



Perris News

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Governor signs bill turning section of Highway 74 over to Perris

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed a bill authorizing Caltrans to turn over a 1.7-mile stretch of Highway 74 to Perris officials, who will then become responsible for maintaining and improving one of the major gateways into the city.

City Engineer Habib Motlagh said the governor's signature clears a major hurdle in Perris' ongoing efforts to take control of Highway 74, which is known as 4th Street as it snakes through the city. The city began its efforts to gain local control of the roadway in 2007, and the city council unanimously approved a resolution supporting the transfer earlier this year.

Final approval from Caltrans could take until mid to late 2009.

Motlagh said the city will gain several major benefits when 4th Street—which along with Perris Boulevard and Ramona Expressway are the city's three most-heavily traveled roadways—comes under local jurisdiction.

The city can widen or repave the street, add additional signage and traffic lights if necessary and plant landscaping without having to seek state approval. That often cuts the time it takes to complete those types of upgrades from two years to several months, Motlagh said. The city must also seek state permission to hold a holiday parade along 4th Street.

Part of the ongoing negotiations with Caltrans involves the amount of state funding Perris will receive for maintenance, officials said.

Motlagh estimated the cost of maintaining and improving the road, which include upgrades to the railroad crossing at C Street and future repaving and landscaping, at about \$2.9 million. More than 20,000 vehicles per day travel on parts or all of 4th Street.

"It is very crucial that the city has control over this highway," Motlagh said. "It's our gateway."

Assemblyman Kevin Jeffries, R-Lake Elsinore, carried the bill that the governor signed. The legislation also turns over the portion of Highway 74 running through Lake Elsinore to that city. Jeffries said having local jurisdiction will help ease traffic congestion because it streamlines the process required for roadway improvements.

"By working with the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and other local agencies and cities, I am confident that we can continue to find ways to improve the quality of life for my constituents, and get things accomplished despite the general partisanship and dysfunction in Sacramento," Jeffries said in a written statement.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch agreed.

"This is a big deal," he said. "It gives us control. I believe we can do as good a job or better than the state to maintain and improve that roadway."



Traffic moves constantly along Highway 74 through Perris, which is known as 4th Street through town. City officials are working to take responsibility for maintain and improving the roadway from Caltrans.

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