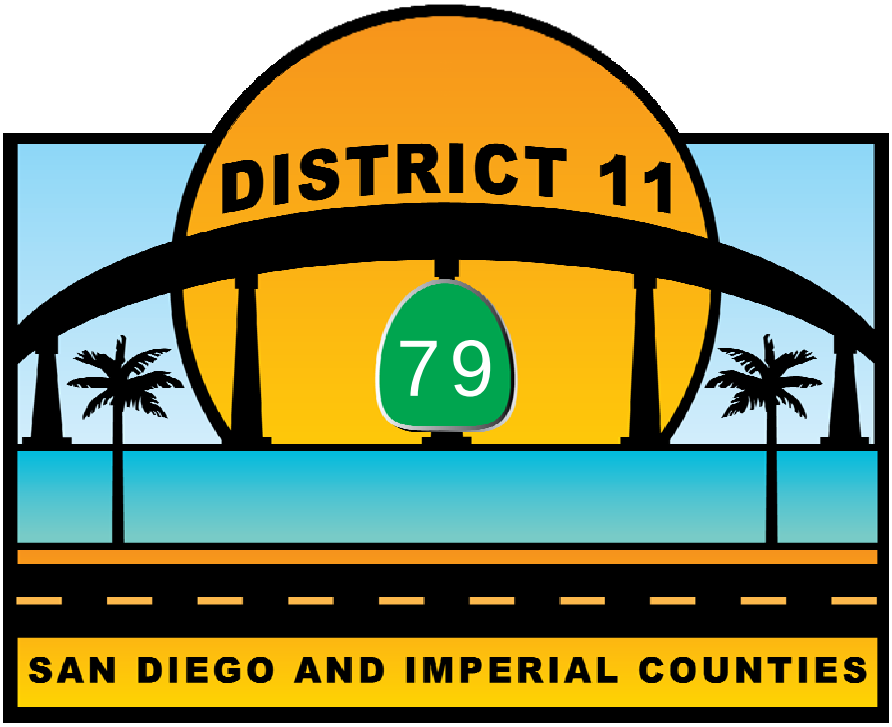


STATE ROUTE-79
TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT SUMMARY

This Transportation Concept Summary (TCS) for State Route 79 in District 11 serves as an analysis tool and conceptual long-range guide for future investment decisions in the transportation corridor.

DISCLAIMER

The information and data contained in this document are for planning purposes only and should not be relied upon for final design of any project. Any information in this TCS is subject to modification as conditions change and new information is obtained. Although planning information is dynamic and ever-changing, the District 11 Planning Division makes every effort to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the information contained in the TCS. The information in the TCS does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation, nor is it intended to address design policies and procedures. If you encounter information that you deem to be inaccurate or unreliable, please contact Kim.Sturmer@dot.ca.gov or at 619-688-6967.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING DIVISION
Planning Leads To Superior Solutions
Caltrans
DISTRICT 11

DRAFT

SR-79 Transportation Concept Summary November 2011

CORRIDOR PURPOSE

State Route 79 (SR-79) is a north-south, two lane conventional highway serving San Diego and Riverside Counties. SR-79 primarily serves intraregional recreational trips generated in the nearby urban areas, to federal, state, and county parklands located in the mountain areas east of the metropolitan San Diego area. SR-79 serves Cleveland National Forest, Cuyamaca Lake, and Lake Henshaw and also provides for local travel to and from the rural communities of Descanso, Julian, Santa Ysabel, Warner Springs, Sunshine Summit, and Oak Grove.

CORRIDOR NEEDS

There are several short radii curves on portions of SR-79 which constrain operating speeds to 15 miles per hour. In addition, sections of SR-79 which run through Cuyamaca Rancho State Park have nonstandard widths. Safety spot improvements, curve realignments, and passing lanes or turnouts; limitation and separation of left turn movements, limited driveways, and other access controls could be provided in the corridor. As population continues to increase in the rural areas accessed by SR-79, employer-based incentives such as telecommuting, vanpooling, and additional park and ride lots should be considered.

