



# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is the I-5 South County Improvement Project from Avenida Pico to San Juan Creek Road?**

The I-5 South County Improvement Project will add a carpool lane in each direction on the I-5 freeway between Avenida Pico in San Clemente and San Juan Creek Road in San Juan Capistrano as well as reconstruct the Avenida Pico interchange. The project will improve traffic flow and reduce congestion throughout the cities of San Juan Capistrano, Dana Point and San Clemente.

## **What are the benefits of the project?**

The \$249 million Measure M-funded project will:

- Add a carpool lane in both directions on I-5 between Avenida Pico and San Juan Creek Road. Currently this area does not have a carpool lane, and the congestion impacts are felt daily by motorists traveling through this segment.
- Improve the sight distance on the southbound curve north of Pacific Coast Highway, which will improve the overall safety of this section of the interstate.
- Reconstruct the Avenida Pico interchange, including widening the northbound Avenida Pico on-ramp to three lanes and providing dual left-turn lanes to both northbound and southbound Avenida Pico off-ramps so traffic will flow smoothly through this main thoroughfare. Avenida Pico will be widened from five lanes to nine lanes beneath the freeway.
- Add and replace sound walls, where needed.

## **What is the project schedule?**

The design phase for the project ended in late-2013. Construction has begun on the third segment of the project from San Juan Creek Road to PCH. The second segment of the project, from PCH to Vista Hermosa is scheduled to begin construction in mid-2014. The final segment of the project, from Vista Hermosa to Avenida Pico includes the reconstruction of the Avenida Pico interchange, and will begin construction in late-2014 / early-2015. The projected completion for the entire project is late-2017.

## **How is OCTA informing the public about the project?**

In an effort to keep residents, businesses and community leaders informed, we are actively meeting with key groups, homeowner associations and businesses in the area. A Stakeholder Working Group made up of community leaders and elected officials also meets on a regular basis to share information about the project. Please call (800) 724-0353 or send an email to [southOC5info@octa.net](mailto:southOC5info@octa.net) to schedule a presentation.

## **Why is OCTA improving the freeway?**

The I-5 freeway is a vital north-south route for all of Southern California and, as many motorists know, traffic notoriously congests along this segment in South Orange County; the improvements will ease traffic flow and remove bottlenecks. In 2009, approximately 8,870 vehicles traveled south of San Juan Creek Road in the peak afternoon hour, and by 2040 that will increase to approximately 11,050 vehicles per hour if the project is not completed.

**What is the project budget?**

The budget for the I-5 South County Improvement Project from Avenida Pico to San Juan Creek Road is \$249 million. The funding is provided by Measure M2, the half-cent sales tax approved by nearly 70 percent of Orange County voters in 2006, as well as state and federal funds.

**Will this project help my commute?**

On this stretch on the I-5, the carpool lanes currently begin and end at San Juan Creek Road. Traffic studies show, by adding easily accessible carpool lanes between San Juan Creek Road and Avenida Pico, traffic will improve immensely. The project also creates consistency in the number of freeway lanes as motorists enter South Orange County, which will eliminate bottlenecks.

**Where will carpool lanes be added?**

The project will add a continuous-access carpool lane in both directions on the I-5 between Avenida Pico and San Juan Creek Road. Between San Juan Creek Road and Pacific Coast Highway, the freeway will be restriped so the “fast lane” or number one lane will become a carpool lane. Instead of five general-purpose lanes, there will be four general-purpose lanes and a carpool lane between San Juan Creek and PCH. An additional lane will be added in each direction of the I-5 south of PCH to maintain the same number of general purpose lanes as well as add a new carpool lane between PCH and Avenida Pico.

**What are continuous-access carpool lanes?**

Continuous-access carpool lanes allow carpoolers to enter or exit at any point along the route; there is no need to rush across several lanes of traffic to enter the carpool lanes. Continuous-access carpool lanes also reduce the chance of missing an exit because they allow motorists to exit whenever it is safe to do so.

**Why won't the carpool lanes continue south past Avenida Pico?**

Studies have concluded that traffic volumes on the I-5 freeway south of Avenida Pico do not warrant extending the carpool lane to the county line and therefore, it was not budgeted as part of the I-5 South County Improvement Project.

