



## INTERSTATE-8 IMPERIAL COUNTY TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT SUMMARY

This Transportation Concept Summary (TCS) for Interstate 8 in the Imperial County portion of District 11 serves as an analysis tool and conceptual long-range guide for future investment decisions in the transportation corridor.

### **DISCLAIMER**

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
**PLANNING DIVISION**  
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**Caltrans**  
DISTRICT 11

# I-8 Imperial County Transportation Concept Summary June 2009

## CORRIDOR PURPOSE

This document discusses transportation issues related to the Imperial County portion of Interstate 8 (I-8). A separate document on the San Diego County portion of I-8 has been developed. To provide continuity, some transportation aspects of the entire corridor are included in this document.

Interstate 8 (I-8) is an east-west interstate highway facility serving San Diego and Imperial Counties. I-8 begins in San Diego at its junction with Sunset Cliffs Boulevard, Post Mile (P.M.) SD L0.0. The portion of this route that is within District 11 extends 276.8 kilometers (km) (172.0 miles) to its eastern terminus at the California-Arizona State Line (P.M. IMP R97.0) near Yuma, Arizona. I-8 continues into Arizona until it intersects with I-10 near Casa Grande.

In the San Diego area, I-8 interconnects all the major north-south metropolitan freeways including I-5, State Route (SR) 163, I-805, I-15, SR-125, SR-67 and SR-54. As it continues east, it accesses the southern terminus of SR-79 (P.M. SD R37.8) and the eastern terminus of SR-94 (P.M. SD R65.9). After it crosses into Imperial County it connects with the western terminus of SR-98 (P.M. IMP 10.1), a parallel facility. In Imperial County, I-8 intersects with SR-86, SR-111 (access to the international POE at Calexico), SR-7, and SR-115. It then reconnects with SR-98 at its eastern terminus. Finally, it accesses the SR-186 connection to the international border station of Andrade. The California portion of I-8 terminates at the Arizona state border.

I-8 was added to the State Highway System in three sections:

1. Former Route 12 from San Diego (I-5) to El Centro in 1909.
2. Former Route 27 from El Centro to the Arizona State Line in 1915.
3. Former Route 109 from Sunset Cliffs Boulevard to I-5 in 1915.

I-8 was added to the Freeway and Expressway System in 1959.

The primary purpose of I-8 in the San Diego area is to provide for east-west movement of commuter, regional, and interregional traffic. The western, more urbanized portion of I-8 is a major commuter route serving Ocean Beach, Mission Valley, San Diego State University, La Mesa, El Cajon, the County of San Diego and Alpine. The eastern portion of I-8 beyond the urban area is primarily an interregional route used for goods movement, and for access to mountain and desert recreational areas. However, there is a small, but increasing amount of commuter traffic between San Diego and the rapidly growing Imperial County. I-8 is the primary route used by Imperial County agricultural producers to ship products into the San Diego area and also provides access to suppliers of the agricultural support industries.

## **CORRIDOR NEEDS**

Within Imperial County, I-8 is a 79 mile, east-west four-lane freeway with complete grade separations at all intersections. The Imperial County portion of I-8 serves as an interregional route for the traveling public and goods movement carriers and provides a connection to other states.

In recent years, I-8 also accommodates increased intraregional traffic within Imperial Valley. Imperial County is one of the fastest growing counties in California. It experienced an increase of 30 percent growth in population between 1990 and 2000 compared to approximately 13 percent for the state and the nation. It is projected to have an even more dramatic growth of 50 percent for the period from 2000 to 2010. It faces significant challenges in addressing growth-related issues, as well as the pressures it faces from the neighboring regions, including San Diego and Mexico.

In recent years, Imperial County has experienced a housing boom and its relative affordability has drawn people to move their families to Imperial County while they commute to their jobs in San Diego. In 2000, just over 400 people commuted from Imperial County to San Diego County and this number has the potential to increase in the future. Eighty-seven percent of those commuters drove through San Diego County and into the western half of the region. Of the total commuting from Imperial to San Diego County, the two principal destinations were downtown San Diego (31 percent) and North City (19 percent). This indicates an increased pressure on the I-8 corridor. In addition, 67 percent of these commuters drove alone.