CORRIDOR ANALYSIS

SR-79 will experience increased traffic from both potential residential development growth and increased recreational traffic. The corridor also provides access to recreational areas and users both on a seasonal and weekend basis. Operational and/or safety improvements should be considered if needed as travel demand in the SR-79 corridor continues to increase.

CORRIDOR TRAFFIC

The following table shows existing (2010) and future (2030) traffic volumes and estimated Levels of Service (LOS).

Existing and Future Average Annual Daily Traffic

LOCATION	2010 AADT[1]	2010 LOS[2]	2030 AADT[3]	2030 LOS[2]
I-8 To Riverside Dr	5,100	B	15,600	D
Riverside Dr to Old Highway 80	2,900	B	6,900	B
Old Highway 80 to Paso Picacho	2,000	B	6,500	B
Paso Picacho to Sunrise Highway	1,700	B	6,300	B
Sunrise Hwy to East. Junction SR-78 (Route Break)	1,900	B	6,200	B
West. Junction SR-78 (Route Break) to SR 76	3,700	B	9,900	C
SR 76 to San Felipe Road	2,700	B	10,400	C
San Felipe Road to Los Tules Rd	2,000	B	7,400	B
Los Tules Rd to Sunshine Summit	1,900	B	6,200	B
Sunshine Summit to Riverside County Line	2,100	B	4,100	B

[1] 2010 traffic volumes from Caltrans Traffic Data Branch website.
[2] 2010 and 2030 Levels of Service are based on sketch level planning analysis and are not to be used for design purposes.
[3] 2030 projected traffic volumes based on the SANDAG Regional Transportation Model.

PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT INFORMATION - CORRIDOR AND SYSTEM COORDINATION

State Route 79 (SR-79) is a north-south, two lane conventional highway serving San Diego and Riverside Counties. The route traverses the Cuyamaca Mountains in central San Diego County, which separate the coastal plains from the desert regions. Within District 11, SR-79 begins at Interstate 8 (I-8) and follows a predominantly north-south alignment for 53.0 miles to the Riverside County line. There is a break in the route at the eastern junction of SR-78 (P.M. SD 20.2), with SR-79 traffic using the SR-78 roadbed for seven miles.

SR-79 was adopted into the State highway system in 1933. In 1959, the portion from I-8 to State Route 78 (SR-78) was added to the Freeway and Expressway System (Street and Highways Code Section 253.5).

The federal functional classification for SR-79 is Rural Minor Arterial. Within District 11, SR-79 is not included in the National Highway System (NHS). SR-79 is not designated as part of the National Network for Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) for trucks. SR-79 is on the Master Plan of State Highways Eligible for Official Scenic Highway Designation, but is not currently designated a State Scenic Highway. In accordance with the Truck Kingpin-to-Rear Axle Length State Highway System Evaluation Report dated December 1989, the portion of SR-79 from the junction of Old Highway 80 (P.M. SD L2.8) (County Road) to the Riverside County line (P.M. SD 53.0) has been identified as geometrically inadequate for use by truck tractor-semitrailer combinations having a 30 foot kingpin-to-rear axle length.

The portion of SR-79 from Engineers Road (PM 12.1) to the west junction of SR-78 in Santa Ysabel (PM 20.2) is named the *Firefighter Steven Rucker Memorial Highway*. It was named in memory of Firefighter Steven Rucker of Novato, who perished in October 2003 while fighting the advancing Cedar Fire line as it threatened the town of Julian and neighboring mountain communities.

The Juan Bautista De Anza Trail is a National Park Service Historic Trail that illustrates the interweaving of the three elements of the Spanish plan for colonization of its northern frontiers: the presidio, the mission, and

the pueblo. It commemorates the route followed by Anza in 1775-76 when he led a contingent of 30 soldiers and their families to found a presidio and mission on the San Francisco Bay. Along the trail route, the visitor can experience the varied landscapes similar to those the expedition saw; learn the stories of the expedition, its members, and descendants; better understand the American Indian role in the expedition and the diversity of their cultures; and appreciate the extent of the effects of Spanish colonial settlement of Arizona and California. The Auto Route approximates the Historic Trail, and covers over 1200 miles between Nogales Mexico and San Francisco California.

