



## STATE ROUTE-7 TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT SUMMARY

This Transportation Concept Summary (TCS) for State Route 7 in District 11 serves as an analysis tool and conceptual long-range guide for future investment decisions in the transportation corridor.

### **DISCLAIMER**

*The information and data contained in this document are for planning purposes only and should not be relied upon for final design of any project. Any information in this TCS is subject to modification as conditions change and new information is obtained. Although planning information is dynamic and ever-changing, the District 11 Planning Division makes every effort to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the information contained in the TCS. The information in the TCS does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation, nor is it intended to address design policies and procedures. If you encounter information that you deem to be inaccurate or unreliable, please contact [Kim.Sturmer@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Kim.Sturmer@dot.ca.gov) or at 619-688-6967.*



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
**PLANNING DIVISION**  
*Planning Leads To Superior Solutions*

**Caltrans**  
DISTRICT 11

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# **SR-7 Transportation Concept Summary September 2011**

## **CORRIDOR PURPOSE**

State Route 7 (SR-7), is an existing north/south four lane highway with access control that begins at the United States/Mexico Calexico East Port of Entry (POE), approximately 6.5 miles to the east of the existing Calexico/Mexicali POE. The first segment of SR-7 from the international border to SR-98 was completed in March 1996. The remaining portion of SR-7 from SR-98 to I-8 was completed in June 2005.

The primary purpose of SR-7 is to serve existing international, commercial vehicle traffic between the U.S. and Mexico and to accommodate anticipated increases in this trans-border commercial carrier activity as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was ratified in 1993.

Besides providing for the international and interregional movement of goods and services, SR-7 also serves recreational and commuter traffic. SR-7 also helps alleviate the environmental effects of lengthy border traffic wait times at the existing downtown Calexico POE and eliminates truck congestion at the downtown POE since all commercial truck traffic must be processed through the Calexico East POE.

## **CORRIDOR NEEDS**

In response to NAFTA, Caltrans developed the NAFTA NET. The NAFTA NET is a transportation network which links the ports of entry and border regions to the existing transportation system. The goals of the NAFTA NET are to facilitate and increase trade, ensure a safe cross border trucking industry, and improve the multimodal transportation network leading to the major international border crossings. SR-7 is included in the NAFTA NET, and is an important part of the high level expressway connection between the U.S./Mexico international border and I-10 in Riverside County that has been called the "NAFTA Farm-To-Market Highway." This system is mostly complete and consists of the SR-7 expressway, the SR-111 expressway, the SR-78/111 Brawley Bypass expressway, and the SR-86 expressway north of Brawley. This system facilitates interregional travel throughout the Imperial and Coachella Valleys, improves intercity and international travel between Baja California, Mexico and Los Angeles, and provides an improved facility for the movement of goods throughout the region.

SR-7 is a critical economic pipeline that links the movement of goods and services with the border region, California, other States in the U.S., and international markets. To illustrate the importance of this route in relation to trade and truck traffic, in 1999 Mexico surpassed Japan to become California's top export trade market. Exports to

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Mexico have grown from \$6.5 billion to \$18.3 billion in 2007, an increase of 181% since 1993.

The value of goods carried in both directions through the Calexico East POE in 2009 was approximately \$5.5 billion, with approximately 277,000 annual truck crossings. Future truck crossings at the Calexico East POE are projected to increase to approximately 603,000, a 218% increase.

This graphic shows the origin or destination of trucks crossing the border and illustrates the State and national importance of California Ports of Entry. All trips travel through San Diego or Imperial County. 79% of these trips originate in or are destined for locations in California.



SR-7 is a vital part of the border infrastructure needed to accommodate existing and proposed commercial vehicle traffic.

