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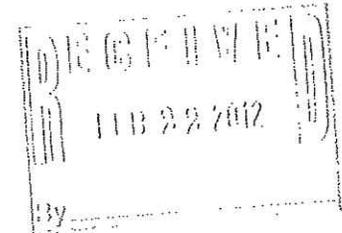
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February 16, 2012



Honorable Mary Bono Mack
Representative, U.S. Congress
36953 Cook Street, Suite 104
Palm Desert, CA 92211

Dear Congresswoman Mack:

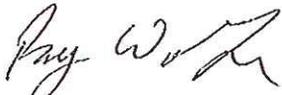
I would like to express my personal apologies for the events that led to the significant traffic jam on Interstate 10 (I-10) through the Coachella Valley Sunday. The project scope was to replace deteriorated slabs and regroove pavement to facilitate better ride quality and extend the life of the concrete pavement. The work entailed removal of large sections of the concrete pavement (8 feet x 12 feet x 12 inches deep), regrading compacting the base material, and placement of rapid-set concrete. Once the new concrete pavement reached a minimum strength after curing, traffic could be restored. A multitude of issues arose that contributed to the unacceptable delays in reopening the highway; temperatures overnight were too low to place concrete pavement, more slabs were removed than could be reasonably replaced in the allocated construction window, the concrete batch plant broke down delaying delivery of concrete for hours, and once concrete trucks were rolling they found themselves caught in the heavy traffic backup. After it was clear to field staff that delays were unavoidable, internal organizational issues delayed media outreach efforts. You have my commitment that we are further investigating the situation to ensure that this event is not repeated. One easy solution that should have been deployed is to temporarily compact asphalt concrete to allow reopening the lanes with concrete pavement placed at a later time. Limiting the number of slabs removed to that which can be reconstructed within the closure timeframe should have been the priority of field staff. Remedial steps that have already been instituted include staffing changes, requiring a back-up plan from the Contractor for instances when unexpected events occur such as the batch plant breaking down, and a reorganization of our internal structure and procedures to ensure that information flows readily to the media and public.

Many of you have asked about the lack of alternate access in the affected area that was brought to the forefront during this incident. I want to assure you that Caltrans has been working with the County, Supervisor Benoit, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the Coachella Valley Associated Governments and the California Highway Patrol to implement solutions.

Ideally, an alternate route somewhat paralleling I-10 from approximately Apache Trail to State Route (SR) 111 will be constructed, but this solution has a number of issues that will delay it for years. Intermediate plans include adding Changeable Message Signs along the various routes leading to the Banning Pass on I-10 in Blythe and a second near Desert Center, on SR-86S near Indio, on SR-111 prior to the junction with I-10, and on I-10 just west of SR-62. A project to construct the signs on I-10 in Blythe and Desert Center is expected to commence construction this summer. The remaining signs will follow in about a year. We are also finalizing plans to construct three additional median barrier breaks with moveable gates between Apache Trail and SR-111 and the two that our maintenance crews created last year using k-rail will be modified with moveable gates. We will also continue to work with the various stakeholders to advance longer term solutions to the lack of an adequate alternate route.

Again, the events that unfolded this past weekend were unacceptable and avoidable if appropriate decisions had been made in the field. This is the real tragedy and I commit to you and the public that we will institute all the necessary organizational and policy changes to ensure this will not be repeated.

Sincerely,



RAYMOND W. WOLFE, PhD
District 8 Director