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HIGH DESERT CORRIDOR
Project History

SUMMER 2015

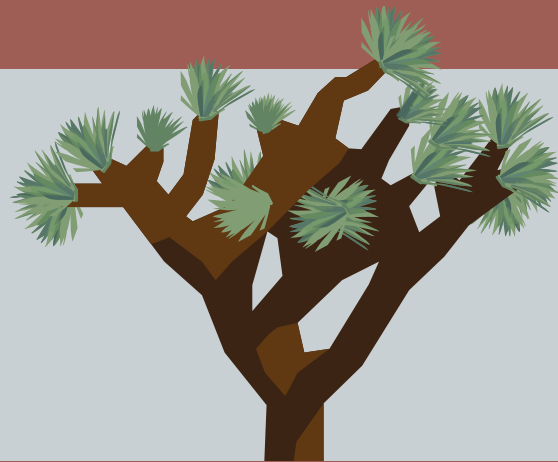


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Overview

The High Desert Corridor (HDC) environmental study is evaluating the potential construction of a multipurpose transportation corridor that could connect SR-14 in Los Angeles County with US-395, I-15 and SR-18 in San Bernardino County. This proposed 63-mile corridor would connect residential, commercial and industrial zones with some of the highest growth potential areas in Southern California, including the cities of Palmdale, Lancaster, Adelanto, Victorville and the Town of Apple Valley.

