

Plainsburg Freeway Project ends at-grade crossings in Merced County

Last month, Caltrans and MCAG joined the community in celebrating the completion of the Plainsburg Freeway Project which eliminated the last at-grade crossing along State Route 99 in Merced County. The \$77 million project upgraded a five-mile stretch of Highway 99 from a four-lane expressway to a six-lane freeway between Buchanan Hollow Road and the Madera County line, and constructed a new interchange for highway access.

The completion of this project was a significant milestone for MCAG, as the elimination of the at-grade crossings along the 99 corridor was a high priority for the agency for many years. One year ago, the community celebrated the completion of the Arboleda Freeway Project which widened an eight-mile section of State Route 99 just south of Merced between Buchanan Hollow and Childs Avenue, and also constructed an interchange to provide safer highway access. Between the two projects, motorists now have 13 miles of safer, less congested travel and two new interchanges to safely reach their destinations.

According to Caltrans, the average daily traffic volume on this section of the highway can surpass more than 37,500 vehicles and is expected to increase to nearly 80,000 by 2024. "These projects have brought Caltrans one step closer to achieving the department's endeavor to widen SR-99 to six lanes from Marysville to Bakersfield," said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty.

The Plainsburg Freeway Project was funded through Proposition 1B, a 2006 voter-approved transportation bond.

Landfill now open first Saturdays of the month

The Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority (RWA) recently released its 2016 calendar which includes additional days of operation. Beginning in January, both landfill locations (Los Banos and Highway 59) will be open the first Saturday of every month, as well as, the Saturday following a closed holiday. Both locations are closed on Sunday. For more information about days of operation, hours or rates, please call (209)723-4481 or visit www.mcrwma.org.



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Left to Right: Merced City Councilman Mike Murphy, Kathleen Crookham, Marjie Kirn, Merced County Supervisor John Pedrozo, Dennis Agar, Ryan Heller, Matt Wainwright, and Louise Farley. Plainsburg Freeway Project ribbon cutting—January 15, 2016.

MCAG scholarship program now accepting applications

MCAG is now accepting applications for the 2016 Anna Maria Fuentes Scholarship. This scholarship program was established in 2010 by the MCAG Governing Board to honor the memory of Anna Maria Fuentes, Grants Program Manager at MCAG.

The Anna Maria Fuentes Scholarship is awarded annually to a graduating high school senior in Merced County with a grade point average of 3.8 or higher who has demonstrated a high level of participation in extracurricular activities including positions of leadership. Applicants must also provide a personal essay that describes their need for scholarship in order to pursue higher education goals.

The 2016 scholarship recipient will receive \$1,000 and will be eligible to receive additional awards of \$1,000 each year for three years based on scholastic performance and documentation.

Applications can be mailed or dropped off at MCAG and must be received by 3:00pm on Monday, February 29, 2016. The selected scholarship recipient will be notified by May 1, 2016.

Interested applicants can access the scholarship application and instructions at www.mcagov.org/217/Scholarship. General inquiries can be directed to Christina Smith at 209-723-3153 x 304 or christina.smith@mcagov.org.

ABOUT MCAG: MCAG is the regional transportation planning agency and metropolitan planning organization for Merced County. In addition to regional transportation planning, MCAG also manages The Bus, YARTS, and the Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority.