



STAFF REPORT  
CITY OF IMPERIAL BEACH

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: ANDY HALL, CITY MANAGER *AH*  
MEETING DATE: AUGUST 6, 2014  
ORIGINATING DEPT.: CITY MANAGER/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT *SN*  
SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL BRIEFING NO. 3 – PALM AVENUE MIXED USE  
& COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN AND  
POTENTIAL STATE ROUTE 75 (PALM AVENUE)  
RELINQUISHMENT ANALYSIS DISCUSSION

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The last City Council update on the Palm Avenue Mixed Use and Commercial Corridor Master Plan (Master Plan) was provided on May 21, 2014. As a key part this project, City staff and its consultant team have been coordinating closely with Caltrans to determine whether or not some of the key elements of the Master Plan could be implemented within State Route 75 (Palm Avenue), either in compliance with the State Highway Design Manual or, potentially, as "design exceptions" processed by Caltrans. After several weeks of coordination with Caltrans which included their preliminary review of the initial drawings for the Master Plan, it has been determined that several key elements of the project will not meet Caltrans' standards nor would they be eligible for design exceptions. Despite this information, and after consulting with SANDAG (the administrator for the \$400,000 Smart Growth Incentive Program grant awarded for the project), staff is recommending that the City proceed with the design and environmental work as currently proposed in order to complete this phase of the design in conformance with the design for which grant funds were awarded. It should be noted that supporting this recommendation would acknowledge that some elements of the project could not be implemented unless a relinquishment of all or portions of State Route (SR) 75 were ultimately accepted by the City. To that end, staff will provide an update on Caltrans' analysis of SR 75 for potential relinquishment to the City.

**BACKGROUND:**

On January 18, 2013, staff submitted an application to the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) for Fiscal Year 2013 Smart Growth Incentive Program (SGIP) funding which allocated funding for local transportation-related infrastructure and planning efforts that support smart growth development in the region. The funding was available for two types of projects: capital and planning. On January 23, 2013, the City Council adopted Resolution Number 2013-7294, authorizing and supporting the submittal of a SGIP planning grant application in the amount of \$400,000. The City Council also authorized City matching funds in the amount of \$50,000 and up to \$45,000 in in-kind contributions (staff expenses).

On June 28, 2013, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved the SGIP Fiscal Year 2013 projects for funding. Among the projects awarded full funding was Imperial Beach's Palm Avenue Mixed Use & Commercial Corridor Master Plan (Master Plan). On July 15,

2013, the City received a Notice of Award from SANDAG for \$400,000 of SGIP planning grant funding. On August 21, 2013, the City Council authorized issuance of the RFQ/P to solicit civil engineering, landscape architecture, urban design and environmental planning consultant services, with the City intending to utilize its on-call traffic engineering consultant, KOA Corporation, for this effort.

The purpose of the SGIP grant will be to develop the prior Master Plan concepts into engineering drawings sufficient to also prepare and process the corresponding environmental review document. On December 18, 2013, after a competitive RFQ/P process, the City Council authorized the execution of a professional services agreement with Project Design Consultants (PDC) as the lead civil engineering consultant of the consultant team including MIG (urban design, landscape architecture & lighting), Katz & Associates (public engagement & outreach), RECON (environmental review), SCS Engineers (environmental site assessment), and GEOCON (geotechnical engineering).

On January 24, 2014, a fully executed copy of the Smart Growth Incentive Grant Agreement between the City and SANDAG was delivered to staff along with a Notice to Proceed with the project. After issuance of the Notice to Proceed, City staff and the consultant team reviewed the Master Plan Study and prepared concept drawings based on the Master Plan recommendations for discussions purposes and to reaffirm the Master Plan recommendations and to fully assess them for application and implementation with the Palm Avenue/SR 75 corridor. A comprehensive Community Engagement effort was then initiated. As part of this outreach effort, a dedicated web page has been created on the City's web site ([www.ImperialBeachCA.gov/PalmMasterPlan](http://www.ImperialBeachCA.gov/PalmMasterPlan)) and a contact email address has been established both to receive information and updates on the project and to provide comments. This web page has been updated regularly with pertinent project information.

On April 16, 2014, staff provided the City Council with its first regular Briefing on the project, during which a detailed Community Engagement Strategy prepared by the consultant team's Outreach & Engagement Consultant, Katz & Associates was presented. Also at this meeting, staff reminded the City Council that the first of two Community Workshops was to take place on April 29, 2014.

On Tuesday, April 29, 2014, the first of two Community Workshops on the Master Plan was held in the City Hall Community Room. The objective of the workshop was to reintroduce the project to the community, explain the work plan for the current phase and its relationship to the established vision, and solicit community feedback on a variety of streetscape/landscape design concepts proposed for the Palm Avenue corridor. A total of 32 community members signed in at the workshop, though it appeared that several more were in attendance. The focus of the first workshop was aimed at reintroducing the community to the project and providing Workshop attendees with sufficient project information while allowing ample time for attendees to provide their input. A presentation of the project was given and input received at the following additional outreach meetings:

- May 15, 2014 – Design Review Board Meeting Presentation
- May 20, 2014 – Presentation to the Kiwanis Club
- May 22, 2014 – Chamber of Commerce Presentation
- May 27, 2014 – Business Improvement District Presentation

Generally speaking, the overwhelming majority of people in attendance at these workshop and community outreach presentations were quite supportive of the Master Plan as proposed. Though most of the comments were supportive, concerns expressed by those in attendance were directed primarily at potential traffic impacts and the potential costs of implementation. It has been assured that those concerns will be analyzed and addressed as the project progresses.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### Continuing Caltrans Coordination

On April 2, 2014, staff and its consultant team provided Caltrans staff with a set of the conceptual engineering drawings for the Master Plan. On April 29, 2014, staff received a letter from Caltrans providing their comments on their initial review of the Master Plan concepts. Based upon the comments in their letter, some of which would all but preclude the implementation of several key elements of the Master Plan, staff and members of its consultant team, including the lead civil engineer (PDC) and the traffic engineer (KOA), met with Caltrans staff on Thursday, May 1, 2014, to discuss the issues raised in the letter. It was a productive meeting during which Caltrans agreed to seek a preliminary determination from their Caltrans headquarter liaison as to whether the key design issues could be potentially be approved through as “design exceptions” by Caltrans.

On May 28, 2014, staff received a preliminary determination from Caltrans that several items of the Master Plan would not be eligible for design exceptions. During additional correspondence, Caltrans provided final notification on June 23, 2014, that the following elements of the project would neither meet nor be eligible for design exceptions to Caltrans State Highway Design Standards:

- The 12-foot lane widths cannot be reduced in width due to the design speed exceeding 45 mph west of 9<sup>th</sup> street and the truck volumes exceeding 250 per lane
- The intersection/crosswalk bulb-outs would not be allowed due to the design speed exceeding 35 mph
- The local access side medians would not be allowed due to the requirement to provide 8 to 10-foot shoulders on a minimum of one side of the two through lanes
- Two different speed limits on the same roadway would not be permitted

The above restrictions would preclude the implementation of the proposed local access lanes and local access medians in the Mid-Town Sector. This is a key element of the Master Plan which received significant support during the community outreach workshop and presentations. These restrictions would also preclude the proposed design of the pedestrian crosswalks in all sectors of the proposed Master Plan. Given this information, therefore, and in order for the City to proceed with implementation of the Master Plan as proposed, a relinquishment of the SR 75 right-of-way or portions of it would have to be accepted by the City. Upon receipt of this information, staff inquired about the status of the Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation for SR 75 (the “TSAE”) being prepared by Caltrans to assess the possible relinquishment of SR 75 to the City. Although staff had expected a Draft TSAE to be completed by the end of April, the Draft TSAE was provided to the City on July 8, 2014, with a final, signed copy of the TSAE delivered on July 11, 2014.

The TASE provided to staff concluded that SR 75 was both eligible and appropriate for potential relinquishment to the City. Further, the TASE indicated that Caltrans District 11 viewed the potential relinquishment of this segment of SR 75 as an initial move towards complete relinquishment of the entire route. As has been discussed with Caltrans and conveyed to the City Council, acceptance of a relinquishment of SR 75 by the City would allow staff and the City Council to be more responsive to community interests and development along Palm Avenue as the City would have more flexibility to add design features currently limited by State highway regulations. Additionally, as stated in the TASE, a relinquished Palm Avenue/SR-75 would allow the City the ability to issue permits to new developments for roadway connections and proposed public improvements thereby eliminating the need to obtain state encroachment permits or state involvement. And, of course, a relinquishment would allow for approval and implementation of the Master Plan as currently proposed and supported during the community outreach effort.

Current and Potential Maintenance Costs of SR 75 (Palm Avenue)

As also conveyed to the City Council at their meeting on April 2, 2014, however, a relinquishment would mean the transfer of all rights, title and interests in the right-of-way to the City. This would necessarily include the transfer of all maintenance responsibilities to the City. It should be noted, however, that, pursuant to the City's Maintenance Agreement with Caltrans, the City already provides, at its cost, much of the on-going maintenance and operations costs for SR 75. These annual costs include the following:

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Landscaping Contract (Aztec Landscaping) | \$18,480        |
| Replacement of Plants & Materials        | \$ 5,947        |
| City Staff Time                          | \$ 1,200        |
| Electrical Costs (SDG&E)                 | \$60,000        |
| Irrigation/Water Costs (CalAM)           | <u>\$10,000</u> |
| <br>Total Annual Costs:                  | <br>\$95,627    |

Additionally, although Caltrans has its own graffiti abatement program, the City's practice is to remove any graffiti itself rather than allow it to remain during the time involved in reporting it and having it removed by Caltrans. Because Caltrans has their own graffiti abatement program, however, the City is not reimbursed for these costs. Staff has also conferred with its insurer, SANDPIPA, and has determined that there would be minimal, in any, increased premium costs associated with the acceptance of a relinquished SR 75 right-of-way. In fact, a benefit to the City would more likely be realized with the increase in roadway lane miles for which the City would be responsible by a corresponding increase in transportation funding paid to the City on an annual basis.

In discussions with Caltrans about a possible relinquishment of SR 75, their staff provided us with the following four-year maintenance costs incurred by Caltrans:

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Total Cost by Maintenance Category: |                  |
| • Safety                            | \$ 73,225        |
| • Preservation                      | \$ 3,775         |
| • Service                           | <u>\$ 49,135</u> |
| Four-year total maintenance cost    | \$126,135        |
| <br>Historical annual average       | <br>\$ 31,535    |

Given the above maintenance costs, therefore, acceptance of a relinquishment of the SR 75 right-of-way would be expected to increase the City's annual maintenance costs by a third of what the City already pays today for the maintenance of SR 75.

The recently completed TSAE was primarily focused on assessing the appropriateness of the potential relinquishment of SR 75 to the City. As noted above, although the TSAE concluded that SR 75 is suitable for relinquishment, it did not include any assessment of the need for necessary improvements to bring the roadway into compliance with applicable highway design standards. That analysis and assessment would be expected in the next step of the relinquishment process. At this point, Caltrans has requested a written request and further authorization to proceed to the next phase of the process which would include the preparation of a Project Scope Summary Report ("PSSR"). Caltrans has estimated that preparation of a PSSR could take up to a year to complete. Although, once again, the City's request to proceed with this phase of the process would not commit the City to acceptance of a relinquishment, it would signal the City's desire to continue on with the assessment of a potential relinquishment and would also provide the City Council with the type of information it requested during their last discussion of this issue on April 2, 2014.

Among other objectives, the PSSR would include "Costs to Relinquish" options for the roadway which would form the basis of a negotiated agreement under which the City could accept relinquishment of SR 75. One of several options for providing the improvements identified in the PSSR would be a negotiated Financial Contribution Only ("FCO") option in which a mutually agreed upon amount of funding would be provided to the City by Caltrans to implement the necessary improvements in the future. Those funds would be provided to the City upon the City's acceptance of the relinquished SR 75 right-of-way.

#### Recommended Course of Action

Over the past several weeks, staff and its consultant team have been seeking a clear determination from Caltrans regarding the City's ability to implement key elements of the Master Plan under state highway design standards. Now that staff has been advised that the Master Plan as proposed and supported by the community during our initial outreach efforts cannot be implemented under applicable Caltrans standards, staff is seeking concurrence from the City Council on a recommended course of action.