SR-79 is part of the Historic Trail Auto Route from San Felipe Road (PM 31.7) to the Riverside County Line (PM 53.0).

RECOMMENDED CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

There are no capacity-enhancing transportation concept facility improvements proposed for SR-79 at this time. The following table shows programmed State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and State Highway Operations and Protection Plan (SHOPP) projects for SR-79 (if any), as well as Project Information Reporting System (PIRS) projects.

POST MILE	LOCATION	IMPROVEMENT DESCRIPTION	SOURCE/ PHASE
L0.3 -10.0	0.3 Mile North Of I-8/SR-79 Separation To 0.7 Mile North Of Paso Picacho Campground	Rubberized Asphalt Concrete Overlay	PIRS/PSE
L0.8	Descanso Junction at Wildwood Glen Lane	Historic Highway 80 Interpretive Project	PA&ED
35.1-53.0	Warner Springs to Riverside County Line	Apply Rubberized Asphalt Concrete Overlay	PIRS/PSE

PSE = Plans. Specifications and Estimates
PA&ED = Project Approval and Environmental Document

The following table shows 2007/2009/2011 10–Year SHOPP Needs Plan Projects for SR-79.

POST MILE	LOCATION	IMPROVEMENT DESCRIPTION	CATEGORY/ FISCAL YEAR
L0.0-34.8	I-8 to 0.2 mile south of Las Tules Rd	Centerline rumble strips, upgrade end treatments	Collision Reduction 2012/2013
L0.0-49.5	I-8 to Chihuahua Creek Bridge	Upgrade 153 Signs (Materials and Exit numbers)	Roadway Preservation 2017/2018
20.0-53.0	Junction SR-78 to Riverside County Line	Rehabilitate roadway	Roadway Preservation 2012/2013
VARIOUS	Bridge Numbers 57-0014, 57-0056, 57-0063, 57-0068, 57-0065, 57-0059, 57-64, 57-0055, and 57-0062	Bridge Rail Upgrade	Bridge Preservation 2014/15

Transit Improvements

Current transit service on and around the SR-79 corridor consists of Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) bus services Route 888 which only operates one round trip each way on Mondays and Fridays from El Cajon to Jacumba, serving the communities of Alpine, Descanso, Pine Valley and Morena Village. Route 888 traverses SR-79 between I-8 and Old Highway 80. Route 892 provides one round trip per day on Thursdays only Between the El Cajon Transit Center, Ramona and Borrego Springs. Route 892 traverses SR-79 between SR-78 and County Route S-22.

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) adopted the new 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in October 2011. The RTP includes an "Urban Area Transit Strategy" which serves as the basis of the regional transit network in the metropolitan San Diego region.

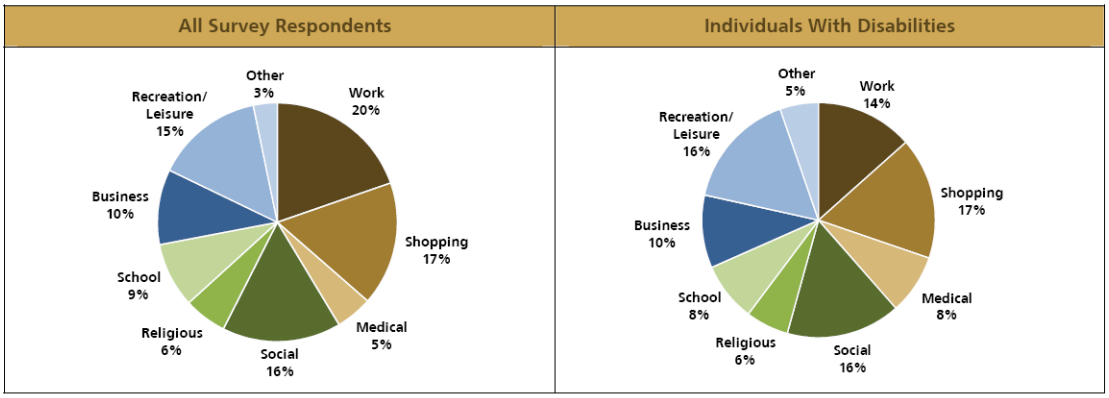
Since SR-79 is located in the rural area of San Diego County, a more appropriate document that discusses rural transportation is the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan).

