PUBLIC INVITED TO REVIEW ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

The studies for the Mid County Parkway are now ready for review. The Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIR/EIS) describes the project. It describes alternatives for the project, the existing environment that could be affected by the project, the impacts from each of the alternatives, and the proposed avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures for these impacts. The studies are available on-line at www.midcountyparkway.org. It is also available at a number of public libraries and government offices (see page 8).

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS:

Three Open House style public meetings will be held this month to discuss your questions. The consultants and staff who prepared the studies and the Draft EIR/EIS will be available to discuss your questions, one-on-one, about the project and the document.

Drop in anytime between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. There will be no formal presentation.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Two Public Hearings on the Draft EIR/EIS are scheduled for November 6th and 12th before the RCTC Commissioners. The public is invited to make oral comments at these meetings. Written comments on the Draft EIR/EIS will be accepted through December 8, 2008. RCTC Commissioners will not be taking action on the project at these hearings. The comments received at these hearings will become part of the public record and will be addressed in the Final EIR/EIS.

WHAT IS THE MID COUNTY PARKWAY PROJECT?

The Mid County Parkway Project is a proposed 32-mile transportation corridor designed to relieve local and regional traffic congestion in the San Jacinto, Perris, and Corona areas, and surrounding Riverside County communities. The corridor was identified as part of the Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) (see page 2), a regionwide planning effort to ensure mobility and protect the environment and quality of life as our area continues to grow.

WHY IS THE MID COUNTY PARKWAY NEEDED?

By 2030, Riverside County’s population is expected to reach 3.5 million. All of the major transportation routes in the region are already experiencing significant congestion. While projects for each major roadway are being designed now to ease congestion and ensure future mobility, traffic in the area of the proposed Mid County Parkway is projected to double in some segments and increase as much as five times in others.

Today, east-west traffic in our region is carried on I-10, SR-60, SR-91 and SR-74. These major roadways provide links to the major north-south corridors: SR-79, I-215, and I-15. Another east-west transportation link such as the Mid County Parkway is essential to reduce congestion and maintain and enhance the quality of life in western Riverside County. The Mid County Parkway will provide logical connections with north-south corridors including the SR-79, the I-215, and the I-15. It will also serve multimodal bus and rail facilities planned as a part of the Perris Valley Line, Metrolink service that will connect Perris to Riverside.

Without the Mid County Parkway, travel times from SR-79 to I-15 will be more than an hour and a half (90 minutes) in 2035. With the Mid County Parkway, those travel times will be reduced to about 30 minutes.
**HOW WERE THE ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPED?**

The Mid County Parkway project formally began in January 2004 when the need and purpose for the project were accepted by the Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The need for the Mid County Parkway project was identified almost five years earlier, when RCTC and the County of Riverside launched the Riverside County Integrated Project—a multi-year process of evaluating future transportation needs, land use, and environmental protection measures to protect the region’s quality of life and environment.

In 2000, RCTC identified four broad transportation corridors to meet future demands, including a corridor connecting the Hemet-San Jacinto area with the Lake Elsinore-Corona area.

In 2003, in acknowledgement of the County’s innovative planning effort to integrate land use, environmental conservation and transportation needs, the Community and Transportation Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP) was one of seven projects in the nation that received federal recognition for environmental stewardship.

Since January 2004, public meetings have been held at each phase of the project to identify preliminary project alternative alignments; to gather more public input on the preliminary alignment alternatives and to get input on refinements to the alternatives. These outreach meetings formed the basis for the alternatives that have been studied over the past three years.

In June 2003, RCTC started project level studies for the Mid County Parkway. All studies and documents were completed in cooperation with participating local, state and federal agencies under a partnership agreement for environmental stewardship.

**WHAT HAPPENS NOW?**

Public information Open Houses and Public Hearings are scheduled in October and November 2008 to collect comments on the Draft EIR/EIS. There will be no forum for oral comments at the public information Open Houses. However, written comments will be accepted at these Open Houses. Comments will be tallied and made public at an upcoming meeting.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

After comments on the Draft EIR/EIS are received from the public and reviewing agencies, FHWA, Caltrans, and RCTC will prepare a Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS will include responses to comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS.

The approval of the Final EIR/EIS will cause changes in the project alternatives, and environmental issues to be addressed in the Draft EIR/EIS.

RCTC receives preliminary project alternatives from the participating agencies on the revised project alternatives to undergo public review. At this point, the participating agencies may agree on a preferred alternative, and the Final EIR/EIS will be released.

**IS THERE A LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR THE PROJECT?**

Yes. In September 2007, RCTC identified Alternative 9 as its locally preferred alternative. RCTC made this decision because the studies revealed that Alternative 9 (TWS DV) had the least overall project impacts.

