

**MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC
APRIL 7 – 10, 2025**

I-15 EXPRESS LANES PROJECT SOUTHERN EXTENSION

ISSUE: In response to rapid population and goods movement growth, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) is prioritizing the advancement of the I-15 Express Lanes Project Southern Extension on Interstate 15 (I-15) between the cities of Corona and Lake Elsinore. Addressing congestion on I-15 is critical for existing residents as well as families relocating to Riverside County for its economic opportunities, affordability, available housing, quality schools, sense of community, and access to open space.

ACTION: The Monday Morning Group urges Congress to advocate to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) in support of RCTC's application for \$25 million in Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant funding for the I-15 Express Lanes Project Southern Extension, Segment 1.

BACKGROUND: RCTC applied for the federal BUILD grant to fund Segment 1 of the project, from El Cerrito Road in Corona to Indian Truck Trail in Temescal Valley. Once completed, both Segment 1 of the project through Temescal Valley and the entire project through Lake Elsinore will enhance the flow of traffic, facilitate the movement of goods, and promote safety. Since 2000, Riverside County has added one million residents and is growing at a rapid rate as it continues to attract families from other parts of the state thanks to the opportunities and amenities local communities offer. In anticipation of this growth residents voted to renew Measure A, a countywide half-cent transportation sales tax that included a commitment to add lanes to I-15. RCTC opened the I-15 Express Lanes in 2021, which added two new lanes on I-15 from the cities of Eastvale and Jurupa Valley, south through the city of Corona.

RCTC continues to advance the I-15 Express Lanes Project Southern Extension to complete the vision identified by voters over two decades ago. This improvement was again affirmed by the public as a priority through substantial community outreach RCTC conducted to identify the transportation needs of Riverside County families. Residents not only support the extension of I-15 Express Lanes to fulfill a longstanding need, but to also prepare for the more than 500,000 residents expected to be added to the County population in the next 25 years.

The full scope of the project would extend the existing I-15 Express Lanes by an additional 15.8 miles southward by adding tolled express lanes in both directions in the existing median and maintaining the number of existing general-purpose lanes for travelers who opt to not use the express lanes. This stretch of I-15 experiences increasing congestion northbound in the morning and significant congestion southbound in the afternoons. Residents who opt to travel in the extended express lanes will reduce the impact on general-purpose lanes for other vehicles including trucks. This operational improvement is critical to the region's economic vitality, due to I-15's role in carrying commuters, freight, and regional tourists. Forty percent of the nation's goods travel from the ports and through the Inland Southern California region along rail and highways to reach their destination. As of 2015, the I-15 moved more than 46,000,000 vehicles annually, including two million tons of freight valued at \$108 billion (FAF04, 2015). Today, those figures are undoubtedly much higher.

The project will improve safety by providing greater separation between passenger vehicles and trucks, expand mobility choice, and increase travel time reliability. Recognizing the significant benefits the project affords to communities in southwest Riverside County, Representative Ken Calvert successfully advanced two Community Project Funding requests for the project in federal FYs 2024 and 2025.

In 2024 RCTC released the draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) for public review and comment. The preliminary engineering and environmental process began in May 2019 and is anticipated to conclude in 2025. RCTC is utilizing the progressive design-build procurement method to advance the project. This procurement method enables RCTC to construct Segment 1 of the project and other segments as funding becomes available. If sufficient funding is secured, RCTC anticipates construction to commence in 2027. RCTC applied for Round 2 of the BUILD Grant administered by USDOT and anticipates award announcements no later than June 28, 2025.