On Monday, July 28, 2014, staff and the City's lead consultant on the Master Plan met with SANDAG staff in their role as the Smart Growth Incentive Program (SGIP) Grant administrator, to discuss the project and the issues it faces. During this meeting, it was agreed that, because the Master Plan was awarded SGIP grant funding based upon the merits and design of the project as proposed, the best course of action would be continue on with the proposed design and the following environmental review based upon that design. Furthermore, because the preparation of the PSSR could take up to a year to complete, waiting for the outcome of that analysis could put the project funding in jeopardy by requiring approval of SANDAG's Regional Planning Committee. In proceeding with the Master Plan project as designed, the environmental review document would acknowledge that elements of the project, as proposed, could not be implemented under current state highway design standards but would also acknowledge that the Master Plan design would most effectively achieve the objectives of the project to provide a more desirable "main street", multi-modal corridor conducive to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and vehicles as well as to businesses and new, infill development. Caltrans staff has indicated that, as long as the environmental document acknowledges the need for a

relinquishment to implement certain elements of the Master Plan, they would not seek to challenge the certification of the document and approval of the Master Plan. By continuing on with the Master Plan as currently proposed, therefore, the City will best position itself to carry out the desired objectives of the Master Plan along with the desires of a majority of the community members who have voiced their support for the project.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

The prior phase of the Master Plan was exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15262 and 15306. This phase of the Master Plan will include the preparation of the required environmental review document to analyze the proposed project. This may result in an amendment to the City's General Plan and Local Coastal Program as well as the processing of a coastal development permit, site plan review, and design review for the proposed capital improvements.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The City has been awarded \$400,000 in SGIP planning grant funding. The City has authorized a City match of \$50,000 and up to \$45,000 in in-kind City services. It is expected that the City's \$50,000 matching funds will come from one-time general fund reserves.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council:

1. Receive City Council Briefing No. 3 on the Palm Avenue Mixed Use and Commercial Corridor Master Plan (Master Plan);
2. Authorize staff and its consultant team to proceed with the project and the design of the Master Plan as currently proposed; and
3. Authorize staff to provide a written request to Caltrans to proceed with the next phase of the relinquishment assessment process including preparation of a Project Scope Summary Report (PSSR).

Attachments:

1. Caltrans Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation for State Route 75 (Imperial Beach City Limits) – July 2014
2. Draft Letter of Request to Caltrans

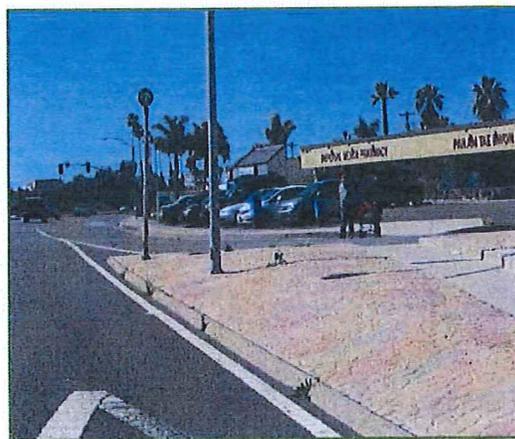


# Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation for STATE ROUTE 75

11-SD-75-PM9.997/11.2

From just south of Georgia St. to just north of Via Silver Strand  
(Imperial Beach City Limits)

July 2014



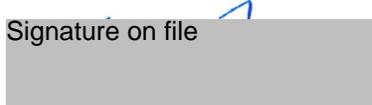
Prepared by:  
The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)  
District 11 Planning Division

## State Route 75 Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation Signatories

I approve this Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation of the proposed relinquishment of State Route 75 from Georgia St. to just north of Via Silver Strand to the City of Imperial Beach and recommend that Caltrans proceed with the relinquishment process.

### Recommend Approval:

Signature on file

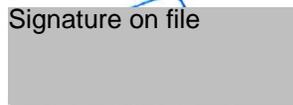


7-8-2014

**BILL FIGGE** Date  
Deputy District Director, Planning  
Caltrans – District 11

### Recommend Approval:

Signature on file

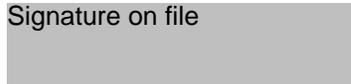


7/8/14

**LAURIE BERMAN** Date  
District Director  
Caltrans – District 11

### Approved:

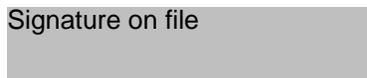
Signature on file



7-8-14

**BRUCE DE TERRA** Date  
Chief  
Office of System and Freight  
Division of Transportation Planning  
Caltrans

Signature on file



7/10/14

**KATIE BENOUAR** Date  
Chief  
Division of Transportation Planning

## **Background**

The purpose of the Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation (TSAE) is to assess the relinquishment of State Highway System (SHS) facilities to local agencies. Relinquishment of individual SHS route segments can be initiated by either State or local agency request. The TSAE specifies the current roles of the route segment in the SHS and includes an assessment of the current and projected use of the facility as that use pertains to the mission and responsibilities of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

## **Purpose and Need**

The District 11 Planning Division developed this Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation (TSAE). This document addresses the elements described below in aiding the determination of the appropriateness of relinquishing portions of State Route 75 (SR-75) within the city limits of the City of Imperial Beach. This segment includes post mile (PM) 9.997 to PM 11.2.

The primary purpose of SR-75 is to provide intraregional access between the cities of Imperial Beach, Coronado, and San Diego. SR-75 provides the only vehicular access to the Coronado peninsula by both the Silver Strand and the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge. The route carries a large number of civilian and military commuters to the North Island Naval Air Station and the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado.

The City of Imperial Beach (City) requested this TSAE to assess the feasibility of relinquishment of SR-75 within the City's boundaries.

### **1. Description of Route and Basis of Request for Relinquishment**

#### **A) Provide county, route number, post miles, functional classification, and other designations (such as STAA truck terminal access route or other designations as applicable).**

SR-75 is a 13.5 mile route which commences at Interstate 5 (I-5) in the City of San Diego and terminates at Interstate 5 near downtown San Diego. The route is entirely within the boundaries of San Diego County and District 11. The segment of SR-75 under evaluation for relinquishment is comprised of two different facility types and lies between PM 9.997 and PM 11.2. The southern segment of the roadway is six lanes and is classified as a conventional highway; the northern segment has four lanes and is classified as an expressway.

In 1933, the portion of SR-75 from I-5 to the Coronado-San Diego Ferry crossing was adopted into the State Highway System. In 1969, the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge opened, providing direct highway service between Coronado and downtown San Diego.