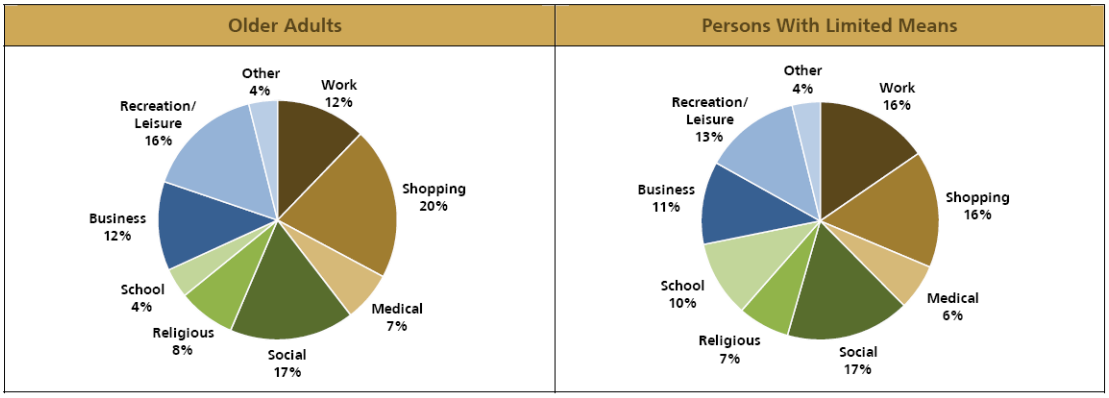
The federal government, through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) now requires each region to prepare this Coordinated Plan. The intent of the plan is to improve coordination in transportation planning and operations between public transit and human service transportation.

A key highlight of this Coordinated Plan update is the addition of information on rural transportation services and needs, based on surveys and outreach efforts specifically in rural areas. Therefore, rural area transportation information and needs are woven throughout the document.

The rural demand analysis was based on the evaluation of a survey developed and deployed by SANDAG (referred to as the "rural transportation survey"). Survey data was required since Census 2000 data is based on population and not geography. As such, it is easy to identify the needs of smaller urban areas (such as block groups in urban areas). By contrast, block groups are spatially much larger in the rural areas and preclude the level detailed of evaluation needed for transportation analysis. The demand analysis data derived from the rural transportation survey included travel demand by demographic category (trips by low-income, disabled, and senior individuals), as well as by trip purpose (nine separate categories). With trip purpose, the data was much more specific than what can be captured by the Census. The rural demographic analysis was only a sample that did not catch all of the sensitive population groups by geographical area. At the same time, it is valuable to provide a snapshot of demand in these areas typically difficult to serve by any transportation service (public, private, or nonprofit).

The results of the rural demand analysis are included in the following charts:





The analysis revealed the following highlights:

All Rural Areas	Persons With Limited Means	Individuals With Disabilities	Older Adults
▸ Work trips represented the largest category of all trips (20%); ▸ Medical trips represented the smallest category of trips compared to the specific population group analysis (5%).	▸ Work trips represented a significant percent of trips; ▸ Medical trips represented the smallest category of trips compared to individuals with disabilities and older adults.	▸ Work trips represented a much smaller percentage than the rural area average for this population (13%); ▸ Medical trips represented the largest share (8%) of any of the groups (including the rural area average).	▸ Work trips represented the smallest percentage (12%) among all of the groups (including the rural area average); ▸ Shopping trips and medical trips generally accounted for a larger percentage of trips from older adults than the other population examined (including the rural area average).

