

High Desert Corridor

Project Fact Sheet



Metro



JANUARY 2012

Background

The High Desert Corridor (HDC) project proposes the construction of a new, approximately 63-mile, east-west freeway/expressway linking State Route (SR) 14 in Los Angeles County with SR-18 in San Bernardino County. This connection would link some of the fastest growing residential, commercial and industrial areas in Southern California, including the cities of Palmdale, Lancaster, Adelanto, Victorville and the Town of Apple Valley. While recent economic conditions have slowed growth throughout the nation, projections show that there will be significant growth in the HDC again in the future.

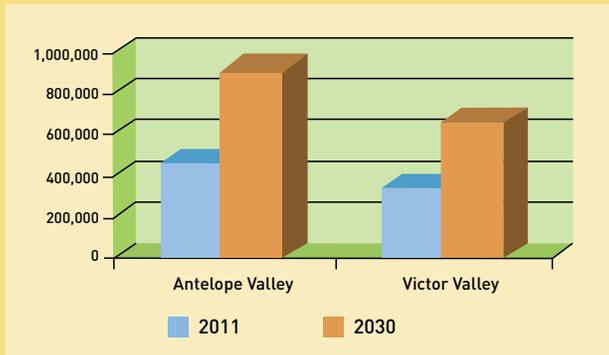
Anticipating this growth, together with the existing congestion on east/west corridors such as I-210, I-10, SR-60 and truck traffic on SR-138, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) initiated the HDC Environmental Impact Statement/Report (Draft EIS/EIR) in September 2010.



Project Alternatives



Population Growth



The existing population in the Antelope Valley is over 450,000 and is projected to exceed 900,000 by 2030. Similarly, Victor Valley's existing population is over 335,000 and is projected to exceed 650,000 by 2030.

In addition to addressing the issue of growth, the HDC project will also address traffic safety and support the growing need to move goods through our region. Traffic volumes are projected to exceed 100,000 vehicles per day in 2035. The HDC project is a critical link for the efficient flow of goods in California. Palmdale and Victorville's regional cargo airports serve as an important hub for both international exports/imports and cargo heading to Northern California. In addition, the Antelope Valley Intermodal Logistics Facility serves as a regional distribution center supporting goods movement between the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. With better and more efficient connections between the ports and the Antelope Valley, goods will move in a faster and more efficient manner across the region to their ultimate destinations.

Goals of the Project

- > Address significant regional growth
- > Increase east-west roadway capacity
- > Enhanced safety
- > Improved connections between regional airports and efficient movement of goods

Project Partners

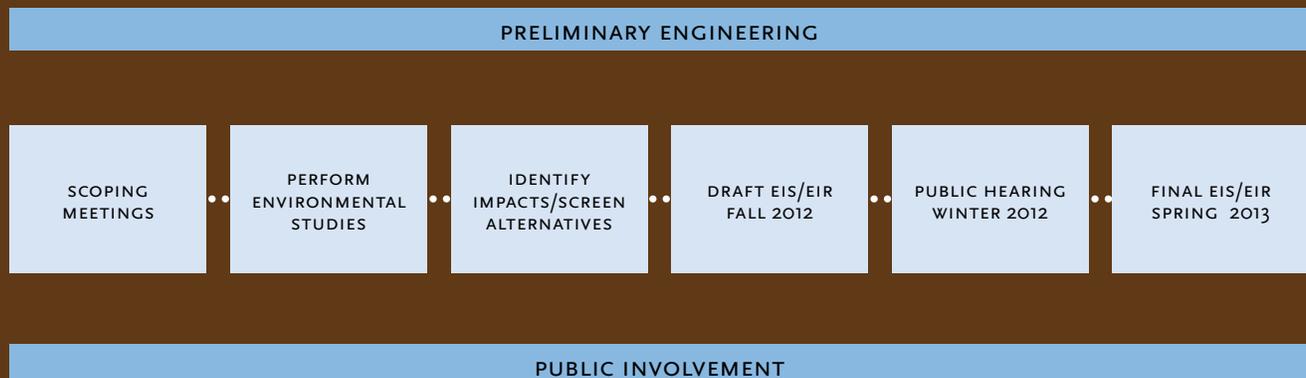
In April 2010, the Metro Board authorized entry into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the implementation of the HDC Project. This MOU identifies the roles and responsibilities of the project partners. Partner agencies include the HDC Joint Powers Authority (HDCJPA), the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG), the State of California represented by the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the County of Los Angeles and the County of San Bernardino represented by their respective Departments of Public Works, and the cities of Lancaster, Palmdale, Victorville, Adelanto and the Town of Apple Valley. Caltrans will also serve as the lead agency for the environmental clearance. The Metro Board approved the HDC as one of six high potential projects for Public Private Partnership and is part of the America Fast Forward initiative.

