



MOVING THE NATION'S GOODS  THROUGH THE INLAND EMPIRE  
2007 2014

The Interstate  
Widening Project





# Acknowledgements

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- City of San Bernardino Past and Present Mayor and Councilmembers
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For the past seven years, the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the City of San Bernardino have been working together to deliver this massive infrastructure project that will increase capacity and improve mobility on Interstate 215 between Interstate 10 and State Route 210 (SR-210).

**T**he Interstate 215 (I-215) Widening Project is at the center of a major corridor known for heavy goods movement activity and also serves as a gateway to mountain resorts, Las Vegas and the Colorado River, among other destinations. The project has transformed this stretch of freeway to better accommodate current and future growth in the region.

The new I-215 includes ramp reconfigurations, the addition of carpool and general-use lanes, major bridge reconstruction and new freeway connectors to provide a more efficient pathway for commuters driving through the area. The new configuration also enhances local access to the City of San Bernardino.

With this major transportation improvement also came the opportunity to create approximately 8,300 direct and indirect jobs – providing economic stimulus during a time when the Inland Empire needed it most. While the great recession had a major impact on the region, project partners such as the Federal Highway Administration helped the project stay on track and keep people employed through an infusion of \$128 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

The completion ceremony for the I-215 Widening Project signifies the end of construction on the 7.5-mile corridor through San Bernardino and marks the beginning of a more efficient, safer and aesthetically pleasing drive for decades to come. Here's to improved transportation in our region – safe travels!

# The Vision for Interstate 215

## A Decades Long Journey

**T**he I-215 Widening Project is a great example of a collaborative partnership between SANBAG and Caltrans District 8. This multi-phased endeavor began with a vision more than 25 years ago to improve an aging stretch of freeway that originally opened to commuters in the late 1950s.

Since the freeway first opened, the region has transformed significantly, shaped by growth in population and commercial activity. For more than 100 years, San Bernardino has been one of the major centers of goods movement activity in the nation. In order for the area to continue to play a critical goods movement role, as well as to attract new

industries, workforce and residents to the region, it was imperative to improve mobility along I-215 in the City of San Bernardino.

In 1988, a study report was approved and planning for the project began. During the following years, a project approval and environmental document (PA/ED) was completed in 1992. However, with funding not yet fully identified, it wasn't until 2005

that the PA/ED was approved – clearing the way for the project to start construction. Separated into four phases, the I-215 Widening Project broke ground in early 2007 with the widening of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. Phase two, the first phase set to improve freeway lanes, quickly followed in late 2007. Phase three kicked off in late 2009, with Phase four following in early 2010.

## Key Project Elements



Innovative project designs and unprecedented community collaboration resulted in freeway lanes remaining open to drivers throughout seven years of construction.



Access to the east and west sides of the City of San Bernardino improved with the construction of on- and off-ramps that connect directly to designated bridges.



Braided on- and off-ramp design reduces backup on the freeway system.



Wall aesthetics represent key City of San Bernardino symbols including the San Bernardino mountain landscape, trains, fountains for the area's native springs, and palm trees.

# A Look At The I-215 Widening Project

## By the Numbers



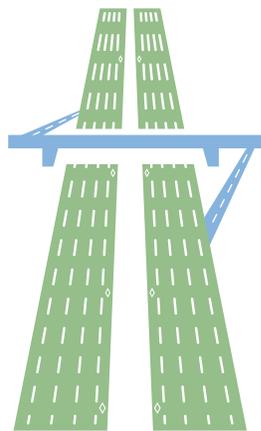
**7** YEAR PROJECT



**4** PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

**2** NEW CONNECTORS

**6** >>> **10**  
FREEWAY LANES



**1** CARPOOL LANE EACH DIRECTION  
**7.5** MILE CORRIDOR  
**15** BRIDGES RECONSTRUCTED  
**34** RAMPS BUILT

2003



**83,000**  
DAILY DRIVERS



2030



**135,000**  
DAILY DRIVERS

APPROXIMATELY



**8,300**  
DIRECT AND INDIRECT JOBS

**3** CONTRACTORS



**60+** SUBCONTRACTORS

**\$ 647** MILLION FOR THE PROJECT



**\$ 128** MILLION FUNDED BY ARRA

# On Your Mark, Get Set, GO!



PHASE 1



## 5<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Construction Gets Project Off to a Running Start



Like any good race, you have to start strong to finish strong – and the I-215 Widening Project was no exception. In February 2007, SANBAG kicked off project construction with the widening of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street bridge – a key gateway to Downtown San Bernardino.

