

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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## More traffic trouble ahead for East Contra Costa drivers

By Paul Bugarino  
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Motorists in Antioch who say Highway 4 causes them headaches may want to stock up on ibuprofen for the next few years.

All of the Highway 4 onramps and offramps through Antioch likely will be under construction by this time next year, part of a \$500 million project to widen the freeway from four to eight lanes through the city by 2015.

Civic and school district officials, along with the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, are trying to prepare residents for the added delays and traffic backups on city streets.

"It's going to be painful, but we know it's going to be better once we get to the other side," said Terry Ramus, a board member of the Antioch Chamber of Commerce. "I'm thankful the funding is there for this to all happen. It would be a disaster if work had to stop in the middle."

Construction continues on ramps at Somersville Road, and work to add a full interchange at Contra Loma Boulevard is set to start in February or March, said Susan Miller, projects director for the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.

Work on that segment will change the current configuration where westbound drivers can enter the freeway at Contra Loma and G Street, and eastbound drivers can exit on those roads.

G Street will still cross over the highway, but it will not have any freeway ramps.

"Caltrans doesn't want anyone building half interchanges anymore," Miller said.

Widening of the freeway from G past Hillcrest Avenue

is expected to begin by next fall.

In anticipation of the road work, more than 18,000 fliers in English and Spanish will be distributed to all Antioch schools to advise parents of the situation, said Tim Forrester, Antioch Unified's associate superintendent of business and operations. The district may also place automated phone calls to parents, he said.

Parents will be advised to allow at least 10 extra minutes to drive to school.

"We wanted to be sure to give them a heads-up," Miller said.

Officials also plan to alert local business owners about the construction and to limit disruptions, including keeping city streets open that cross the freeway during the day.

Input from businesses will be important throughout the construction, Ramus said.

East Contra Costa residents Rhonda Hauck and Janet Flores are among those who are glad Highway 4 is being widened but know it will cause some hassles. They already avoid the highway on their trips to work or "over the hill" into Concord around Highway 4.

"It's way overdue. Any improvement they can make is just common sense," said John Tiernan, a 22-year

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Antioch resident. Highway 4 through Antioch has been four lanes since the growing region was predominantly farmland and orchards.

Contra Costa's transportation authority continues to demolish buildings and homes of relocated residents near the freeway from G to Hillcrest and clear trees in anticipation of the widening. PG&E is relocating its power lines.

Contact Paul Burgarino at 925-779-7164. Follow him at [Twitter.com/paulburgarino](https://twitter.com/paulburgarino).



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