Study Process

The project development process is well defined by federal and state environmental and funding requirements. The flow chart below highlights the major milestones in the environmental process. Currently the project is in the Draft EIS/EIR study phase.

- > Release of the Draft EIS/EIR – fall 2012
- > Public Hearings – winter 2012
- > Final EIS/EIR – spring 2013

Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report Development Process



High Desert Corridor Alternatives included in the Draft EIS/EIR

Below are the Functional Alternatives and physical variations carried forward for further study in the High Desert Corridor Draft EIS/EIR:

No-Build Alternative

This alternative consists of those transportation projects that are already planned and have committed funds to be constructed by or before 2035 (subject to additional requirements under CEQA and NEPA). Consequently, the No Build Alternative represents future travel conditions in the HDC study area without the HDC Project and it is the baseline against which other transportation alternatives proposed for the study area will be assessed.

Transportation System/Demand Management (TSM/TDM) Alternative

The TSM/TDM alternative for the High Desert Corridor (HDC) is a collection of lower cost roadway improvements through the project corridor that can be evaluated against the proposed project alternatives. The TSM/TDM alternative focuses on improvements that connect SR-14 with SR-138 and then extend east to connect with US-395, I-15 and SR-18. The key elements that are under consideration for this alternative include:

- > An eight lane, grade-separated freeway from SR-14 to 30th Street East,
- > A transition to a four lane at-grade expressway from 30th St East to 125th Street East,
- > A four lane at-grade highway connecting to SR-138 and extending east to US-395,
- > A six lane arterial highway from US-395 to I-15, and
- > Minor roadway and signal improvements along SR-18 from I-15 to Bear Valley Rd.

Except for the freeway portion between SR-14 and 30th Street East, these TSM/TDM roadway improvements would maintain at-grade intersections with local roads and driveway access.

Freeway/Expressway Alternative (Avenue P-8, I-15 and SR-18)

This alternative consists of a combination of a controlled-access freeway and an expressway. It generally follows Avenue P-8 in Los Angeles County and then runs slightly south of El Mirage Road in San Bernardino County; it then extends to Air Expressway Road near I-15 and curves south to terminate at Bear Valley Road. There are four physical alignment variations that will be considered: alignment variations that will be considered:

- > **Variation A**
Located in the City of Palmdale, this variation would result in the freeway/expressway running slightly south of the main alignment, approximately between 15th St East and Little Rock Wash.

- > **Variation B (south)**
The freeway/expressway variation would run slightly south, of the main alignment between Oasis Rd and Caughlin Rd east of the county line.
- > **Variation D**
Located near the community of Lake Los Angeles, this freeway/expressway variation would run slightly south of the main alignment, just south of Avenue R, approximately between 150th St East and 230th St East.
- > **Variation E**
Located near the cities of Adelanto and Victorville, the freeway/expressway would run just south of the federal prison.