The 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) federal functional classification for SR-75 is Urban Principal Arterial, and portions of the route within the City of Coronado (outside of this study area) are designated as Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET). SR-75 is designated as part of the National Network for Surface Transportation

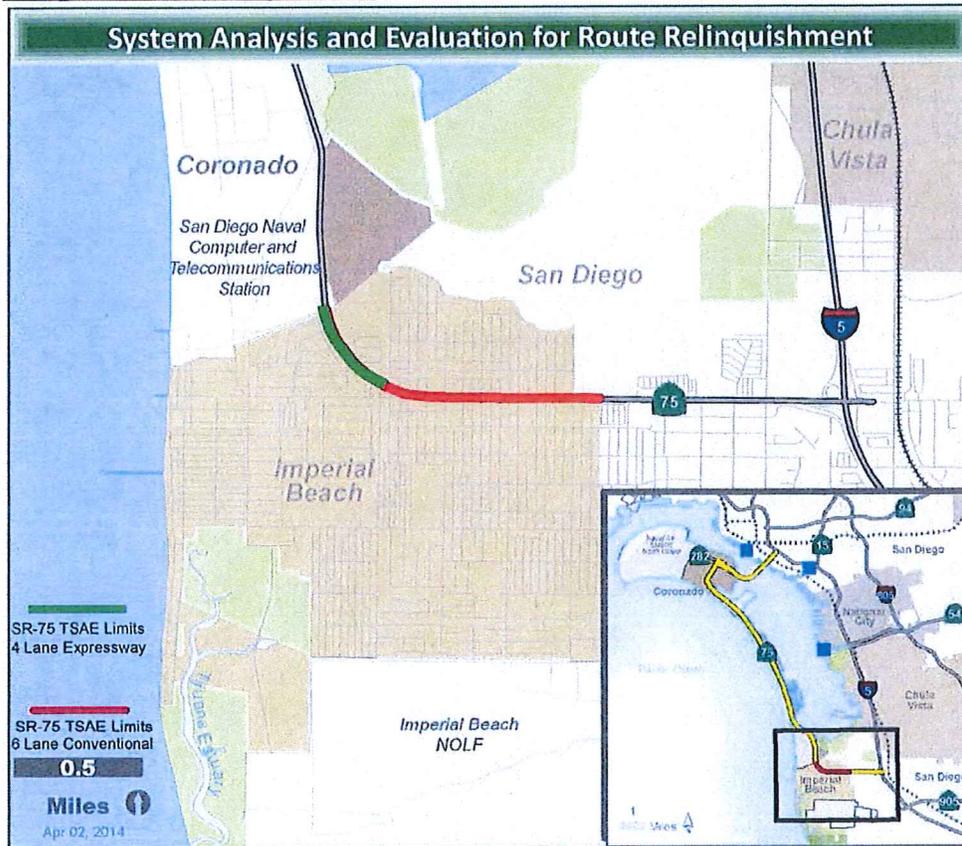
Assistance Act (STAA) for trucks with the following restriction: no flammables, corrosives, or explosives on Coronado Bay Bridge from toll plaza (PM 20.3) to junction Route 5 (PM 22.3); otherwise, the highway is a terminal access route. Outside of the study area, SR-75 is included in the National Highway System (NHS) in the City of Coronado serving both Naval Amphibious Base Coronado (NABC) and Naval Air Station North Island (NASNI). SR-75 is on the California list of Officially Designated State Scenic Highways.

**Existing facility types within the study limits:**

| Post Mile (PM) | Location                             | Rural/Urban | Lanes/Facility Type* | Federal Functional Class | STAA (Y/N) | Designated Scenic Highway (Y/N) |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 9.997-10.72    | Georgia Street to Delaware Street    | Urban       | 6C                   | Urban Principal Arterial | Y          | Principal Arterial              |
| 10.72-11.2     | Delaware Street to Via Silver Strand | Urban       | 4E                   | Urban Principal Arterial | Y          | Principal Arterial              |

Upon completion of this proposed relinquishment, SR-75 would be interrupted within the city limits of Imperial Beach, with the remaining southern portion of the Route located in the City of San Diego and the remaining northern portion of the Route located within City of Coronado and Department of the Navy jurisdictions.

## Map of study segment:



- B) Identify the category the route and route segment is included in the Two Tier System Report (primary or secondary). Identify if the district concurs with the category and why.**

Caltrans proposed a Two-Tier Highway System in 1995 in response to local entities expressing interest in more control of State Highways traversing their communities. This interest resulted from the application of interregional highway standards to routes that no longer function as such. Though the two-tier system was not adopted, the underlying concept is still utilized to differentiate local and interregional highways.

The intent of the State highway "Primary" system was an interconnected network of routes that provide the greatest mobility in both rural and urban areas. The Primary routes are generally characterized by higher speeds and greater access control.

The State highway "Secondary" system has routes that should be operated and maintained by the appropriate local governmental agency that can be most responsive to the public interests in administration, planning, and/or construction of that facility. The intent was for

Caltrans to have authority to negotiate relinquishment agreements with local agencies for State highway Secondary routes or portions of those routes.

The portion of SR-75 being evaluated for relinquishment was included in the Secondary category of the Two-Tier System. District 11 concurs with the placement of this portion of SR-75 into the Secondary category since much of SR-75 operates like a city street rather than a State highway. On-street parking and numerous driveways and access points generate significant side friction. This portion of the route does not function as an interregional transportation facility. SR-75 parallels the Interstate 5 (I-5) freeway, which carries most of the interregional commercial and passenger vehicular traffic.

**C) Evaluate if the segment proposed is in fact between two logical termini and identify any issues with the proposed limits of the relinquishment. Identify how these will be addressed. Examples of issues with logical termini are relinquishments that will create a stub route, terminate in mid block or intersection, etc.**

The segment being evaluated for relinquishment has a southern terminus at the eastern city limit of the City of Imperial Beach. SR-75 continues east for approximately one mile in the City of San Diego to the route terminus, just east of I-5. The segment in the City of San Diego possesses a similar context to the segment in Imperial Beach; it is a six-lane primary arterial that has many commercial land uses and subsequent demand for access including sidewalks, bicycle facilities, bus stops, and many driveways. SR-75 to the north is a four-lane expressway that shifts to a four-lane conventional highway in the downtown section of the City of Coronado, and then shifts back to an expressway on the Coronado Bay Bridge, where the route terminates at I-5.

