



PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

# US-395 REALIGNMENT RIGHT OF WAY PRESERVATION

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SAN BERNARDINO ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS (SANBAG)

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SANBAG'S US-395 PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT?**

A. The US-395 Realignment Program Environmental Impact Report, or "EIR," is an effort by SANBAG and other partner agencies to identify a new route for US-395 in the Victor Valley to the west of existing US-395 for the purposes of right-of-way preservation. The goal of SANBAG's project is identify an alignment for US-395 that is legally recognized and capable of being included into the General Plans of the Cities of Adelanto, Hesperia and Victorville and the County of San Bernardino. This EIR involves the identification of route alternatives, evaluation of those alternatives through technical studies and public input, and a decision by local governments to adopt the preferred route for possible inclusion in local General Plans. The purpose of the US-395 Realignment EIR is to find a feasible route on which there is broad agreement so that right of way can be preserved for the ultimate construction of a new US-395 Freeway/Expressway. New development can then be planned around this future facility. This EIR does not address the actual construction of the facility.

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### **Q. WHICH AGENCIES ARE COOPERATING IN THE SANBAG US-395 REALIGNMENT PROGRAM EIR?**

A. SANBAG is the lead agency for preparing the EIR, but the effort is being undertaken in close partnership with Caltrans, the County of San Bernardino, and the cities of Adelanto, Hesperia, and Victorville.

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### **Q. WHY DOES US-395 NEED TO BE REALIGNED?**

A. A new US-395 is needed for two reasons—to accommodate the current and future local traffic demand and to separate long distance through traffic from local traffic. Existing US-395 highway through the Victor Valley is at capacity. Although the current alignment of US-395 can accommodate widening to six lanes as a conventional highway, the additional capacity will be insufficient to meet both the local circulation needs of the Victor Valley and the needs for interregional travel. The combined population of the Victor Valley has grown by 70,000 over the last five years, an increase of 35 percent. Forecasts show that the population of the Victor Valley could approach 1 million within the next several decades. A vibrant, growing area like the Victor Valley needs an efficient transportation system. In addition, the Project Study Report (PSR) that was prepared by Caltrans in 2001 indicates that traffic on certain segments of US-395 will increase between 200% and 400% between now and 2030. Significant portions of the traffic growth will be the increase in interregional traffic, including a substantial number of heavy duty trucks. A realigned US-395 will upgrade the state highway to a freeway/expressway and provide it with the operational efficiency required to accommodate the forecast demand.



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## **Q. WHEN WOULD A NEW US-395 BE BUILT?**

A. Concurrent with the efforts initiated by SANBAG, Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are performing the detailed engineering and environmental studies required to construct the realigned US-395. Completion of the Project Approval and Environmental Documents required for construction of the project is anticipated in 2012. Right of way acquisition, design, and construction would require several additional years and would be dependant on the availability of funding. No specific construction schedule can be set for a number of years.

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## **Q. HOW DOES THE SANBAG EIR RELATE TO THE WORK BEING CONDUCTED BY CALTRANS ON THE REALIGNMENT OF US-395**

A. Caltrans and SANBAG are concurrently working on two separate but interrelated projects. SANBAG is preparing an EIR governed by the state statutes contained in the California Environmental Quality Act. The type of EIR being prepared by SANBAG for the project is a program EIR, which is a planning-level document, intended to provide local jurisdictions the legal mechanism to preserve right-of-way for the future realignment of US-395. SANBAG's EIR does not provide the permits or approvals required to construct the project. An EIR/EIS (Environmental Impact Study) is being prepared by Caltrans as required by Federal and State statute. When approved, this document will allow the construction of a new freeway/expressway. Caltrans will be evaluating several alternatives in addition to those being evaluated in the SANBAG EIR.

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## **Q: HOW DOES THE EIR PROECESS WORK?**

A. An EIR is a process provided under California State law to evaluate a project's merits and to allow government agencies and the public to offer their comments and inputs on the impacts of the project. The process begins with a "Notice of Preparation" to indicate that an EIR is to be prepared, followed by meetings to obtain agency and public input. Technical studies are performed to provide facts regarding the potential impacts of the project. This information is documented in the draft Environmental Impact Report, followed by a public comment period and preparation of the final Environmental Impact Report. The process began in November 2006 and is projected to take a total of 18 months.

