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Interchange and Bridge Project Nearly Complete

(Placerville, Calif.)—One of the largest transportation improvement projects in the history of El Dorado County is nearing completion. The \$80 million U.S. Highway 50 Missouri Flat Interchange and Weber Creek Bridges project is now open to motorists with formal project completion anticipated by the end of the year.

“From a motorist’s point of view, the project is basically complete,” said Matt Smeltzer, Deputy Director of the County Department of Transportation. “We continue to work on punch list items like paint, striping, additional railing and erosion control, but are hoping for final inspections by the end of the year.”

The entire project was undertaken in two phases. Phase 1A completed in 2008 included improvements to Missouri Flat Road and expansion of the Missouri Flat Road interchange for a tight diamond formation. The \$41 million project was funded with local transportation funds. Phase 1A won a national American Public Works Association Transportation Project of Year award.

The more recent Phase 1B project included improvements to mainline Highway 50, seismic retrofitting of the eastbound and westbound existing Weber Creek Bridges, widening each bridge to three lanes, construction of auxiliary lanes between Missouri Flat Road and Placerville Drive, remaining construction of ramps for a tight diamond configuration and a bike and pedestrian path adjacent to Highway 50. The California Transportation Commission allocated \$35.5 million for the project, which included \$5 million in economic stimulus funds for the bike path.

Final construction of the new bike path east of the Weber Creek Bridge on Highway 50 is being temporarily delayed to make changes to the alignment that will enhance sight distance for motorists traveling eastbound. The modified design will increase the separation between the bike path and the eastbound Highway 50 traffic lanes east of Weber Creek and west of Placerville Drive.

“The proposed realignment design changes will be more compatible with the future Western Placerville Drive Interchange Improvement project, and minimize the amount of bike path reconstruction and cost in the future,” said Adam Bane, El Dorado County project manager.

The County and Caltrans expect approval of the bike path realignment plans and connection to Placerville Drive/Forni Road in mid-2013. Construction is anticipated to take place in 2014, when additional funding is obtained. The bike path may be partially opened to the public between Missouri Flat Road and the east side of the Weber Creek crossing following formal completion of the interchange and bridge project.

Overall construction costs for Phase 1B of the project have been approximately 90% of budget. As a result of the lower than expected costs, the Board of Supervisors was able to authorize payment for the restoration of the Motherlode Drive Park and Ride. The profile of Motherlode Drive was raised seven feet during Phase 1A of the project resulting in the loss of several parking spaces, which will now be restored to full capacity.

While under construction in 1962, *Pacific Road Builder* magazine indicated that the Weber Creek Bridge project on Highway 50, "will always be one of the state's most interesting."

"Our project may no longer be one of California's most interesting, but it's definitely one for the El Dorado County history books," said Smeltzer. "It is impossible to predict all of the variables in a project of this magnitude, but it has progressed well and the transportation improvements will be long lasting."

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