



## 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 the 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 between 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 bridge
- 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 / 7<sup>th</sup> Street connector
- reconstruct the southbound I-405 to the eastbound SR-22 connector
- reconstruct various on-ramps 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 Garden Grove Freeway (SR-22) Improvement project recently constructed between the Costa Mesa Freeway (SR-55) and Valley View Street.

The WCC project has an approved environmental impact statement and construction is underway.

The I-405 Improvement Project is currently in the environmental phase. The 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 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.

The draft environmental document will be available for public review in late 2011. The I-405 Improvement Project construction is three to six years away depending on funding availability and project delivery method.

### **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 southernly and will be constructed below the existing southbound I-405 to northbound I-605 connector. 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?**

The WCC project consists of two segments. Construction began on the east segment, near Valley View Street, in September 2010 and construction on the west segment, near Seal Beach Boulevard, will begin in early 2011. Construction on both segments will be completed in 2014.

### **How is the WCC project being funded?**

The total project cost is \$277 million, including \$87 million in federal funds from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and \$50 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The remaining funds include \$135 million from the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) / Proposition 1B and \$5 million in local funds.

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

The WCC project includes two new HOV connectors as well as the reconstruction of several existing bridges and connectors, including the Seal Beach Boulevard Bridge, Valley View Street Bridge, the northbound I-405 / westbound SR-22 / 7<sup>th</sup> Street connector and the southbound I-405 to eastbound SR-22 connector.

**Will any structures be closed temporarily during construction?**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Street bridge will be closed for approximately one year during reconstruction. Unlike the Valley View Street and Seal Beach Boulevard Bridges, this structure cannot be reconstructed one half at a time, due to the geotechnical, structural, right-of-way and bridge alignment constraints.

The eastbound SR-22 to northbound I-405 connector will also be closed for approximately 10 months while it is being reconstructed.

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

Recommended detour routes are available online at [www.octa.net/wc\\_closures.aspx](http://www.octa.net/wc_closures.aspx).

**How will traffic be detoured during the 7<sup>th</sup> Street bridge closure?**

A 7<sup>th</sup> Street detour map is available online at [www.octa.net/wc\\_closures.aspx](http://www.octa.net/wc_closures.aspx).

**How is OCTA planning to mitigate impacts on local streets from increased traffic during the WCC project?**

Each corridor city will be compensated financially for staff time to assist with traffic management and public safety during construction. Additionally, several detour corridors will receive signal and intersection modifications as well as pavement restoration and restriping.

Traffic will be continuously monitored during construction and adjustments to signal timing and striping will be made as necessary.

**Is OCTA improving the Studebaker Rd. interchange in Seal Beach as a part of the WCC project?**

OCTA is not reconfiguring the Studebaker Rd. / SR-22 interchange at the entrance of College Park West as a part of the WCC project. However, the City of Seal Beach is working with the City of Long Beach and Caltrans on a possible project for the area. Please contact the City of Seal Beach for more information.

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

In coordination with the WCC project corridor cities, OCTA and Caltrans developed a traffic management plan 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 / 7<sup>th</sup> Street bridge is scheduled to be complete before work will begin on the 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 and three lanes on the southbound side of the bridge.

**What hours of the day will construction take place?**

Construction will primarily occur on weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., however, there will be intermittent construction on the weekends. Some night activity will be required for demolition, re-striping, k-rail placement and paving activities. The public will be notified about night construction activities well in advance.

**Caltrans recently completed the installation of numerous lights on the I-405 Freeway 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. The new soundwalls will be 14 to 16 feet high. 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](mailto:cbyrne@octa.net).

**Are you acquiring residential or commercial property to construct the WCC project?**

There are no residential acquisitions needed to construct the WCC project. However, there is one small commercial acquisition from the Bixby Property at Seal Beach Boulevard. OCTA is also pursuing an easement from the Department of the Navy to complete improvements on the southbound I-405 between Seal Beach Boulevard and Bolsa Chica Road.

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

Traffic noise level predictions were modeled for three school buildings closest to the project alignment (Lee, Weaver, and Francis elementary schools) in the Rossmoor community. At each of these schools, the modeled worst-hour traffic noise levels outside the school building did not approach Caltrans' / Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) exterior noise abatement criteria (NAC) of 67 decibels. 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 decibels 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 decibels. Based on the analyses, the estimated interior noise levels at these three schools would not approach or exceed Caltrans' / FHWA interior NAC of 52 decibels.

Predicted carbon monoxide concentrations from vehicle emissions also were 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 Construction Helpline at (800) 724-0353.

### **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](mailto:cbyrne@octa.net). Additional project information can be viewed online at [www.octa.net/westcounty](http://www.octa.net/westcounty). You can also become a fan of the project on Facebook or follow the project on Twitter.

[www.facebook.com/WccProjectInfo](http://www.facebook.com/WccProjectInfo)

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