



Death Valley National Park News Release

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Contact: Abby Wines, 760-786-3221, abby_wines@nps.gov

Towne Pass Curve Correction Proposed

DEATH VALLEY, CA –The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to realign a section of CA-190 immediately east of Towne Pass to improve safety and reduce collisions.

During a five-year period from 2009 to 2014, there were six collisions in the curvy 0.6-mile section from milepost 69.2 to 69.8 of CA-190, three-quarters of a mile east of Towne Pass. Five of these accidents resulted in injuries. All of the collisions occurred during the day in clear weather conditions. Caltrans reports that this rate is over four times higher than the total statewide average rate, of accidents per million vehicle miles driven, when compared with like facilities.

The current speed limit on this section is 55 miles per hour, but drivers are advised to slow to 30 miles per hour to drive safely through a series of curves, the tightest of which has a radius of 350 feet. This project would realign the road, reduce the number of curves in the 0.6-mile section from six to three, and increase the radii of the curves so that they could be driven safely at 55 miles per hour.

Straightening the road, constructing paved shoulders, and flattening or stabilizing side slopes to reduce potential rock-fall would involve removing 24,000 cubic yards of earthen material and reusing 12,000 cubic yards of that earthen material to fill in other areas. Sight distance while driving would increase from a current minimum of 166 feet to 600 feet.

The project would add paved shoulders up to 8 feet wide and rumble strips on this 0.6-mile section. The rumble strips would be constructed in a skip pattern, meaning that there would be sections of smooth pavement to reduce noise and allow bicyclists to cross. Rumble strips have been consistently proven to reduce collisions and improve driver awareness. These would be the first rumble strips in Death Valley National Park.

The proposed project would affect remnants of the historic Eichbaum Toll Road, which was built from Darwin Wash over Towne Pass to Stovepipe Wells in 1926 by Herman William (Bob) Eichbaum. The State of California bought the road in 1934 and eventually designated it as State Route 190.

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The project has an estimated cost of \$3.9 million. Caltrans plans to keep the road open during construction.

Caltrans invites the public to review the proposed Towne Pass Curve Correction project at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/d9/environmental/index.html>. Comments should be addressed to Angela Calloway, Environmental Office Chief, California Department of Transportation, 500 Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514 or via email to angela.calloway@dot.ca.gov. Comments are due by November 9, 2016.

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