

Transportation routes vital to South County's economic prosperity

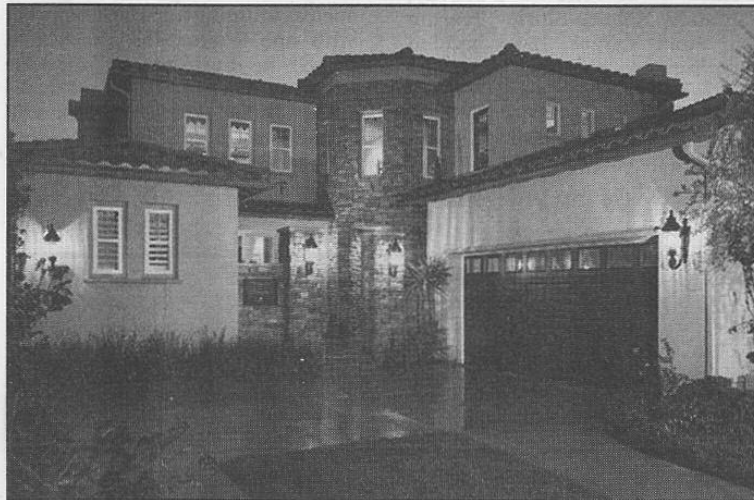
Good progress is being made on two major transportation projects important to South County's economic development and lifestyle improvement.

The opening of state Route 125, just 16 months away, will directly link Otay Mesa and Chula Vista with La Mesa and Spring Valley by connecting state Route 54 with state Route 905 near the international border. The 9-mile, four-lane, toll road is expected to reduce commute times and relieve traffic congestion on area freeways and some surface streets.

"SR-125 will improve regional mobility in South County and access for residents and businesses to employment centers on both sides of the border," said Ed Lopez, president of South County Economic Development Council (SCEDC). "Additionally, this route will help facilitate the movement of commercial goods from the border to points north."

Scott Alevy, incoming president of SCEDC echoed the significance of SR-125.

"This is an important link for the businesses in Otay Mesa," Alevy



State Route 125 will provide new access for existing and new homeowners in the South County. McMillin Homes, a Corky McMillin Company, has built thousands of homes in communities in Chula Vista, contributing to the economic growth of the region.

said. "This freeway will support bi-national commerce, while offering additional access to South County residents."

SR-125 has been part of the state's planned freeway system since 1959 and part of the Regional

Transportation Plan, which establishes the region's 20-year transportation plan based on population and employment projections, since 1984.

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"SR-125 is long overdue," Chula Vista Mayor Steve Padilla said. "This transportation corridor is vital to Chula Vista's future. We're pleased its opening is on the near horizon."

The road is a \$639 million project of California Transportation Ventures.

Further south, community leaders are working to secure the necessary funding to extend SR-

905 from I-805 to the future SR-125 junction west of Brown Field.

Several San Diego legislators — Denise Moreno Ducheny, Christine Kehoe, Shirley Horton and Juan Vargas, have banded together to request that the California Transportation Commission allocate funds for right-of-way purchases. The legislators argue that buying the land now would go a long way toward avoid-

ing cost escalations and facilitate the construction of SR-905.

CalTrans is currently evaluating different construction alternatives, such as building a six-lane highway with one intersection (La Media Road) or building a four-lane highway with limited intersections. Different alternatives will depend on the different funding allocations from the federal government and possibly local devel-

opment impact fees. Some funding may become available through the 2004 Proposition A half-cent sales tax extension (TransNet), but these dollars are not expected to hit the streets before 2009.

"We need to be persistent in getting commitment to this important bi-national trade corridor," Alevy said. "It's vital to the continued growth and economic development of South County."