

AROUND THE REGION: REGIONAL EDITION

Bypass lanes open at I-5/805 merge

February 18, 2006

Northbound bypass lanes will open at the Interstate 5/805 merge today, along with a learning curve for drivers.

The bypass offers smoother connections to state Route 56 and to Carmel Mountain Road from either I-5 or I-805, allowing motorists to escape the backups in the regular traffic lanes.

Contractors planned to take the wraps off directional signs and open the connectors by 7 a.m.

Caltrans urged drivers to pay special attention to signs in the area as they become familiar with the configuration.

The true test may not be seen until Tuesday evening, when motorists caught in the first non-holiday weekday commute find out how much easier it becomes to escape the congestion at the merge while heading to state Route 56.

The bypass also offers access to a right turn on Carmel Mountain Road. Engineers say an on-ramp from Carmel Mountain Road to northbound I-5 will be ready in a month or two.

The old exit to Route 56 is being closed, so motorists will have to use the bypass.

Construction on the \$180 million project began four years ago. Contractors reported they are running ahead of the fall 2007 completion schedule for the southbound portion of the project.

– *Jeff Ristine*

Driver dies after rollover accident

CHULA VISTA – A 26-year-old driver was killed early yesterday in a rollover accident on Olympic Parkway after he lost control of his compact car while speeding and was thrown from his vehicle, police said.

The man, identified by the county Medical Examiner's Office as Steven William Mooney of Chula Vista, was driving west near Heritage Road about 1:40 a.m. when he lost control on a slight curve in the roadway and his car became airborne, Lt. Scott Arsenault said.

The car struck three metal posts and rolled several times. Mooney was pronounced dead on the roadway, Arsenault said.

Police closed the right lane on westbound Olympic Parkway for several hours while they conducted their investigation.

– *Angelica Martinez*

Team that offered quake aid returning

Sailors from Beach Master Unit One's Beach Party Team Alpha are scheduled to return to Coronado tomorrow.

The team has spent the past seven months on deployment. Its duties included support work for Operation Iraqi Freedom and earthquake relief efforts in the Kashmir region of Pakistan.

On Oct. 8, a temblor killed more than 70,000 people and left about 3 million homeless in Kashmir. In the aftermath, the team helped to move nearly 200 tons of clothing, water, food and other goods to quake-affected areas.

– *Hieu Tran Phan*

Federal grant aids S.D. police, sheriff

The San Diego Police Department and the county Sheriff's Department have been awarded a joint federal grant of \$575,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice.

The agencies will share the funds for gang suppression and general law enforcement needs, including forensics, training, equipment and maintenance.

Donna J. Warlick, senior management analyst for San Diego police, said the grant helps address budget shortfalls and unanticipated needs for each agency.

– *Joe Hughes*

3rd public hearing set on bus changes

EL CAJON – Metropolitan Transit System officials have added a third public hearing, in El Cajon, to give passengers an opportunity to sound off on proposed sweeping changes to bus schedules and routes.

The transit board will meet March 8 at 6 p.m. at the German American Hall, 1017 S. Mollison Avenue (along bus route 874).

Two previously announced meetings are March 2 from 6 to 9 p.m. and March 9 from 9 a.m. to noon, both at Golden Hall at the San Diego Community Concourse, 202 C St., in downtown San Diego.

The hearings are on a draft plan for a complete overhaul of the MTS bus operation, aimed at realigning schedules and services with the greatest demand.

– *Jeff Ristine*

It's renewal time for SENTRI drivers

Drivers whose enrollment in the SENTRI border-crossing program has expired or is about to expire can

renew memberships beginning next week, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

SENTRI participants consent to background checks and pay a fee in exchange for use of special fast-pass lanes at the border.

In addition, customs officials are switching all SENTRI members from the white transponders that were attached to vehicle windshields to newer equipment known as radio frequency identification technology. All SENTRI participants are required to have the new equipment by June 21.

Participants in SENTRI, or Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection, are required to renew their accounts every two years. The renewal fee is \$129 per person, with a cap of \$258 per family.

The new equipment is available at the SENTRI office at 2500 Paseo Internacional, Otay Mesa. People are urged to make appointments by calling (619) 690-7601, 690-7602 or 690-7603. The work, which takes about 15 minutes, also can be done without an appointment on a first-come, first-served basis.

Participants need to have the old transponder, current SENTRI cards, vehicle registration and proof of insurance. New SENTRI users automatically receive the new equipment.

The SENTRI office will be open longer beginning Tuesday, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., including weekends.

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