

= California State Route 37 =

State Route 37 (SR 37) is a state highway in the northern part of California that runs 21 miles (34 km) along the northern shore of San Pablo Bay . It is built from U.S. Route 101 in Novato and runs through the southern tips of Sonoma and Napa counties to Interstate 80 in Vallejo . It serves as a vital connection between the four counties of the North Bay Area , north of San Francisco ; Sonoma Raceway and Six Flags Discovery Kingdom are accessible from Route 37 .

Route 37 has been proposed to be built to freeway standards since the early 1950s . However , the proposal was met with many economic and environmental obstacles , making the task all but impossible for much of the route . Problems included a levee break in Vallejo which turned part of the land around the highway into a marsh that is home to endangered salt marsh harvest mice , and a section of highway known as " Blood Alley " for its high rate of fatal accidents .

= = Route description = =

Intended to run from State Route 251 , a highway that has not been constructed , SR 37 begins in Novato with a junction at U.S. Route 101 and heads northeast as a freeway for about a quarter mile before becoming a four @-@ lane expressway . The route passes over the Petaluma River into Sonoma County before meeting the southern terminus of State Route 121 at a signal @-@ controlled intersection near Sears Point and the Sonoma Raceway .

The route continues as a divided two @-@ lane expressway in a more easterly , then southeasterly , direction as it crosses Tolay Creek and proceeds through the Napa Sonoma Marsh at the northern edge of San Pablo Bay . Before the construction of the barrier in 1995 , this portion of SR 37 was three lanes with the middle lane alternately serving as a passing lane for each direction . This stretch of highway was given the nickname of " Blood Alley " for its high @-@ rate of fatal accidents . With the middle lane removed , accidents dropped dramatically .

SR 37 becomes a four @-@ lane freeway on Mare Island , approaching northern Vallejo . After it crosses over the Napa River Bridge , it continues as a freeway , overlapping the old highway alignment and passing north of the old road known as Marine World Parkway (due to its proximity to the Six Flags Discovery Kingdom , previously known as Marine World) . SR 37 travels in a northeasterly direction along the White Slough before turning east as it crosses over State Route 29 and heads to its eastern terminus at I @-@ 80 as the James Capoot Memorial Highway (honoring a Vallejo police officer who was killed in the line of duty) . In the early 1990s , the stretch between Fairgrounds Drive , which serves as the entrance to Discovery Kingdom , and Mini Drive was upgraded to a freeway . In 2004 and 2005 , following over fifty years of complications , the remaining non @-@ freeway section in Vallejo was upgraded as well .

Route 37 is also known as William " Randy " Bolt Memorial Highway from Route 29 to Skaggs Road (honoring a California Department of Justice agent who was killed in the line of duty in an accident along SR 37) , and Sears Point Toll Road , which was originally a toll road that ran from Route 121 to Vallejo . This route is part of the California Freeway and Expressway System and is eligible for the State Scenic Highway System . However , it is not designated as a scenic highway by Caltrans .

= = History = =

The stretch of road east of Sears Point was once part of the historical El Camino Real . As a result of the State Highways Acts of the early 20th century , the Black Point Cut @-@ off was built over it and opened to traffic in 1917 . This highway followed the current alignment east of Sears Point , before diverting northeast along present @-@ day Route 121 . It was first designated Legislative Route 8 (LRN 8) , later being signed as State Route 37 .

Prior to being under State control , the section between Sears Point and Vallejo was known as the Sears Point Toll Road , a toll road managed by Golden Gate Ferry that was built over an ancient Native American trail . When it was purchased by the State in 1938 , tolls were removed ; it then became signed as State Route 48 until 1964 .

Route 37 was redefined in the 1964 state highway renumbering as a route starting at SR 251 , then SR 17 , near Nicasio and ending at I @-@ 80 near Lake Chabot . The whole of SR 37 has been proposed to be built to freeway standards since the early 1950s . However , the proposal was met with many economic and environmental obstacles , making the task all but impossible for much of the route .

= = = Sears Point Toll Road = = =

As late as 1926 , Golden Gate Ferries , owners of the Sears Point Toll Road Co . , began plans to build the Sears Point Toll Road , with a contract awarded to Oakland @-@ based Hutchinson Company in October 1927 . The paved toll road was to be built on top of an ancient Native American trail along the San Pablo Bay shore between the Sacramento Highway and the Black Point cut @-@ off (LRN 8) near Sears Point . It was expected to cost \$ 775,000USD , with a toll not exceeding \$ 0 @. @ 35 . Toll road officials explained the purpose of the road ; to stimulate motor vehicle usage by reducing the commute times and expenses of motorists traveling from the East Bay and Sacramento areas by offering a more direct route toward Marin , Sonoma and the Redwood Highway . The road opened for traffic in 1928 .