Short-term future growth in Imperial County is difficult to predict given the existing economic market conditions, however, longer-term growth may have an impact on I-8. In order to accommodate intraregional and interregional traffic volume increases, capacity-enhancing projects may need to be developed on portions of I-8 in Imperial County. Additional interregional strategies in the areas of transportation and land use could be developed that would reduce congestion and ensure adequate level of service on the I-8 corridor while improving air quality. These include but are not limited to completing gaps in the local arterial street system to get local trips off of I-8, expansion of transit service, integrating smart growth principles into planned land use/transportation projects, and encouraging the development of a better jobs/housing balance in Imperial County.

## **CORRIDOR ANALYSIS**

The I-8 corridor is the main transportation route between San Diego County and Imperial County. Collaboration between Caltrans, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), the Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG), and appropriate Imperial Valley cities and the County of Imperial is essential to address issues of common concern. The coordination of policies and planning of transportation and other interregional issues between San Diego and Imperial Counties will help to facilitate a more efficient transportation system.

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Strategically situated on the border with Mexico, San Diego and Imperial Valley share common concerns related to border infrastructure as well as homeland security. The City of Calexico in Imperial County forms a cross-border metropolitan area with Baja California’s capital city of Mexicali, just as San Diego and Tijuana shares a cross-border metropolitan area. Imperial County has the potential to take advantage of its role as a portal for global trade and commerce. Trade through the Calexico-East Port of Entry represents almost 30 percent of the value of U.S.-Mexican trade through California land ports of entry. An interregional planning partnership will enable the two regions to evaluate and pursue compatible strategies to capitalize on their unique proximity to Mexico.

In 2006, IVAG received a Caltrans grant to develop a study to address transportation issues between the San Diego region and Imperial County. The consultant-prepared San Diego-Imperial County I-8 Corridor Strategic Plan (February 2009) was written for the Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG). The report identifies issues and establishes goals and objectives. Interregional strategies will be developed based on the study findings in the areas of transportation, housing, and employment. One of the components of the Strategic Plan is an analysis of existing and future commute patterns between Imperial County and San Diego County.

## **CORRIDOR TRAFFIC**

The following table shows existing and future traffic conditions for I-8 in Imperial County.

LOCATION	2008 AADT <sup>1</sup>	2008 LOS <sup>2</sup>	2030 AADT <sup>3</sup>	2030 LOS <sup>2</sup>
San Diego/Imperial County line to SR-98	14,000	A	24,900	B
SR-98 to Imperial Highway	12,200	A	23,100	A
Imperial Highway to Dunaway Road	12,200	A	20,300	A
Dunaway Road Drew Road	12,300	A	21,600	A
Drew Road to Forrester Road	14,200	A	29,900	A
Forrester Road to Imperial Avenue	18,100	A	34,600	A
Imperial Avenue to SR-86	32,500	A	66,700	B
SR-86 to Dogwood Road	34,500	B	91,700	C
Dogwood Road to SR-111	31,500	B	87,000	C
SR-111 to Bowker Road	14,600	A	49,200	B
Bowker Road to Orchard Road	13,200	A	45,200	B
Orchard Road to Bonds Corner Road	11,200	A	20,500	A
Bonds Corner Road to SR-115	11,000	A	18,800	A
SR-115 to SR-98	11,600	A	19,400	A
SR-98 to Brock Research Center Overpass	14,000	A	19,000	A
Brock Research Center to Gordon Well Road	14,000	A	19,000	A
Gordon Well Road to Ogilby Road	13,900	A	19,000	A
Ogilby Road to Sidewinder Road	14,800	A	21,400	A
Sidewinder Road to SR-186	15,100	A	21,400	A
SR-186 to Winterhaven Drive	19,200	A	29,900	A
Winterhaven Drive to 4th Avenue	19,400	A	29,000	A
4th Avenue to Arizona State Line	16,800	A	27,900	A

<sup>1</sup> 2008 AADTs derived from the Caltrans Traffic and Vehicle Data Systems Unit website.

