



Stockton Freeway Network Strengthened

Coordinating I-5, SR-99 and SR-4 Projects Was Not Easy, but Benefits Are Many

Photo courtesy of Viewpoint Aerial Photography



An aerial photo gives a birds-eye view of a key section of the Stockton freeway grid. The northbound and southbound lanes of Interstate 5 take a vertical path over the top of State Route 4, the Crosstown Freeway, that cuts through the center of the city, connecting with State Route 99 to the east.

In Stockton, a half-billion dollars of infrastructure investment means wider, smoother freeways, better pedestrian options, quieter neighborhoods and reduced truck traffic on city streets.

Delivered as a quartet of projects over a three-year period, the \$547 million of improvements include the county's first High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, improved interchanges and stretches of sound wall on both sides of busy Interstate 5.

A new 2,870-foot bridge on State Route 4 now gives trucks direct access to the Port of Stockton, which reduces goods-movement delay and keep big rigs off city streets. Workers also laid thousands of feet of new sidewalk, and expanded eight miles of State Route 99 from four lanes to six.

San Joaquin County's largest city resides between two of California's major north-south trade corridors, with SR-99 on its east and I-5 on its western flank. State Route 4, the Crosstown Freeway, connects the two.

Caltrans' local partner, the San Joaquin Council of Governments, combined a variety of funding sources — Proposition 1B, local Measure K half-cent transportation improvement tax, and State Highway Operation and Protection and Program (SHOPP) funds — to move these projects forward.

The Stockton region experienced a growth spurt in the years leading up to these projects. Traffic volumes grew from 110,000 average daily vehicle trips in 2008 to 132,000 in 2014. With the completion of these projects in 2016, commuter and freight traffic flow more freely.

Those improvements, however, did not come without challenges for motorists, residents and businesses. Lanes were shifted, freeways closed and everyday commutes were disrupted. The entire process lasted nearly a year longer than planned. But the I-5 project brought positive conclusion to what had been an ongoing community issue. For several years, residents and community leaders had been

lobbying for a sound wall on I-5 adjacent to an elementary school. As part of this project, Caltrans constructed and dedicated the sound wall to the school, which will improve safety as well as cut noise levels from the nearby highway.

Work on I-5 was delayed when an eight-mile stretch of new roadway had to be removed and replaced because of a design flaw in the flange beams that support the concrete roadway.

State Route 99, sometimes called the “Ag Highway” is a critical route for agricultural products and motorists. The \$214.5 million South Stockton Widening project, along with the newly completed Manteca Widening project, vastly improved travel conditions on that stretch of SR-99. The eight-mile project was the largest in the history of Caltrans’ District 10. It widened SR-99 from four to six lanes, removed and replaced existing interchanges, and provided thousands of linear feet of sidewalk and shoulders that demonstrate Caltrans’ commitment to pedestrian and bicycle travel.

Local streets, meanwhile, benefitted from reduced traffic rerouting and congestion. Through the design team’s efforts, Caltrans was able to accelerate the construction schedule and save an estimated \$31 million.

District 10’s extensive outreach campaign kept the public informed during setbacks that included roadway flooding and unanticipated difficulties when removing existing concrete.

When completed in December 2016, the region showed an overall improvement of travel times on the highway and local roads. That reduction in travel times reduced vehicle emissions and improved the reliability of goods and freight distribution along the Central Valley.

The SR-4 Crosstown Freeway cuts east and west through Stockton, linking SR-99 and I-5. From the sky, it is the center line of a giant “H.” It received two unique upgrades. The first, the Crosstown Extension, allowed direct access by large freight trucks to the Port of Stockton. Before the 2,870-foot long bridge was complete, it was an all-too-common sight to see 18-wheelers rolling through residential neighborhoods.

The other project, affectionately called the “Big Fix,” strung together several smaller projects that included bridge rehabilitation, installation of automated warning systems, and a maintenance make-over.

In a bold move that provided additional safety to workers and saved money, the Big Fix project contractor proposed and was granted a VECP (Value Engineering Change Proposal) to close entire lanes for 10 weekends, a move that saved \$350,000. A vigorous outreach campaign was conducted about the closures, detours, or delay times, and the project was completed four months ahead of schedule.

Source: Greg Lawson, Public Information Officer, Caltrans District 10



Caltrans photo by Bill Lavelle

The State Route 4 "Crosstown Extension" project, seen here before its opening, now allows freight trucks to access the Port of Stockton.



Caltrans photo by Mohsen Abdelfatah

Work crews perform a bridge joint replacement as part of the SR 4 "Big Fix" that made various improvements to the trade corridor.