

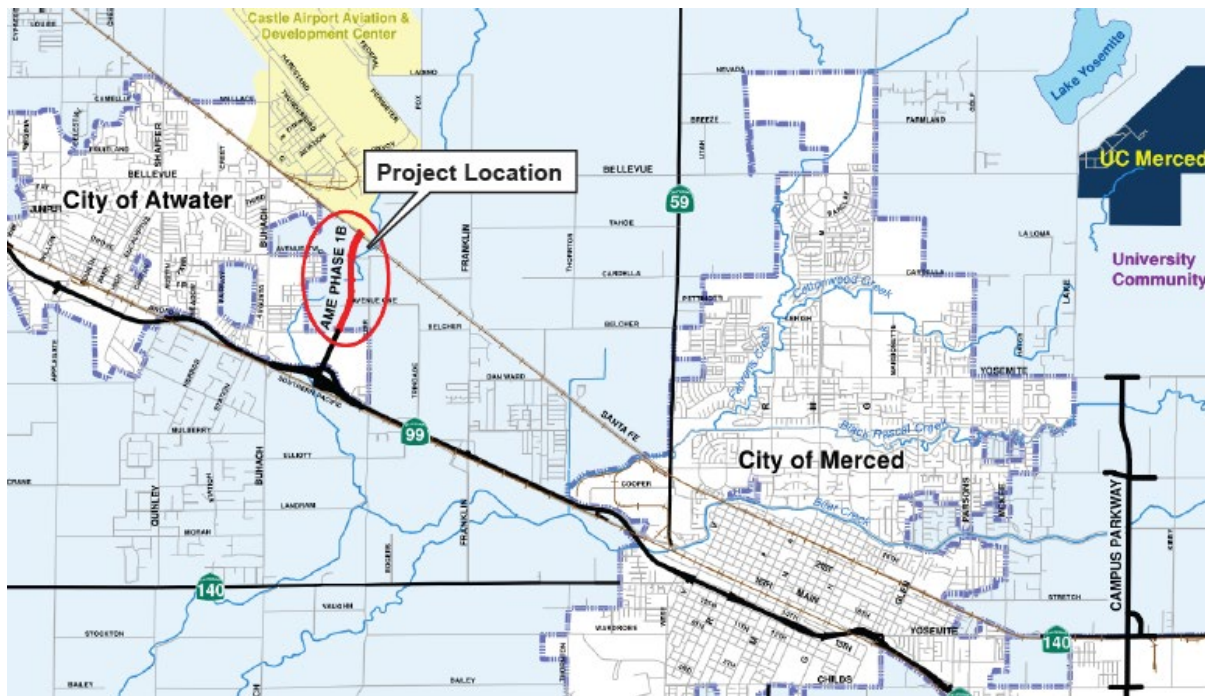


2024 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Fact Sheet

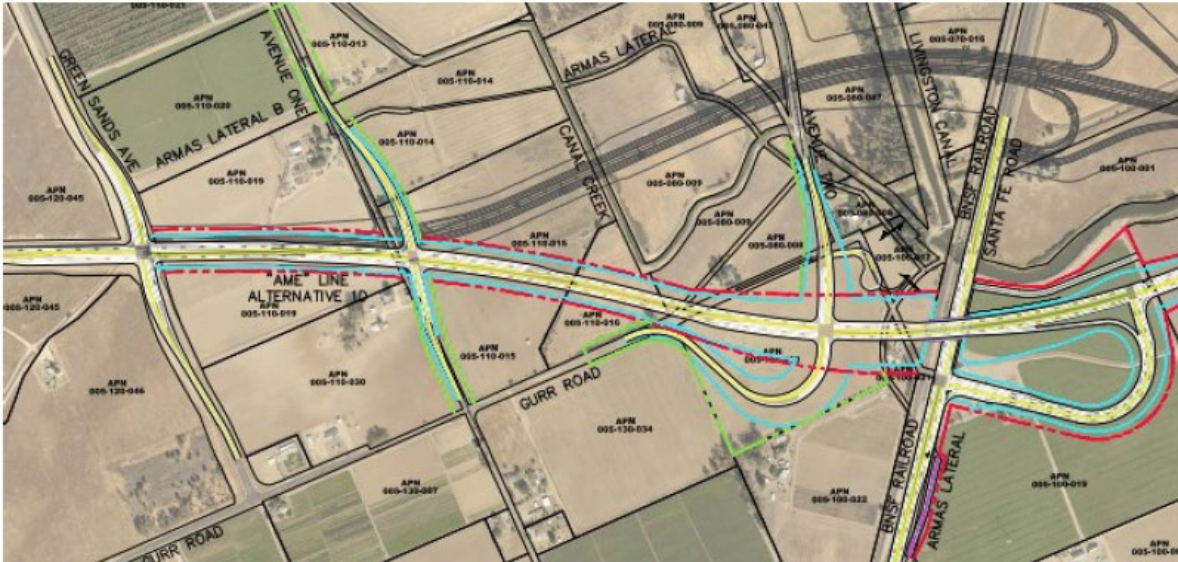
Executive Summary

The Atwater-Merced Expressway is a multi-phase project to connect State Route 99 to the Mid-California International Trade District (MCITD) at the former Castle Air Force Base via a two-lane expressway. The MCITD is home to the Merced County Inland Port, a recent recipient of \$49.6 in state Port and Freight Infrastructure Program (PFIP) funds for the further development of the port facility to assist with the diversification of freight logistics facilities in the State of California. The location of this facility is particularly impactful as it provides safe and expedient access to SR 99, one of the principal freight conduits in California and identified as a Top 6 Corridor for the initial viable network in the adopted Clean Freight Corridor Assessment.

The AME project will not only provide safe access between the port facility and SR 99, but will also eliminate an unsafe, at-grade rail crossing at Avenue Two and Santa Fe Drive. Once completed, the AME will redirect commercial traffic currently traveling through school and residential areas on local arterials. The completion of AME will enable more efficient and environmentally sustainable multimodal movement of freight between the nationally significant SR 99 freight corridor and the regionally significant manufacturing, technology and logistics hub MCITD, and more specifically, the Merced County Inland Port.