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## **Q: HOW WILL FINAL DECISIONS BE MADE?**

A. There are several steps involved in deciding where to locate the future US-395. Following the preparation of the final EIR, SANBAG will approve the EIR, with any necessary changes to respond to public and agency concerns, and will issue a "Notice of Determination." This will be a declaration of the location where right-of-way should be preserved for the future US-395. This will allow the County, Adelanto, Hesperia, and Victorville to adopt the alignment into their General Plans, giving them the legal means to preserve the right-of-way for the route. Final alignment determination will occur several years later and will be based on the more detailed EIR/EIS being prepared by Caltrans for federal approval. There is a risk that Caltrans and/or FHWA might not agree with the locally preferred location, but SANBAG is trying to minimize this risk by engaging in rigorous technical studies and an open dialogue with the agencies and the public on all the issues of concern.



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## **Q. WHAT WILL THE REALIGNED US-395 LOOK LIKE?**

A. The new route for US-395 would ultimately become a freeway through the Victor Valley, under current plans. An analysis of traffic loadings will determine how many lanes are needed. Tentative plans call for three lanes in each direction south of State Route 18 (Palmdale Road) and two lanes in each direction north of that point. A wide center median would allow for future expansion. It is also possible that the project could be constructed in phases, with signalized intersections at cross streets initially, with the construction of interchanges (over/underpasses) later, as conditions warrant. These decisions will be made depending on the outcome of the Caltrans EIR/EIS and the availability of funding.

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## **Q. IS THE EIR LOOKING AT POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES FOR THIS ROUTE?**

A. Yes. The EIR is evaluating three possible routes, each of which has two options for connecting to Interstate 15. These alternatives will also be compared to the “no-build” alternative, in which nothing more is done to improve US-395. Each of the routes will be evaluated in terms of their impact on communities (direct impact to homes and businesses, traffic, noise, air quality, visual impacts, etc.) and the environment (water resources, cultural resources, endangered species, etc.). Technical studies will assist agencies and the public in weighing the pros and cons of each alternative. The alternative alignments may be adjusted as a result of the technical studies. The alignments shown on the map currently may not represent the final location for the facility. The proposed final location of an alignment for right-of-way preservation will be clearly identified in the SANBAG draft EIR, with ample opportunity for public and elected official comment before a decision is made by the SANBAG Board of Directors. In addition, the Caltrans EIR/EIS will continue to analyze the alignments considered in the SANBAG EIR, as well as other alternative alignments that were identified in prior studies. The Caltrans EIR/EIS will provide the basis for the final determination of the location of the future route for the realignment of US-395. The Caltrans environmental process will also afford the public ample opportunity for review and comment. The Caltrans EIR/EIS is anticipated to be completed by 2012.

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## **Q. WHEN CAN SUPPORT OF OR OPPOSITION TO AN ALIGNMENT BE VOICED?**

A. A highway facility of the magnitude of US-395 will inevitably have impacts. The desire of all the agencies involved is to find an alignment that has the fewest impacts and provides for the safest and most direct route to accommodate regional and interregional traffic flows. Citizens and agencies may make comments on the alignments at any time. However, SANBAG is requesting that agencies not take positions supporting or opposing specific alternatives until all the technical information has been compiled and the public has had ample opportunity to comment on that information. The purpose of the EIR is to effectively and objectively weigh the pros and cons of each alternative.



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## **Q. WHERE CAN I GO TO RECEIVE UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON SANBAG'S US-395 EIR ACTIVITIES?**

A. SANBAG has created a website specifically for this project. In addition to project information, the website provides up-to-date information about public outreach meetings and a document library with materials important to the project. The website also provides an opportunity for public comment and questions. Questions submitted to SANBAG via the website will be answered within 48 business hours. The website is located at [www.sanbag.ca.gov/us395](http://www.sanbag.ca.gov/us395).

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## **Q. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PROVIDE INPUT INTO THE EIR PROCESS?**

A. There will be numerous opportunities for input at community meetings, city council meetings, and through direct contact with project staff. To obtain the most current information on the project, first visit the SANBAG website at [www.sanbag.ca.gov/us395](http://www.sanbag.ca.gov/us395). Newsletters will be posted periodically. You can provide comments or questions on the website via e-mail. You may also call the US-395 toll-free information line at 1-877-HWY-395R. SANBAG's intent is to provide for a completely open process of information sharing and input, enabling decisions to be made that are in the best overall interest of those who live and work in the Victor Valley.