

Route 56 project is headed for completion | Group grateful budget crisis didn't stall work; [NC,NI Edition]

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Abstract (Document Summary)

When completed next July, Route 56 will be the only east-west freeway between routes 78 and 52 -- a distance of about 22 miles. The ends of Route 56 were finished years ago, and construction crews are closing a four-mile gap between the paved segments.

The 10-mile-long Route 56 will connect Interstate 5 at Carmel Valley with Interstate 15 in Rancho Penasquitos, and local officials believe more than 70,000 vehicles a day will travel on the freeway when it is finished.

SANDAG made similar assurances for about 70 transportation projects in the county, including the I-5/805 merge and the widening of I-15, as well as the completion of Route 56.

Full Text (359 words)

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The homeowners association in Rancho Santa Fe is grateful the state budget crisis is about to be solved without interrupting one of the neighborhood's favorite projects: completion of state Route 56.

Association officials have long pushed for an east-west artery that will relieve the traffic burden on Del Dios Highway, which carries an average of about 21,000 vehicles a day.

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"The (Rancho Santa Fe) association is very grateful that SANDAG (the San Diego Association of Governments) has stepped in to assure 56 gets completed and completed on time," association planning director Keith Behner said yesterday.

SANDAG recently said if the state budget crisis threatened to halt the \$50 million project, it would lend money to the California Department of Transportation to keep construction crews on the job.

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It appears unlikely SANDAG will have to lend any money to keep the projects going because the state Assembly approved a budget this week that includes the funding and Gov. Gray Davis is expected to sign it into law tomorrow.

Behner said it was gratifying to see local transportation officials assure that major projects would not halt because of the budget impasse.

He also said it is vital for the Route 56, I-5/805 and I-15 projects to be completed to maintain traffic circulation in North County.

Eric Pahlke, SANDAG's transportation director, said his association's promise to lend money to keep the

projects on track was instrumental in keeping contractors on the job.

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