## CORRIDOR ANALYSIS

For purposes of analysis, SR-7 traverses a lightly populated rural agricultural and desert environment. There are no capacity enhancing projects proposed for SR-7, however, there is a proposal to construct a new interchange on SR-7 for a new access road to a future airport. A specific location for the interchange is yet to be determined. Future projects on SR-7 will focus on roadway preservation, scheduled pavement rehabilitation, and any needed improvements at the Calexico East POE.

# CORRIDOR TRAFFIC

SR-7 will be experiencing an increase in traffic in the future. In some cases, especially in the Calexico area, traffic is expected to double between 2005 and 2025. The following table shows existing and future traffic conditions for SR-7.

## Existing and Future Traffic

LOCATION	2010 AADT <sup>1</sup>	2010 LOS <sup>2</sup>	2025 AADT <sup>3</sup>	2025 LOS <sup>2</sup>
U.S./Mexico Border to SR-98	13,000	A	54,900	D
SR-98 to I-8	5,500	A	49,600	C

<sup>1</sup> 2010 AADT's derived from Caltrans Traffic Data Branch website

<sup>2</sup> 2010 and 2025 Levels of Service (LOS) are based on sketch level planning analysis and are not to be used for design purposes.

<sup>3</sup> 2025 AADT's are from the Imperial County Transportation Model and represent average AADTs from multiple subsegments. These numbers are estimates based on current and proposed regional growth and are subject to change based on potentially different growth estimates. These AADT's also do not reflect potential future realignment of SR-98 based on ongoing studies or other potential transportation improvements in the Calexico area.

# RECOMMENDED CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

There are no major capacity-enhancing transportation improvements proposed for SR-7.

Coffman Associates has prepared an Airport Feasibility/Site Analysis Study for Imperial County that analyzes the replacement of the existing Imperial County Airport. This study has examined potential sites that consider environmental, roadway access, and military airspace requirements, among many other criteria. Much of the airspace over Imperial County is devoted to military operations from the El Centro Naval Air Station. Due to the need to cooperate with military requirements, military representatives were included in the planning process. The recent study has concluded that it is feasible to develop a new airport in Imperial County for air cargo, commercial airline, and general aviation activity.

The 2007 District 11 10-Year State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) Plan includes a project on SR-7 to upgrade 40 signs (materials and exit numbers) and convert overhead lighting to inductive technology. This project is tentatively scheduled in fiscal year 2017/2018.

The Calexico East POE is located at the southern terminus of SR-7. There is a proposed project to reconfigure and expand the POE to increase security, alleviate congestion, and reduce cross-border wait times. The Federal General Services Administration (GSA) and Caltrans are working together to identify low cost, high impact passenger and commercial vehicular capacity enhancing projects. Currently, this proposed project lacks funding, so the cost and project scope are yet to be determined. In addition, Caltrans will collaborate with appropriate agencies and jurisdictions to promote land use

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amendments which encourage the establishment of commercial vehicle brokerage houses in the Calexico East area to alleviate truck route/land use conflicts in Calexico.

Although not designated as SR-7, there is a critical NAFTA NET project that proposes the construction of a new SR-115 four lane expressway on new alignment extending northerly from the I-8/SR-7 junction and connecting with the existing west junction of SR-115 and Evan Hewes Highway. More details on this project are included in the SR-115 TCS.

## TRANSIT SERVICE

Imperial Valley Transit Service (IVT) was created in 1989 as "Imperial County Transit". It began as a five route system with three buses running Monday through Friday. The passenger ridership averaged approximately 3,000 passengers a month. Today the service has a new name and a new look and the passenger ridership averages approximately 23,000 passengers a month.

The service is operated by First Transit, Inc., administered by the Imperial County Department of Public Works and funded by the Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG). The IVAG Regional Council members represent each city and the County. Funding is provided annually through the adopted IVAG Transit Finance Plan. The sources of the funding include, State Transit Assistance (STA), State Transportation Development Act (TDA), Federal 5311 and 5307 funds and local fare revenue.

