

# San Diego's dream trolley line extension getting closer to reality

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new trolley line for San Diego is getting closer to reality.

The California Coastal Commission has approved a permit for the planned Mid-Coast Trolley, a mark of progress that follows action in Washington that is expected to provide funds to pay for a new tracks and stations between Old Town and University Town Center.

Commissioners voted unanimously Wednesday to give the San Diego Association of Governments approval to build the new line, which will roll through 3.5 miles of designated coastal zone. The 11-mile project to extend the existing Blue Line includes nine new stations and will link the county's two largest job regions.

Constructed within San Diego city limits, the line hugs Interstate 5. It runs from Santa Fe Depot downtown on existing tracks to the Old Town Transit Center just south of Interstate 8. From there it will head north on new tracks to University City. Once at University City, the tracks change from running at-grade to elevated rail.

The project is expected to relieve traffic congestion, shorten travel times, improve reliability, and reduce transfers for people traveling to University City, a commission staff report says.

SANDAG said construction is expected to begin this year and the new line will be open for service in 2021. It's projected cost is \$2 billion. The regional planning organization expects the population on the trolley's corridor to increase by 19 percent by 2030 and employment to rise 12 percent.

Last week, funding for the trolley line passed a significant milestone when financing passed from the Federal Transit Administration to the Office of Management and Budget. From there it will go to Congress for consideration.

"We are getting very close to something that has been a dream for almost two decades," SANDAG Chairman and county Supervisor Ron Roberts said recently.

Roberts said he doesn't anticipate any sort of legislative roadblocks.

Money from the half-cent TransNet sales tax will pay for a portion of the project, he said.

*Stewart writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune.*

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