

TriLink/State Route (SR) 239 DRAFT Revised: January 29, 2013 Study Impetus Statement

SR 239 is a legislatively recognized, but unconstructed route in the California state highway system. First identified in 1959, the legislative language describes SR 239 as a potential roadway linking SR 4 near Brentwood to I-205 or I-580 west of Tracy in San Joaquin County. The route was never approved; however, a Caltrans Route Concept Report completed in 1985 recommended a two-lane conventional highway with adequate right-of-way to handle up to a four-lane facility, to serve the high growth areas.¹

In 2009, Contra Costa County received two federal appropriations totaling \$14 million. The federal appropriations will be used to establish a multi-jurisdictional partnership that would oversee the process for evaluating multi-modal alternatives for the SR 239 corridor. In 2010, the County retained a consultant team – led by Parsons – to conduct the planning study. In January 2012, administration of the study, now called TriLink, was transferred from Contra Costa County to the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA).

This TriLink Study Impetus identifies five key areas for consideration and discussion:

- » Regional Connectivity
- » Planned Development and Job Realization
- » Roadway Safety
- » Emergency Response
- » Goods Movement

The Parsons consultant team, in partnership with the stakeholders and constituents along the corridor, will address the issues and needs associated with each of these areas. The consultant team will develop a range of multi-modal alternatives with the ultimate objective of establishing consensus on a preferred alignment for SR 239.

¹ Caltrans District 4, 1985. "Route Concept Report: Route 239," page 3 of 6.

Regional Connectivity

The study area is bounded by I-205 and I-580 to the south and SR 4 to the north. There are few quality connections between the roadways in western San Joaquin County and eastern Contra Costa County. SR 4 (former SR 4 Bypass) north of Marsh Creek Road is planned to be widened to four lanes. However, SR 4 along Marsh Creek Road is not being improved, and does not provide sufficient service to the east, beyond Brentwood. While Vasco Road has had recent safety improvements, these have not expanded its overall capacity, due to the Gateway policy in place, and congestion is an issue.² Average daily traffic has increased by more than 40 percent between 1996 and 2006, and is expected to continue to increase.³ Additionally, Byron Highway carries approximately 11,500 vehicles per day, with 23 percent truck traffic.

The lack of transportation capacity in eastern Contra Cost County was noted in a 1997 Caltrans study of State Route 4 which stated:

Route 4 is intended to connect the Bay Area with Stockton and the Sierra. Due to geometric constraints in the San Joaquin Delta, however, it cannot adequately serve this function. Route 4, therefore, serves as a “cul-de-sac” linking Eastern Contra Costa to the Bay Area but not providing for appreciable interregional movement. Analysis needs to be conducted to identify the facility needs in the 239/Byron Highway Corridor.⁴

Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle connections are also limited in this corridor. The proposed eBART connection would terminate in Brentwood. There is no proposed commuter rail connection to western San Joaquin. Sidewalk and pedestrian paths are missing on some existing roadway segments and bicycle lanes also do not extend outside of Brentwood, or north of Tracy.

The TriLink study will examine these access, congestion, and demand issues in an effort to improve the transportation link between eastern Contra Costa County and Tracy. Proposed improvements could potentially mitigate congestion on the I-580 and Vasco Road corridors by providing a more direct or dedicated route, and multi-modal or intermodal options for the movement of people and goods.

² Vasco Road is constrained by the 1995 Tri-Valley Transportation Plan/Action Plan which restricts widening.

³ Metropolitan Transportation, 2008. “Vasco Road Median Barrier Project: Findings and Recommendations Report,” page 3 of 18.

⁴ State Route 4 Corridor Study, 1997. California Department of Transportation – District 4, Office of Transportation Planning, System Planning Branch, page vi.

Planned Development and Job Realization

Development in the study area is constrained by growth policies, such as the urban limit line (ULL), environmental constraints, and agricultural lands. The TriLink study will explore opportunities for access improvements for pedestrians, bicycles, auto, truck, and transit that are supportive of and facilitate planned growth in the study area.