Based on the details gathered in the survey, it was clear that there were only minor differences between the transportation demands of the three specific population groups versus the general population.

An additional element of Coordinated Plan focuses on developing an understanding of the unmet transportation needs in rural communities. This was done through a four-step rural transportation study, including

phone interviews with community leaders, a public survey, outreach meetings, and input from the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). In particular, the survey enabled SANDAG to isolate trips that were not made because the respondent was unable to arrange transportation (referenced as "unserved" trips). Additionally, since specific personal demographic information was asked on the survey (age, income, disability, etc.), SANDAG was able to calculate the percentage of unserved trips by each transportation disadvantaged population group evaluated in this plan.

The significant difference between transportation disadvantaged groups and non-disadvantaged groups' missed trips suggests that rural communities have a large need for increased and improved transportation and mobility solutions for their most sensitive populations. In particular, the survey identified that low-income individuals and persons with disabilities had the most unserved trips.

The analysis of unserved trips by seniors (persons over 65), revealed that religious and school trips represented the largest category of unserved trips for this population by percent. Most of the other categories were at or near the 10-percent unserved trip level, similar to the overall senior average. This data showed that virtually every category included unmet senior transportation needs.

Other transportation improvements

There is one Park and Ride lot at the southern terminus of SR-79, at the northwest quadrant of the I-8/SR-79-Japatul Valley Road interchange in Descanso. There are a total of 30 parking spaces.

State Route 79 winds through some of the most picturesque landscapes in southern California. It attracts vacationers bound for camp grounds, parks, hiking trails, and scenic vistas. Although most of SR-79 exists without sufficient shoulder width, the law gives the legal right for bicycle riders to access most public roads in California. When combined with several segments of narrow, winding road, coupled with traffic composed of motor homes, recreational vehicles pulling trailers, and some commercial trucks, the roadway width requires extra care when passing bicycles and pedestrians. The challenge for bicycle riders is to use this facility as a Class III Bicycle Route (to share the same roadway) with the current traffic; this is without providing dedicated Class II Bicycle Lanes. It is important that any future projects proposed for SR-79 include adding additional shoulder width.

Additional modal option improvements such as transportation demand management, transportation system management, and Intelligent Transportation Systems could also be developed where feasible for the SR-79 corridor.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Caltrans District 11 Development Review staff in the Planning Division review federal, state, and local planned or proposed development activities that have the potential to impact state transportation facilities or other resources under Caltrans' jurisdiction, and recommend conditions of project approval that eliminate those impacts or reduce them to a level of insignificance. Typically, this involves the review of development proposals in which Caltrans is either a responsible (permitting) or commenting (reviewing) agency, but has no discretionary approval power over the project other than permit authority. Development Review staff work cooperatively with local lead agencies and developers in determining the type and level of mitigation needed to offset project impacts. They are also responsible for identifying other functional areas within District 11 that are affected by the proposal, and coordinating the circulation of appropriate documents with other functional areas for review and comment.

Based on the Caltrans Traffic Impact Study (TIS) guidelines, a 1,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) threshold size triggers the need for developers to prepare a traffic study for their project. There are currently no proposed development projects in the SR-79 corridor that generate over 1,000 ADT.

The $27 million Santa Ysabel Tribal Casino and Resort was opened in April 2007. This facility is located adjacent to SR-79 about five miles north of the SR-78/79 west junction. This is a considered a “modest” 35,000 square foot casino with 349 slot machines.

There is a planned Julian Cuyamaca Fire Station to be located on SR-79 south of Julian near the intersection of SR-79 and Royal Drive.

Further information regarding potential development projects in the SR-79 corridor can be obtained from the Caltrans District 11 Development Review Branch.