



NEWS RELEASE

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RCTC Approves New Project to Help Smooth I-15 Traffic Congestion in Corona, Temescal Valley

As the Riverside County Transportation Commission nears completion of the 15 Express Lanes, Commissioners voted to proactively improve a traffic hot-spot on southbound Interstate 15 between Cajalco Road and Weirick Road in the Corona/Temescal Valley area.

Heavy congestion occurs during peak hours on southbound I-15 through south Corona and into Temescal Valley. Once the 15 Express Lanes opens, I-15 will narrow from five lanes to three lanes at Cajalco Road when traveling south.

A new project, known as the 15 Corridor Operations Project or 15 COP, will add a non-tolled lane on southbound I-15 from the Cajalco Road on-ramp to the Weirick Road off-ramp, a segment slightly less than one mile. The project will widen the existing I-15 median, shift vehicles to this new pavement, and convert the existing outside lane to a new travel lane. In addition, the 15 COP will widen the Bedford Canyon Wash Bridge.

Funding for the project is made possible by effective management of the 15 Express Lanes Project, which has \$25 million of unspent budget that will be used to fund much of the new southbound lane. Federal funds will pay for the balance of the \$38.3 million project cost.

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“Southbound I-15 motorists have spoken loud and clear for years that they need more relief,” said RCTC Chair and Wildomar City Council Member Ben J. Benoit. “The RCTC Commission agreed and we took action to accelerate improvements that will make a difference. Thanks to RCTC’s staff, we have funds remaining from the current 15 Express Lanes Project to keep moving south.”

RCTC has adopted an aggressive schedule for engineering, environmental studies, project design, and construction. The new lane could open in late 2024.

The project is designed to offer interim traffic congestion relief on I-15 near Cajalco Road and Weirick Road before the opening of another project, the 15 Express Lanes Southern Extension (or 15 ELPSE), in approximately 2028. Technical studies are under way now for the 15 ELPSE, which would add express lanes in both directions in the median of I-15 between Cajalco Road and Route 74/Central Avenue in Lake Elsinore.

Building the 15 COP follows a similar strategy used by RCTC after the 91 Express Lanes opened in Riverside County in 2017. Once those lanes opened, several areas of local congestion occurred, and several operational enhancements were made to improve traffic flow, including a new westbound lane between Green River Road and Route 241.

To sign up for 15 COP project updates, visit rctc.org/15cop