One key issue associated with relinquishing SR-75 in the evaluation segment includes the discussion regarding logical termini. Terminating SR-75 within the Imperial Beach city limits while retaining the north and south segments of the route would create a non-state highway segment between two State Highway segments of SR-75. Jurisdictionally, this situation should only be a problem if a portion of SR-75 was partially in the City of Imperial Beach. In such a case, maintenance, operational, and jurisdictional issues may arise. However, mechanisms currently in practice could mitigate these potential issues. The Cooperative Agreement must specify how these issues will be resolved.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is how a potential relinquishment would impact the neighboring cities of San Diego and Coronado and the Naval stations along SR-75. Specifically, military equipment and hazardous material that cannot cross the Coronado Bay Bridge would need to be allowed passage along the relinquished segment of SR-75. The need to document agreements with the City of Imperial Beach to address these concerns and maintain current access must be included in the final Cooperative Agreement between Caltrans and the City of Imperial Beach. In addition, the following sections address some of the contextual issues that relate to SR-75 in both the City of Imperial Beach and the City of San Diego, which support relinquishment of the entire route, with the exception of the Coronado Bay Bridge.

- D) Describe the basis of request for relinquishment and identify local jurisdiction(s) requesting it. Explain why the city or county does not want the State Highway designation. Explain the issues and history including requests for encroachment permits and issues with approving or denying requests. Include district/local jurisdiction IGR/CEQA discussions, comments, and issues. This is important for multiple reasons including documenting context sensitive solutions efforts and what could and could not be resolved. Explain how the relinquishment benefits local planning and community design and circulation considerations.**

This portion of SR-75 traverses a predominantly built-out area of the City of Imperial Beach. The conventional highway portion of SR-75 from just south of Georgia St. (PM 9.997) to Rainbow Drive (PM 10.990) behaves operationally like a busy city street due to the prevalence of traffic signals and turning lanes. Numerous driveways generate significant side friction. This portion of the route does not function as an interregional transportation facility as part of the State Highway System. The portion of SR-75 from Rainbow Drive to the northern city limits of the City of Imperial Beach serves as a transition between the expressway environment and the conventional highway "main street" context of the Imperial Beach segment.

Land use within the City of Imperial Beach adjacent to this portion of SR-75 consists of mixed use commercial, including several shopping centers as well as several proposed developments. As additional development occurs, the construction of new (or expansion of existing) access points to SR-75 becomes problematic. From an operational perspective, the continued expansion of new development and the resulting additional traffic utilizing SR-75 as prime access downgrades the Level of Service (LOS) on the facility and further reduces the State Highway functionality. The City of Imperial Beach requested this Transportation System Analysis & Evaluation to analyze potential future City access control of the roadway and possibly avoid the Caltrans permitting process for local development projects.

Two large mixed-use developments and one large residential development are proposed adjacent to SR-75 in the City of Imperial Beach. These developments will increase traffic volumes on SR-75. City staff and project proponents have met with Caltrans staff, and Caltrans standards with regard to traffic, access to projects, and bicycle and pedestrian accommodation are an issue. The City is interested in this TSAE and subsequent relinquishment in order to avoid, what the City sees as, inconsistencies with Caltrans policy.

The City of Imperial Beach received a Caltrans Community Based Transportation Planning (CBTP) Grant, to study community connectivity improvements to the SR-75 corridor within the city limits. The Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan was the final product of the CBTP grant. This plan proposes infrastructure treatments intended to allow the Palm Avenue Corridor to develop economically and provide transportation improvements for all users of the corridor. The Palm Avenue study acknowledges that some of the roadway features and treatments proposed may not meet state highway standards and that relinquishment of SR-75 may be necessary to realize some proposed features. The City of San Diego was recently awarded a CBTP grant to study similar issues along the segment of SR-75 in that City.