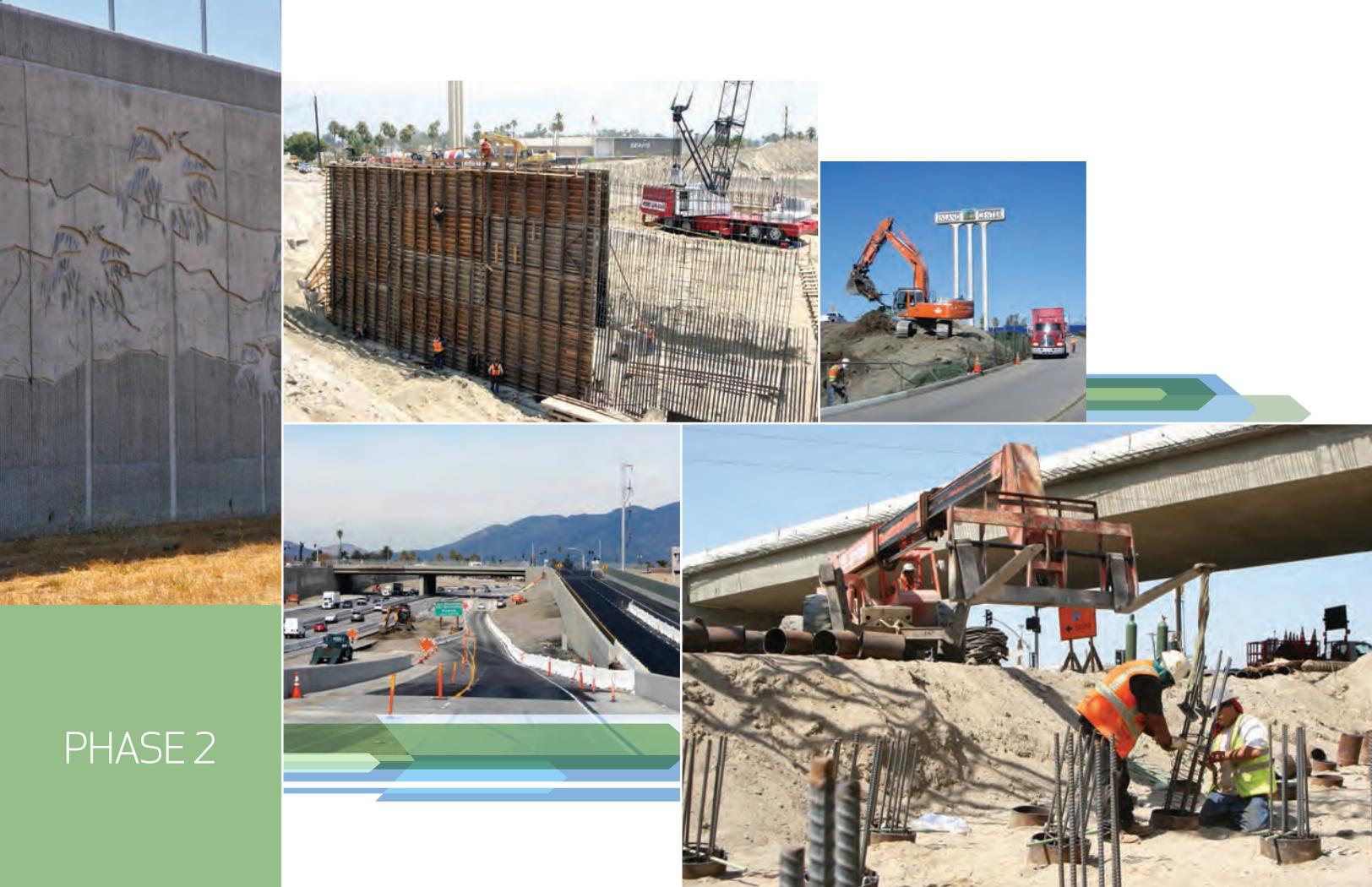
To maintain traffic flow for this major east/west connector for the City,

the construction team built the first half of the new bridge alongside the existing structure. Just one year later - almost to the day - crews switched traffic to the new bridge to demolish the old structure and begin construction on the second half of the widened bridge.

The old 5<sup>th</sup> Street bridge was truly a slice of history for San Bernardino and historic

Route 66. We were able to preserve key elements of the structure and donate them to the San Bernardino Historical Society. Among these items were a steel name plate from the 1950s identifying the bridge and concrete pieces of the historic structure following demolition, which were placed in commemorative boxes.

Crews continued their hard work to construct the second half of the bridge and connect the two structures to open the final six-lane configuration. The best part – we were under budget by approximately \$2 million and were six months ahead of schedule. Now that's the way to end the first phase of a four-leg race!