Atwater-Merced Expressway, project location in the region



Source: Quincy Engineering

Atwater-Merced Expressway design sketch

Benefits

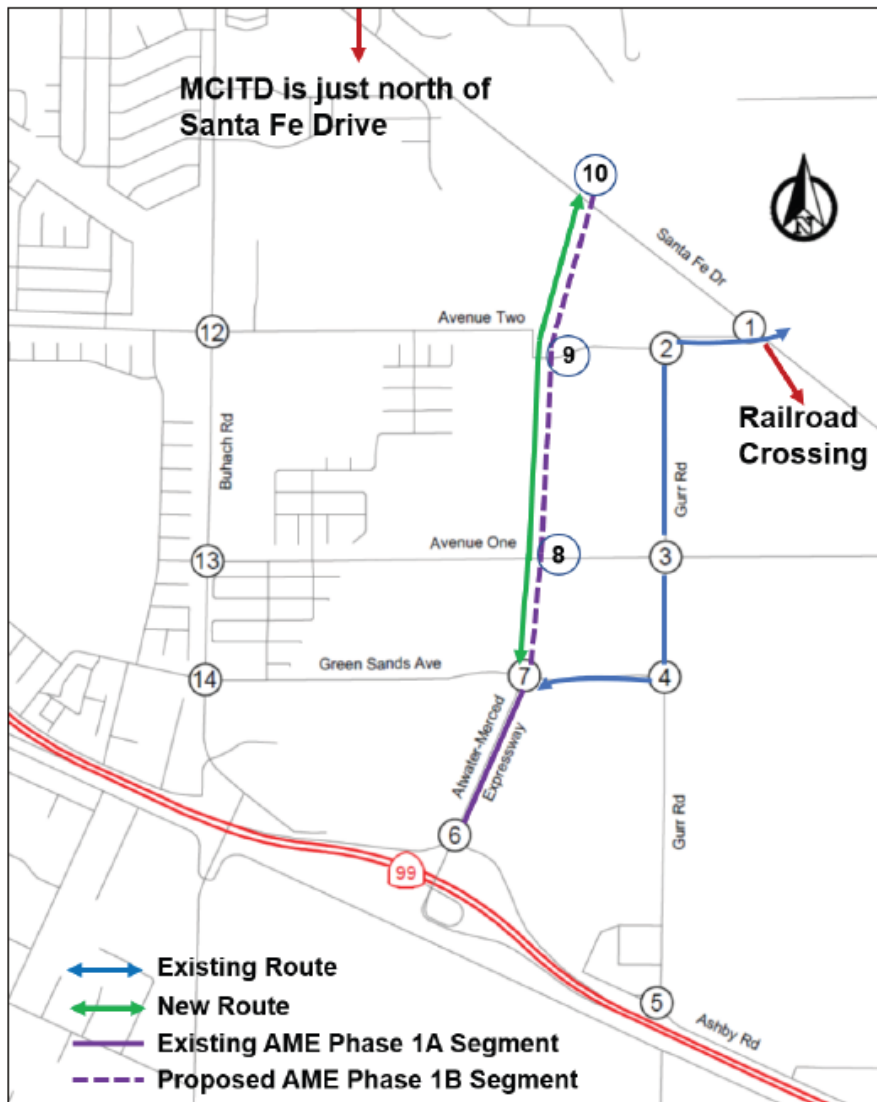
The Atwater-Merced Expressway will provide economic benefits, safety improvements, and emissions reductions to the MCAG region and the local community.

As it will provide east-west connectivity between SR 99 and the MCITD and Inland Port, this facility will provide for much more efficient movement of goods and the safer movement of people. The elimination of the Burlington-Northern and Santa Fe at-grade rail crossing and the unsignalized intersection at Santa Fe Drive and Avenue Two will improve safety and vehicle delay. In fact, it is estimated that AME will save more than 3 million hours in travel time in the first 20 years of operation – that is more than 167,000 hours a year. And with the shift of passenger and freight traffic from Buhach and Gurr Roads onto a direct expressway route, the more efficient and shorter travel distances will result in less idling, reduced vehicle miles traveled, and reduced air pollutants.

The AME project will provide tremendous opportunity for the local and regional economy of a historically disadvantaged region of unserved and underserved residents. As noted, the AME will provide a safe and efficient connection between SR 99 and the MCITD, a trade zone located at the former Castle Air Force Base. This area includes an Airport Zone comprised of the Castle Airport that accommodates civilian aviation and air freight activities. The Automotive Zone is already anchored by the Transportation Research Center (TRC) and is specifically geared toward the research, development and testing of connected and autonomous vehicle technology. The Manufacturing Zone accommodates medium and large format advanced manufacturing and logistics activities and the Rail Logistics Zone is anchored by a new transload facility that will support inbound and outbound cargo handling. The completion of the AME will act as a catalyst for the further development of the MCITD and Inland Port, which is estimated to generate 10,000 new high value jobs when fully built out.

Completion of the AME will contribute to improved localized and regional air quality through providing more efficient accessibility (and thus more than 200,000 reduced operating hours)

over its first two decades of operation between SR 99 and the MCITD. Improved air quality due to more efficient freight movement will in turn contribute to an improvement in the quality of life for county residents in general, and in particular those living along Buhach Road, from which much of the commercial freight will shift to the AME.



