

Express lane plan for I-15 exposes policy rift

Project runs counter to state’s claim it prioritizes climate goals, opponents say.

By Rachel Uranga

Express lanes on eight miles of the truck-choked Interstate 15 will break ground this year and, officials promise, speed up commuters’ slog through the Inland Empire’s ever-growing sprawl of warehouses, subdivisions and polluted air.

But its contentious approval by the California Transportation Commission last month exposed a deepening rift in the state between its climate goals and the list of freeway widening projects that some say are gliding through without scrutiny and threatening the health of the people who live near them.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is now looking into allegations that the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority and the California Department of Transportation may have misled it about the potential environmental harm the project could cause communities that breathe in some of the nation’s worst air. Both say the project was vetted thoroughly and is sound.

In the Inland Empire, the \$388-million express lane project is the centerpiece of a plan to improve traffic along one of the nation’s most congested freight corridors, where commuters going to school or work must navigate the deluge of big rigs carrying goods to and from the area’s massive distribution centers. The new lanes would run roughly from the 60 Freeway to a few miles south of the 210 Freeway and connect to Riverside County’s toll lanes.

Plans for the lanes had been moving along for more than a decade with widespread support from federal, state and local agencies — until December, when Joseph Lyuu, who was then a member of the California

[See **Freeways**, A7]



Photographs by ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

TAYLOR SWIFT not only won album of the year a record fourth time — for “Midnights” — she also announced what could be her fifth: “The Tortured Poets Department,” out April 19. **More coverage, A12.**

GRAMMY AWARDS

What they were made for

Inclement weather did not dampen the excitement inside Crypto.com Arena, whether it was a first or 14th win



MILEY CYRUS received her first two Grammys for the hit “Flowers,” including record of the year.



BILLIE EILISH and brother/co-writer Finneas O’Connell were shocked to win for song of the year.

FIERCE STORM PARKS OVER L.A. AREA

Governor declares state of emergency as ‘Pineapple Express’ gains strength.

By Hayley Smith, Grace Toohey, Emily Albert Reyes, Roger Vincent, Rong-Gong Lin II and Howard Blume

Chilling rain, swirling gray clouds and blustery winds rolled into Southern California on Sunday as the strongest storm of the season geared up to deliver near-record rainfall and life-threatening flash flooding through Tuesday.

The slow-moving atmospheric river was gathering strength Sunday afternoon, spurring Gov. Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency in eight Southern California counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura. The National Weather Service in Oxnard warned that “all systems are go for one of the most dramatic weather days in recent memory.”

“Storms can change quickly, but let me be clear: This storm is a serious weather event,” L.A. Mayor Karen Bass said at a news conference Sunday. “This has the potential to be a historic storm — severe winds, thunderstorms and even brief tornadoes.”

Forecasters said the storm appeared to be focused on the Los Angeles area, where it could park itself for the next few days. It could drop up to 8 inches of rain on the coast and valleys and up to 14 inches in the foothills and mountains.

At a briefing Sunday afternoon, L.A. Unified Supt. Alberto Carvalho announced that schools would remain open Monday, except for Vinedale in Sun Valley, which is affected by city-ordered mandatory evacuations. He called on parents and staff to look for updates Sunday night and Monday at 6 a.m.

[See **Storm**, A6]

Gazans are angry. Not just at Israel, but at Hamas too

By NABIH BULOS AND A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KHAN YUNIS, Gaza Strip — By the 100-day mark of Israel’s offensive in Gaza, Abu Ahmad Al-Gharabli and his 13 family members had been displaced four times before settling in Rafah, at the besieged enclave’s southern end.

Forced to sell cigarettes on the street to get by, the 56-year-old blacksmith is angry. At his inability to provide food and shelter for his family. At the scant humanitarian aid he’s received.

And, most of all, at Hamas.

“Before they launched Oct. 7, they should have secured food, drink and money so that we wouldn’t suffer like this,” Al-Gharabli said of the militant group’s assault on Israel that triggered the

[See **Gaza**, A4]



HATEM ALI Associated Press

“HAMAS didn’t consider the consequences” of war, said one Gazan. Above, a line for food in Khan Yunis.

Why aren’t more patients getting Paxlovid?

Officials are pushing doctors to prescribe the antiviral drug to those with COVID-19. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Bill pairs border policies, war aid

The \$118-billion Senate proposal, which would help resupply Ukraine, faces heavy GOP skepticism. **NATION, A5**

Ohtani frenzy grows at event

DodgerFest showed the team has a global superstar like no other, Dylan Hernández writes. **SPORTS, D1**

Weather

Rain, heavy at times. L.A. Basin: 58/51. **B6**

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A 2007 federal case against medical pot dispenser drags on

By Brittny Mejia

For nearly 17 years, the federal government has been after Charles Lynch for running a medical marijuana dispensary.

Prosecutors refused to drop their criminal case against him even as marijuana became fully legal in California and 23 other states. They refused to let it go when Congress forbade the Department of Justice from using its funds to criminally prosecute medical marijuana activities that were consistent with state law.

Prosecutors have pursued Lynch’s case — which involves conflicting state and federal marijuana laws — through appeals, delays and criticism that they were spending too many resources on a case that meant so little.

“Twenty-five percent of my life,” Lynch, now 61, said in a Southern drawl at a hearing in downtown Los Angeles last month.

When federal authorities launched their investigation in 2007, George W. Bush was in the White House and Lynch was a respected businessman in Morro Bay, Calif., with a three-bedroom ranch-style house in nearby Arroyo Grande.

These days, he struggles financially, lives in a single-wide trailer on his mom’s property in New Mexico and strains to remember the details of the marijuana operation that got him in so much trouble.

“I’ve lost track,” he testified at the hearing as his mother looked on.

Lynch and his lawyers have portrayed the case as a pointless exercise by the De-

[See **Lynch**, A8]



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