

Getting tough on graffiti

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More than two years after the completion of an important Los Angeles public works project, the contributions of a chemical manufacturer continue to contribute to the city's landscape. The manufacturer developed a solution that helped save the city \$17.2 million and create a graffiti-free zone in the heart of one of its most defaced areas.

The Alameda Corridor opened in 2002 following more than two decades of planning and five years of construction. The \$2.4 billion endeavor—which connects the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to downtown Los Angeles—was constructed to streamline freight transportation and reduce the congestion that snarls the city's roadways. From a transportation perspective, the corridor's completion was a significant achievement. The project included the 40-foot concrete walls of the Mid-Corridor; this expansive below-ground railway serves as the heart of the corridor, consolidating 90 miles of rail lines over a 10-mile stretch.



The city of Los Angeles formed the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (ACTA) in 1989 to oversee the project. The authority united various public works offices in charge of the corridor's design and construction. One of ACTA's responsibilities was to acquire an effective concrete curing agent, which would be applied to the walls of the corridor to achieve maximum surface hardness. ACTA also sought an anti-graffiti treatment for the corridor walls. ACTA's initial approach included applying the two products separately. With the curing agent estimated to cost \$0.07 to \$0.10 per square foot, and the anti-graffiti agent projected to cost as much as \$2 per square foot, the job would be both time consuming and costly. ACTA spent 22 months entertaining and evaluating offers from numerous sealant, coating, and chemical manufacturers. The chosen solution came from SEI Chemical, a specialty chemical developer in Northridge, Calif. SEI was able to reduce cost and increase performance through its GPC-100, a graffiti proofer and concrete curing agent. The product provided a two-in-one approach that cured the concrete while creating a barrier against graffiti. Furthermore, GPC-100's furnished and installed cost of \$0.23 per square foot saved roughly \$ 12.2 million; applying two separate products could have cost more than \$2 per square foot.

The treatment process, which began in 2000 and was completed in 2003, encompassed 60 miles and 6½ million square feet of concrete, representing the largest structure treated with anti-graffiti products in the world. The application of GPC-100 proved both functionally and financially successful, saving more than \$5 million in labor costs over two separate applications. More than two years later, the Mid-Corridor is the only section of the structure that remains untainted by spray paint, positioned between two outer corridors that are covered in graffiti.

SEI offers a range of anti-graffiti coatings and graffiti removers. The company is working with the California DOT (Caltrans) to develop a variety of anti-graffiti solutions. One is an anti-stick optically clear film product for road signs; Caltrans currently spends approximately \$100,000 per month to replace vandalized signs. However, one of SEI's notable achievements continues to be the expansive and untainted surface of the Mid-Corridor, which graces the walls of one of Southern California's largest public works projects and stands as a fortress against one of the nation's most common acts of vandalism.