<sup>2</sup> 2008 Level of Service (LOS) is based on sketch level planning analysis and is not to be used for design purposes.

<sup>3</sup> 2030 AADTs are projected from the 2025 Imperial County Transportation Model, version Calx GP+.

## **PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT INFORMATION - CORRIDOR AND SYSTEM COORDINATION**

This section includes information pertinent to both the San Diego and Imperial County portions of I-8.

The functional classification of I-8 from I-5 to the Arizona State Line is Interstate. From the Urban/Rural Limit (SD P.M. R31.3) to the Arizona State Line (IMP P.M. R97.0), I-8 is included as a part of the Interregional Road System (IRRS).

I-8 in its entirety from Sunset Cliffs Boulevard to the Arizona State Line is a National Highway System (NHS) route. I-8 has been designated by Caltrans District 11 as a State Highway Impacted by NAFTA. The portion of I-8 from I-5 to the Arizona border is a designated route in the National Network for Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) for trucks; I-8 west of I-5 is a terminal access route to the national network. I-8 from Lake Jennings Park Road to the Imperial County Line is part of the San Diego Region Oversize Load Highway System.

The length of I-8 from I-15 in San Diego County to SR-7 in Imperial County is included in the Statewide List of Lifeline Routes. A lifeline route is a route that is deemed so critical to emergency response/life saving activities of a region or the State that it must remain open immediately following a major earthquake, or for which preplanning for detour and/or expeditious repair and reopening can guarantee through movement of emergency response activities.

I-8 from Sunset Cliffs (SD P.M. L0.0) to Highway 98 (IMP P.M. R10.3) is on the Master Plan of State Highways Eligible for Official Scenic Highway Designation.

The Intermodal Corridors of Economic Significance (ICES) system was created in response to 1994 State legislation that required the Department to identify the significant transportation arteries in the State that connect or provide access to major sea or waterway ports, nationwide railway systems, airports and interstate and intrastate highway systems. I-8 from I-5 to the Arizona State Line is designated as part of the ICES system.

There is a truck escape ramp on eastbound I-8 near the Meyer Creek Bridge (P.M. IMP R3.7). There is a truck brake inspection area on eastbound I-8 in Inkopah (P.M. SD R76.8). There is also a proposed Inkopah Safety Roadside Rest Area (SRRRA) near this location.

The Sunbeam SRRRA (P.M. R31.4) is located on I-8 between Drew Road and Forrester Road. The existing temporary Sandhills SRRRA (P.M. 80.2) will be replaced by the proposed Imperial SRRRA near Sidewinder Road (P.M. R88.7)

An immigration checkpoint has been implemented on westbound I-8 approximately one mile east of Sunrise Highway (San Diego County S-1). An agricultural pest inspection station and truck scale facility is located on I-8 west of Winterhaven.

## RECOMMENDED CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

There are a variety of transportation improvements planned for I-8 in Imperial County. Improvements are from the 2008 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the 2008 State Highway Operation and Protection Plan (SHOPP), the District 11 Project Information Reporting System (PIRS), the District 11 2007 Ten-Year SHOPP Needs Plan, the most recent Status of Projects, the District 11 Planning Division, the 2008 Imperial County Transportation Plan, the Imperial County General Plan Circulation Element, and the March 2008 Imperial Valley Regional Transportation Impact Fee (RTIF) Study.

With the rapid growth in the Imperial Valley, there are also a large number of proposed surface street arterial improvements. Detailed information on these proposed arterial improvements is included in the May 2008 Imperial County Transportation Plan and the RTIF Study.

### Freeway Corridor Improvements

The following table shows recommended freeway corridor improvements for I-8 in Imperial County. These projects are from the 2008 Imperial County Transportation Plan.

