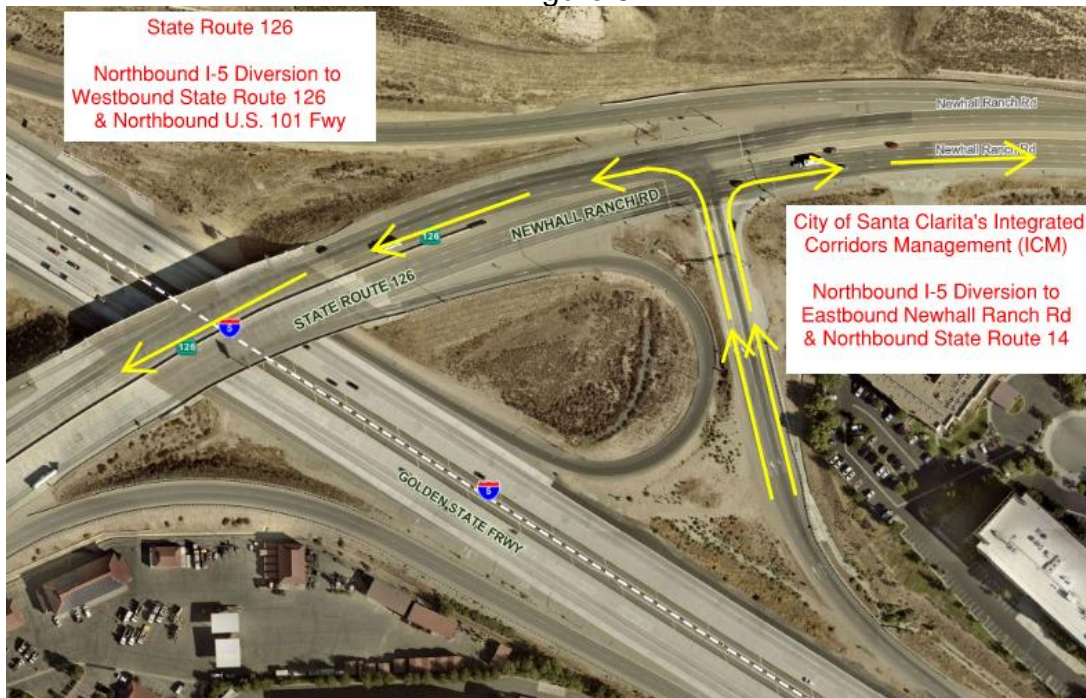
- Restrict northbound traffic on The Old Road at Sedona Way for local access only (see Figure 4).

Figure 4



- Exit northbound I-5 Freeway at Newhall Ranch Road off-ramp, turn right onto Newhall Ranch Road, and travel eastbound on Newhall Ranch Road to northbound 14 Freeway under the City of Santa Clarita's ICM strategy (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



- Exit northbound I-5 Freeway at Newhall Ranch Road off-ramp, turn left onto State Route 126 and travel westbound on SR-126 to northbound U.S. 101 Freeway (see Figure 5).

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Public Works identified the following infrastructure improvements at County-maintained facilities to support the implementation of an ICM System along The Old Road.

- Installation of fiber optics communications system along The Old Road from Lake Hughes Road to Calgrove Boulevard will enable Public Works to monitor traffic conditions and implement traffic management plans in response to traffic congestion during I-5 Freeway events.
- Deployment of Changeable Message Signs at key decision points to guide motorists to use pre-defined diverted routes and not use local roadways.
- Deployment of traffic data sensors to monitor traffic conditions and trigger implementation of a pre-defined Traffic Management Plan.

COST ESTIMATES

Infrastructure improvements to support the implementation of ICM strategies and coordinated signal operations along The Old Road are estimated to cost \$16.9 million for design and construction (see Table 1).

Table 1

Project Component	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost (Design & Construction)	Cost Estimate
Changeable Message Signs	31	Each	\$400,000	\$12,400,000
Cellular phone communications site	39	Each	\$10,000	\$390,000
Cellular phone communications site – monthly charge (assume 10-year lifespan)	39	Each per 10 years	\$10,000	\$390,000
Fiber Optic (total 2 miles)	10,650	Foot	\$60	\$633,600
Sensor (Video Camera)	31	Each	\$100,000	\$3,100,000

TOTAL COST: \$16,913,600

FUNDING

Public Works will explore grant applications under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to fund the recommended infrastructure improvements.

AGREEMENTS

Project stakeholders will need to address the following integration needs to manage the corridor traffic as a multimodal system and benefit the entire corridor. Written agreements to document collaborative and/or funding commitments may be necessary.

- Operational Integration – define project stakeholders' specific operational responsibilities to facilitate management of the corridor, promote information sharing, and coordinate operations across the various transportation networks in the corridor.
- Technical Integration – provide communication links and traffic data between agencies by which information, system operations, and control functions can be effectively shared and distributed among the agencies' respective transportation management systems.