Freeway/Expressway Alternative with High Speed Rail Feeder Service Right-of-Way

This Alternative follows the same route as the Freeway/Expressway Alternative (with Variation A, B, D and E) and includes additional right of way for a High Speed Rail (HSR) Feeder Service with possibilities of green technologies. If a HSR Feeder Service is proven to be viable, its engineering and environmental analysis would be funded by others at a later date.

Freeway/Tollway Alternative (Avenue P-8, I-15 and SR-18)

This Alternative follows the same route as the Freeway/Expressway Alternative (with Variation A, B, D and E) and includes additional right of way for a High Speed Rail (HSR) Feeder Service with possibilities of green technologies. If a HSR Feeder Service is proven to be viable, its engineering and environmental analysis would be funded by others at a later date.

Freeway/Tollway Alternative with High-Speed Rail Feeder Service Right-of-Way

This Alternative is similar to the Freeway/Tollway Alternative (with Variation A, B, D and E) and includes additional right of way for a High Speed Rail (HSR) Feeder Service with possibilities of green technologies. This alternative would include a Public-Private Partnership analysis. If a HSR Feeder Service is proven to be viable, its engineering and environmental analysis would be funded by others at a later date.

Hybrid Corridor Alternative

This alternative would consist of a combination of all or some of the previously identified alternatives, whose elements (TSM/TDM, Freeway, Expressway, Tollway and HSR Feeder Service) would be pieced together to best fit the needs of each section of the corridor. The determination of which elements to use, and at which locations, would be determined based on the results of the traffic study, environmental studies and public input.



How can I get involved?

For additional information, please use the following contact tools to access more project information, ask questions, or provide comments.



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Messages are retrieved every business day.



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Please be sure to include all of your contact information in the body of your email.



metro.net/hdc

dot.ca.gov/disto7/travel/projects/138hdc



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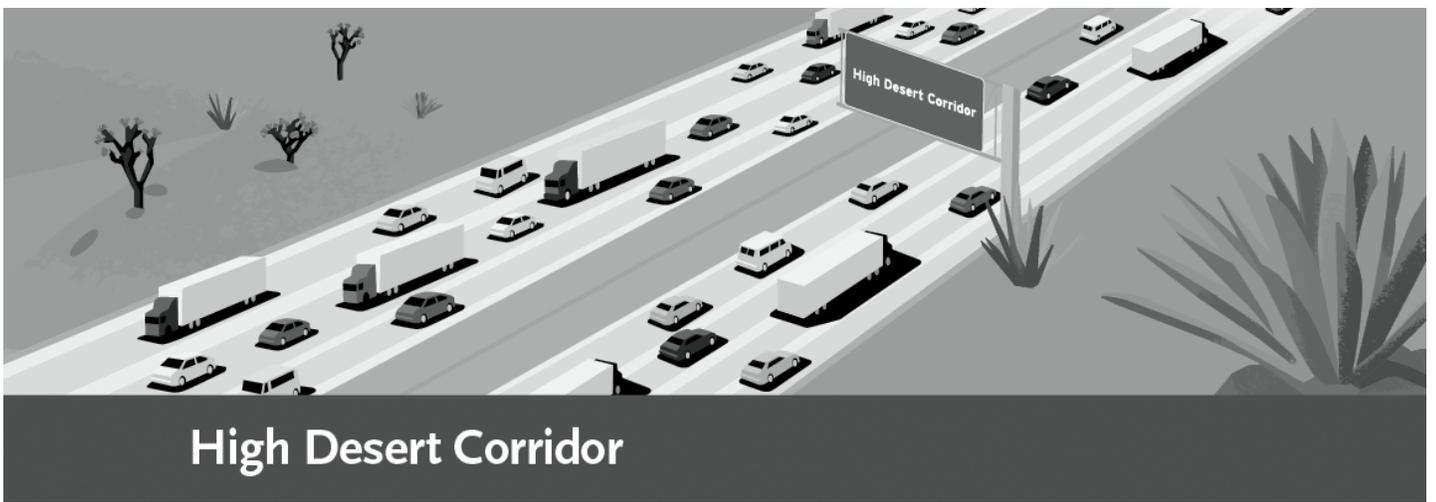


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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. When will Caltrans select one of the alternatives?

