

210 Freeway Opens With Cheers & Jeers

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SAN BERNARDINO

By Chris Levister

Shortly before 10 o'clock anxious motorists began cueing up along Alder Avenue in Rialto behind a weathered Caltrans barricade. But first, a few final flourishes, finally at 10:14 a.m. a voice rang out, 'Let em' roll'.

Marta Macias Brown, widow of Rep. George E. Brown Jr., became the first to drive onto the 7.25 mile ribbon of white concrete between Rialto and San Bernardino followed by a super charged green Mustang - A parade of euphoric drivers honked, whistled, waved and cheered. Virgin pavement never felt so good especially if your daily commute takes you down the 210 past the 15 interchange. What began as a line on a map six decades ago as the Foothill Freeway, opened with fanfare as the George Brown Jr. Memorial 210 Freeway, dedicated to the late congressman from San Bernardino.

"This is a wonderful day. George would be proud," said Mrs. Brown.

"It's a great celebration. It opens up our eastern valley creating a continuous thoroughfare," said San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris. "Our neighbors to the west have seen the completed freeway sections through their areas spark a boom in development. Rialto and San Bernardino can expect to reap the benefits next."



Assemblywoman Amina Carter (D-Rialto) (I-r) San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris and Rialto Mayor Pro-Tem Winnie Hanson join State Transportation officials moments before opening the 210 Freeway expansion between SB and Rialto.

With the price tag hovering around a billion dollars, it's an expense taxpayers were eager to pay - in exchange for the congested route that took motorists along a zig zag from the 210 to the 15 to the 10 Freeway on the way to Redlands and points east. Now it's just one straight shot to Redlands and beyond.

"Wow, what a historic moment," said Rialto resident, former small business owner and district representative Assemblywoman Amina Carter "Having grown up in San Bernardino during a period when the west side of the city was cut off from the freeway and having access to it now is something I never thought I'd see in my lifetime. I'm really excited about the job that all of us have done here today especially the taxpayers."

"There's been a lot of anticipation," said Cheryl Donahue, spokesman for the San Bernardino Associated Governments, or Sanbag, the county's transportation agency.

"I think we're going to see a lot of happy motorists out their today."

"This is taxpayer's money at work," gushed Zaze Harris Caltrans' oversight electrical engineer.

Flashing a smile that could sell toothpaste senior resident engineer for Sanbag Carole Sanders

brushed off playful salutes and a reporter's label of superwoman, preferring to dive into the celebratory atmosphere.

"Wow, it's been a long arduous haul. I've been on this project nine years from ground breaking to finish. Together we completed this freeway safely, under budget and on time."



210 Project Senior

Overseeing the project since 2003 Sanders an African-American professional civil engineer predicts the State Street on ramp will bring access and commerce to San Bernardino's long suffering Westside cut off when the 215 Freeway opened nearly a half century ago.

Resident Engineer Carole Sanders, P.E. called the opening a watershed moment for the inland region.

"Freeway access is one of the biggest assets in business. By adding access you draw commerce. When you draw commerce you breathe life back into a community.

The State Street community will change for the better," said Sanders.



Euphoric SB City Councilman Rikke Van Johnson waits for State Street barriers to come down.

Workers will continue to install emergency call boxes, mile markers and signal controllers along with generally tidying up for several weeks. The biggest unfinished parts of the freeway are the high speed connector roads that will carry traffic from the eastbound 210 to the southbound 215 Freeway, and from the north bound 215 to the westbound 210.

The \$55 million connectors are scheduled to be under construction in 2009 and finished sometime in 2011. The completion of the 210 means Highway 30 will soon be relegated to the history books renamed simply the 210.

Not everyone is cheering, however, some Redlands and Highland residents are worried that the completed freeway will mean jam-ups in their

backyards. Officials in some San Gabriel Valley communities have complained about spillover on surface streets.

The 210 expansion is a door for some, a jam for others, said one excited motorist waiting to anoint the new stretch of freeway.

An anxious Pasadena commuter responded, "I just want to thank everybody who made this day necessary."

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