In addition, Alternative 9 (TWS DV) required fewer property acquisitions and displaced fewer occupants and employees. The preferred alternative is also the least expensive for right of way acquisition and construction.

**HOW WERE THE ALTERNATIVES STUDIED?**

From September 2004 through April 2005, Caltrans conducted “value analysis” studies on the project. Metropolitan Water District and the State Department of Water Resources commented on alternatives close to Lake Mathews and Lake Perris dams. The Value Analysis process included representatives from our transportation partners with the objective to offer engineering and operational improvements. These studies led to the addition of an alternative south of those previously considered, the removal of the alternative north of Lake Mathews and relocation of the alternative near Lake Perris. These changes were presented to the public in a newsletter and at a public meeting in August 2005. The participating agencies agreed this set of refined alternatives would undergo study in the Draft EIR/EIS.

From 2005 to date, all aspects of the Mid County Parkway alternatives have been subject to careful scrutiny. An important part of the studies were social and economic impacts including effects on communities, in particular the displacement of homes and businesses. Additional studies evaluated the impacts each alternative would have on biological resources including plants, animals and their habitats. Other studies evaluated impacts to water resources, habitat reserves, parks, cultural resources, and land use. Noise, air quality, geology and other environmental factors were also evaluated for each alternative. During the course of the work, cost was also evaluated as were engineering considerations.
How do the alternatives compare?

For a description of how the studies arrived at the options below, see pages 2 and 3.

**ALTERNATIVE 9 AND RRTC LOCALLY PREFERRED**

**ALTERNATIVE 9 (TWS DV)**

- **Cost-Construction and Right of Way**: $3.51 billion
- **Sociocultural/Community**: 336 estimated residential units relocated
- **Threatened and Endangered Species**:
  - 6.1 acres of least Bell's vireo habitat impacted
  - 33.5 acres of Coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat impacted
  - 157.6 acres of Quino checkerspot butterfly critical habitat impacted
  - 2.9 acres of San Bernardino kangaroo rat critical habitat impacted
- **Existing Habitat Reserves**: Impacts 449 total acres, including:
  - 262.2 acres impacted within Lake Mathews Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 22.4 acres impacted within El Sobrante Landfill Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 163.4 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
- **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan**: Impacts 49.4 acres of impacts to Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Criteria Area
- **Parks**: Reduction of 2.36 acres of El Centro Sports Park
- **Cultural Resources**: Impacts 2 Native American sacred sites
- **Land Use**: 2,704.1 total acres impacted
- **Water Resources/Aquatic Ecosystem**: 24.8 total acres of aquatic resources

**LOCALY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

**ALTERNATIVE 5 (TWS DV)**

- **Cost-Construction and Right of Way**: $3.40 billion
- **Sociocultural/Community**: 360 estimated residential units relocated
- **Threatened and Endangered Species**:
  - 6.1 acres of least Bell's vireo habitat impacted
  - 33.5 acres of Coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat impacted
  - 157.6 acres of Quino checkerspot butterfly critical habitat impacted
  - 2.9 acres of San Bernardino kangaroo rat critical habitat impacted
- **Existing Habitat Reserves**: Impacts 449 total acres, including:
  - 262.2 acres impacted within Lake Mathews Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 22.4 acres impacted within El Sobrante Landfill Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 163.4 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
- **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan**: Impacts 49.4 acres of impacts to Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Criteria Area
- **Parks**: Reduction of 2.36 acres of El Centro Sports Park
- **Cultural Resources**: Impacts 2 Native American sacred sites
- **Land Use**: 2,704.1 total acres impacted
- **Water Resources/Aquatic Ecosystem**: 24.8 total acres of aquatic resources

**ALTERNATIVE 6 (TWS DV)**

- **Cost-Construction and Right of Way**: $3.76 billion
- **Sociocultural/Community**: 336 estimated residential units relocated
- **Threatened and Endangered Species**:
  - 6.5 acres of least Bell's vireo habitat impacted
  - 0 acres of Coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat impacted
  - 140.0 acres of Quino checkerspot butterfly critical habitat impacted
  - 2.9 acres of San Bernardino kangaroo rat critical habitat impacted
- **Existing Habitat Reserves**: Impacts 546.8 total acres, including:
  - 327.6 acres impacted within Lake Mathews Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 77 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
- **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan**: Impacts 49.4 acres of impacts to Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Criteria Area
- **Parks**: Reduction of 2.36 acres of El Centro Sports Park
- **Cultural Resources**: Impacts 2 Native American sacred sites
- **Land Use**: 2,704.1 total acres impacted
- **Water Resources/Aquatic Ecosystem**: 24.8 total acres of aquatic resources

