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Construction Begins on Flyover Connector Bridge on 605 / 10 Freeways

By Maritza Velazquez, Staff Writer



BALDWIN PARK - Work is under way to correct a notoriously problematic interchange at the heart of the San Gabriel Valley, where commuters attempting to merge within a few hundred feet leads to traffic snarls and driver confusion.

Local, state and federal officials gathered Wednesday to celebrate the start of construction on a \$66 million one-lane flyover ramp that will provide a direct connection from the southbound 605 Freeway to the eastbound 10 Freeway,

which accommodates more than 182,000 vehicles daily,

Traffic flows through connector from the southbound 605 Freeway to the eastbound 10 Freeway in Baldwin Park on Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2012. Caltrans is construction a \$66 million direct flyover connector

from the southbound 605 freeway to the eastbound 10 Freeway to improve traffic flow in the area, commuters currently are given a very short distance to merge from the 605 to the 10. (SGVN/Staff photo by Watchara Phomicinda) according to Caltrans.

"This connector will provide a fluid transition and eliminate confusion for motorists by removing the weave and a point of conflict between these two freeways," said Shirley Choate, Caltrans District 7 acting deputy director of program and project management, during the press conference at Baldwin Park's Barnes Park, located adjacent to the 605 Freeway.

Design of the project is nearly completed and construction should begin within the next couple of weeks, said Mehdi Salehinik, project manager.

"(The interchange) has been a plague for many of us and certainly there's some frustration because we know that there is the potential to move traffic more fluidly if we were able to enjoy the kind of infrastructure that you see elsewhere in the state of California," Assemblyman Roger Hernandez said.

The project is funded by the State Highway Operation and Protection Program, with a combination of state and federal monies, Caltrans officials said.

The funding comes after the San Gabriel Valley failed to receive a portion of the Prop 1B voter-approved transportation bonds in 2006.

However, local, county and state leaders collaborated to garner funding allocations to get the job finished.

Baldwin Park Councilwoman Marlen Garcia said she and her colleagues on the City Council, in addition to elected officials in West Covina attended a California Transportation Committee meeting in Sacramento to lobby for Prop 1B funding for the project, but were ultimately denied, she said.

"We really thought that we always were the stepchild and everything was focused on L.A. and the westside and we got the short end all the time," Garcia said. "We said we need to go up and rattle some cages."

Although the state denied Prop 1B funding, they told the elected officials that they would search for another funding source, Garcia said.

The ramp will be erected 70 feet above the freeway so that those driving along the southbound 605 freeway will have their own ramp to connect with the eastbound 10 freeway without having to make lane changes that interfere with other drivers also merging on the interchange.

According to Caltrans, there will be construction closures, with the bulk of the work being performed during evenings. The agency will inform the public when the closures occur.