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COUNTY AWARDED GRANT FOR BICYCLE BRIDGE IN HILMAR

MERCED – The Merced County Board of Supervisors voted earlier this week to accept a grant from Caltrans Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA) for the construction of a bicycle/pedestrian bridge in Hilmar. The bridge will go over the Turlock Irrigation District (TID) canal adjacent to the Hilmar School complex.

"I am so pleased that we have received funding for this important project, which will allow school children and community residents to bike and walk to the Hilmar School complex," commented Supervisor Deidre Kelsey, District Four. "Biking to and from school and work is an excellent way to increase our activity levels and decrease our impact on the environment and our air quality. I look forward to the completion of this project and the ability of children and families to make use of this improved access to our school complex."

The total cost for the project is estimated to be \$222,000, and the grant received by the County, from Caltrans BTA account will cover 90% of the cost. The remaining 10% cost will be covered by District Four special board project funds.

The new Hilmar Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge Project will provide a safe and efficient crossing of the Turlock Irrigation District Lateral Canal No. 7. It will provide a direct link from local subdivisions to many destinations, including Hilmar Middle School, Elim Elementary School, Hilmar High School, Colony Basic Skills Alternative High School, Irwin Continuation High School, the Hilmar Library, the Hilmar Community Hall, and the Hilmar Pool. The project is expected to go out to bid in Summer 2009 and be completed by the end of next year.

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