



NEWS RELEASE

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District: District 10 - Stockton
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CALTRANS ELIMINATES LAST AT-GRADE CROSSINGS ON STATE ROUTE 99 IN MERCED COUNTY

MERCED COUNTY – Caltrans and the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) announced today that Central Valley travelers will have a safer and more efficient commute thanks to a project that eliminated the last at-grade crossings along State Route 99 (SR-99) in Merced County.

“The completion of this project marks a significant milestone for our community as it eliminates the last remaining at-grade crossings along the SR-99 corridor in Merced County,” said Marjie Kirn, MCAG Executive Director. “The elimination of these intersections has been a high priority for MCAG for many years so we appreciate our partnership with Caltrans and the collaborative commitment to making these safety improvement projects a reality in our community.”

The \$77 million project upgraded a five-mile stretch of SR-99 from a four-lane expressway to a six-lane freeway between Buchanan Hollow Road and the Madera County line.

Along with the recent improvements, Caltrans and its partners celebrated the completion of a \$127 million project on December 5, 2014, that constructed an interchange at Arboleda Road, and widened an eight-mile section of SR-99 just south of Merced between Buchanan Hollow Road and Childs Avenue. Motorists were able to use the new 13-mile section of SR-99 during holiday travel as crews made finishing touches on the newest project that included a new interchange at Plainsburg Road.

The elimination of at-grade crossings on SR-99 in Merced County and the new interchanges are easing congestion and providing a smoother commute for truckers and recreational traffic. Motorists no longer have to wait for vehicles and trucks to pass when trying to cross the state route, and can use the new interchanges to safely reach their destination. Vehicles are now experiencing free-flowing traffic with no hindrance to driving speed caused by the at-grade crossings. Interregional traffic and growth in Merced County and the San Joaquin Valley were forecasted to generate traffic demands beyond the existing capacity of the old state route.

The average daily traffic volume on this section of the highway can surpass more than 37,500 vehicles daily and is expected to increase to nearly 80,000 by 2024.

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“The projects have brought Caltrans one step closer to achieving the department’s endeavors to widen SR-99 to six lanes from Marysville to Bakersfield,” said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty. “SR-99 is a major route in one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world, and it was essential that the new alignment would sustain for smooth movement of both goods and traffic for future generations.”

The project received approximately \$66 million from Proposition 1B, a 2006 voter-approved transportation bond. Proposition 1B authorized \$1 billion to be available specifically for safety, operational enhancements, rehabilitation or capacity improvements necessary to improve the SR-99 Corridor. Since its passage, more than \$18 billion in Proposition 1B funds have been put to work statewide for transportation purposes.

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