

City celebrates road widening

BY CAROL R. PERCY
LINCOLN NEWS MESSENGER REPORTER

With construction workers watching on May 15, Lincoln City Councilmen and staff stood shoulder-to-shoulder

with a congressman, a county supervisor and transportation officials to wield golden shovels for the ceremonial groundbreaking on Nelson Lane.

After three years of planning,

the Nelson Lane Bridge Replacement and Roadway Widening Project is officially underway. It is expected to be finished by June of next year.

The \$8.8-million project will

include construction of two northbound and two southbound lanes to accommodate increased traffic to and from the Lincoln Regional Airport, as

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NELSON: Widening, new bridges will increase safety for residents traveling on Nelson Lane

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well as future development in that area of Lincoln, according to Jill Thompson, Lincoln's public information officer.

On hand for the groundbreaking were Lincoln City Councilmen, Congressman Tom McClintock, Placer County Board Supervisor Robert Weygandt, Placer County Transportation Planning Agency executive director Celia McAdam, Caltrans District 3 Planning and Local Assistance Office representative Stella Liao.

Lincoln City Manager Jim Estep said the project is key to Lincoln's economic growth.

"It's a vital link to the airport and industrial area. Basically, this was a one-lane bridge, and with the huge increase in traffic with the bypass opening," Estep said, "it became a safety issue. Now, we'll be able to get commerce traffic in and out of here."

In a May 15 city press release, Lincoln Mayor Gabriel Hydrick said that average daily traffic on Nelson Lane has increased from 1,200 to 12,000 vehicles since the State Route 65 Bypass opened in October 2012.

With completion of the Nelson Lane improvements, commercial vehicle traffic will have direct freeway access to the Lin-



COURTESY

On hand for the Nelson Lane Bridge Replacement and Roadway Widening Project groundbreaking May 15 were Lincoln City Manager Jim Estep, left, Lincoln Councilman Peter Gilbert, Lincoln Councilman Paul Joiner, Congressman Tom McClintock, Lincoln Mayor Gabriel Hydrick, Placer County Board Supervisor Robert Weygandt, Placer County Transportation Planning Agency executive director Celia McAdam, Caltrans District 3 Planning and Local Assistance Office representative Stella Liao and Lincoln Councilman Stan Nader.

coln Regional Airport and the surrounding business park for the first time, Lincoln Councilman Paul Joiner said.

The economic development opportunities for new businesses and new jobs created by this project "are very exciting for both Lincoln and the entire South Placer region," Joiner said.

"For the residents, the widening of Nelson Lane to four lanes plus two new bridges will provide increased safety on what was once a very narrow country roadway and bridge," Joiner said.

Estep praised Ray Leftwich, Lincoln's construction manager for Nelson Lane Bridge Replacement and Roadway

Widening Project.

"Ray was really the key to getting this project started and completed on time," Estep said. "He ran into a lot of roadblocks and forged ahead."

Leftwich said the project involved one and one-half miles of roadway and two bridges.

As one of many challenges,

the city had to obtain permission for right-of-way and easements from eight area property owners of small rural ranches and farms, one of whom had been dead since 1931, according to Leftwich. The city "had to go through a court condemnation process" for that property, Leftwich said.

The city's "biggest challenge for the project was getting everything done in time to comply with the time constraints for Proposition 1B state funds, which amounted to \$600,000," Leftwich said.

As for traffic conditions, the roads will be passable for traffic at all times during construction, Leftwich said.

The project is scheduled for partial completion with two lanes in each direction open to traffic by this Dec. 31.

Full completion of the project is scheduled for June 30, 2015. It will involve final paving and striping operations on the roadways.

Both operations are affected by temperature and wet weather, Leftwich said.

"We are allowing winter to pass before we finish all the details necessary to close out the job," Leftwich said.

Caltrans I-80 overpass work subject of Newcastle drop-in session

BY GUS THOMSON
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Caltrans will play host to an open-house meeting May 28 in Newcastle to inform residents and businesses about the upcoming Interstate 80 vertical-clearance project on Interstate 80 overpasses.

The \$36 million project will increase the vertical clearance of nine structures spanning the freeway between Loomis and Magra, including two in Newcastle.