DECEMBER 4, 2018

EMERGENCY TRAFFIC CIRCULATION PLANS FOR I-5 IN SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

The Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor through the Santa Clarita Valley has been identified as a critical chokepoint in California’s highway system. The I-5 serves as the backbone for goods movement between Mexico and Canada and for motorists traveling north-south within the state and beyond. This segment of the I-5 also provides a vital link to job centers for tens of thousands of daily commuters.

In normal times, these factors create challenging traffic conditions for those who use the corridor; but the problem has been exacerbated due to ongoing construction activities in the area. Currently, The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is implementing a road surface rehabilitation project between Newhall and Castaic on the I-5 and an important capacity enhancement project will begin shortly thereafter. The end result will be a much safer and efficient movement of people and goods through the region but the area will continue to experience challenging conditions for the foreseeable future.

-M O R E-

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

BARGER _____

HAHN _____

This past weekend saw the highest number of holiday travelers in the metropolitan Los Angeles area in the past fifteen years, which proved to be nearly impossible to navigate through the I-5 corridor in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Additionally, during the coming winter months there will likely be increased impacts due to weather related freeway closures north of Castaic.

The residents of unincorporated Castaic are heavily impacted during these situations as the only way to get in and out of Castaic is via the highly constrained Old Road. The Old Road becomes a two-lane road north of Hasley Canyon and is unable to handle increased traffic volume when issues arise on the I-5. As a result, residents are trapped in Castaic or cannot get into their community for hours on end.

Along the I-210 corridor in the San Gabriel Valley, Caltrans, in partnership with Los Angeles County Public Works and adjacent cities, has been developing a very promising *Integrated Corridor Management* pilot to improve mobility and handle emergency situations that heavily impact the freeway. A similar level of partnership is needed in the Santa Clarita Valley along the I-5.

-M O R E-

I, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Direct the Department of Public Works, Department of Regional Planning, Sheriff's Department, and Fire Department, to collaborate with Caltrans, the California Highway Patrol, and the City of Santa Clarita to devise emergency mobility action plans to be implemented should the I-5 experience major disruptions or shut downs due to accidents, weather, or construction, and report back in the interim with monthly status reports, including:

- 1) Identification of strategies to direct traffic where appropriate to ensure enhanced movement of vehicles;
- 2) Analysis of potential high traffic volume periods (i.e. holidays and weather related events);
- 3) Development of contingency plans in anticipation of these periods;
- 4) Consideration of potential chokepoints and/or closures related to highway construction activities;
- 5) Solicitation of feedback from the Castaic Area and West Ranch Town Councils, and;
- 6) Enhanced communication plans in anticipation of, or in response to major disruptions.

#

KB:amj

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

EMERGENCY MOBILITY OPTIONS IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

The Route Fire in the unincorporated Castaic community started on August 31, 2022, at approximately 12:00 p.m., scrambling first responders from across Los Angeles County (County) to protect lives, infrastructure, and private property. Soon thereafter, the fire which had erupted on the west side of Interstate 5 Freeway (I-5), quickly jumped and spread to the east side of the freeway, prompting road closures, mandatory evacuations, and a significantly larger concern for life safety.

Through the heroic efforts of our first responders, who immediately deployed personnel and equipment, no structures and no lives were lost before containment of the fire. As of today, the fire has burned more than 5,200 acres and has threatened 500 homes but is now more than 98% contained. The quick action by the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD), in conjunction with the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), ensured that firefighting resources were able to reach the front lines of the fire to put out the blaze. This required a full closure of the I-5 to allow for first responders to quickly get to the front lines of the fire.

However, the mobilization and prioritization of resources needed to stop the spread of the fire had a significant impact to traffic circulation along the I-5 corridor and especially in the Castaic community. My office has received dozens of reports of residents being unable to leave their homes, reach their kids at school, and move about the community.

These efforts however paled in comparison with the scale of the regional and commuter traffic and commercial vehicles that were detoured off the freeway due to the initial closure to stop the fire. In the following days after significant containment of the fire, Caltrans noted that a retaining structure along the freeway had been damaged by the fire and would need emergency repair, necessitating a continued closure of two northbound I-5 lanes, exacerbating traffic conditions on a major holiday weekend.

-MORE-

MOTION

SOLIS _____

KUEHL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

MITCHELL _____

Caltrans subsequently noted that the two lanes would remain closed indefinitely, gridlocking traffic during a majority of the day, and sending commuters into the Castaic community, creating a traffic nightmare. In response, my office has requested that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) deploy messaging to keep traffic on the freeway or onto alternate freeways and has requested that the County's Department of Public Works (DPW) establish local access only for roadways in the Castaic community to ensure local access can be maintained while the closures are in place.

The Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor through the Santa Clarita Valley has for a number of years been designated as chokepoint in the State of California's highway system. Serving as one of the major transportation corridors for the movement of goods between Mexico, the United States, and Canada, the I-5 corridor in Santa Clarita faces challenging traffic conditions during the course of its normal operations. One of the constraints of this corridor is the geography of the valley where various segments of the State's interstate system coalesce into a geographic chokepoint.

