

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SANBAG receives an additional \$49 million in stimulus funds for the Inland region

SAN BERNARDINO, CA – A ray of economic relief beamed down on the Inland Empire this week as additional stimulus funds were allocated for a transportation infrastructure project in San Bernardino County.

The State of California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency (BTH) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) allocated \$49 million of the state's share of federal stimulus funds to San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) to start construction on the next two phases of the I-215 Freeway Widening Project through San Bernardino. This allocation was approved by the California Transportation Commission at its April 15 meeting in Sacramento.

The state's share of federal stimulus funds, along with the \$80.6 million regional share of federal stimulus funds already allocated to SANBAG on April 1, provides a total of \$129.6 million in stimulus funding for this vital regional project, which received bi-partisan support at all levels.

The stimulus funds are part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The funds are being distributed to regional agencies throughout California for transportation projects that have been selected based on a combination of their "shovel-ready" status, job creation, broader economic impacts, and benefits to the state's transportation infrastructure. The total allocated to date in California is \$2.2 billion. Nationally, the bill provides more than \$48 billion for transportation.

"This news brings an economic boost to the region," commented SANBAG Board President Gary Ovitt and chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. "The Inland Empire economy has suffered some of the most severe distress due to both high unemployment and a high rate of foreclosures. We are pleased to receive the stimulus allocations and want to thank Governor Schwarzenegger and his staff for their support."

SANBAG is applying the stimulus funds to the next two phases of the I-215 freeway project through San Bernardino because they are ready to begin construction. “These segments have passed all environmental and design stages and are ready to go out to bid for construction in May 2009,” said San Bernardino Mayor Patrick Morris, a member of SANBAG’s 29-member Board of Directors. “Construction will start later this summer. Freeway work that is currently in progress around the Inland Center Mall area is already funded and will continue simultaneously. We are grateful to have these funds designated for the I-215 freeway project in our city.”

SANBAG and Caltrans are partnering on this massive 7.5 mile, \$800 million freeway improvement project, which is less than halfway through construction. The overall project starts at Orange Show Road and continues north to University Parkway, and includes construction of a major freeway interchange with flyover ramps where the I-215 freeway intersects with State Route 210. The cost of the work remaining to be done is \$431 million. The project had been fully funded until the state’s economy delayed sale of the Proposition 1B bonds designated for the project. SANBAG subsequently purchased private placement general obligation bonds through the State of California, which made the entire funding strategy possible.

“After months of analyzing potential projects, SANBAG developed a strategy that identified the I-215 freeway project as its top priority,” explained SANBAG Board member and County Supervisor Josie Gonzales. “Construction on this project will continue until 2013 and will provide and sustain more than 8,000 construction jobs, in addition to other project-related jobs.”

The economic benefit of the freeway project reaches beyond just the construction work. “Completion of this stretch of freeway will be a tremendous asset to the economic development efforts in the City of San Bernardino,” commented SANBAG Board member and County Supervisor Neil Derry. “Without the stimulus dollars, this project would have been halted mid-stream and would have left the city hanging with an incomplete freeway project for years. We anticipate economic development downtown will evolve as the I-215 freeway project progresses.”

The remainder of the funding needed for the project was derived from a mix of federal, state, and local funding sources, including Measure I, the voter-approved half-cent sales tax.

SANBAG, the transportation planning authority and council of governments for San Bernardino County, is also developing a local stimulus program to fund a variety of other projects in the county.

For additional information, check the SANBAG website at: www.sanbag.ca.gov.