**ALTERNATIVE 7 (TWS DV)**

- **Cost-Construction and Right of Way**: $3.51 billion
- **Sociocultural/Community**: 290 estimated residential units relocated
- **Threatened and Endangered Species**:
  - 8.5 acres of least Bell's vireo habitat impacted
  - 0 acres of Coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat impacted
  - 140.0 acres of Quino checkerspot butterfly critical habitat impacted
  - 2.9 acres of San Bernardino kangaroo rat critical habitat impacted
- **Existing Habitat Reserves**: Impacts 546.8 total acres, including:
  - 401.1 acres impacted within Lake Mathews Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 77 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
- **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan**: Impacts 49.4 acres of impacts to Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Criteria Area
- **Parks**: Reduction of 2.36 acres of El Centro Sports Park
- **Cultural Resources**: Impacts 2 Native American sacred sites
- **Land Use**: 2,704.1 total acres impacted
- **Water Resources/Aquatic Ecosystem**: 24.8 total acres of aquatic resources

**ALTERNATIVE 9 (TWS DV)**

- **Cost-Construction and Right of Way**: $3.18 billion
- **Sociocultural/Community**: 266 estimated residential units relocated
- **Threatened and Endangered Species**:
  - 0.1 acres of least Bell's vireo habitat impacted
  - 40.1 acres of final Coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat impacted
  - 327.6 acres of final Quino checkerspot butterfly critical habitat impacted
  - 2.9 acres of final San Bernardino kangaroo rat critical habitat impacted
- **Existing Habitat Reserves**: Impacts 193.6 total acres, including:
  - 77 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 171.5 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
- **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan**: Impacts 49.4 acres of impacts to Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Criteria Area
- **Parks**: Reduction of 2.36 acres of El Centro Sports Park
- **Cultural Resources**: Impacts 2 Native American sacred sites
- **Land Use**: 2,796.2 total acres impacted
- **Water Resources/Aquatic Ecosystem**: 24.8 total acres of aquatic resources

**ALTERNATIVE 10 (TWS DV)**

- **Cost-Construction and Right of Way**: $2.98 billion
- **Sociocultural/Community**: 230 estimated residential units relocated
- **Threatened and Endangered Species**:
  - 0.1 acres of least Bell's vireo habitat impacted
  - 40.1 acres of final Coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat impacted
  - 327.6 acres of final Quino checkerspot butterfly critical habitat impacted
  - 2.9 acres of final San Bernardino kangaroo rat critical habitat impacted
- **Existing Habitat Reserves**: Impacts 193.6 total acres, including:
  - 77 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
  - 171.5 additional acres impacted within Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan
- **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan**: Impacts 49.4 acres of impacts to Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Criteria Area
- **Parks**: Reduction of 2.36 acres of El Centro Sports Park
- **Cultural Resources**: Impacts 1 Native American sacred site
- **Land Use**: 2,796.2 total acres impacted
- **Water Resources/Aquatic Ecosystem**: 24.8 total acres of aquatic resources

* The difference between Alternative 9 and Alternative 9 (TWS DV) is a design variation at I-15. Alternative 9 includes a more substantial collector-distributor (CD) road system, therefore greater right of way is needed. Alternative 9 (TWS DV) has a modification at El Cerrito/I-15 interchange which reduces the need for the CD road system and less right of way.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE MID COUNTY PARKWAY:

- What is a parkway?
  A divided highway with full or partial access control and with grade separations at local interchanges with major local arterials.

- What will the Mid County Parkway look like?
  The photo below shows an example of what the parkway may look like. The number of lanes varies from two in each direction to four in each direction, depending upon the area, and includes a wide open median.

- How and when will RCTC acquire the property needed to build the Mid County Parkway?
  Rights of way will be acquired close to the time of construction. RCTC must follow public laws and processes to purchase the property needed for the Mid County Parkway. Appraisals will be done near the time of needed acquisition and fair market value for the land will be offered. RCTC will work with the property owner to reach a fair price. If a price cannot be agreed upon, RCTC may adopt a Resolution of Necessity to invoke eminent domain, a process outlined in the U.S. Constitution and governed by state and federal law which allows government agencies to buy private property for a public purpose such as new roads, parks, schools, hospitals and police or fire stations. Through eminent domain, property owners are paid an amount deemed fair by the court, based on opinions of independent appraisers.

- How will my comments be addressed? Will I get a personal, written response?
  All comments or questions received during the public comment period on the Final EIR/EIS will be responded to in the Final EIR/EIS. We expect the preparation of the Final EIR/EIS will take several months.

- What is the Mid County Parkway a truck route?
  No. Although RCTC cannot designate who can use the Mid County Parkway, the overall purpose of the route is to provide a transportation parkway that will effectively and efficiently accommodate regional east-west mobility between and through Corona, Perris, and San Jacinto. The Mid County Parkway will provide increased capacity and relieve regional traffic congestion. In areas with steep grades, an additional lane is planned for trucks or other slow moving vehicles.