On November 29 , 1932 , the California State Highway Commission received a recommendation to purchase the road and was able to invest \$ 418,000USD by 1936 . However , the U.S. Navy owned rights to the right @-@ of @-@ way of part of the route , and opposed the purchase . This resulted in congressional actions to establish a clear title deed for the route . House Representative Richard J. Welch was one of the earliest government officials to pressure the State of California to acquire the toll road in order to convert it into a toll @-@ free highway . He argued that having only one toll road to travel in order to reach the Golden Gate Bridge would benefit commuters ; he also cited the ten and seventh @-@ tenths @-@ mile difference in distance between the toll road and a route through Napa . A Navy Department deed permitting the State to purchase the road was granted by the Attorney General on October 26 , 1938 . The highway then became signed as State Route 48 until the 1964 renumbering .

= = = Highway upgrading in Vallejo = = =

By 1955 , talks began about upgrading the highway . After a proposition to turn much of the route into a toll road failed , it was decided a four @-@ lane freeway would be the best decision . However , opposition from residents in surrounding neighborhoods as well as a federal oil embargo only allowed widening of the approach between Fairgrounds Drive and I @-@ 80 . In 1977 , a levee broke and flooded a portion of the developed land , turning it into protected wetlands that is home to endangered species . Because of its new status , environmental studies were needed in order to continue the project .

Soon after , the project was split into different phases to handle problems with particular areas . It was first divided between the newly created marshlands and the section between Sonoma Blvd . (SR 29) and I @-@ 80 . With Marine World being relocated , the city was able to the widen the latter section and build an overpass across Fairgrounds Drive in 1992 .

= = = " Blood Alley " = = =

While the Vallejo section of SR 37 was being updated , another problem with the route would hinder its progress . The section between Sears Point and Mare Island was plagued with fatal accidents , earning its nickname of " Blood Alley " . Between 1966 and 1970 , 27 people lost their lives to it . In a preliminary effort to reduce the fatalities , officials established both a daylight test section , requiring all cars to keep their headlights on during the day , and passing lanes . However , these efforts were ineffective .

In 1993 , local resident Jim Poulos campaigned to have a barrier erected after the death of his 18 @-@ year @-@ old son , Frankie , on " Blood Alley " . At this time , the situation with this stretch

only worsened as the death toll between 1990 and 1996 rose to thirty @-@ one . At first , Caltrans thought the barrier would make matters worse since it would be difficult for emergency vehicles to attend to accidents ; environmental issues were also cited . Caltrans was waiting for the ability to create a causeway to span the area instead . Poulos continued his campaign despite opposition , and was granted the barrier in 1995 . The barrier was not built without controversy , as it also eliminated the passing lanes . However , since the barriers were built , there were no longer any crossover accidents as of 2005 .

While the median was built , a few problems needed to be resolved in order for the road to work both safely and in an environmentally friendly way . Emergency personnel needed to quickly access accidents and provide them easy transport to nearby hospitals . To alleviate this problem , Caltrans implemented electric gate technology , which would allow emergency vehicles to cut through certain parts of the median . The other problem was to both protect the plant life and the salt marsh harvest mice residing around the highway . As a result , crews placed timbers and sheeting to protect foliage , and added holes into the median barrier to allow the mice to cross the highway .

= = = White Slough and Sonoma Boulevard interchange = = =

To protect White Slough while still allowing the widening of SR 37 , the White Slough Protection and Development Act was passed in 1990 . It allowed up to 13 acres of wetlands to be filled but required at least four times as much wetland restoration elsewhere in the Bay Area .

After environmental studies on the White Slough , Caltrans widened and elevated that section of the road and converted it to a freeway . To accommodate bicycles and pedestrians , a cycleway was built along the eastbound side of the freeway . Finally , Caltrans completed the overpass which crossed SR 29 , Broadway , and Mini Drive (bypassing Marine World Parkway , three traffic signaled intersections , and a railroad grade crossing) . The project was completed in the summer of 2005 , and fully open to traffic on August 20 .

= = Future = =

Since 2011 , the Road Ecology Center at the University of California , Davis has partnered with Caltrans and other regional and local entities to collaboratively plan future scenarios for SR 37 . Since 2014 , this has focused on structural and locational adaptations to the highway in response to potential sea level rise impacts . This is one of the first highways in the country to face vertical or geographic re @-@ location due to likely sea level rise impacts . The most popular option with stakeholders is to place the highway on a causeway , allowing it to escape flooding from sea level rise and reduce impacts to the marshes . This would not eliminate traffic noise impacts to birds , mammals and human communities adjacent to and near (< 1 km) the highway . Other options considered have included placing the highway 3 ? 4 meters higher on a levee , building a tunnel for the highway under the North Bay , and realigning the highway with existing highways to both eliminate impacts to the marshes and avoid sea level rise impacts .

= = Major intersections = =

Except where prefixed with a letter , postmiles were measured on the road as it was in 1964 , based on the alignment that existed at the time , and do not necessarily reflect current mileage . R reflects a realignment in the route since then , M indicates a second realignment , L refers an overlap due to a correction or change , and T indicates postmiles classified as temporary (for a full list of prefixes , see the list of postmile definitions) . Segments that remain unconstructed or have been relinquished to local control may be omitted . The numbers reset at county lines ; the start and end postmiles in each county are given in the county column .

= = Popular culture = =

The route is used as the title for Train 's 2012 album California 37 . The album cover includes a picture of the spade California 37 sign , but is not actually a picture of the highway .