

[Close Window](#)[Send To Printer](#)

## Bond boosts freeway funds

### I-5 expansion, rail improvements on way

By Mike Sprague Staff Writer  
Whittier Daily News

The passage of a \$19 billion statewide bond issue for California's transportation needs is good news for local commuters - especially motorists in Santa Fe Springs and those who use the Santa Ana (5) Freeway, local officials said.

The highway bond act should provide more than enough money to widen the Santa Ana Freeway from the Orange County line to the San Gabriel River (605) Freeway, as well as funding for the construction of five grade separations in Santa Fe Springs, officials said.

"It's going to be a boon," Santa Fe Springs City Councilman Gus Velasco said. "The freeway is going to open up, and so will our streets."

The freeway widening project is expected to get an additional \$400 million from the bond issue, adding to \$1 billion already set aside for the work.

"Existing money would have stopped short by a mile or two," said Jerry Wood, executive director of the I-5 Joint Powers Authority, a consortium of six cities that has pushed for years for the widening. "With this new money, the project can be built to the 605 Freeway."

Wood said the consortium, now that the bond has passed, plans to ask Caltrans to accelerate its plans to widen the freeway. Caltrans already is in the process of acquiring homes and businesses near the Carmenita Road interchange.

Construction on the project to widen the Carmenita bridge from two lanes to six lanes, as well as the freeway a half-mile on each side of the street, is expected to begin in 2008, Wood said.

But the entire freeway widening will take another 10 years to complete, according to a 2005 I-5 Joint Powers Authority projection.

About \$300 million is expected to be available to construct five railroad grade separations - rail crossings - along the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe railroad line that runs from east to west through the city, said Santa Fe Springs City Manager Fred Latham.

To make sure the area gets the money, Latham said calls will be made to Caltrans to ensure the projects are funded, Latham said.

"It's fairly clear the bond itself didn't specifically allocate money to projects," he said.

The crossings include Pioneer Boulevard, Los Nietos Road/Norwalk Boulevard - two crossings would be built there - Lakeland Avenue and Marquardt Avenue.

Latham said the crossings are needed because more trains are expected to come through those intersections. There also are plans to install a third track along the rail line that will allow more train traffic, he said.

"In the years to come, as the Alameda Corridor is more effective in getting trucks off the highway, the Public Utilities Commission will authorize longer and longer trains and longer and longer delays at these intersections," Latham said.

[mike.sprague@sgvn.com](mailto:mike.sprague@sgvn.com)

(562) 698-0955, Ext. 3022