- How do I submit my comments or questions about the Draft EIR/EIS?
  Written comments may be submitted during this period. In addition, the public is encouraged to attend one of the three Open House public information meetings on the project scheduled for the last week of October (see page 1). Staff will be available to discuss your questions on the project, and accept written comments.

- How will the project be funded?
  Depending on the timing of RCTC Commission action, construction of the Mid County Parkway could begin in 2012. Decisions have not yet been made on whether construction would start on the east end, the west end, or the middle of the project.

- How can I submit my comments or questions about the Draft EIR/EIS?
  The public comment period runs from October 10 – December 8, 2008. Written comments may be submitted during this period. In addition, the public is encouraged to attend one of the three Open House public information meetings on the project scheduled for the last week of October (see page 1). Staff will be available to discuss your questions on the project, and accept written comments.

- How do the Mid County Parkway and the final EIR/EIS affect property values?
  RCTC must follow public laws and processes to purchase the property needed for the Mid County Parkway. Appraisals will be done near the time of needed acquisition and fair market value for the land will be offered. RCTC will work with the property owner to reach a fair price. If a price cannot be agreed upon, RCTC may adopt a Resolution of Necessity to invoke eminent domain, a process outlined in the U.S. Constitution and governed by state and federal law which allows government agencies to buy private property for a public purpose such as new roads, parks, schools, hospitals and police or fire stations. Through eminent domain, property owners are paid an amount deemed fair by the court, based on opinions of independent appraisers.

- Where can I review Draft EIR/EIS?
  You can review the Draft EIR/EIS at the offices of participating government agencies, numerous area public libraries, at public meetings, and on the internet at www.middcountyway.org. For complete list of options, see page 8.
WHO ARE THE PARTICIPATING AGENCIES EVALUATING THE PROJECT AND WHAT ARE THEIR ROLES?

A project like the Mid County Parkway must be evaluated by transportation agencies at all levels of government: local, state, and federal.

At the local level, RCTC is the lead agency. RCTC is Riverside County’s primary transportation planning agency and administers the voter-approved Measure A 1/2 cent sales tax for transportation, regional projects funded by the Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee (TUMF), and state and federal transportation allocations to the region. Projects include roadways, major transportation corridors, transit, commuter assistance, and commuter rail.

RCTC is Riverside County’s primary transportation planning agency and administers the voter-approved Measure A 1/2 cent sales tax for transportation, regional projects funded by the Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee (TUMF), and state and federal transportation allocations to the region. Projects include roadways, major transportation corridors, transit, commuter assistance, and commuter rail.

The State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are the state and federal transportation agencies, respectively. Each agency has different responsibilities in preparing the Draft EIR/EIS. FHWA is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act, RCTC is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act, and Caltrans is providing oversight for the National Environmental Policy Act process. All agencies have responsibilities in the development of the studies and reports that contributed to the Draft EIR/EIS. In addition, through the agency partnership agreement for the project, Federal and State resource agencies have been involved in the development of the alternatives and review of the environmental studies. This cooperative effort meets the spirit of the Environmental Streamlining Executive Order.

WHERE CAN I REVIEW THE DRAFT EIR/EIS?

RCTC
4080 Lemon Street, 3rd Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

Caltrans District 8
464 West 4th Street, 6th floor
San Bernardino, CA 92401

Federal Highway Administration
600 Capitol Mall, Suite 4-100
Sacramento, CA 95814-4708

City of Corona
Public Works Department
400 S.Vicencia Ave., 2nd Floor, Suite 210
Corona, CA 92882-2187

Corona Public Library
650 S. Main St.
Corona, CA 92882

Hemet Public Library
300 E. Latham Ave.
Hemet, CA 92543

Perris Public Library
163 E. San Jacinto Ave.
Perris, CA 92570

San Jacinto Public Library
500 Idyllwild Dr.
San Jacinto, CA 92583

Woodcrest Public Library
17024 Van Buren Blvd.
Riverside, CA 92504

The Draft EIR/EIS is also available for review on the internet at: www.midcountyparkway.org

To better accommodate the public, a copy of the Draft EIR/EIS is available for purchase at:

OCB Reprographics
4295 Main Street
Riverside, CA 92501
(951) 686-0530

For individuals with sensory disabilities, please contact us to discuss availability of the Draft EIR/EIS in alternate formats. Please call or write to:

Ms. Cathy Bechtel,
RCTC
P.O. Box 12008
Riverside, CA  92502-2208
(951) 787-7141

or use the California Relay Service
(800) 735 -2929 (TTD/TTY),
(800) 735 -2922 (voice).