**Photographs of segments studied:**

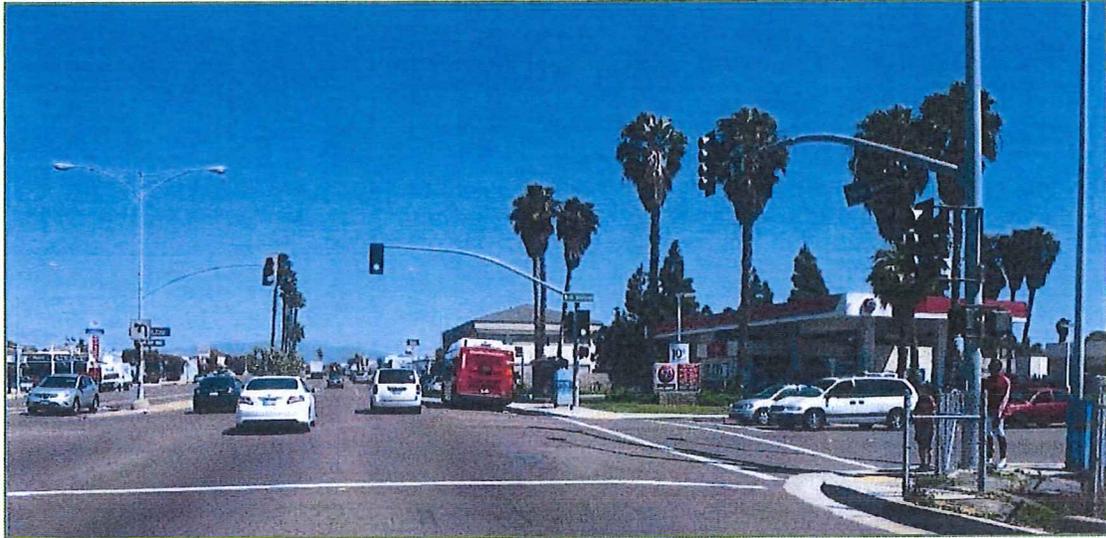


**Northbound SR-75 at PM 10.1**

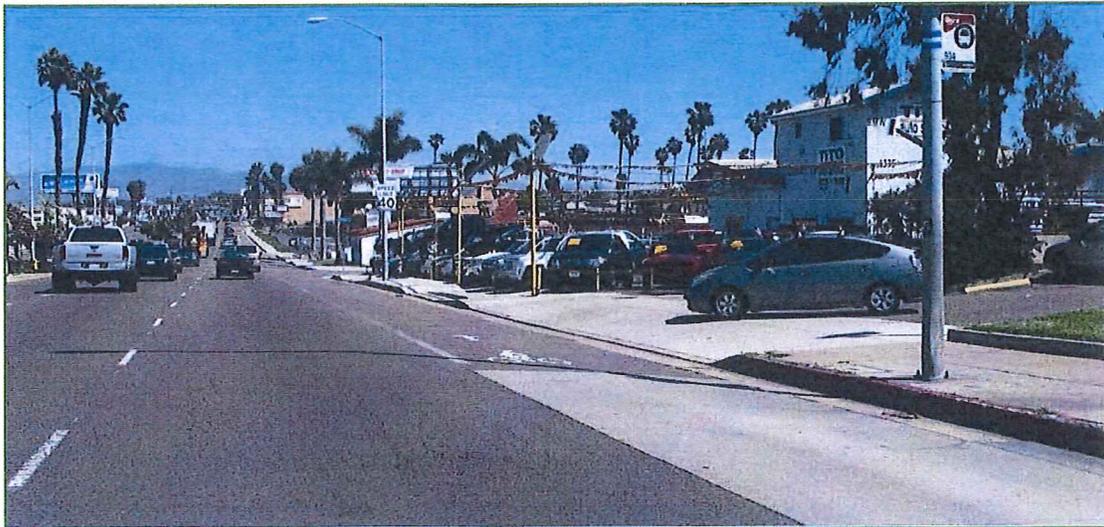


**Northbound SR-75 at PM 10.7**

**Photographs of segments studied:**



**Southbound SR-75 at PM 10.5**



**Southbound SR-75 at PM 10.1**

**E) Identify status of the route in local agency circulation element of the General Plan and any current applicable local planning studies or community initiatives impacting the request.**

SR-75 is identified as a Prime Arterial in the Circulation Element of the City of Imperial Beach General Plan.

The Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan discusses the issues associated with Caltrans ownership of SR-75 and the desire to use roadway features that differ from Caltrans Standards. The Master Plan states:

“The roadway is currently within Caltrans jurisdiction, and is a State Route. Caltrans approval will be necessary during the design phase of these segments. During this phase, Caltrans may require different levels of processing in order to obtain approval of these projects. Some segments will need design exceptions for lane or shoulder width variations, while others may be greatly disparate to the Caltrans standard cross-sections and may require the complete relinquishment of the highway in order to implement. The level of each will be negotiated by the City of Imperial Beach and Caltrans at the time of design processing.”

The Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan recommends multi-modal access for transit, bicyclists and pedestrians and includes some engineering features that may not be approved by Caltrans on SR-75. The City of Imperial Beach is interested in the feasibility of a relinquishment to pursue such engineering features without obtaining Caltrans approval and going through the design exception process. Certain design exceptions may require Federal Highway Administration approval in addition to Caltrans approval.

## **2. Route or Corridor Concept and Recommendations for Route Development**

**A) Identify the route development or relinquishment recommendations in the districts route concept or transportation corridor report and other applicable internal reports or studies. (Cite date of latest Transportation Concept Report or Transportation Corridor Report).**

Caltrans completed a Route Concept Report for SR-75 in 1985. At that time, no relinquishment considerations were under discussion.

District 11 completed a Transportation Concept Report Summary (TCS) for SR-75 in October 2011. The following summary discusses the proposed relinquishment, and specifically states:

“Caltrans strongly encourages the City of Imperial Beach to ascertain at an early stage if any or all portions of this project will

require relinquishment of SR-75, so that the City may begin consultations with the City of San Diego and the City of Coronado for acceptance of portions of the route that may fall within their jurisdiction and require relinquishment.”

In addition, the TCS identifies SR-75 in its entirety as a potential candidate for relinquishment in the Fiscal Year 2010 State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP).

**B) Describe current and projected future traffic and components of the traffic stream (5 plus axle trucks) for the route as it exists in the state highway system and any system restrictions for large trucks. Identify how this is forecasted to change based on the relinquishment.**

Existing traffic on SR-75 in Imperial Beach operates at levels of service (LOS) B and C. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Regional Transportation Model projects LOS C and D in 2030. The following table shows 2010 traffic count data and projected 2030 volumes:

**Existing and Future Average Weekday Traffic**

| Location  | 2010 AWDT <sup>1</sup> | 2010 LOS <sup>2</sup> | 2030 AWDT <sup>3</sup> | 2030 LOS <sup>2</sup> |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 13 <sup>th</sup> Street (PM 10.070) to 9 <sup>th</sup> Street (PM 10.570) | 34,900                 | B                     | 39,800                 | C                     |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> Street (PM 10.0570) to Delaware Street (PM 10.720)        | 23,400                 | C                     | 32,900                 | C                     |
| Delaware Street (PM 10.720) to 7 <sup>th</sup> Street (PM 10.790)         | 21,100                 | C                     | 25,600                 | C                     |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Street (PM 10.790) to Rainbow Drive (PM 10.990)           | 17,500                 | B                     | 22,100                 | D                     |

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Average Weekday Daily Traffic (AWDT) derived from Caltrans District 11 Traffic Census Branch Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) Volumes.

<sup>2</sup> 2010 and 2030 Levels of Service are based on sketch level planning analysis and are not to be used for design purposes.

<sup>3</sup> 2030 AWDT Volumes based on the SANDAG Regional Transportation Model.

According to the 2012 Caltrans Annual Average Daily Truck Traffic census, there were, on average, 163 five-plus axle trucks per day on SR-75, comprising 8.5% of the average daily truck traffic. SR-75 is designated as part of the National Network for Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) for trucks with the following restriction: no flammables, corrosives, or explosives on Coronado Bay Bridge from toll plaza (PM 20.3) to junction Route 5 (PM 22.3); otherwise the highway is a terminal access route. Trucks carrying restricted loads must access the City of Coronado, the Coronado Naval Amphibious Base, and North Island Naval Air Station by following a southerly route on I-5 then circle back to the north on the SR-75. Any relinquishment would need to consider the current and future needs of vehicles that are restricted on the Coronado Bay Bridge, as well as the need to maintain STAA requirements and terminal

routes. Details of the resolution would be a requirement of the Cooperative Agreement between the City of Imperial Beach and Caltrans in the event that the relinquishment is approved and accepted.

