

WHAT IS THE SCHEDULE FOR THE SR-79 REALIGNMENT PROJECT?

Transportation projects have many phases that are required by law before they can be implemented. The SR-79 Realignment Project has been the subject of a Realignment Study Report (1998) and a Project Study Report (2000). We have developed project Purpose and Need (2003), Project Criteria and Alternatives Selection (2004), and Updated Preliminary Agreement (2005) documents which have been approved by the participating transportation and environmental agencies. The current phase is a Project Report and Draft Environmental Impact Study/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) which will lead to a Final Project Report and EIS/EIR.

This work is expected to take approximately three years. After that, final engineering design and right-of-way acquisition can take place. When that work is completed, construction can begin.

2004-2006	2007	2008-2009	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Scoping Meetings Evaluate and Redefine Alternatives Prepare Technical Reports Prepare Draft EIS/EIR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Draft EIS/EIR Conduct Public Hearings Identify Preferred Alternative Prepare Final EIS/EIR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Final EIS/EIR Prepare Final Engineering/Design Acquire Right-of-Way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin Construction

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS?

Attend a public meeting, visit the SR-79 Project website at www.sr79project.info, call us at (951) 787-7141 or write us at:

Hideo Sugita—Deputy Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission
P.O. Box 12008 • Riverside, CA 92502-2208

WHO ARE THE SR-79 REALIGNMENT PROJECT PARTNERS?

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the County of Riverside, and the cities of Hemet and San Jacinto are all partners in this project.



WHY IS THE SR-79 REALIGNMENT PROJECT NEEDED?

The SR-79 Realignment Project is being developed to meet the following important mobility goals for the Hemet-San Jacinto area:

- Create roadway capacity for the area's population and business needs in 2035
- Serve regional movement of people and goods
- Provide a more effective connection between Domenigoni Parkway and Gilman Springs Road
- Separate local and regional traffic by transforming SR-79 into an improved regional highway that takes heavy regional traffic off of local and residential roads
- Resolve shared use of SR-74 and SR-79
- Create a facility that is compatible with future transportation needs and that will be compatible with future public transit facilities
- Improve overall motorist safety



WHAT IS THE SR-79 REALIGNMENT PROJECT?

This project proposes to realign State Route (SR) 79 between Domenigoni Parkway and Gilman Springs Road. Currently, the highway runs motorists through a circuitous north-south route and needs improvements in efficiency, safety and capacity. The proposed project would realign the highway to provide a more direct route within the San Jacinto Valley. Regional motorists would be able to use a true, north-south route while residents of Hemet and San Jacinto will enjoy better mobility on local streets.

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE SR-79 REALIGNMENT PROJECT?

Public scoping meetings were held in October 2004 to determine the scope of the project. At these meetings, members of the public commented on various segments for potential alignments that were loosely grouped into three major routes: Western, Central, and Eastern alternatives and made recommendations regarding what should be studied.

At that time, people voiced concerns about how the proposed roadway would serve local economic development, preserve the rural character of some areas, avoid harm to environmental and cultural resources, reduce traffic congestion, and minimize disturbances to homes and businesses. Some expressed impatience that studies for the project began in 1998 and that a new road is not already under construction.

The great majority of public comment focused on the unsuitability of the Eastern Alternative proposal for a number of reasons:

- Disturbance to a large number of homes and businesses
- Impacts to a large number of schools
- Disruption of local traffic

Following those public meetings, RCTC approached the permitting agencies: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to request the removal of the Eastern Alternative from further study.

Simultaneously, RCTC took the proposed alternatives to a panel of independent experts from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for a review called "Value



Riverside County Transportation Commission
P.O. Box 12008
Riverside, CA 92502-2208
SR-79 REALIGNMENT PROJECT



www.rctc.org
www.sr79project.info

Fact Sheet #2
October 2005

(Continued inside)



SR-79 REALIGNMENT PROJECT

A project of the Riverside County Transportation Commission

WHAT IS HAPPENING (continued from front page)

Analysis.” This is an important part of any large roadway project that might be built with federal funds. The Value Analysis team reviewed the proposed alternatives and echoed some of the public concerns.

In the meantime, the federal permitting agencies agreed to eliminate the Eastern Alternative on the condition that there be more than one alternative under study that avoided areas of wetlands. Of the two remaining alternatives, only the Western Alternative avoided impacts to wetlands. As a part of their work, the Value Analysis team suggested the addition of a new route between the Central and Western alternatives that avoided impacts to wetlands and satisfied the permitting agencies concerns. As a result, those agencies agreed to remove the Eastern Alternative from further study. (See map.)

In addition, the City of Hemet passed an Interim Urgency Ordinance that clearly states the City’s preference for the Central Alternative but creates a planning area that contains the areas still under study so that any new development will not result in undue impacts to a future roadway. This ordinance will be in effect for 24 months and ensures that any new development proposal will consider not only a future roadway but also impacts to Riverside County’s Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Hemet Ryan Airport future expansion, among other factors.

It is now important to take this New Alternative suggested by the Value Analysis team back to the public to get input. It is also important to begin narrowing the study areas west of Warren Road and north of Domenigoni Parkway to actual alignments where a roadway might be constructed. These proposed alignments are also shown on the map.

HOW WILL AN ALIGNMENT BE SELECTED?

The map on the right shows the alternatives currently being studied. So far, more than 91 individual segments have been studied. Even with the elimination of the Eastern Alternative, many segments remain feasible and will continue to be a part of the next phases of the process. Generally, segments that are shown to be feasible could be connected to form three possible routes.

The possibilities will be evaluated through public input, the opinions of local, state, and federal government agencies, and the results of environmental studies. When this work is complete, RCTC and the project partners will review the results and select a preferred route.