## PHASE 2

# Freeway Widening - Here We Come!

## Reconstruction Starts at South End of Corridor

Less than one year after Phase 1 broke ground, Caltrans kicked off construction of the first freeway widening portion of the I-215 Widening Project, spanning from approximately Orange Show Road to Rialto Avenue.

For the next two and a half years, motorists and the community got a first-hand look of what they could expect from the freeway design and configuration of the entire 7.5-mile corridor once complete.

In addition to the expansion of the freeway from three to five lanes in each direction, Phase 2 introduced braided on- and off-ramps. From above, the ramps look woven together to separate merging traffic from through traffic to improve safety and

ease congestion. Unique wall designs were also introduced that were representative of the City, including the San Bernardino Mountains, fountains for the area's native springs and palm trees.

For the first time, drivers could visualize what the

corridors would look like when the project was completed. There was no doubt - the impressive bridge, ramp and lane structures would help re-shape and improve travel through San Bernardino.

# Downtown San Bernardino Gets Complete Freeway Makeover

## New Design Improves Mobility North to South and Accessibility East to West

In 2009, SANBAG kicked off the construction of Phase 3 with a promise to make the commute on I-215 through San Bernardino smoother, safer and easier by reconfiguring an outdated freeway design. For more than 50 years, that design had vehicles entering on the left into the fast lane. It also limited access to the east side of the city. Completed in early 2014, the new configuration not

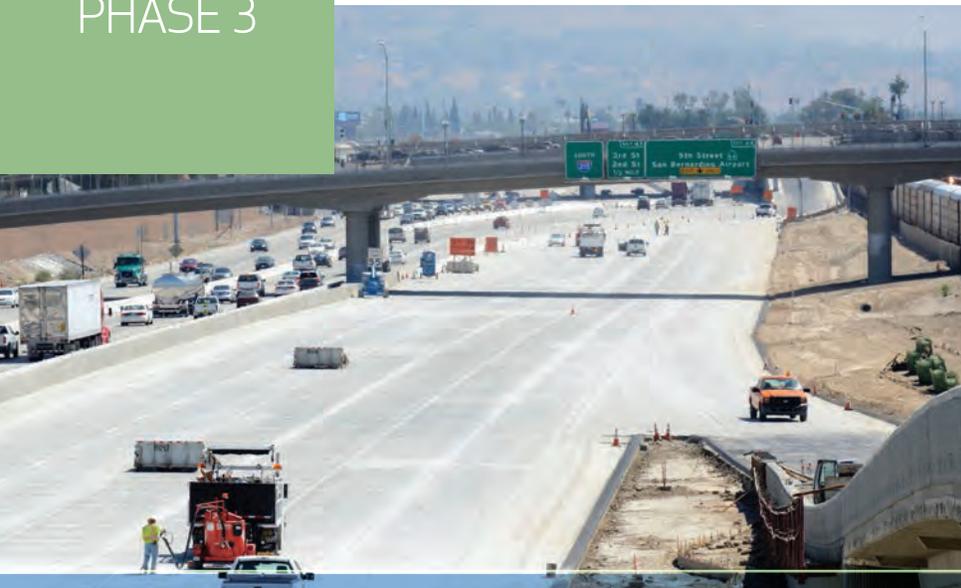
only provides motorists a more traditional way to enter the freeway with on- and off-ramps on the right side of the highway, but it also greatly improves access to the west side of the City of San Bernardino.

In addition to widening the freeway from three to five lanes in each direction with carpool lanes, new on- and off-ramps were built directly to key east/west thoroughfares at 5<sup>th</sup> Street

and Baseline Street to improve access to business corridors and residential areas. Also, the bridges and underpasses at Rialto Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Street and 16<sup>th</sup> Street were rebuilt and improved. A highlight of underpass aesthetics is the Super Chief train design at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street near the historic Santa Fe Depot – celebrating a 140-year history of trains in San Bernardino.

Other highlights include an improved connection between I-215 and SR-210, the addition of soundwalls through residential areas on the northbound side of I-215 and street improvements just on the other side of this wall. This dramatic mobility improvement benefits the public now and encourages plans for future growth of the region.

### PHASE 3



# I-215 and SR-210 Get Connected

## New Flyover Connectors Improve Access In Northern San Bernardino

**P**hase 4 of the project, which began in early 2010 and was led by Caltrans, continued the widening of I-215 from Massachusetts Avenue on the south end up to University Parkway on the north end. University Parkway is a main exit for people traveling to California State University, San Bernardino. While these improvements were

very important, the most highly anticipated work in this phase was the construction of direct connector ramps between I-215 and SR-210.