Throughout the course of the environmental study, alternatives will be refined to minimize impacts and maximize their potential benefits. The draft environmental report (Draft EIS/EIR) is scheduled to be completed and released for public review in fall 2012. Staff will review public comments and the technical evaluation to recommend a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in the final environmental document in spring of 2013.

2. How is the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) selected?

The environmental evaluation of the alternatives combined with public input is used to select the LPA. Caltrans decision makers will carefully review the potential impacts and benefits of each alternative as well as the cost, funding and public input to make a final decision.

3. Who is leading the effort/project study?

Caltrans is the lead agency for the completion of the environmental study and is the owner/operator of all public freeways in California. Metro is a funding partner and is responsible for transportation improvements in Los Angeles County. Together, Caltrans and Metro have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that identifies the roles and responsibilities for the environmental clearance and project approval for the HDC.

4. Why is the High Desert Corridor (HDC) needed?

The continued growth of the Antelope and Victor Valley areas together with the pressure to move goods efficiently through Southern California and provide access to regional airports has placed a premium on making a new east/west connection between SR-14 and I-15, extending to SR-18. Improvements to this corridor are considered necessary to provide for the existing and projected traffic demand attributed to residential growth and increasing

commercial and industrial developments. This growth is resulting in inadequate capacity and accessibility along the existing east-west roadways such as the SR-138 and Palmdale Boulevard.

5. What are the benefits to the surrounding communities?

For years the communities along the proposed High Desert Corridor have depended on limited east/west travel corridors such as Palmdale Boulevard and SR-138. These travel corridors are undersized and unsafe, plagued with flooding and high accident rates. The HDC project would provide a fully grade-separated highway that is safe and efficient. This project will also serve as an economic catalyst for continued and future job growth.

6. How will the HDC be funded?

As with most, if not all, large public infrastructure projects, funding must come from a variety of sources. In the case of the HDC, there is some funding available through Measure R, the ½ cent sales tax passed by voters in Los Angeles County in 2008 to complete the environmental clearance for the project. In addition, funding is being pursued from both state and federal funding sources. However, with current economic conditions as they are, Public Private Partnerships (PPP) are being aggressively explored to determine how best to finance this project. The opportunity to incorporate green technology and/or high speed train access along the HDC right-of-way may also provide other funding sources to consider.

7. What private funding sources are available to help offset the cost of this project?

The bulk of private sector funding is expected to derive from bond financing backed by tolls. The Green Energy Corridor is being studied to see if wind, solar or natural gas revenue can add to direct or bond financing of construction, operation and maintenance. If Congress passes a new Surface Transportation bill, provisions for no or low interest loans, loan guarantees, and freight fees may be available.

Private funding will come from a combination of potential tolls and green energy technologies along the High Desert Corridor. Currently, a Green Energy Corridor study is being conducted to seek the potential economic benefits of green energy technologies for the construction and maintenance of the High Desert Corridor.

8. Is funding available now? Will it be available once construction is ready to begin?

Funding to complete the HDC has not been identified at this time. Policy and decision makers are actively working to identify the appropriate funding needed to complete the project. In addition, in October 2009, the Los Angeles County Metro Board approved the HDC as one of six projects for further Public Private Partnership opportunities and will

develop a Strategic Assessment and Business Case Development Plan for future funding of the project.

Future phases of the project will only begin once the project funding is in place.

9. Why does the environmental study include other transportation modes?

The legal requirements of the state and federal environmental process requires that not only the proposed build alternatives be evaluated but also any other reasonable alternative for comparison. Therefore, the environmental document evaluates a “No-Build” and Transportation System/Demand Management (TSM/TDM) alternatives.