Six overpasses will have the bridge deck raised about 2 feet, and three will have the roadway below lowered to provide the necessary increased clearance.

Caltrans staff will be at the meetings to provide information on schedules, alternate routes, community impacts and project benefits.

The drop-in-style event will be from 5-7 p.m. May 28 in Newcastle Elementary School, 8951 Valley View Drive, in Newcastle.

Freeways may take their toll

How would you feel about paying a toll to drive on Interstate 80 to Lake Tahoe or the Bay Area? Or Interstate 5 to L.A.?

In a proposal to Congress last month, the U.S. Department of Transportation suggested allowing states to turn interstate freeways into tollways. Cash-strapped states with aging highways can use the toll revenue to repair and update those highways (relieving the feds of much of the burden). U.S. DOT also proposes allowing toll revenue to be used to improve mass transit near the toll road.

Road builders and free-market advocates have long pushed the idea of toll roads. The fact that the Obama administration is talking about it suggests the idea is gaining traction.

Politically, though, it's difficult to turn a freeway into a "feeway." Most drivers likely will not appreciate suddenly having to pay to use I-5 or I-80 or other interstates. The federal government has a pilot program allowing Missouri, North Carolina and Virginia to make the switch, but none has yet been able to pull it off. The trucking industry, among others, is opposed.

A California Department of Transportation spokesman was circumspect when we asked what his agency thought of the idea.

"We don't comment on proposed legislation," David Anderson said. He added, though, "Greater flexibility for states is certainly helpful as we explore all our funding options for the future."

Sacramento officials already have explored the possibility of new toll roads and of toll lanes on existing local highways. Their conclusion: Tolling is not a panacea for funding woes.

In 2010, Caltrans and local planners looked at adding a toll lane on Interstate 80 through Sacramento County. The group concluded there is not enough congestion to attract enough drivers to use the lane. Given the costs of setting it up and operating it, the lane likely would not break even until about 2035, they said. Caltrans also looked a few years ago at turning the carpool lane on Highway 50 into a toll lane but came to similar conclusions. The frequent on- and offramps would not allow a toll lane to work efficiently.

Notably, those were studies of adding a toll lane, which gives drivers the option of paying to use that lane, if they think it will get them to work faster. On toll roads, all drivers must pay. Sacramento planners have studied two possible new toll roads.

One would be the planned Placer Parkway, which would connect highways 65 and 99. But local government officials say they don't have enough up-front money to attract a private partner to build and operate the road.

Another would be the planned Capital SouthEast Connector road, which would connect Highway 99 at Elk Grove with Highway 50 in El Dorado County. Project head Tom Zlotkowski floated the toll idea, but several area council members reacted negatively. Zlotkowski says the toll idea remains, but "only as a back-up if all other options to fund the project fail."

*Call The Bee's Tony Bizjak,
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COURTESY

The Placer County Transportation Planning Agency is requesting public input regarding a new project for the improvement of the Highway 80/State Road 65 interchange.

Public input requested on highway project

The Highway 80/State Road 65 interchange is an important regional connector that serves the burgeoning commercial and office spaces along the Highway 65 corridor and travelers along Interstate 80. Traffic within the area is fairly congested especially during peak hours and it is going to get worse.

The Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) is working on improving the interchange to remove the bottleneck impeding the traffic flow which keeps Placer residents, businesses and visitors stuck in traffic.

The overall project consists of the following phases:

- Project Study Report (completed by Caltrans in 2009)
- Project Approval and Environmental Document (currently underway)
- Final Design and Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Construction.

For the past three years, Placer County Transportation Planning

HOW TO HELP

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency is looking for your input on the project alternatives.

To view detailed maps and provide your input, visit www.8065interchange.org.

Agency and the CH2M Hill consultant team, in conjunction with the project partners, input from stakeholders and the public, have analyzed existing and projected future traffic conditions within the project area and have developed several potential alternatives to meet the project objectives. The result is five proposed project alternatives.

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency is looking for your input on the project alternatives. To view detailed maps and provide your input, visit www.8065interchange.org.

~ From www.8065interchange.org