

## Interstate 5 carpool lanes and other North County projects will share \$17.7 million in federal funds

By Phil Diehl

NORTH COUNTY — Federal money for carpool lanes on Interstate 5 in Oceanside, a new fire station on Camp Pendleton, and projects in Carlsbad, Vista, Encinitas and Solana Beach are included in the recent Fiscal Year 2024 government funding bill signed by President Joe Biden.

“These investments will have a profound impact on the communities of North County San Diego and South Orange County, and build on the progress we’ve made to make our district healthier, safer and stronger,” said District 49 Rep. Mike Levin, D-San Juan Capistrano, in a written announcement Tuesday.

Topping the list of 15 projects in the two counties is \$4 million allocated to the Orange County Transportation Authority for its Coastal Rail Corridor Relocation Study. The study will look at the possibility of relocating several miles of the railroad away from the beach in San Clemente, where landslides have stopped passenger trains from traveling between San Diego and Orange County for months at a time in recent years.

The second-largest allocation on the list totaling \$17.7 million is \$2.7 million to replace the old Area 53 fire station at Camp Pendleton. The new building will have living quarters, training facilities, kitchen and dining areas, vehicle apparatus bays and more, Levin’s announcement states.

Also included in the spending bill is \$1.2 million for a project already underway to add HOV lanes to I-5 in Oceanside. The work continues the carpool-lane project that Caltrans and the San Diego Association of Governments began in 2017 in Solana Beach. Working north from there, Caltrans finished four additional miles of lanes in Carlsbad last year.

Oceanside will get \$1 million for upgrades at John Landes Park in the Tri-City area. The money will cover additional upgrades to the community center there, including a library and classes such as dance, pottery and arts for children and adults.

Del Mar is on the list for \$960,000 to replace parts of the city’s sewer and storm drain infrastructure. Carlsbad, Vista, Encinitas, Solana Beach and San Juan Capistrano each will get \$850,000 for street projects.

In Carlsbad the money will allow the city’s Safe Routes to Schools program to install 140 high-visibility crosswalks and 105 speed cushions near schools, also to resurface some streets. Encinitas will install a roundabout at Leucadia Boulevard and Hygeia Avenue.

Vista is getting its dollars for the Emerald Drive Complete Streets Project, where it will pay for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, pedestrian crossings, and access and safety improvements including lowering traffic speeds.

Solana Beach will install traffic calming and pedestrian safety features along Lomas Santa Fe Drive, and in San Juan Capistrano the money will pay for replacing a 60-year-old bridge and two more traffic lanes, new sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting and channel improvements in San Juan Creek.

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department will get \$760,000 to install advanced technology for forensic DNA testing in cold case homicides and sexual assaults. The tools will be available to more than 30 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, Levin's office said.

Finally, the Crown Valley Parkway mobility project in Laguna Niguel, which includes ADA-accessible features and improved pedestrian pathways, and the Stonehill Drive widening project in Dana Point and San Juan Capistrano, each will get \$500,000.