



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Preserving the Character of Our Community

June 3, 2019

Jim Desmond, Chair Supervisor, County of San Diego
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Jewel Edson, Deputy Mayor, City of Solana Beach
Judy Ritter, Mayor, City of Vista
Nathan Fletcher, Metropolitan Transit System
Jack Feller, North County Transit District
Johanna Schiavoni, San Diego County Regional Airport Authority

Re: Item No. 7 State Route 94/State Route 125 Interchange Project Update

Dear Honorable Transportation Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Members:

We write on behalf of The Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) in support of \$12M Right-of-Way acquisition funding for the SB SR125/EB SR94 Connector.

GMIA is a non-profit 501(c)(4) organization that works on behalf of our community to ensure the quality and character of our community is preserved and enhanced. We represent over 7,000 single-family residences with a population approximating 20,000 people. Our region includes parcels east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon, generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Road. Since 1938, GMIA has worked with County and regional governmental entities to help resolve transportation issues that impact our community.

Completing the SR125/SR94 interchange, originally constructed in 1976, has been a long-term critical priority for our organization and its members. We have been advocating for the completion of the interchange for over two decades. Indeed we were a driving force behind the construction of the surface connector from WB SR94 to NB SR125 in 2003.

The need for the SB SR125/EB SR 94 Connector is well-documented. Presently SB125 motorists must exit at Spring Street then loop around on surface streets to get to EB SR94. As a result a huge backup across all lanes of SB SR125 occurs every workday from Spring Street all the way back to Interstate 8. This backup has specific negative impacts on the GMIA community. First, to avoid the backup, drivers detour through the Grossmont-Mt. Helix area on surface streets such as Fuerte Drive and Bancroft Drive and on smaller avenues and ways



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through our community. This results in small roads being used for purposes they were not intended and creates dangerous situations. Second, the backup results in thousands of cars being virtually parked every day with their motors running on GMIA's Western border spewing tons of pollutants into the air as they wait to get off SB SR125 at Spring Street.

There is a related bottleneck on NB SR125 at this same location where the freeway squeezes from five lanes to three lanes under the Merritt Boulevard bridge then back to five lanes. The backup stretches a mile on workday afternoons and encourages drivers who typically would stay on NB SR125 and exit on Lemon Avenue or Grossmont Boulevard to instead stay on EB SR94 and then go through the backroads of Casa de Oro and Mt. Helix to get to their homes. This again intrudes on neighborhoods and creates dangerous risks. Construction of the Connector will eliminate this NB SR125 bottleneck at the same time because the lanes under the current Merritt Boulevard bridge will be adjusted as part of the Connector project.

The SR125 backups have grown dramatically in recent years as SR125 was completed south of SR94 and then north of Interstate 8, and as the Eastlake, Otay Ranch and Ranch San Diego areas have been built out. SR125 has become a critical transportation corridor for residents throughout the County, connecting the border and South Bay with the East County and points north. This is a regional issue in the truest sense.

We also want to emphasize this is not about funding a new freeway that could be seen as encouraging further development. SR125 is in place and for the most part is an outstanding freeway. It is a modern freeway from the Mexican border to Santee except for this one bottleneck at Spring Street/Merritt Boulevard. This one small stretch that has been virtually unchanged since SR125's original construction in 1957. It is time after 62 years to bring this short stretch up to the standards of the other 22 miles of freeway.

It is critical that the Connector project move forward quickly and efficiently. The project is in a Design Phase that will conclude in 2020. We ask that SANDAG approve \$12M for Right-of-Way acquisition that takes place concurrent with the design phase. In that way, the project will be shovel-ready by 2022 and we all will be in a position to finally address this "missing link" and meaningfully improve the quality of life for our County's residents.

Very Truly Yours,

Susan Nichols
President

Guy Halgren
Past President

Kathleen Coates Hedberg, PE, MPH
President-Elect