

Local Leaders Approve Foothill-South

Preliminary design work, permit process to continue despite lawsuits

In February the elected officials that make up the Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency (TCA) Board of Directors approved an alignment that would complete the Foothill (241) Toll Road, between Oso Parkway and the I-5 freeway south of San Clemente.

In March, the board also approved a contract to begin preliminary design for the 16-mile project. In addition to engineering work, over the next year-and-a-half, TCA will seek a variety of state and federal permits needed before construction can begin. Progress for this long-planned project, which would give South County residents an alternative route to the I-5 freeway, will continue despite lawsuits filed by State Attorney General Bill Lockyer and the environmental groups that have sued TCA in the past delaying previous toll road projects.

“This is from the same groups represented by the same lawyers who continue to oppose any transportation project designed to improve mobility,” said Ken Ryan, Chairman of the Foothill/Eastern TCA Board of Directors. “We will continue to work on getting the necessary state and federal permits, so that we can bring traffic relief to Orange County as soon as possible. It’s unfortunate that significant financial resources will go to attorneys instead of toward improving mobility and enhancing the environment.”

The following are some of the common questions that are asked regarding these lawsuits and TCA’s decision to build Foothill-South. More information is available at www.foothill-south.com.

- Q:** Why did TCA approve the alignment? Can’t the road go around the state park?
- A:** The Camp Pendleton Marines, who own the land, would not permit the alignment to go further south as it would interfere with their training missions. The TCA Board of Directors did not choose the alignment to the north because it would have destroyed hundreds of San Clemente homes and businesses eliminate hundreds of jobs, and bisected the community.
- Q:** Would the toll road go on the beach?
- A:** No. Foothill-South would connect with the I-5 from the east and would not come any closer to the beach than the I-5 already is today.
- Q:** Does the state own the state park land?

A: No, it is federal land owned by the Marines and leased to the state. The state park lease expires in 15 years.

Q: Why not just widen the I-5?

A: Widening the I-5 was one of the alternatives analyzed. However it was not selected because 800 homes and 300 businesses would have to be removed, 5,000 jobs would be lost, and the cost of the project would exceed \$2 billion. Caltrans, the state transportation agency, has given no indication that the state is willing to fund such a project.

Q: How many people use the park every year?

A: **According to the state parks figures**, of the 2.5 million people that use the state park, 2.3 million visit the state beach portion for day trips. The coastal state beach will be completely unaffected by Foothill-South as the toll road comes no closer to the beach than the I-5 does today.

Q: When did the Foothill-South study begin?

A: 1981. This project has been under analysis and review for the last quarter century.

Q: Did TCA consult with any other transportation or environmental agencies before making this decision?

A: Yes. Over the last six years, a collaboration of agencies including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans have joined TCA to analyze hundreds of alternatives before recommending the one that was approved by the TCA Board.

Q: Has TCA been sued before?

A: TCA has been sued more than a dozen times while planning and building the existing 51-mile toll road system. Many of the lawsuits were filed by the same environmental activist groups that are suing now. TCA won all 12 lawsuits.

TCA representatives are available to speak to your community group about Foothill-South. Call Jeff Bott, TCA Community Relations Representative, at **(949) 754-3458** or email **jbott@thetollroads.com**.

(Map of green alignment with other alignments not selected screened back)