Traveling east and west in northern San Bernardino along the foothills was a challenge from I-215. Since 1998, the expansion of SR-210 from the City of La Verne moved its way east in phases toward San Bernardino. In 2007, the final section of SR-210 from Rialto to San Bernardino opened.

However, the connector ramps that facilitated travel between I-215 and SR-210 were not originally part of the project. With the passage of voter-approved Proposition 1B, funding became available to allow the addition of these ramps to the I-215 Widening Project. In 2012, the new connectors were opened and were renamed the Gary Moon Interchange in 2013. Gary Moon is a former SANBAG Major Projects Director and a long-time advocate

for transportation investments in San Bernardino County.

Other features of Phase 4 included the widening of bridges at Massachusetts Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Mt. Vernon/27<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as new ramp configurations on the latter two. New hardscape features such as aesthetic rock blankets and walls of the San Bernardino Mountains and arrowhead were incorporated in specific areas.



# When Funding Falls Flat... Collaboration Comes Out a Winner

**S**ecuring funding for major freeway construction projects can be a challenging and time-consuming task under even the best of circumstances. Leading up to the I-215 Widening Project groundbreaking in 2007, SANBAG and Caltrans had spent years identifying funding for the massive project. Their efforts paid off and funding seemed secure while the U.S. economy was enjoying a prosperous period.

But everything almost came to a screeching halt a year and a half into construction when the financial crisis hit and the start of the Great Recession began. The project was being funded in part by the California-approved Proposition 1B Transportation Bond Program. With the state's lowered credit rating negatively affecting the sale of the bonds, uncertainty loomed and it was unclear if the project could be completed during the unprecedented economic downturn.

We weren't alone. Across the nation, thousands of projects were in jeopardy - enter the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Shovel-ready projects were being considered for the economic stimulus package, making the I-215 Widening Project a prime candidate for funds that could keep the project on track.

With support from regional, state and federal elected officials and stakeholders, coupled with a demonstrated need to put Americans back to work in a region devastated by high unemployment, SANBAG and Caltrans successfully stated their case and received \$128 million in stimulus funding. This was the third largest amount in the nation awarded to a freeway construction project at the time.

The ARRA funding was the lifeline needed to keep the project moving forward. Later, when Proposition 1B funds were again made available, the project's overall funding was secured.

Meanwhile, local transportation funding through the San Bernardino County voter-approved Measure I never waived. This half-cent sales tax first approved in 1989, and again in 2004, was a clear message that citizens valued the continued improvement of San Bernardino County's transportation network.

By mid-2009, federal and state funding had once again been secured – getting people back to work and ensuring the overall project would be kept on track.



# Becoming a Model Transportation Project

**A**s one of the largest freeway projects in the region's history, the I-215 Widening Project set a precedent by putting San Bernardino on the map. The project's prominence combined with the strong relationships forged with local stakeholders made this seven-year project an award-winning one.

Through incorporating forward-thinking design characteristics, hosting memorable events,

implementing creative public outreach techniques and unprecedented intergovernmental collaboration, the project became a flagship venture that received recognition from some of the most prestigious organizations throughout the country.

While SANBAG was on the receiving end of awards from the National Association of Government Communications, California Association of Public

Information Officials and more, the project team couldn't have done it without local stakeholders and their endless support, feedback and patience throughout construction.

Thanks to the efforts of the entire community - residents, business owners, elected officials and more - the I-215 Widening Project is now a model for transportation projects across the region and the country.



## Recognized by:



## Award Winning Campaigns

- 1 #215BIGSHIFT** – Awarded for efforts to manage a major traffic shift and weekend-long full freeway closure in 2012.
- 2 Phase 3 Groundbreaking Ceremony** – The event that kicked off a new phase of construction and put people back to work garnered representation from Washington D.C and national media attention including the *Wall Street Journal*. The groundbreaking was named the best government event in the nation in 2009, among numerous other accolades.
- 3 215 in 2:15 Video Series** – SANBAG gave the community a backstage pass to the construction project, offering a behind-the-scenes look at project updates in this monthly YouTube video series lasting two minutes and 15 seconds each.
- 4 I-215 News Flash** – This weekly electronic newsletter delivered visually interesting and timely project updates via email.



A special thank you to the above sponsors for their company's dedication to successfully delivering the Interstate 215 Widening Project in San Bernardino, California. Their collaboration and commitment by workers created a project that the community can be proud of and one that will benefit the region for generations to come.



The I-215 Widening Project is a partnership among San Bernardino Associated Governments, the California Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the City of San Bernardino.