- C) Identify the primary origins and destinations for travel on the route segment in terms of interregional and major regional trips and sub area localized trips as applicable. Identify any primary route segment functions that may impact relinquishment considerations, for example, connectivity to a regional mall, a regional area industrial park, regional airport, and other functions.**

Travel on SR-75 consists of a wide range of local and regional traffic. The Imperial Beach segment is a commuter route for residents to employment centers in the City of Imperial Beach, the City of Coronado, North Island Naval Air Station, and the Coronado Naval Amphibious Base. Many small and medium-size businesses are located along SR-75 and residential areas populate the nearby communities along the SR-75 corridor.

SR-75 within the study limits is an alternate connection from I-5 and points to the north, south, and east to the City of Coronado and Silver Strand State Park. Recreational and tourist trips to these destinations are frequent in the spring and summer months.

- D) Identify any issues with the local agencies request that will or may negatively impact interregional or regional travel and connectivity, inter-modal transfer for freight, and other functions. Identify how the concerns will be addressed. This includes potential local restrictions of truck access and timing for deliveries.**

Given that SR-75 is a STAA Truck Route, an agreement with the City of Imperial Beach will be necessary to maintain terminal access along any potential relinquished portions of the route. No other issues have been identified.

- E) Identify if the relinquishment is expected to cause diversion of interregional and regional trips (including large trucks) to other state routes or local arterials thus creating a potential need for additional improvements to accommodate increased travel demand on the routes.**

A diversion of trucks and increased travel demand are not anticipated beyond local growth and development.

- F) Identify any compatibility issues with the transition created by the proposed relinquishment for the adjoining jurisdiction and any “gaps” created by the relinquishment. For example will a relinquishment terminate at an intersection or mid-way in an identified bikeway segment creating potential traveler confusion or differences in design standards. Identify how compatibility issues will be resolved.**

No gaps or traveler confusion are expected to result from the relinquishment. SR-75 to the south, in the City of San Diego, has similar characteristics to the Imperial Beach segment. The City of San Diego is studying the re-purposing of SR-75. To the north, the context of SR-75 becomes expressway and changes significantly.

- G) Identify any issues with signal coordination and control along the route and existing agreements with local jurisdictions that will need to be modified with the relinquishment. Identify recommended actions to resolve.**

Issues that could arise include a disconnect between Caltrans signal operations on the remaining portions of SR-75 in the City of San Diego. Caltrans will work closely with the City of Imperial Beach throughout the relinquishment process on traffic signal coordination and future ownership of traffic signals.

Traffic signal coordination with the City of San Diego also needs to be addressed as a component of a Cooperative Agreement in the event of a relinquishment.

- H) Identify actions that may be needed to advise interregional travelers and the trucking industry on connecting routes or adjacent route segments if the segment recommended for relinquishment will not accommodate through or connecting trips based on anticipated or known local redesign and development plans.**

No actions are anticipated. Local trucks serving local developments along the relinquished SR-75 will continue to use the relinquished SR-75. Access would still be accommodated.

- I) Identify any Department of Transportation funded studies ongoing or completed that impact the route portion (Environmental Justice, Community Planning, State Planning and Research and others) and related recommendations.**

In 2007, the City of Imperial Beach was awarded a Caltrans Community Based Transportation Planning (CBTP) Grant to create the Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan. The resulting \$18.6 million project creates a new “main street” to entice pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers to patronize the businesses along Palm Avenue, encourages private investment in the area, and establishes a more defined route to the shoreline. The Imperial Beach City Council unanimously approved the Master Plan in February 2009. Also in February 2009, the Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan Traffic Impact Study analyzed potential

modifications to traffic lanes, parking areas, medians, landscaping, sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs, and gutters.

The Master Plan divides Palm Avenue into four sections from Rainbow Drive to 13th Street. Each section – West End Gateway, Park, Mid-Town and East End Gateway – represents a distinct district that will be connected to the others with new landscaping and improved sidewalks, medians, and bike paths. The most significant design changes are planned for the Mid-Town section from Florida to Delaware Streets. The Master Plan proposes keeping two lanes of the highway in each direction for through-traffic and using one lane to access businesses. That lane will be separated from the other two with a median.

Another section that may change is the Park area, from Delaware to 7th Streets. The area is now a mix of odd-shaped medians and traffic islands and a series of diagonal streets and merging lanes. The new design would provide for a better flow of traffic toward a more prominent entrance to the city's Seacoast commercial district.

The proposed changes, including the loss of the one through-lane in the Mid-Town section, narrower intersections, and wider lanes and medians, coupled with more trees and traffic signals that work together will improve traffic movement along this portion of SR-75.

The City of San Diego was recently awarded a CBTP grant that will study similar improvements to SR-75 adjacent to the Imperial Beach segment. These types of studies often support proposed relinquishments.

**J) Identify adjacent local agency position(s) on the relinquishment and how they have been coordinated and addressed between jurisdictions.**

The City indicated support of this relinquishment evaluation with a letter of interest in having full control of the segment of SR-75 within the City limits. Relinquishment of the Route would allow the City the ability to issue permits to new developments for roadway connections, thereby eliminating the need to obtain State encroachment permits or State involvement.

**3. District Coordination with Regional Transportation Planning Agency**

**A) Identify steps the district has taken to coordinate the relinquishment request with the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).**

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) is aware of the historical interest in relinquishment possibilities for SR-75. Discussions and coordination has taken place between the Caltrans, SANDAG and with the City of Imperial Beach. Caltrans will continue to work closely with SANDAG and the City of Imperial Beach throughout the relinquishment negotiation process.

**B) Identify the route development strategy in the Regional Transportation Plan and any supportive or contrary recommendations on the relinquishment.**

The SANDAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) from October 2011 does not include any project proposals on SR-75.

Relinquishment recommendations and/or actual relinquishment of portions of SR-75 will be coordinated closely with SANDAG staff. Another benefit of relinquishment from a funding perspective is that more dollars may potentially be available for improvements to remaining State routes in San Diego County.

**C) Identify district actions to provide information and recommendations to the RTPA technical committee and as applicable the policy committee and other applicable groups to educate and inform on state highway issues and coordinate the relinquishment. This should include how the district has worked with the technical advisory committee to encourage consideration of relinquishment of entire routes and route segments that were identified as eligible in the Two Tier analyses from 1995.**

SANDAG is aware of the local jurisdictional interests regarding this proposed relinquishment and has met with the Caltrans District 11 Director. Caltrans planning staff also met with former MPO staff when the Two-Tier Highway System was proposed and the potential for relinquishment of Secondary routes was discussed.