The service area for IVT includes routes in the primary service area between Brawley, Imperial, Imperial Valley College, El Centro, Heber, and Calexico. The secondary service areas include Holtville, Seeley, Niland, Calipatria and Westmorland. The remote zones which provide lifeline service include Ocotillo, Winterhaven and the east side of the Salton Sea.

Routes are designed to provide connection between the cities in the primary corridor where 80% of the population live, works or studies. There are approximately 28 routes with multiple trips daily Monday through Friday. Service is offered on a reduced schedule on Saturdays. Service is not offered on Sundays.

The County also administers Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service known as Areawide Independent Mobility (AIM) Transit. AIM Transit offers a curb-to-curb Dial-A-Ride service for the disabled who are not able to use the traditional fixed-route service. While the Dial-A-Ride service remains available to seniors over the age of 60, priority is given to those certified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ADA Paratransit will transport users anywhere within a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile corridor of Imperial County Transit routes.

Additional, individual agency public transit services include demand-responsive Dial-A-Ride services offered by the Cities of Brawley, Calexico, El Centro, Imperial, and the West Shores area.

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Med Express service offers non-emergency medical transportation from Imperial County to San Diego to access medical facilities, including hospitals, clinics and doctor appointments. The service is primarily designed for older adults and people with disabilities, but is also open to the general public on a space-available basis. Med Express service is available four days each week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, plus alternating Mondays and Fridays every other week), with a van departing Imperial County at 5:30 AM and returning from San Diego around 6:30 PM. The Association For Retarded Citizens (ARC) operates the service under contract to Imperial County. Service is provided in a wheelchair-accessible Ford E450 van. The service is funded with Transportation Development Act (TDA) Article 8C funds, fares and Local Transportation Funds (LTF). The fare for Med Express is \$15.00 for a round-trip for the patient (or person going to the medical appointment) and \$7.00 round-trip for an attendant that accompanies that rider. If space is available, members of the general public may take a round-trip ride on the service for \$30.00. Med Express is used by a number of social service agencies to get their clients to medical appointments in San Diego.

There are a number of social service transportation providers serving clients or consumers in Imperial County. While some agencies provide transportation directly, others arrange for it on behalf of their clients or consumers by contracting with others, or subsidizing transit fares. Most of the agencies have a particular focus on the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, or low-income individuals; however, some agencies may serve a broader group.

Additional information regarding transit in Imperial County can be found in the consultant-prepared Imperial County Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Final Plan submitted to the Imperial Valley Association of Governments in October 2008. In particular, Future transit service improvement strategies are analyzed in this document, and include, but are not limited to, expanding and/or restructuring current transit service to improve efficiency and productivity, adding new services such as the El Centro Circulator Shuttle, and conducting additional Circulator Bus Feasibility studies.

## **NONMOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION**

The County of Imperial's bicycle facilities program is designed to enhance environmental and social benefits for the citizens of Imperial County by providing an integrated network system of bicycle and pedestrian facilities for the safe and efficient movement in and through the County of Imperial. This includes an integrated bicycle circulation system which includes facilities to promote the environmental and social benefits of commuter and recreational bicycling. The County shall cooperate with other governmental agencies to provide connections and continuations of bicycle corridors. The bicycle circulation system will be integrated with auto, pedestrian, and transit systems.

The County of Imperial Bicycle Master Plan was completed in September 2003. This

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Plan is currently being updated by Alta Planning and Design. The following information is from the First Draft of the Plan dated August 15, 2011:

*"The County of Imperial's existing bicycle network consists of 2.0 miles of off-street paved bike paths (Class I), and 8.4 miles of bike lanes (Class II). The existing bicycle network is fragmented and lacks supportive end of trip facilities, however, there are ample opportunities for strengthening these crucial elements of the bicycle system. The County of Imperial is predominantly an agricultural community consisting of flat terrain. Dry and temperate weather conditions predominate throughout the year, with the exception of the extremely hot summer months of May through September. The County's transportation network offers miles of paved roadways with relatively level terrain, limited cross traffic, low traffic volumes and wide expanses of open land that are ideal for recreational bicycling.*