POST MILE	LOCATION	IMPROVEMENT DESCRIPTION
R34.0 - R40.9	Forrester Road to SR-111	Add 2 lanes to existing 4 lane freeway
R35.5	Austin Road/I-8	Construct Interchange
R37.0	Imperial Avenue/I-8	Reconstruct Interchange
R39.0	Dogwood Road/I-8	Reconstruct Interchange
R42.5	Bowker Road/I-8	Improve Interchange
R90.7	SR-186/I-8	Revise Interchange

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The following table shows 2008 SHOPP and PIRS projects for I-8 in Imperial County.

<b>POST MILE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>SOURCE/ PHASE OR YEAR</b>
R4.9	Devils Canyon Bridge	Seismic Restoration	2008 SHOPP - FY2009/10
R 7.2	Meyer Creek Bridge	Seismic Restoration	2008 SHOPP - FY2009/10
R10.0 – R28.0	0.3 mile west of I-8/SR-98 to 0.8 mile west of Derrick Road Overcrossing	Apply Asphalt Rubber Chip Seal	PIRS/PSE
R31.3	Sunbeam Rest Area	Upgrade Safety Roadside Rest Areas	2008 SHOPP - FY2009/10
R37.5	I-8/8 <sup>th</sup> Street Overcrossing	Install Traffic Signals (Coop w/County of Imperial)	PIRS/PSR
R 88.7 - R89.3	Sidewinder OC to 0.6 mile east of Sidewinder Overcrossing	Construct Safety Roadside Rest Area	2008 SHOPP - FY2011/12
R91.0 - R96.8	All American Canal to Colorado River Viaduct	Clean and treat Bridge Deck with Methacrylate and replace Joint Seals	PIRS/PSE
96.9	I-8/Colorado River Bridge	Paint Bridge	PIRS/PSE

PSR = Project Study Report

PSE = Plans, Specifications and Estimates

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The following table shows 2007 10-Year SHOPP Needs Plan Projects for I-8 in Imperial County.

<b>POST MILE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CATEGORY/FISCAL YEAR</b>
R0.0 - R10.3	SD/IMP County Line to Junction I-8/SR-98	Pavement Rehabilitation	Roadway Preservation 2011/12
R0.0 - R97.0	I-8 to Arizona Stateline	Provide Rumble Strip	Collision Reduction 2011/12
R0.0 - R97.0	I-8 to Arizona Stateline	Upgrade 475 signs and Overhead Lighting to Inductive Technology	Roadway Preservation 2013/14
R37.3 - R38.0	Eastbound onramp at Imperial Avenue to Westbound offramp to SR-86	Construct westbound auxiliary lane	Mobility 2017/18
Various	Various	Bridge Rail Upgrade and Deck Rehabilitation	Bridge Preservation 2014/15

The following table shows additional projects relevant to the I-8 corridor in Imperial County. These projects are included in the March 2008 Imperial Valley Regional Transportation Impact Fee (RTIF) Study. This study also includes a number of planned transportation improvement projects on non-State highway arterial surface streets in Imperial County.

<b>POST MILE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENT DESCRIPTION</b>
R36.5	I-8/La Brucherie Overcrossing	Widen bridge to 4 lanes
R37.5	I-8/Eighth Street Overcrossing	Widen bridge to 6 lanes
R40.0	I-8/Pitzer Road Overcrossing	Widen bridge to 4 lanes

## **Transit Improvements**

The majority of transit service in Imperial Valley is provided by Imperial Valley Transit (ICT). ICT is an intercity fixed route system subsidized by the Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG), administered by the County Department of Public Works, and operated by Laidlaw Transit Services, Inc., a private-for-profit service. ICT operates several fixed-routes which serve the communities of Brawley, Calexico, Calipatria, El Centro, Holtville, Niland, Seeley, and Westmorland, Monday through Saturday. Additionally, ICT operates limited service to Winterhaven, Bombay Beach, and two express round-trips to Imperial Valley College (IVC Express), which supplements the regularly scheduled service. The IVC Express offers one round trip from Niland and one round-trip from Calexico on IVC school days only. Passenger ridership currently averages 23,000 passengers a month. Although no ICT routes operate directly on I-8, the El Centro-Calexico route 100 operates on nearby parallel streets between SR-86 and Dogwood Road.

