



Perris News

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I-215 - Route 74 Interchange Project Breaks Ground

City officials broke ground Monday on a new interchange at Interstate 215 and Highway 74 that will remake the landscape of Downtown Perris, improve safety and traffic flow and spur business development.

The \$29 million interchange marks a red-letter day for Perris, officials said, agreeing that the project was critically needed and a long time coming.

The project, made possible through transportation fees, sales tax revenues and federal stimulus dollars, will eliminate the five-point intersection at Redlands Avenue and Fourth Street.

It will realign and widen off-ramps from north and southbound I-215, widen the bridge over the freeway from two to eight lanes and replace 12 traffic-clogging stop signs with five traffic signals. Construction also will widen Redlands Avenue, create sound walls and retaining walls and an eight-foot wide sidewalk on the north side of the bridge.

Work on the project is expected to begin later this summer and take two years.

"This is a huge milestone for the City of Perris," said Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley, a Perris resident.

Ashley said the City has needed a new interchange for decades. Caltrans offered to build one in 1986 but a fractious City Council and reluctant business owners failed to work together to bring the project to reality. A long recession in the 1990s meant the project stagnated. Other projects moved ahead of the Perris interchange.

Ashley said that when federal money became available, the City stepped forward and, working with Caltrans, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the Western Riverside Council of Governments and the March Joint Powers Authority to successfully lobby for funds.

"The opportunity came along at this time and we took it," Ashley said. "We seized it. We did not wait. I am so proud of the Perris City Council for working to bring this about. This council does not miss many opportunities to improve the lives of Perris residents."

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said the new interchange will spur development in and around Downtown. A developer is expected to break ground on a major shopping center featuring a Super Target and other stores, restaurants and a theatre within six months of the beginning of work on the interchange. Both projects are coordinated to finish about the same time.

"Development is waiting for this project," the Mayor said. "If you can't people here, they will not come. This is a red-letter day for Perris."

City Councilman Al Landers said traffic will move faster through Downtown once the interchange is completed, making driving conditions less congested and safer.

"We've needed this for years," Landers said. "I am glad the City is finally getting a new interchange it has so desperately needed."

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said Perris continues to partner with government agencies and private enterprise to bring jobs and opportunities to residents. Perris is taking the lead in the development of green technologies and boasts the largest "green" building in the world, the HaneBrands distribution center. The City has purchased and restored several historic buildings, including the Train Depot, Bank of Perris and Perris Theatre.

"Perris is the hub of the entire Inland Empire," he said. "This new interchange will be the gateway to shopping centers and our civic center. Many people go through Perris on their way to Lake Elsinore and Corona. We are the center of everything in western Riverside County. This project is a great example of how federal stimulus money should be used."

City Councilwoman Joanne Evans said she can't wait for the day when the "horrendous" traffic that backs up on I-215 at Highway 74 will be eased by the new interchange.

"Once this project is completed, it will make a big, big difference," she said.

The City Council, Supervisors Ashley and Bob Buster, City Manager Richard Belmudez and representatives of Caltrans, RCTC and WRCOG took part in the ceremonial ground-breaking.



The ceremonial ground-breaking. Here members of the Perris City Council toss the first shovels.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley say the new Interstate 215/Highway 74 interchange means big things for Perris.



Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans says the new interchange will alleviate "horrendous" traffic that currently backs up on the off-ramps to the freeway.



Perris City Council members Al Landers and Mark Yarbrough say the interchange has been a long time in coming.



Several photographers captured the event.