



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*****Photo Attached*****

Emergency Turnarounds under Construction at 5 I-10 Locations

Caltrans has started work on five permanent median gate barriers on Interstate 10 that will allow the California Highway Patrol to safely turn around traffic in the event of an emergency that shuts down the freeway.

“I’m extremely pleased to see Caltrans initiate work to create permanent emergency escape points on Interstate 10,” said Supervisor John J. Benoit. “These emergency turnarounds are the product of a request I made to Caltrans in 2010 after a major highway closure. Along with newly installed changeable message signs, improved communications to media outlets and concierges, the emergency turnaround points provide new tools to assist in mitigating the impact of major closures along I-10.”

The median gates will be located at:

- 1.1 miles east of the Hargrave Street undercrossing in Banning;
- 0.1 miles west of the Malki Road eastbound exit in Cabazon;
- 1.4 miles east of the Main Street eastbound exit in Cabazon;
- 2.3 miles west of Haugen-Lehmann Way eastbound exit in Whitewater; and
- 1.2 miles west of Route 10/62 separation near Palm Springs.

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After a fatal crash shut down westbound Interstate 10 traffic for six hours in December 2010, Supervisor Benoit initiated meetings with Caltrans, California Highway Patrol and Riverside County Transportation Department officials. As a direct result of the discussions, in 2011, Caltrans removed portions of the guardrail separating opposite lanes of the freeway and replaced them with 200-foot K-rails that can be moved during emergencies.

The median breaks were an expeditious, interim solution around traffic tie-ups where no alternate routes exist yet through this constricted area of the Interstate 10 corridor.

With median gate barriers, gates can be opened by key and moved by hand without needing heavy equipment to remove the K-rails. The gates are approximately 60 feet, allowing for a single vehicle at a time to cross over.

The total cost of construction of these five gates is approximately \$860,000, and they are being constructed all at once by Autobahn Construction. The work is expected to be completed in early June. Drivers should expect nighttime closures of the number one lane (fast lane) in both directions from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m.

Since 2012, Riverside County, Caltrans, the California Highway Patrol, the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments and the cities of Banning and Palm Springs have met regularly to discuss improvements to road facilities, communication and response procedures for future closures of Interstate 10.

In March, Caltrans installed four electronic changeable message signs to alert motorists of major traffic delays and hazards ahead.

Long term, Riverside County and the partner agencies are working on detour routes in the San Gorgonio Pass area. A new two-lane road south of Interstate 10 connecting Hathaway Street in Banning to Apache Trail in the Cabazon area is in the environmental phase. The county is expecting to begin construction on the extension of Seminole Road north of Interstate 10 to Rushmore Avenue by the end of 2014.

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Supervisor John J. Benoit represents the eastern two-thirds of Riverside County on the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. Stretching from Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs, south to the Salton Sea and east to Blythe and the Colorado River, the 4th District is the largest geographical district in the county.

Supervisor Benoit's office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.