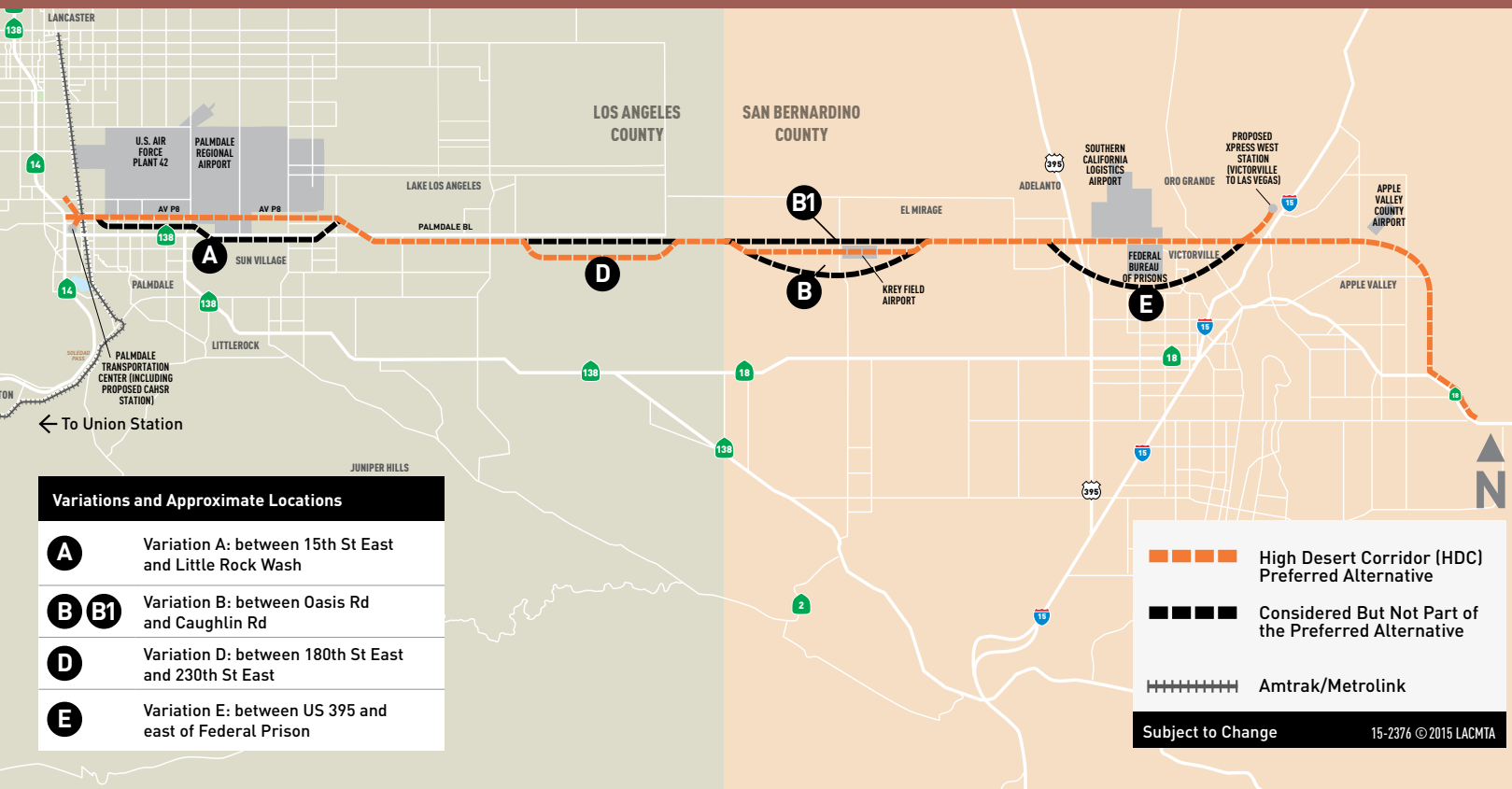


Background

What began in the 1930s as a simple idea to improve SR-138 as a 'bypass' alternative to Los Angeles traffic has now emerged into a ground-breaking and historic effort to create a multipurpose High Desert Corridor (HDC). Due to growth in population during the 1980s and 90s, a number of planning and feasibility studies were completed in the 1990s that considered the potential future infrastructure needs of the high desert area. Many of these studies led to what is now known as the proposed HDC project, which is considering the development of a multipurpose corridor that, in addition to a new freeway/expressway, includes a tollway, a high-speed rail feeder service, a bikeway and a green energy component.

With dwindling federal and state resources to fund such projects as the HDC, supervisors from Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties helped create the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Authority (HDCJPA) in 2007 to coordinate local support and accelerate the project development process for the HDC. Through the leadership of the HDCJPA, the project partners (Caltrans, Metro, San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG), the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the corridor cities) have positioned the HDC to become a sustainable multipurpose corridor. To help address this future funding need, the Metro Board of Directors approved the HDC as one of six projects that may be viable for Public-Private Partnership opportunities. SANBAG also designated the HDC as their priority project for Public-Private Partnership consideration.

Project Map



SR-138 and SR-18 currently serve as the primary west-east routes across the high desert between Palmdale and Victorville. They were built in the 1930s (SR-138) and 1960s (SR-18) using engineering standards that were current at the time. Although they have been improved over the years, they still do a poor job of meeting the needs of motorists and the local communities today. Together, these roads provide a very indirect route between the major population centers and commercial areas (including airports and logistics facilities) on either side of the desert. Additionally, a combination of heavy traffic conditions, higher speeds and an increasing number of larger trucks have created significant safety issues. These conditions are expected to get worse in the future as the area's population increases.

2002 Study

In 2002, Caltrans completed a "Regionally Significant Transportation Investment Study," or RSTIS, which elevated the project's importance to a national level, thereby allowing local governments to take advantage of additional transportation planning resources. Simultaneously, the North County Combined Highway Corridor Study (NCCHCS) was initiated by Metro to develop a multimodal transportation plan for the northern Los Angeles County Region; this study was completed in 2004. One of the alternatives identified for further study included the potential for a "limited access High Desert Corridor, a brand new freeway between I-5 and I-15." The NCCHCS also called for increased bus and rail service. The NCCHCS did not have funds available for project implementation, but near term projects were funded through Federal, State, and local sources. At the conclusion of the study, the project again received federal recognition, and was designated as a "High Priority Corridor" for the National Highway System.

High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Authority

The HDCJPA was created in 2007 and continues to take the lead in policy-setting for the potential future financing for the construction of the HDC Preferred Alternative (PA), which is currently under study. The HDCJPA is working on crafting the state P3 guidelines, including state and federal programming, in an effort to formally identify the HDC as the first P3 in SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan. The HDCJPA is also coordinating closely with the California High Speed Rail Authority and XpressWest efforts. Currently, local funds from both Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties, as well as previously secured state and federal dollars, are being used to complete the environmental studies for the entire 63-mile corridor. However, no funding for potential future phases of the project, including construction, has been identified.

Draft EIS/EIR and Final EIS/EIR

In late 2010, Caltrans and Metro initiated the HDC Environmental Impact Statement/Report (EIS/EIR) and released the Draft EIS/EIR for public review and comment in late 2014. Metro and Caltrans studied five functional alternatives and four physical variations in the Draft EIS/EIR and identified the Preferred Alternative (PA) in July 2015. The PA is a multipurpose alternative that includes freeway/tollway with high-speed rail in the median along with the green energy corridor and the bikeway. The PA includes two previously considered variations (Variations D and B1) as part of the alignment:

VARIATION D – located in Lake Los Angeles, will reduce the number of residential displacements and avoid an existing vineyard

VARIATION B1 – located in Adelanto, will avoid impacts to several water wells owned by the Phelan Piñon Hills Community Services District

The PA was carried to the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (Final EIS/EIR), which is anticipated to be released during the Spring of 2016.



Contact Us

Please use the following contact tools for additional information, questions, or comments:

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