The County of Imperial also administers Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service known as Areawide Independent Mobility (AIM) Transit. AIM Transit offers a curb-to-curb Dial-A-Ride service for the disabled who are not able to use the traditional fixed-route service. While the Dial-A-Ride service remains available to seniors over the age of 60, priority is given to those certified under ADA. ADA Paratransit will transport users anywhere within a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile corridor of Imperial County Transit routes.

Additional, individual agency public transit services include demand-responsive Dial-A-Ride services offered by the Cities of Brawley, Calexico, El Centro, and Imperial.

Future transit service improvements will include expanding and/or restructuring current transit service to improve efficiency and productivity, adding new services such as the El Centro Circulator Shuttle, and conducting additional Circulator Bus Feasibility studies.

Detailed information on existing and future transit issues in Imperial County is discussed in several reports prepared by consultants for IVAG, including the Imperial County Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (October 2008), the Winterhaven/Quechan Reservation Rural Connector Report (July 2008), the Public Transit Services Fare Analysis (June 2008), and the Imperial County Transit Vision (November 2000).

## **Nonmotorized Transportation**

The County of Imperial's bicycle facilities program is designed to enhance environmental and social benefits for the citizens of Imperial County by providing an integrated network system of bicycle and pedestrian facility for the safe and efficient movement in and through the County of Imperial. This includes an integrated bicycle circulation system which includes facilities to promote the environmental and social benefits of commuter and recreational bicycling. Class II bikeways will be planned into appropriate Prime, Major, and Secondary arterials. The County will cooperate with other governmental agencies to

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provide connection and continuation of bicycle corridors. The bicycle circulation system will be integrated with auto, pedestrian, and transit systems.

The County of Imperial Bicycle Master Plan Update (September 2003) recommends implementation of a 252 mile system of bicycle lanes, routes and pathways that will link to schools, shopping, employment and future expanding residential areas. In addition, Bicycle Master Plans were developed in 2002 and 2003 for the Cities of Brawley, Calexico, El Centro, Calipatria, Holtville, Imperial, and Westmorland. In many of these plans, bicycle facilities are proposed for routes parallel or perpendicular to I-8.

Bicycle riders and pedestrians have a legal right to access most public roads in California. While pedestrians are prohibited from virtually all freeways, bicycles are permitted on the outside shoulders of nearly 25 percent of all freeways located within the state. Freeway shoulders open to bicycle travel on I-8 in Imperial County are:

- 1) San Diego/Imperial County Line (P.M. IMP R0.0) to Imperial Highway (P.M. IMP R011.924)
- 2) Gordon Well Road (P.M. IMP R073.477) to Ogilby Road (P.M. IMP R083.821)
- 3) Sidewinder Road (P.M. IMP R088.701) to Junction SR-186 (P.M. IMP R090.740)

The legal authority to prohibit bicycle and pedestrian use from freeways and expressways is specified in the California Vehicle Code section 21960.

### **Other Transportation Improvements**

There are numerous ongoing or proposed Imperial Valley transportation studies. Some of these studies may have an impact on I-8 transportation issues. In particular, the Forrester Road Interregional Corridor Study (April 2009) analyzes a variety of short-term and long-term alternatives to improve Forrester Road between SR-98 and SR-78. These alternatives including widening the existing two lane roadway to a four and six lane facility, and developing interchange improvements at I-8/Forrester Road. The study also evaluates transportation demands and resulting infrastructure needs required to serve the demand for growing regional, intraregional, interregional, and international traffic. In addition, the study looks at transportation improvements intended to facilitate the movement of freight and related goods to meet the needs of agriculture and related industries in Imperial Valley, including cross-border commercial vehicle traffic.

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed by President Bush in August 2005. SAFETEA-LU included a funding earmark for studying a Magnetic Levitation (MAGLEV) link between the San Diego region and a potential regional international airport in the Imperial Valley known as the "Desert Site".

The SANDAG Maglev Study Phase 1 was completed in March 2006 detailing all issues associated with the potential Maglev development. The study concluded that from an engineering perspective, the Maglev system is feasible, but there are many risks associated with this emerging technology, including infrastructure challenges, operations and maintenance issues, and capital cost.