Source: Mott McDonald. AECOM

Goals and Objectives

The Atwater-Merced Expressway is an integral component of the transportation network in the 2022 RTP/SCS and will help the region meet both its policy and qualitative transportation goals, as well as measurable goals relating to housing, land use, and air quality/VMT.

The goals most directly related to this project include:

- Provide a safe and efficient regional road system that accommodates the demand for movement of goods and people.
- Provide an adequate regional road system for goods movement.
- Support the creation of a multimodal goods movement network.
- Maintain safe and efficient operations on all regionally significant roads.
- Provide for goods movement by improving the freight network, strengthening the rural communities' ability to access national and international trade markets, and supporting regional economic development.
- Support economic and community vitality by fostering job creation and business attraction, retention, and expansion.
- Achieve reduction in traffic fatalities and severe injuries on public roads.
- Achieve reduction in congestion.
- Reduce project delivery delays by making efficient use of available transportation funding.

Consistency of Phase 1B Outcomes with California Freight Mobility Plan

CFMP Goal	Objective	AME Phase 1B Consistency
Multimodal Mobility	Strategic investments to maintain, enhance, and modernize the multimodal freight transportation system with innovative approaches including advanced technology to optimize integrated network efficiency, travel time reliability improvements, and sustainable congestion reduction.	Completion of Phase 1B and operation of the AME will enable greater efficiency of freight movement between SR-99 and the MCTID, a 1,900-acre greenfield and brownfield technology, manufacturing , and freight logistics facility supporting air, rail, and road freight.
Economic Prosperity	Grow the economic competitiveness of California's freight sector through increased system efficiency, productivity, and workforce preparation.	Completion of Phase 1B and operation of the AME will act as a catalyst for the development of the MCITD which, upon completion of its development build out, is estimated to create approximately 10,000 high value jobs.

Environmental Stewardship	Support strategies that reduce, avoid or mitigate adverse environmental impacts of the freight transportation system while promoting ecological restoration in the planning process.	Completion of Phase 1B and operation of AME is estimated to result in the avoidance of 3.4 million operating hours over its first twenty of operation. This is estimated to result in the avoidance of 11,110 tons of (CO2, PM, NOX) being released into the atmosphere over this time.
Healthy Communities	Enhance community health and wellbeing by distributing the benefits of the goods movement system equitably across California's communities.	Completion of Phase 1B will shift commercial and passenger traffic travelling to Santa Fe Drive and MCITD from SR-99 via Buhach and Gurr Roads, thus removing traffic from a streets largely characterized by residential properties and one of which also is home to a high school. In addition to reducing the potential for accidents, completion of Phase 1B and operation of Phase 1 the AME will result in more efficient commercial road movements, thereby resulting in less emissions and better localized and regional air quality.
Safety and Resiliency	Reduce freight-related deaths/injuries and improve system resilience by addressing infrastructure vulnerabilities associated with security threats, expected climate change impacts, and natural disasters.	Removing commercial traffic from potential conflicts with residential and civic uses, as well as replacing an existing rail/road crossing with a grade separated crossing will result in the potential for less safety incidents.
Asset Management	Maintain and preserve infrastructure assets using cost-beneficial treatment as indicated in the State Highway System Management Plan (SHSMP) ³ , per the federal FAST Act, State and Highway Code 164.6, and Caltrans Deputy Directive (D-35).	Upon completion of Phase 1B, the AME will be in good state of good repair. The Merced County will be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the AME.
Connectivity and Accessibility	Provide transportation choices and improve system connectivity for all freight modes.	Completion of Phase 1B and operation of Phase 1 of the AME will result in enhanced connectivity between the SR-99, part of the national Primary Highway Freight System, and the employment lands along Santa Fe Drive, particularly the MCITD, a major regional technology, manufacturing , and freight logistics facility supporting air, rail, and road freight.

To view MCAG's 2024 Regional Transportation Improvement Program please visit <https://www.mcagov.org/151/Regional-Transportation-Improvement-Prog>