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South Orange County Economic Coalition Announces Active Support for Alternate Solution to Interstate 5

With regional mobility critical to future economic and job growth, business organization sees completion of additional north-south route to regional traffic relief

LAGUNA WOODS, CA – The South Orange County Economic Coalition (SOCEC) announced that it will actively support the combined efforts of the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA), CalTrans, OCTA, the County of Orange, elected officials and community residents to find regional traffic relief solutions through South Orange County.

SOCEC's Board of Directors voted unanimously today to mobilize its members and the broader business community to support solutions that address the need for north-south traffic relief and an alternate route to Interstate 5 through south Orange County.

"There isn't a single south Orange County resident who commutes to, from and within south Orange County to work every day, or travels through the region on Interstate 5, who isn't impacted and frustrated by the lack of alternative routes," announced Wayne Brown, SOCEC's Director of Government Relations. "There are several potential solutions being considered and we support pursuing and investigating all options available."

SOCEC's board cited the fact that Orange County's population is expected to increase by over 400,000 residents in the next two decades – including 14,000 new homes being built in Rancho Mission Viejo – for its rationale for urgency on this issue.

"All of this is expected to increase traffic through south Orange County by an estimated 60 percent between now and 2035," continued Brown. "That's why it's essential that we effectively plan now to identify workable traffic relief solutions. The status quo is not acceptable and we plan to educate the community about the importance of the need for north-south traffic relief."

A series of community meetings to lay out the various options available to complete the 241 toll road through south Orange County and ultimately connecting with Interstate 5 have been taking place over the past several months, with the next meeting scheduled for June 5 at Saddleback College.

Throughout this public process, 18 ideas for alternative north-south routes have been received. TCA and other agencies are studying the ideas proposed by the public to determine their benefits, costs and impacts to find a balanced traffic relief solution. The Coalition has been participating and will continue to participate in this process that will ultimately deliver a solution that works for the broad balance of the community.

This new effort was launched following TCA's settlement of five lawsuits regarding the previously proposed north-south route, State Route 241 South and Tesoro Extension. The settlement, agreed to by more than a dozen environmental organizations, means that TCA can move forward to review alternative solutions to regional traffic problems in an environmentally sensitive manner.

"We applaud all sides in this matter for sitting down and achieving a workable solution that will ultimately result in much-needed traffic relief for south Orange County," said Brown. "Now it's time to make it happen."

The South Orange County Economic Coalition has identified several focus areas as key to economic vitality and job growth. Along with regional mobility, this includes an adequate supply of housing for our region's workforce, a safe and reliable supply of drinking water, developing our future workforce, access to quality healthcare and others.

About the South Orange County Economic Coalition

The South Orange County Economic Coalition serves as the leading voice for business throughout the region. Through advocacy, education and representation, SOCEC works to advance policies and legislation that promote a strong south Orange County economy and business climate. For more information, visit www.economiccoalition.com.

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