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Additional improvements such as park and ride, transportation demand management, transportation system management, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies could also be developed for the I-8 corridor in Imperial County.

## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Caltrans District 11 Development Review staff in the Planning Division review federal, state, and local planning or proposed development activity that has the potential to impact state transportation facilities or other resources under Caltrans' jurisdiction, and to recommend conditions of project approval that eliminate those impacts or reduce them to a level of insignificance. Typically, this involves the review of development proposals in which Caltrans is either a responsible (permitting) or commenting (reviewing) agency, but has no discretionary approval power over the project other than permit authority. Development Review staff work cooperatively with local lead agencies and developers in determining the type and level of mitigation needed to offset project impacts. They are also responsible for identifying other functional areas within District 11 that are affected by the proposal, and coordinating the circulation of appropriate documents with other functional areas for review and comment.

Based on the Caltrans Traffic Impact Study (TIS) guidelines, a 1,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) threshold size triggers the need for developers to prepare a traffic study for their project. The following information generally includes projects for which an Environmental Document, a Specific Plan or a Master Plan has been or will be prepared. There are seven potential major development projects currently in the development review process within and adjacent to the I-8 corridor in Imperial County that will each generate more than the 1,000 ADT threshold. Total cumulative projected ADT from these developments is expected to be approximately 84,200.

Depending on the future economic climate, housing and commercial growth in Imperial Valley is anticipated to continue. The consultant-prepared final Imperial Valley Regional Transportation Impact Fee Study (March 2008) lists 233 planned development projects to be completed by the year 2030. These proposed development projects range from a 10 unit multiple family housing unit to 700 acre developments with over 2,700 houses, in addition to large 700,000 square foot commercial and retail developments. Some of these developments may have additional cumulative impacts on traffic in the I-8 corridor.

In addition, the Quechan Indian Tribe has constructed a new hotel/casino located at the southwest corner of the I-8/SR-186 interchange. The size of the Quechan hotel/casino is approximately 295,000 square feet and is located on a 22-acre site. There are 1,500 parking spaces, stormwater facilities, a wastewater treatment facility, and a water supply infrastructure. Approximately 800 to 1,000 people are employed at the facility. The hotel/casino complex is expected to generate approximately 8,000 ADT. This additional traffic will impact the I-8/SR-186 interchange as well as SR-186 from I-8 south to the hotel/casino entrance (approximately 1/8 mile). It is anticipated that improvements at the I-8/SR-186 interchange will be needed.

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Because of uncertainties associated with future demographic, socioeconomic, and political climates, the scale of development may be subject to change. The development application and approval process is also subject to change. Changes in land use prompting rapid housing and commercial development growth will need to be monitored closely by all impacted jurisdictions and agencies. Appropriate traffic studies for proposed developments will need to be conducted and reviewed carefully by Caltrans staff. Land development and local capital improvement projects should also be coordinated with Caltrans projects. Further information regarding specific development projects in the I-8 corridor can be obtained from the Caltrans District 11 Development Review Branch.

The following table shows proposed projects in the Imperial County I-8 corridor currently in the development review process. This table does not include the aforementioned 233 planned development projects. Construction of some of these developments may either be underway or complete:

<b>POST MILE</b>	<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ADT</b>
36.97	Miller Burson	Residential & School - 485 dwelling units, school, 4.2 acres park	5,767
38.96	Rosswood	Residential - 148 dwelling units, 1.6 acres park	1,540
38.96	Surya Enterprises project	Commercial - 2 hotels, filling station, and drive-thru restaurants	1,526
38.96	Las Flores Estates	Residential - 150 dwelling units, 1.5 acres park	1,550
38.96	The Plaza at Imperial Valley	Commercial/Retail - 38 acres, 350,000 sq. ft.	27,200
38.96	Imperial Valley Commons	Commercial -774,000 sq. ft	38,700
90.74	Quechan Casino project	Native American Casino and Hotel - 22 acres, 295,175 sq. ft.	8,000