

State Route 56 to open July 17

The grand opening of state Route 56 will be held on July 17.

"This project has been on the books for decades," said San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy. "I'm thrilled that Caltrans, with the help of the Freeway Congestion Strike Team, SANDAG and a number of other agencies, was able to get this freeway on track and completed."

To celebrate the opening a free community festival and bike ride will be held on the new road just after officials hold a ribbon cutting ceremony at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 17.

"When I began my first term as a councilmember in 2000, many of the properties necessary to complete SR56 had not been purchased," said Councilmember Brian Maienschein, co-chair of the Mayor's Freeway Congestion Strike Team. "I'm so happy to see that all the work we have done on this project is paying off. This is a result of our efforts to make congestion relief a priority for our city."

This final section of the four-lane freeway, between Camino del Sur and Carmel Country Road, will complete the nine-mile stretch between Interstate 5 and Interstate 15. Initially, the new freeway will accommodate 20,000 vehicles per day. That will increase to between 84,000 to 120,000 vehicles a day by the year 2020.

The freeway is expected to reduce traffic on Black Mountain Road, Mira Mesa Boulevard, Miramar Road and Carmel Valley Road. These streets are already operating at or near capacity. The new freeway will also balance the north-south traffic on I-5 and I-15. Plans call for eventually adding another two lanes.

"SR 56 is a very critical link in our regional transportation infrastructure," said councilmember Scott Peters. "It will get parents home to their families more quickly and the bikeway along the entire route makes this a recreational amenity as well as a freeway."

The new stretch of freeway, which will be open to vehicle traffic on Monday, July 19, features interchanges at Camino Santa Fe and Camino del Sur. The new section of SR 56 also includes bridges, drainage facilities and environmental mitigation.

The east-west route will connect the coast communities of Del Mar, Torrey Pines and Carmel Valley with the eastern neighborhoods of Rancho Penasquitos, Carmel Mountain Ranch, Ranch Bernardo and Poway. Construction costs for this portion of the freeway are \$56 million. The

entire SR 56 project costs \$220 million including right-of-way acquisition, stormwater pollution prevention and engineering.

Funding for the multi-million dollar project came from state, city, county and SANDAG sources. Developers in the area have also contributed to this project.

"More than \$62 million already has been contributed from the existing half-penny transportation sales tax, known as TransNet, to build the west and east ends of the new freeway," noted Poway Mayor Mickey Cafagna, the vice chair of SANDAG.

The free festival that will be held to mark the occasion will include a bike ride on the freeway, live music, activities for children, food and beverages to purchase, and displays of fire and police equipment. Parking will be available at Westview High School and in a dirt lot off of Torrey Santa Fe Road owned by Kilroy Realty. Free shuttle service will be provided from the parking lots to the freeway by Cloud 9 Shuttle, Old Town Trolley and Sundance Stage Line. Free water will be provided by Poseidon Resources.

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