*The Plan's infrastructure recommendations consist of bikeway network facilities and bicycle support facilities. The recommended bicycle network consists primarily of on-street facilities, including nearly 260 miles of on-street bikeways (including bike lanes and bike routes), approximately 64 miles of proposed off-street bikeways (bike paths), and 103 miles of routes along shoulders of various State Highways within Caltrans' jurisdiction. The Plan also recommends organizing the proposed 420 miles of bikeways into fifteen designated bikeway routes that provide shorter, more utilitarian trips and good connections to schools, employment and recreational facilities. Recommended bicycle support facilities and programs include bike parking, routine maintenance of the bikeway network, and signage.*

*The Plan recommends several education, enforcement, encouragement, monitoring, and evaluation efforts that the County should pursue. Recommended education programs include developing a "Share the Road" campaign and a Safe Routes to School program. Encouragement programs include a bicycle signage plan, developing a regional bicycle map, and bike commute events and incentives. Evaluation and monitoring programs include convening a Bicycle Advisory Committee, developing a Complete Streets Policy, collecting bicycle and pedestrian counts, and preparing annual progress reports. The Plan supports the implementation of the bicycle network recommendations by providing planning level cost estimates of the proposed bicycle network. The cost of implementing the complete proposed bicycle network is estimated at approximately \$66 million dollars. The Plan also applies prioritization criteria to the entire network to evaluate each proposed bicycle facility in its ability to improve the existing bicycle network and its ease of implementation. The results of the project ranking process should serve as guidelines for the County in the implementation of the recommended bicycle network."*

In addition, Bicycle Master Plans were developed in 2002 and 2003 for the Cities of Brawley, Calexico, El Centro, Calipatria, Holtville, Imperial, and Westmorland. Currently, bicycle travel is permissible on all segments of SR-7 in Imperial County.

## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Caltrans District 11 Development Review staff in the Planning Division review federal, state, and local planning or proposed development activity that has the potential to impact state transportation facilities or other resources under Caltrans' jurisdiction, and to recommend conditions of project approval that eliminate those impacts or reduce them to a level of insignificance. Typically, this involves the review of development proposals in which Caltrans is either a responsible (permitting) or commenting (reviewing) agency, but has no discretionary approval power over the project other than permit authority. Development Review staff work cooperatively with local lead agencies and developers in determining the type and level of mitigation needed to offset project impacts. They are also responsible for identifying other functional areas within District 11 that are affected by the proposal, and coordinating the circulation of appropriate documents with other functional areas for review and comment.

Based on the Caltrans Traffic Impact Study (TIS) guidelines, a 1,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) threshold size triggers the need for developers to prepare a traffic study for their project. The following information generally includes projects for which an Environmental Document, a Specific Plan or a Master Plan has been or will be prepared. There is one potential major development project within or adjacent to the SR-7 corridor that will generate more than the 1,000 ADT threshold. Total cumulative projected ADT from this development is expected to be approximately 47,000 ADT. There may be an additional number of smaller development projects that may have additional cumulative impacts on traffic in the corridor. Because of uncertainties associated with future demographic, socioeconomic, and political climates, the scale of development may be subject to change. Changes in land use prompting rapid housing and commercial development growth will need to be monitored closely by all impacted jurisdictions and agencies. Appropriate traffic studies for proposed developments will need to be conducted and reviewed carefully by Caltrans staff. Land development and local capital improvement projects should also be coordinated with Caltrans projects.

The following table shows proposed projects in the Imperial County SR-7 corridor currently in the development review process. Construction of some phases of this development may either be underway or complete.

<b>POST MILE</b>	<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ADT</b>
1.18	Gateway of the Americas Specific Plan	Mixed-use	47,000