Brentwood, Oakley, Antioch and the unincorporated area around the Byron Airport, all of which are located in eastern Contra Costa County, have undeveloped, non-agricultural lands that are within the voter-approved ULL. These undeveloped lands are designated for commercial, industrial, or business park development. In addition, the Innovation for Green Advanced Transportation Excellence (i-GATE) initiative, centered at the Lawrence Livermore and Sandia labs, aims to create 5,000 new jobs in the Tri-Valley region over the next five years. Cordes Ranch, in the City of Tracy, aims to create 23,000 jobs at buildout, while Mountain House in San Joaquin County aims to create 22,000+ jobs at buildout.⁵ Improved linkages to the east and south would allow the study area communities to realize current general and specific plans and support new plans to improve the local jobs-housing balance, which is currently about 0.5 jobs per household.⁶ In particular, industrial development, which is likely to include warehouse development, will be better supported by improved through-put of goods movement in and out of the area, in addition to providing access for employees. These areas planned for job-generating land uses such as industrial, office, retail space, and business parks that would provide opportunities for much-needed employment-growth in an area that currently has far more housing than jobs.

In addition to the planned commercial, industrial, and business park development, Tracy, Brentwood, Oakley, Mountain House, and Antioch all have significant areas planned for residential development that have not yet been developed. Improved linkages to the east and south would allow the study area communities to realize general and specific plans and support improvement of the jobs/housing balance. An improved jobs/housing balance will reduce average commute distances, reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) relative to the traditional growth patterns, and furthering the aims of regional planning initiatives like SB 375.

⁵ Economic Planning Systems (EPS), Economic Planning Systems (EPS), 2012. "TriLink Socio-Economic Dataset Memo," 2012.

⁶ A jobs-housing balance of less than about 1.5 indicates a net out-commute, so the local ratio of 0.5 jobs per household suggests that many area residents commute to jobs outside their communities.

Roadway Safety

A study commissioned by Contra Costa County in 2004 reported 254 collisions, including seven fatal collisions, on Vasco Road between 1996 and 2003. Recent safety improvements on Vasco Road were aimed at addressing this situation, but did not increase capacity. Sharp curves, narrow lanes, steep grades, lack of passing options and high traffic volumes mean safety is still an ongoing concern for Vasco Road and other local rural roadways. Between 2008 and 2010 there were 59 collisions on Vasco Road, including three fatal collisions. The lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the corridor also poses a safety concern. The same combination of design features that don't meet current standards also creates safety concerns on the Bryon Highway. Between 2008 and 2010 there were 22 collisions on Byron Highway.⁷

The TriLink study will look at opportunities for addressing roadway safety by implementing current design standards which demonstrate safety benefits and re-routing potential future truck traffic to roadways built to a more appropriate design speed to address safety concerns in the study area.

Emergency Response and Recovery

SR 239 could serve as an evacuation route facilitating access to and from regional centers of urbanization.

Flooding due to heavy rain events and/or levee failure pose a significant threat to public safety. As discussed in the *Contra Costa County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update*⁸, such an event would result in the need to evacuate large numbers of people who live in the low-lying areas in and around the Delta. Additionally, increased storm frequency, intensity, and duration could represent a barrier to emergency response and recovery, both in short- and long-term time frames. Particularly flood-prone areas within the immediate vicinity of the proposed SR 239 corridor include Mountain House, Knightsen, Discovery Bay, Oakley, and Antioch. Flooding in any of these areas would result in an immediate need to evacuate to the south, and would likely preclude evacuation to the east.

⁷ The source of the collision data from 2008 to 2010 is the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS).
⁸ Contra Costa County, Contra Costa County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, Chapter 13.

Goods Movement

The commercial, industrial, business park, and residential developments planned for the study area will increase the demand for goods movement. The lack of an effective connection between western San Joaquin County and eastern Contra Costa County will affect the efficient movement of freight as freight volumes and traffic congestion increase. Vasco Road is currently at or near its capacity while Byron Highway and SR 4 are at approximately 70 percent of their capacity. Preliminary traffic growth demand estimates show that by 2040 current capacity will be exceeded by 50 percent or more. The TriLink study will analyze options for efficient goods movement.

It is unlikely that the Mococo rail line can play a major role in reducing the demand for trucking in the corridor. In general, rail freight movement is cost effective for longer distances (300 to 500 miles) of travel. Additionally, the freight moved by rail in many cases will be moved between the rail yard and its destination/origin by trucks.⁹

The M-580 Marine Highway Corridor includes the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers, and connects commercial navigation channels between the Port of Oakland and the inland ports in Stockton and Sacramento. When fully implemented, freight service via barge could eliminate 180,000 truck trips from I-580, I-80, and I-205 annually, saving approximately seven million gallons of fuel, thereby reducing air emissions.¹⁰

⁹ State Route 4 Corridor Study, 1997. California Department of Transportation—District 4, Office of Transportation Planning, System Planning Branch, page 48.

¹⁰ U.S Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, 2010. Marine highway Corridors, page 2.