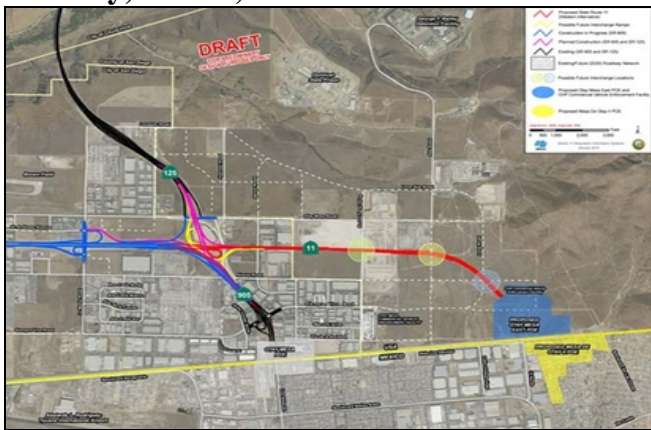


Border Trade Network 'Simply Intolerable': Expert

Commercial traffic about to get a much-needed upgrade

By MICHAEL GEHLKEN
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A proposed border crossing in East Otay Mesa is expected to increase trade efficiency by relieving commercial traffic congestion, and according to a highly decorated retired military official, it is about time.

Barry McCaffrey, a four-star General who spent 32 years in the Army, expressed concern Tuesday about ongoing cross border transportation challenges and optimism about the planned additions of State-Route 11 and East Otay Mesa Point of Entry, which are expected to open in 2015.

“Right now, the situation is simply intolerable,” McCaffrey said on NBC 7/39 News in the Morning. “There’s an economic cost, obviously, to not investing in cross-border transportation. The Feds are only spending \$250 million a year, and yet trade with Mexico has tripled since we instituted NAFTA (in 1994). We’ve got to put our resources where our economic future lies.”

SR-11 is a proposed four-lane highway that would range over two miles and connect SR-905 and SR-125 to the East Otay Mesa Port of Entry. According to a Caltrans report in December, the highway could range in cost from \$300 to 360 million with the port price at \$300 to \$350 million.

The state intends to help relieve cost through a premium border-crossing option, allowing transporters to reduce wait times from three hours to less than 30 minutes by paying a fee, according to the report.

In June 2008, a Caltrans report estimated the project will have a positive economic impact exceeding \$31.6 billion over the first 10 years of operation with \$29.1 billion coming from freight crossings and \$2.5 billion deriving from personal vehicles.

“I think California recognizes,” McCaffrey said, “if you can’t get trade back and forth across that border — if it takes two hours for a trucker to clear customs, an hour for these millions of people across the frontier — then you’re looking at an economic problem in southern California. That’s got to get fixed. New sources of funding, new ways of thinking about it are going to be moving (the state) forward, and CalTrans has been very creative with how it’s handling this problem.”

In 2003, imports and exports between California and Baja California totaled nearly \$30 billion compared to \$15 billion in 1995. The current Otay Mesa Point of Entry handles over 90 percent of commercial truck traffic entering San Diego from three U.S.-Mexico ports of entry, Caltrans reported.

More than 1.4 million trucks carrying an estimated \$28.6 billion in goods passed through the Otay Mesa Port in 2006, and that Caltrans figure is expected to double by 2025.

Source: <http://www.nbcсандiego.com/news/local-beat/Current-Border-Trade-Network-Simply-Intolerable-Expert-113298339.html>