

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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## Wait over: Highway 4 widening under way

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Contra Costa Times

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PITTSBURG — Relief is on the way for motorists who sit in traffic on a crowded stretch of Highway 4.

Work has started on the next piece of the Highway 4 widening, the addition of four lanes from Loveridge Road to just west of Somersville Road in Antioch. The \$64.9 million project will include the creation of a median in the highway wide enough for BART's extension into East Contra Costa County and a new interchange at Loveridge.

Crews started removing dirt from the side of the highway earlier this month near the eastbound onramp from Loveridge Road. Two miles east near Century Auto Mall, heavy machines cleared space in the highway median.

The widening is expected to take about three years to complete, said Susan Miller, director of projects for the Contra Costa Transportation Authority. The construction area includes three creeks, meaning roadwork can't take place during rainy seasons, she said.

The work is exciting for Antioch residents, who have been paying sales taxes and waiting decades to see Highway 4 widened, City Councilwoman Martha Parsons said.

"It's our tax dollars finally at work," Parsons said. "There are a lot of people who never thought they were going to see it, and now it's happening."

Added Contra Costa County Supervisor Federal Glover: "It's exciting to see work being done. This area has waited a long time for this particular phase."

With construction on the Loveridge-to-Somersville

segment under way, Caltrans is seeking bids for widening Highway 4 from Somersville to Contra Loma Boulevard. That project, which would include offramps at Somersville, is projected to cost \$49.7 million.

Local transportation officials hope the cost to widen to Contra Loma will be far below that amount. The contract for the Loveridge-to-Somersville portion this spring was 30 percent below the expected price tag.

Construction on the widening to Contra Loma could start by February, Miller said.

Caltrans is working to obtain a right of way so it can widen Highway 4 to G Street, Miller said. PG&E is relocating utility lines in anticipation of construction, she said.

That segment could go to bid by next spring.

The entire widening is expected to be completed by 2015, with an estimated total cost of more than \$500 million.

**Contact Paul Bugarino at 925-779-7164.**

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