10. When will construction begin on this project?

If funding was available, the technical project development process including environmental clearance, engineering and design could prepare the HDC for construction as early as 2016. However, this is the most optimistic timeline based on the required technical requirements with no delays. Typically, funding is what determines the timing of projects not the technical process.

11. Will there be a high-speed rail (HSR) feeder component to this project?

The Desert Xpress and the California High Speed Rail Authority projects are not part of this study and are currently going through their own project development processes. However, because of the potential need for right-of-way along the HDC corridor for a future high speed rail feeder connection, the environmental process is looking to clear up to 500 feet of right-of-way which could accommodate a future high speed rail feeder corridor.

12. Will there be a HSR station along the alignment?

The environmental evaluation for the alternatives includes the potential Right-of-Way (ROW) clearance for a high speed rail feeder system. However, specifics about the high speed rail feeder system, such as station location will be conducted by a separate environmental clearance effort.

13. Does the project include toll lanes?

Some of the project alternatives consider the use of tolls along the High Desert Corridor. Metro is currently conducting a Strategic Assessment and Business Case Development to determine the specific limits of the toll lane. Information on toll lanes will be presented to the public as soon as it becomes available.

14. Will there be dedicated truck lanes?

No dedicated truck lanes are being proposed as part of this project. However, the HDC is focused on the east-west truck movement between Antelope and Victor Valleys.

15. Where will the new overpasses be located?

The traffic model demand forecast study, part of the environmental clearance work, will help determine the location of overpasses, ramps, number of lanes and other traffic related elements. The traffic study is projected to be completed June 2012.

16. Can the project team make a presentation to my group?

Yes, Caltrans, Metro and the consultant team are available to make a HDC presentation to your group. If you are interested in having a presentation, we encourage you to call the project helpline at 888.252.7433.

17. What is included in the Scoping Report?

The Scoping Report documents the outreach activities and public input received at the outset of the environmental process. Scoping meetings are conducted with the public and government agencies, to identify public and agency concerns and to define the environmental issues and alternatives to be examined in the EIS/EIR. The report includes a project history, comments submitted by the community and participating agencies, and outlines key issues identified for study in the EIS/EIR.

18. What should I expect in the Draft EIS/EIR?

The purpose of the Draft EIS/EIR is to study the potential impacts of construction and operation of the HDC, and to evaluate measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts of the project. Examples of impacts to be studied include:

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| Operation and construction | Energy |
| Traffic and parking | Climate change |
| Land use and development | Historic, archaeological and paleontological impacts |
| Displacement and relocations | Parklands |
| Community and neighborhood impacts | Economic and fiscal impacts |
| Visual and aesthetics | Safety and security |
| Air quality | Growth inducing impacts |
| Noise and vibration | Environmental justice |
| Ecosystems and biological resources | Cost and financial analysis |
| Geotechnical, seismic and hazardous materials | |
| Hydrology and water quality | |

19. When will the Draft EIS/EIR be available for review?

The Draft EIS/EIR is expected to be released to the public Fall 2012.

20. How can I comment on the Draft EIS/EIR?

Once the document is released for community review and response, Caltrans will host a set of public hearings to take verbal and written comments. Additionally, comments can be submitted by email or postal mail. Currently, the Draft EIS/EIR is scheduled to be released in the fall of 2012.

21. Will this lead to increased truck traffic on local roads?

The proposed HDC project would provide a safe and efficient highway for trucks to use between SR-14, through I-15 and to SR-18. This should result in less truck traffic on local roads. The environmental document will analyze the traffic impacts of the HDC.

22. Will private property need to be purchased for this project? If so, when will property owners be notified?

The environmental document (Draft EIS/EIR) will determine what, if any, right-of-way is required for each of the proposed alternatives. Property owners will be notified of the public release of the Draft EIS/EIR and encouraged to review and provide input. If you are a property owner and are interested in following the project you can contact the project helpline 888.252.7433 and provide us with your contact information so we can place you on the project database for all notifications and updates.