

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	February 24, 2022
SUBJECT:	Receive Presentation on Fix 5 Cascade Gateway
AGENDA ITEM:	17
STAFF CONTACT:	Daniel Wayne, Senior Transportation Planner

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors receive a presentation on Fix 5 Cascade Gateway (F5CG) Project.

DISCUSSION:

In recent years, the effects of climate change have profoundly impacted the Shasta Region in the form of severe weather and wildfire events. The region's transportation system is particularly vulnerable. Northbound Interstate 5 (I-5) closures have occurred 18 to 26 times per year over the last five years, or more than double historical averages. Recent closures have also become longer in duration. It is not uncommon for closures to last multiple days and for traffic to back up for ten or more miles. At such times, the I-5 corridor and multiple interchanges become gridlocked and the State Route 299 East/89 detour route is inaccessible.

The region feels the pinch in numerous ways during I-5 closures, including increased congestion and hours of delay; additional traffic-related injuries and fatalities; and unhealthy air quality from passenger and freight vehicle emissions. These impacts affect local, state, and national economies. Because closures are frequent but not regular, and because many of the incidents cannot be eliminated but require adaptation, the solution does not lie in plain sight. A suite of complementary strategies is needed to better manage I-5 closures and attract essential funding support from state and federal partners.

The Fix 5 Cascade Gateway (F5CG) Project proposes numerous strategies that work together to meet this challenge. Major project elements include the following:

- **Managed lanes** are proposed on northbound I-5 for 5.2 miles through the Redding Urbanized Area. Overhead changeable message signs and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) infrastructure will enable Caltrans Traffic Operations to dynamically assign lanes based on:
 - Trip purpose (e.g., local, detour, or through trips);
 - Vehicle type (e.g., passenger, freight, or transit vehicles);
 - Major events (e.g., collisions, extreme weather, wildfires, or maintenance); and
 - Travel demand management (e.g., high-occupancy lanes and/or toll lanes during peak traffic volumes).



- **Contiguous auxiliary merging lanes** are proposed on both northbound and southbound I-5 between State Route 273 and 44 interchanges. Despite operating concurrently with State Route 299/44 for two miles, this segment of I-5 bottlenecks from three to two travel lanes. The combination of managed lanes and contiguous auxiliary merge lanes will allow Caltrans to maintain free flow traffic on the northbound outside lane for local and detour traffic, while also improving first responder access and corridor evacuation during an emergency. In addition, the primary causes of three collision clusters on I-5 (i.e., collisions as a result of merging, lane weave, and speed differential) will be remedied, further improving corridor reliability and safety.
- **Extension of the Palisades Trail** will fill a critical gap in the region's bicycle and pedestrian network and provide a direct and contiguous connection to the only high-quality crossings of I-5 for three miles through central Redding (i.e., grade-separated trails located at State Route 299/Lake Boulevard and Dana Drive to Downtown). This addition reduces barriers to active transportation travel; increases transportation network resiliency by providing an alternative travel option when roadways are gridlocked; and provides a safe and affordable mobility option for disadvantaged communities surrounding the project site.
- **Freight vehicle charging stations (and potentially hydrogen fueling)** will be added at the Cottonwood Weigh Station to support the state's transition to a zero-emission freight system and improve air quality along the I-5 corridor.
- **A North State I-5 Corridor Study grant application** will, if selected for funding, engage a larger group of stakeholders to plan additional truck parking facilities, ITS infrastructure, charging/fueling stations, and other strategies beyond the Shasta Region's borders.

As proposed, the F5CG Project is both innovative and transformational for the Shasta Region because it addresses near-term needs in a pragmatic and community-supported manner, while swinging the door open to additional corridor management strategies that have proven highly effective in reducing vehicle miles traveled and maintaining long-term corridor performance. Without the F5CG Project, corridor reliability will continue to deteriorate, and the region will not have the tools needed to manage traffic operations during disruptive events and peak travel demand.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

SRTA and Caltrans District 2 are partners in the planning and funding of the F5CG Project. Local agency partners have been engaged in the scoping process and have been asked to provide local support and matching funds needed for state and federal grant applications.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Total project cost is \$90.336 million. SRTA is contributing \$4.508 million of in state/regional transportation improvement program (STIP/RIP) funds. SRTA and Caltrans are requesting \$50 million in additional funding through several grant programs.