

Corridor Newsletter: Summer 2011

Looking Ahead to Key Improvements in the North and South Segments of the I-15 Express Lanes

By **Gustavo Dallarda**, Corridor Director

We're excited about the progress we're making on the I-15 Express Lanes project. While work continues, much of it is being completed ahead of schedule. In the South Segment, the Carroll Canyon



Work near Poway Road bridge is expected to be finished soon.

Road bridge was completed this spring and the Poway Road bridge is expected to be finished this summer.

Additionally, we anticipate opening all four Express Lanes in the middle of the median between SR 56 and SR 163, as well as new access points that will connect Express Lane drivers to Mira Mesa and Scripps Ranch. The new access points are detailed in a story on the following page.

One last major hurdle needed to be cleared prior to this opening—a nine-day full closure of the Express Lanes between SR 56 and SR 163 from June 18 to June 26. The Express Lanes had to be

closed to do key work, such as installing the moveable barrier, which will help traffic flow in the future.

Meanwhile, North Segment Express Lanes construction is on schedule to be completed at the end of 2011. It will provide four new Express Lanes in the median from SR 78 to Via Rancho Parkway. It will be the final link in the 20-mile improvement project.

Read on to learn of the importance of slowing down in construction zones, meet an MTS Commuter Express Bus Driver and find out how you can get the scoop on traffic updates through Caltrans' District 11's new Twitter account.

At Construction Sites, Slow Down: For Everyone's Sake

Cops and fire fighters put their lives on the line routinely in the course of their jobs. And so do District 11 Caltrans and highway contractor workers.

Locally, three Caltrans workers have been killed in a little over a month in the line of duty. The loss of life is staggering and heart-breaking, considering that the last local highway worker fatality occurred in 1995.

Since 1924, more than 175 Caltrans workers have died doing their jobs. As highway construction work continues throughout the region, Caltrans wants to remind motorists of the importance of looking out for workers and slowing down when entering construction zones and being on the lookout for workers doing maintenance.

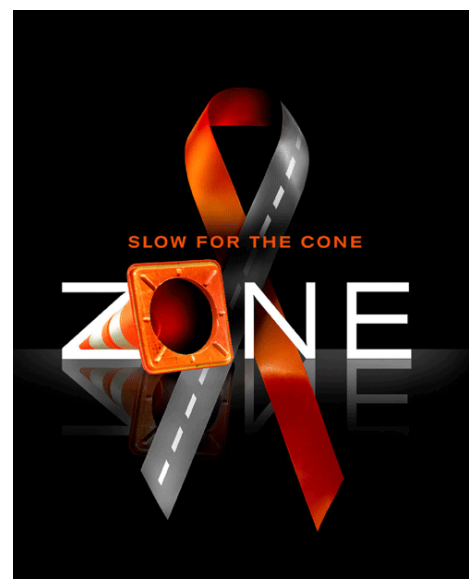
"We need the traveling public to know that 'PLEASE Slow Down for the Cone Zone,' is more than a slogan, it's a person's life," said Caltrans District 11

Director Laurie Berman.

Drivers should be aware that Caltrans' crews and contractors work all hours of the day and night. They do construction and maintenance work and are vulnerable, given that traffic flows near them. Caltrans routinely conducts employee safety training, but drivers need to do their part by slowing down wherever workers are present.

Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol are stepping up the "Slow for the Cone Zone" campaign throughout the summer to help motorists understand the consequences of not paying attention or driving when impaired, particularly when entering construction areas.

Fines are doubled if you're caught speeding in a construction zone. Motorists are also required by law to slow down and move over a lane if they can safely do so when they spot a Caltrans' vehicle flashing warning lights.



Slow for the Cone Zone Poster

Temporary closures, such as the one to the I-15 Express Lanes, and road detours are inconveniences, but remember that safety for you, your passengers and our crews has to be the top priority.

New South Segment Entrances and Exits to the Express Lanes Opening This Year

When the nine-day closure of I-15 ends on June 27, a number of new Express Lane entrances and exits will connect Express Lane drivers to Mira Mesa and Scripps Ranch for the first time. For 25 years, the previous Express Lanes, connecting Escondido to downtown San Diego, had a single entrance and exit, bypassing those communities.

Adding new entrances and exits opens the door for even more travel options. Express Lane northbound entrances near Miramar Way and Miramar Road are brand-new and will be ready for use after the nine-day closure. A new southbound entrance just south of Mercy Road will also open to drivers for the first time.

That particular entrance will be important for drivers coming from Carmel Mountain Road and Camino Del Norte. Temporarily, they'll have to use it. The entrance ramp they've taken, on the



New entrances to the Express Lanes, like this one at Miramar Way, will open on June 27th.

right side of the freeway, will be closed permanently. A more convenient southbound access point will open later at Poway Road. Other entrances and exits are slated to open along the South Segment of the project in the fall as well.

Meet MTS Commuter Express Bus Driver Jose Loera: Taking the Stress Out of Your Commute



MTS Bus Driver Jose Loera poses in front of his Commuter Express Bus.

How long have you been with MTS and driving the Commuter Express Bus Routes?

I have been driving MTS buses in San Diego for over 11 years. I used to drive buses in New Jersey, New York, and Los

Angeles, but I love my job in San Diego. I primarily drive Route 810 from the Escondido Transit Center to downtown San Diego every morning. It takes approximately 35-45 minutes. In the afternoon I work on standby helping other drivers that are running into traffic or other problems. It is very important to keep the bus routes on schedule for our passengers.

Have you seen an increase in riders since Commuter Express Bus service began?

Definitely. We started this route about two and a half years ago. At first people didn't know about these new direct routes. Now the buses I drive are nearly full every morning. We've added services for Route 810 because it is a very popular route. We travel in the I-15 Express Lanes and the riders really appreciate the consistent travel time and nice, com-

fortable buses. Riding in the buses really takes away the stress of traffic, the high cost of gasoline, and the hassle of having to find parking downtown.

Will you continue driving these routes once Bus Rapid Transit service starts in a couple years?

I will definitely continue driving this route or a similar route. I love seeing my passengers every day. I love seeing my passengers every day. We are like a family. We share stories and talk about the weekends. The passengers all know each other very well. They relax, take naps, or chat with each other. Riding the bus is a very pleasant experience.

What do you do in your spare time for fun?

I spend time with my daughter and my mother on the weekends. Seeing family and friends is relaxing and keeps a smile on my face.

Question of the Quarter

Is it True? Has Caltrans Actually Joined the Twitter World?

It's true. You can follow us at Caltrans San Diego @SDCaltrans. It's yet another service for our customers. Follow us and you can get instant information on road closures, traffic collisions and other news weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you're a regular commuter, it'd be a great idea to follow us so you get can real-time information throughout the day.