**D) Identify regional studies on this portion of the route or impacting it and the related recommendations from the studies. Identify if the study recommendations support the relinquishment request.**

In 2013, SANDAG awarded a Smart Growth Incentive Program grant in the amount of \$400,000 to the City of Imperial Beach. The award is intended to produce 30% development plans and environmental clearance to begin the implementation of the aforementioned Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan. This grant is currently being implemented and discussions are currently on-going between City of Imperial Beach and Caltrans staff regarding design and traffic aspects of the Plan.

- E) In regional areas where State congestion management planning and program statutes apply (counties with an urbanized area or portion of urbanized area) and where the county and cities have not exercised the “opt out” provision, identify district actions to encourage relinquishment of the entire Two Tier route in order to most effectively link local land use decisions to transportation planning and funding decisions across jurisdictions for comprehensive congestion management.**

District 11 views the potential relinquishment of the Imperial Beach segment of SR-75 as an initial move towards a complete relinquishment of the route. The City of San Diego was awarded a CBTP grant to perform a study similar to the Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan. This work is viewed as a conceptual plan for the corridor. As the study progresses, the City of San Diego may come to the same conclusion as the City of Imperial Beach regarding relinquishment. The City of Coronado, to the north, has not yet applied for a CBTP grant. However, District 11 staff discussions with the City of Coronado regarding potential relinquishment are on-going.

#### **4. Coordination with State Plans and Programs**

- A) Identify any known Plans of other State Agencies, Departments or Public entities impacting the route portion and adjacent portions (Coastal Plans, Coastal Bike Trails and Pedestrian Plans, other plans).**

As previously mentioned, one important issue that needs to be addressed is how a potential relinquishment would impact the neighboring cities of San Diego and Coronado and the Naval stations along SR-75. Specifically, military equipment and hazardous material that cannot cross the Coronado Bay Bridge must be allowed passage along the relinquished segment of SR-75. The need for the City of Imperial Beach to address these concerns and maintain current access will be included in the final Cooperative Agreement between Caltrans and the City of Imperial Beach.

Other than the above issue, no known plans from other State or public entities would impact the proposed relinquishment.

- B) Identify projects that are now programmed or planned on the state highway within the area or in adjacent segments that may be impacted by the relinquishment. Include all programs regardless of funding type (STIP, SHOPP, Local Programs – CMAQ, TEA, RSTP) and include transit capital programs as applicable.**

The only project in the District 11 10-Year SHOPP Needs Plan is route relinquishment.

## **5. Internal District Coordination**

- A) Identify the functional unit in the district and project manager for the relinquishment package and person to call for questions on the system evaluation.**

Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation (TSAE) contact Bill Figge, District 11 Planning Director (619) 688-6681, or Rob Owen, Freight & System Planning Branch Chief at [rowen@dot.ca.gov](mailto:rowen@dot.ca.gov) (619) 688-2507.

Relinquishment Project Manager, contact Rob Owen (619) 688-2507.

Relinquishment Project Initiation Development (PID) information, contact Jesus “Chi” Vargas (619) 688-3157.

- B) Identify the responsible unit and individual for coordinating the revised state highway information based on the approved relinquished segment within the district (maintenance, traffic operations, design, other units), to Headquarters Divisions, and for ensuring local enforcement and safety agencies are informed of the status of the change in route status from a state highway to a local road when it occurs.**

Relinquishment Project Manager, Rob Owen (619) 688-2507

**Identify functional unit and responsible position in the district for ensuring that the state highway inventory accurately reflects the relinquished segment post miles with final approval.**

Rob Owen, Freight & System Planning Branch Chief: [rowen@dot.ca.gov](mailto:rowen@dot.ca.gov) or (619) 688-2507.

## State Route 75 Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation Signatories

I approve this Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation of the proposed relinquishment of State Route 75 from Georgia St. to just north of Via Silver Strand to the City of Imperial Beach and recommend that Caltrans proceed with the relinquishment process.

### Recommend Approval:

Signature on file

**BILL FIGGE**  
Deputy District Director, Planning  
Caltrans – District 11

7-8-2014

Date

### Recommend Approval:

Signature on file

**LAURIE BERMAN**  
District Director  
Caltrans – District 11

7/8/14

Date

### Approved:

Signature on file

**BRUCE DE TERRA**  
Chief  
Office of System and Freight  
Division of Transportation Planning  
Caltrans

7-8-14

Date

Signature on file

**KATIE BENOVAR**  
Chief  
Division of Transportation Planning

7/10/14

Date

August 6, 2014

Laurie Berman  
District 11 Director  
California Department of Transportation, District 11  
4050 Taylor Street  
San Diego, CA 92110

**SUBJECT: LETTER OF REQUEST – PREPARATION OF A PROJECT SCOPE STUDY REPORT (PSSR) FOR THE POTENTIAL RELINQUISHMENT OF STATE ROUTE 75/PALM AVENUE IN THE CITY OF IMPERIAL BEACH, CA**

Dear Ms. Berman:

The City of Imperial Beach (City) is in receipt of and would like to thank District 11 of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the Final Transportation System Analysis and Evaluation (TSAE) for State Route 75/Palm Avenue (SR 75). As the TSAE found that SR 75 in Imperial Beach would be appropriate for potential relinquishment, the City is now interested in having Caltrans proceed with the preparation of a Project Scope Study Report (PSSR) that would analyze the City's segment of SR 75, inclusive of needed infrastructure improvements and maintenance costs that would form the basis of a negotiated agreement under which a potential relinquishment might occur.

At their meeting on August 6, 2014, our City Council authorized City staff to issue this letter of request to initiate preparation of the PSSR. As the PSSR will be essential for City staff and the City Council to assess and adequately consider the possibility of the relinquishment of the segment of SR 75 within the City, it is understood that this letter constitutes the City's written request only to proceed with the PSSR but does not commit the City to acceptance of the relinquishment of SR 75. The City does desire, however, to continue working with Caltrans to assess the possibility of a relinquishment of SR 75.

The City respectfully requests, therefore, that Caltrans proceed with the preparation of a PSSR as part of its current work plan to continue the assessment of the portion of SR 75 within the City's boundaries for its possible relinquishment to the City.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Andy Hall  
City Manager

C: Jim Janney, Mayor  
Greg Wade, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director  
Hank Levien, Public Works Director  
Joe Hull, District Chief, Traffic Operations  
Bill Figge, Deputy District Director, Planning