

Improvements to Highway 4 continue

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Photo courtesy of Karl Nielsen

The Sand Creek Road Interchange project along Highway 4 wrapped up recently. Work on the Balfour Project will start soon

While one major Highway 4 project has recently reached the finish line, others are not far behind.

Crews recently wrapped up the third and final phase of the Sand Creek Interchange project, which included construction of a second bridge overcrossing at the Sand Creek Road interchange – an addition that was made to the plan after it was discovered the \$32 million project was under budget by approximately \$2.5 million. About \$5 million in Measure J funds were also contributed to the project.

The original plan was to extend the highway from two lanes to four lanes – two in each direction – from just west of Lone Tree Way to Balfour Road, but the addition of the second bridge extended the widening by about three-quarters of a mile to south of San Jose Avenue.

“The Sand Creek interchange is a great example of being good stewards of public funds,” said Randy Iwasaki, executive director of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.

“We were able to use cost savings from the first part of this contract, to build the second bridge that completes the Sand Creek interchange.”

With one major project completed, crews are already gearing up to make further improvements to the area.

Beginning as soon as the spring of 2015, crews will replicate the Sand Creek Interchange project, doing similar work to elevate the bypass over Balfour Road. Once finished, eastbound and westbound traffic will bypass the Balfour signal en route toward Bryon and Discovery Bay. The estimated \$56.6 million project is short about \$4 million, but funds are expected to roll in soon, said Brentwood Mayor and Contra Costa Transportation Authority Commissioner Bob Taylor.

“That’s going to be a safety improvement for the transportation community and for residents in the area,” Taylor said.

Further west, another project will add connector ramps from westbound Highway 4 to northbound Highway 160, and from southbound 160 to eastbound Highway 4, allowing motorists using the Antioch Bridge to get to Brentwood without having to use Hillcrest Avenue, in Antioch, to turn around or cut through Oakley. That project, which is being funded through \$50 million in bridge tolls, is expected to be completed late next year or in early 2016.

Also, the expansion of BART from the Pittsburg and Bay Point station to Hillcrest Avenue in Antioch, is moving along with the expansion of the eBart in 2016. The fully funded, \$462 million endeavor will incorporate smaller, diesel-powered trains that will run along the median of Highway 4. The eBart trains will meet BART trains at the Pittsburg and Bay Point station every 15 minutes, and usher riders from a stop at Hillcrest Avenue to the Pittsburg and Bay Point station in 10 minutes. Plans are for the service to continue east from Antioch in the future.

“This will greatly improve transit accessibility for the region, help reduce traffic congestion, and enhance the quality of life for the more than 250,000 residents of eastern Contra Costa County,” said Linsey Willis, director of external affairs for the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.

For more information on the projects, visit www.4eastcounty.org.