**Where will the sound walls be constructed?**

Existing sound walls will be rebuilt to accommodate the widened freeway. The only new sound wall to be constructed is located along the southbound I-5 freeway in San Clemente, along Shorecliffs Golf Course. State and federal standards determine where sound walls are built. Each location with homes, businesses or other noise-sensitive receivers has been evaluated for worst-case projected traffic noise impacts in the environmental phase, which was completed in 2011. Those with projected future traffic noise levels near or above the Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) were then evaluated with a sound wall as a noise abatement measure. For a sound wall to be determined feasible, it needs to reduce traffic noise by at least seven decibels (dBA). For a sound wall to be then considered reasonable, construction costs for the sound wall must be below an amount determined by a formula that takes into account the number of homes that benefit from the sound wall and the percentage the wall would cost in relation to the overall project. For more information see <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/noise/index.htm>

**When will construction of the sound walls begin?**

Construction of a sound wall is usually concurrent with the freeway construction. Sound wall construction will be ongoing during all three segments of the project, and has started as of spring 2014.

**Are any right-of-way issues or property acquisitions expected in this project?**

OCTA's goal in any project is to minimize the disturbance to the surrounding community and residents. In this particular project we will acquire the Shell service station and Burger Stop on the south side of Avenida Pico in San Clemente.

### When will closures occur?

Closures will mostly take place at night between approximately 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. However, to complete construction safely, some long-term closures will take place during the day, and will also have signed detours in place.

### Will there be signed detour routes?

Easily identified detours will be in place to assist drivers in navigating around the closures. OCTA partnered with Caltrans and the cities of San Juan Capistrano, Dana Point and San Clemente to work on a Transportation Management Plan identifying lane closures and other potential traffic impacts. As part of our outreach efforts, OCTA will strive to provide advance notification of any closures through e-mail, text alerts, social media and partnering city websites.

### How will OCTA communicate with cities impacted by the project?

OCTA will communicate regularly with all the corridor and surrounding cities during construction by conducting routine meetings with their elected officials and staff members.

### Will there be any pedestrian or bike lane improvements at the Avenida Pico interchange?

Yes, as part of the Avenida Pico reconstruction, bike lanes and pedestrian access will be improved or constructed at the interchange. Both a bike lane and pedestrian access will be available on eastbound Avenida Pico. Westbound Avenida Pico will have a bike lane, but will only have pedestrian access between the southbound I-5 off-ramp and Calle de Industrias.

### Are there any other projects that are going on in this same area?

Yes, a few projects are underway in this same area. OCTA strives to work with all local cities and agencies to ensure all projects are conducted as seamlessly as possible. Here are a few projects in South County:

- I-5/Ortega Highway Interchange Improvements  
Construction underway; expected to finish in mid-2015
- La Pata Extension Project  
Construction start date: Spring 2014
- Caltrans Rubberized Asphalt Overlay –PCH to OC /San Diego County Line  
Construction start date: July 2017 to July 2018
- Cow Camp Road construction between Parkway and Foothill Transportation Corridor  
Construction underway; expected to finish in late 2015

### How can I stay informed?

Stay informed about the I-5 South County Improvement Project by signing up for weekly construction alerts on the project website at [www.octa.net/I-5pico](http://www.octa.net/I-5pico).

You can also “like” the project on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/OCISouthCounty](http://www.facebook.com/OCISouthCounty), or follow the project on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), @southOC5info. To receive closure and detour notices on your phone, text SOUTHOC5INFO to 67076.

For additional information about the project, please email [southOC5info@octa.net](mailto:southOC5info@octa.net) or call (800) 724-0353

**STAY INFORMED** Stay plugged in to the I-5 South County project!

Website: [www.octa.net/I-5Pico](http://www.octa.net/I-5Pico)

Text: SouthOC5info to 67076 for project updates

Facebook: [facebook.com/OCISouthCounty](http://facebook.com/OCISouthCounty)

Twitter: @southOC5info

Instagram: @southOC5info

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