With the increasing instances of severe heat as a result of climate change, there is an incremental shift in the number of days where conditions increase the risk of wildfires. Despite efforts to implement the necessary mitigation efforts and emergency plan, the increasing voracity of wildfire incidents experienced in the state over the last few years demonstrates the possibility of catastrophic consequences if the corridor experiences a record-breaking wildfire.

Further exacerbating the issue for the corridor are weather events that strain the already fragile infrastructure of the corridor. These events include snow and ice conditions, which can be partially planned for with meteorologic forecasting.

On December 4, 2018 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) unanimously approved my motion titled "Emergency Traffic Circulation Plans for I-5 in Santa Clarita Valley". Since then, the Board has asked DPW to investigate and develop contingency plans for one of the most critical pieces of transportation infrastructure for portions of the Santa Clarita Valley and Antelope Valleys. Despite direction from the Board to prioritize the mitigation of these known issues, DPW has been unable to demonstrate responsiveness to address the deficiencies of the corridor.

Critical components of a broader solution to these types of events have been identified by DPW in their subsequent reports back to the December 2018 Motion. The most recent Board Report dated June 28, 2022 has listed multiple efforts that need to be expedited. If these critical components are not identified and developed, the County is at risk of missing out on the potential to access once in a generation infrastructure funding being made available at the State and Federal levels.

-MORE-

For residents of the Castaic community, closures of the I-5 either due to collisions or snow and ice storms have demonstrated the limits of the Old Road, which functions as the only relief valve for one of the most heavily traveled goods movement corridors in the State. Closures of the I-5 during events can lead to significant congestion, delay, and presence of large commercial vehicles on residential roadways.

With an increased focus on resilient infrastructure and a greater emphasis on sustainability it is imperative that plans of action be updated to incorporate these elements to provide the best pathway to funding critical infrastructure improvements. Given the risk if proper action is not taken, it is undeniable that the Castaic community will continue to face more heightened risks than other communities in the County. As the occurrence and severity of wildfires increases, it is evident that greater collaboration amongst County agencies is needed to achieve tangible outcomes and solutions.

The implementation of an adequate Integrated Corridor Management System is critical in the short term as the long-term solutions are properly addressed and mitigated along with many of the recommendations from the Department of Public Works which have been in development and planning since early 2019. As the emergency and its aftermath unfolded over Labor Day weekend, it highlighted the importance of building in wildfire resiliency and mobility within our communities.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS (BOARD) direct the Director of the Los Angeles County (County) Department of Public Works (DPW):

1. Report back to the Board in writing and in person at the Board's September 27, 2022 Regular Meeting on the following:
 - a. A defined plan to expedite the construction of the traffic signals at the intersection of The Old Road at Parker Road and Castaic Road at Ridge Route Road, respectively, which were recommended by DPW for installation in July 2019;
 - b. Updated cost estimate, schedule, and funding plan for the status of continued efforts to address congestion on The Old Road, including Segments 1 and 2 as identified in the June 28, 2022 Board Report;
 - c. Draft concept of operations to address traffic congestion along The Old Road during Interstate 5 Freeway events;
 - d. Draft conceptual design plan and cost estimate to implement an Integrated Corridor Management System at existing and future signalized intersections along The Old Road;
 - e. Integrated Corridor Management strategies for a potential Interstate 5 Connected Corridors project;
 - f. Engagement technology companies such as Waze, Google, and Apple to request that their software route drivers to appropriate alternatives and away from residential neighborhoods during critical events;

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2. Revise the ongoing Board Report for the December 4, 2018 Motion titled “Emergency Traffic Circulation Plans for I-5 in Santa Clarita Valley” to include the above directives and update the reporting frequency from quarterly to monthly.

I, FURTHER MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS direct the Chief Executive Office’s Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, in conjunction with the Department of Public Works, to advocate in support of Federal and State funding and appropriations requests for congestion relief and climate resiliency projects along The Old Road, as identified in the Department of Public Works’ June 28, 2022 Board Report.

I, FURTHER MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS direct the Department of Public Works, with support from the Chief Executive Office, to report back in writing in 30 days with a financing plan to address any identified funding gap that considers, among other things, state and federal grant opportunities, Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs), Public Private Partnerships, and Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, and includes all timelines the Board must be aware of to draw down federal and state funding and a plan for other funding opportunities.

I, FURTHER MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS direct the Office of Emergency Management, in coordination with the Department of Public Works, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, and any other relevant County Departments and/or local agency stakeholders, to develop and report back in writing in 45 days with a proposed plan for Incident Traffic Management for the unincorporated communities of the West Santa Clarita Valley that addresses necessary preparation, traffic management, evacuation methods and concepts, and communication strategies to evacuate the community during life-threatening emergencies.

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