

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION URGES OVERRIDE OF COASTAL COMMISSION VOTE

Federal agency says 241 Toll Road is essential to regional congestion relief, conformity with the Clean Air Act and provides national security benefits.

IRVINE, Calif. (May 29 2008) – Acting Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) James Ray recommended that the Secretary of Commerce override the February 6 California Coastal Commission decision in a recent letter. FHWA is the lead Federal agency for the 16-mile project, which would connect the 241 Toll Road to Interstate 5 on Camp Pendleton.

Importantly, Mr. Ray's letter noted that "no reasonable alternative is available" that would meet the requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Program. The letter also noted "the national interest in a safe and efficient transportation system; the critical importance of Southern California's transportation viability and air quality improvement, the orderly process undertaken for this project and the commitment to minimize and mitigate adverse effects." Mr. Ray further noted that the proposed project is consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act.

"FHWA has a particular interest in this project because Southern California faces some of the worst traffic congestion and air quality in the nation and the I-5 corridor is one of the Nation's most important transportation corridors for the movement of freight and passenger vehicles," the May 23 letter states.

"The existing and future transportation needs affecting the I-5 corridor through the San Diego and Los Angeles regions make it imperative that steps be taken to

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improve the capacity and operations of the transportation system in these areas,” the letter states. “The FHWA has also designated this corridor as having the highest national importance to interstate travel and international trade, affecting freight flows and passenger travel essential to our economy and quality of life.”

The letter describes the collaborative process that led to the selection of the route, including the study of 43 alternative routes, to ensure that the route provides for efficient transportation while minimizing adverse impacts.

“This letter underscores TCA’s commitment to developing a project that meets the transportation needs of the region with a focused effort to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts,” said Lance MacLean, chairman of the Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency.

The letter also made the following points:

- “I-5 is a major corridor of national significance and the severe congestion in the Southern California region makes it the area with the least ability to accommodate even temporary losses in highway capacity.”
- “FHWA has an independent statutory responsibility to ensure that project decisions are made in the best overall public interest, taking into account a broad set of social, environmental, and economic considerations, in addition to meeting the needs for safe and efficient transportation.”

ABOUT TCA

More than 300,000 trips are taken on The Toll Roads every weekday. The Toll Roads are operated by the Transportation Corridor Agencies, two joint powers authorities formed by the California state legislature in 1986 to plan, finance, construct, and operate Orange County's 67-mile public toll road system.

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Fifty-one miles of the system are complete, including the 15-mile San Joaquin Hills (SR-73) Toll Road from Newport Beach to San Juan Capistrano; and the 36-mile Foothill/Eastern Toll Road (SR-241, SR-261, SR-133) from the 91 Freeway to south Orange County. More: www.thetollroads.com.

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