

Headquarters dedication honors father of Caltrans

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April 7, 2006

Bill Carter has been a maintenance expert in the soon-to-be-replaced Caltrans building in Old Town since 1960, taking on a facility he generously describes as needing "a lot of upkeep."

Others say the District 11 headquarters literally is falling apart: too hot on hot days, too cold on cold days. Bad plumbing, too.

Carter, 68, could retire and leave the headaches behind. He's not going to, not just yet.

Gazing at the new \$70 million District 11 Caltrans building after its dedication this week, Carter said, "I just want to be here for a few months."

The ceremony honored former state legislator Wadie P. Deddeh, for whom the new office building on Taylor Street is named.

Deddeh, repeatedly referred to Wednesday as the father of modern-day Caltrans, authored the legislation in 1972 that created the California Department of Transportation. Previously, its highway functions were handled from a division in the state Department of Public Works.

Deddeh, who was born in Iraq, devoted most of his own remarks to matters of pride: his Chaldean heritage; his son, Peter, a Superior Court judge; his grandchildren. Now, 85, he quoted Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Bernard Shaw, Ronald Reagan and referenced God.

Deddeh ended a 27-year career in the Legislature, representing South Bay districts, in 1993.

The Caltrans District 11 staff will begin moving into the headquarters, directly across the street from the current building, about April 20. The move is expected to be completed by Sept. 1.

Built for more than 900 employees, the complex – three connected buildings of two to five stories – allows Caltrans to end its use of leased office space in five different buildings in Mission Valley, downtown and Kearny Mesa. The move will save the agency about \$3.4 million a year.

The facility is within walking distance of a bus, trolley and commuter rail transit center. The 800-space parking lot will be open to Old Town visitors and transit customers after hours and on weekends.

Special touches include solar panels on a 250-foot trellis, a waterfall in the central plaza and two pieces of public art.

The fate of the existing property – a valuable acre of real estate once the building is demolished – will be decided by its owner, the state Department of General Services.