

Thomas Roads Improvement Program

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Design Consultant Selected for 7th Standard Road Widening

Bakersfield and Kern County took another step toward improving traffic flow and goods movement along the 7th Standard Road corridor today when the Board of Supervisors approved a \$2.7 million contract with Lim and Nacimiento. The engineering firm will provide final design services for road widening between Coffee Road and Santa Fe Way and a separation of grade over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway tracks. The project -- one of the major transportation projects that Congressman William M. Thomas (R-CA) earmarked for funding in SAFETEA-LU, the 2005 federal transportation act -- is managed by the Thomas Roads Improvement Program.

The existing two-lane road carries commuter traffic and facilitates goods movement from the International Trade and Transportation Center and numerous agricultural interests to SR-99. The 7th Standard Road freeway exit also provides access to the new William Thomas Terminal at the Kern County Airport. The region is targeted for significant growth in coming years, with major residential and commercial developments already approved by the cities of Bakersfield and Shafter and the county of Kern. Traffic models show vehicle-per-day volumes doubling over the next 20 years and the improvements will accommodate this growth.

The road will serve as the North Beltway in the future Bakersfield Beltway system, which will carry traffic around Metropolitan Bakersfield and help relieve congestion on urban streets.

The North Beltway also includes improvements to the SR-99 interchange at 7th Standard Road and a separation of grade over the Union Pacific Railroad tracks near Golden State Avenue. Construction is scheduled to begin on the interchange in mid-2007. Construction on the widening project and BNSF separation of grade is expected to begin in mid-2008.

The total cost for the North Beltway is approximately \$55 million -- \$25 million for the SR-99 interchange/Union Pacific separation of grade and \$30 million for the widening/BNSF separation of grade. Funding sources include the State Transportation Improvement Program, Section 190 funds (a state program providing funds to separate rail and roads), local dollars and federal funds.

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