



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the West County Connectors Project?

The West County Connectors (WCC) project was initiated by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to link high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, otherwise known as carpool lanes, on the San Diego Freeway (I-405) with those on the Garden Grove Freeway (SR-22) and the San Gabriel River Freeway (I-605) to create a seamless HOV connection among the three freeways. The project will:

- add an additional HOV lane in each direction on I-405 between the SR-22 and the I-605 (for a total of two in each direction)
- connect the SR-22 HOV lanes east of Valley View Street with the HOV lanes on I-405 west of Valley View Street via a direct-connector ramp
- connect the I-405 HOV lanes south of I-605 to the HOV lanes on I-605 via a direct-connector bridge
- reconstruct the Valley View Street bridge crossing over SR-22 and the Seal Beach Boulevard bridge crossing over I-405
- reconstruct the existing connector bridge ramps between I-405 and SR-22 and those between I-405 and I-605
- reconstruct the northbound I-405 to westbound SR-22 connector
- reconstruct various on- and off-ramps
- construct soundwalls and retaining walls at various locations
- add landscaping and hardscaping elements

How is the WCC Project different from the I-405 Improvement Project currently in the environmental phase?

The WCC project is the second phase of the SR-22 HOV project recently constructed between the Costa Mesa Freeway (SR-55) and Valley View Street. The WCC project will add an additional HOV (carpool) lane to the portion of I-405 between the SR-22 near Valley View Street and the I-605. The project has an

approved environmental impact statement and is currently in final design. WCC project construction is scheduled to begin in early 2010.

The I-405 project environmental document will further study the two alternatives from the Project Study Report: adding one lane in each direction or two lanes in each direction. The OCTA Board of Directors also recently voted to study a “funding constrained alternative” and explore a high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane and general purpose lane option. Analysis of these alternatives will include evaluating options to stay generally within the existing right of way.

Construction is 7 to 10 years away depending on funding availability.

What changes occurred as a result of public comments received during the environmental planning phase of the WCC project?

In response to comments on the 2001 Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/EIS), Caltrans further analyzed multiple sections of the SR-22 corridor to refine right-of-way limits and reduce environmental impacts. Due to these efforts, the proposed I-405/I-605 HOV direct connector was realigned and will be constructed below the existing southbound I-405 to northbound I-605 connector. The design modification is in compliance with the environmental report to mitigate the visual impact to the adjacent community of Rossmoor and the city of Seal Beach. Right-of-way impacts also were eliminated to the community of Rossmoor and the city of Seal Beach College Park East development.

When will construction on the WCC project begin and end?

Construction is currently scheduled to begin in early 2010 and be completed in late 2013.

How is the WCC project being funded?

The total project cost is \$400 million, including \$200 million in federal funds from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and \$200 million in state funds from the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA).

How many new structures are included in the WCC project? Will any existing structures be replaced?

There will be two new HOV bridges and reconstruction of several existing bridges, including the Seal Beach Boulevard Bridge, Valley View Street Bridge and 7th Street Bridge.

Will any structures be closed temporarily during construction?

The northbound I-405 to westbound SR-22 connector, otherwise known as the 7th Street bridge, will be closed for approximately one year during construction. Unfortunately, unlike the Valley View Street and Seal Beach Boulevard Bridges, this structure cannot be reconstructed one half at a time.

The eastbound SR-22 to northbound I-405 connector will be closed for approximately ten months while it is being reconstructed.

The southbound I-605/southbound I-405 connector and eastbound SR-22/southbound I-405 connectors will also be closed for approximately two weeks at different times during the project.

Recommended detour routes will be publicized well in advance of each closure.

How will traffic on Seal Beach Boulevard be handled during construction?

OCTA and Caltrans developed a traffic management plan, in coordination with the WCC project corridor cities, to address all construction staging. The Seal Beach Boulevard Bridge will be reconstructed one half at a time and reconstruction of both the Valley View Street Bridge and the northbound I-405 to westbound SR-22/7th Street bridge will be complete before work will begin on Seal Beach Boulevard Bridge.

During the first phase of construction of the Seal Beach Boulevard Bridge, one lane will be open in each direction and a center median will be dedicated to emergency vehicle use only. During the second phase of construction, two lanes will be available in each direction. Once construction on the bridge is complete, there will be four lanes on the northbound side of the bridge and three lanes on the southbound side.

Caltrans recently completed the installation of numerous lights between Valley View Street and Seal Beach Boulevard to increase safety. Is reinstalling these lights part of the West County Connectors Project?

Yes. The center median of the freeway will be shifted to accommodate the new I-405/SR-22 HOV structure. OCTA's intent is to save the existing light fixtures and reinstall them on the new median barrier as part of the WCC Project.

How will the WCC Project address access to emergency vehicles during construction?

Emergency access will be maintained at all times during construction. OCTA community relations staff members are working diligently with local emergency services to ensure the proper entities are notified of closures, detours and other construction activities. During the first phase of construction on the Seal Beach Boulevard Bridge there will be one lane open in either direction and a center striped median reserved for emergency vehicle use only.

How will construction affect the commute on the SR-22, I-405 & I-605?

The flow of traffic will improve once construction is complete. During construction, motorists may experience some delays. However, construction crews will be working safely and efficiently to ensure the project is completed on time and with minimal inconvenience to the traveling public. To accommodate motorists traveling through the area, closures during peak travel times or holidays will be limited. When closures are unavoidable, detour routes will be provided along with advance notification and signage. Most temporary closures will be late at night to minimize traffic impacts.

Will new soundwalls be constructed as a part of this project? Will existing soundwalls be replaced?

The project will include new soundwalls and in certain instances replacement of existing soundwalls per the project's approved environmental document. For detailed information about a soundwall in your area, please contact Christina Byrne, OCTA Community Relations Officer, at (714) 560-5717 or cbyrne@octa.net

How is OCTA mitigating impacts to schools adjacent to the project?

Traffic noise level predictions were modeled for the three school buildings (Lee, Weaver, and Francis Elementary Schools) in the Rossmoor community closest to the project alignment. At each of these schools, the modeled worst-hour traffic noise levels outside the school building was found not to approach Caltrans'/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) exterior noise abatement criteria (NAC) of 67 dBA. The modeled noise levels outside the school buildings were adjusted to predict the interior noise levels using the FHWA building noise reduction values for typical building structures.

It was assumed that windows would be open in school buildings that are not air-conditioned, providing a 10 dBA noise reduction between outside and inside the building. For school buildings that are air-conditioned, it was assumed windows

would be closed, providing a building noise reduction of 20 dBA. Based on the analyses, the estimated interior noise levels at these three schools would not approach or exceed Caltrans’/FHWA interior NAC of 52 dBA.

Predicted carbon monoxide concentrations from vehicle emissions are below the applicable Federal and State standards.

Where can I find out more information about the project?

For more information regarding this project or any other Orange County freeway improvement project, call the toll free Transportation Helpline at (800) 724-0353 or log on to www.octa.net/westcounty.

How can I receive current information about the West County Connectors Project?

Ask to be added to the project distribution list by contacting Christina Byrne, OCTA Community Relations Officer, at (714) 560-5717 or cbyrne@octa.net

