



Credit: California Department of Transportation

San Diego Freeway (I-405) Improvement Project

California Department of Transportation
District 12

Orange and Los Angeles Counties, California

Creating two high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes through the conversion of an existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane and addition of one lane in each direction, plus addition of general purpose lane

NOTABLE PRACTICES

Environmental Analysis

- Alternatives included a combination of general purpose and HOT lanes

Meaningful Public Involvement

- Significant public engagement to address community concerns
- Individualized outreach to stakeholders to educate and gain support



INTRO & BACKGROUND

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) (sponsoring agency), proposed to improve 16 miles along Interstate 405 (I-405) between State Route (SR)-73 and I-605 in Orange and Los Angeles counties by relieving congestion and improving operational efficiency. Caltrans conducted and approved the NEPA review for the project under NEPA Assignment (23 U.S.C. 327) in California.

The I-405 Improvement Project aims to accommodate expected employment, population, and housing growth. Built in the 1960s, the I-405 freeway carries between 257,000 and 370,000 vehicles per day depending on location. I-405 experiences heavy traffic congestion in the general purpose lanes and HOV lanes, and OCTA projects a 35 percent increase in traffic along the corridor by

2040. The corridor needs additional lanes and other improvements to improve traffic flow, relieve congestion, and improve mobility.

The north and south termini of the project, at I-605 and SR-73 respectively, are locations where multiple freeways converge, generating congestion and delay.



Figure 1. San Diego Freeway (I-405) Improvement Project Location Map. Credit: California Department of Transportation.

Caltrans and OCTA proposed to add one general purpose lane in each direction between Euclid Street and I-605 and improves freeway entrances, exits, and bridges. The project also involves conversion of the existing HOV lanes and construction of a new lane in each direction between SR-73 and I-605 to form the 405 Express Lanes. See Figure 1.

The 405 Express Lanes will operate 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, and enable travelers not

meeting the minimum occupancy requirements to pay a toll for a more reliable travel time. HOVs will be able to use the lanes for free to encourage rideshare and transit usage, based on the specifics of the toll policy (described further below). Tolls will vary throughout the day using pre-set toll prices, and OCTA will adjust the toll prices quarterly based on traffic volumes.



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Caltrans and OCTA developed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project. They prepared a Supplemental Draft EIS that provided new information on potential project-related traffic effects to address comments received in the Draft EIS. The Supplemental Draft EIS did not study new alternatives or change the scope of the project.

The alternatives evaluated in the Draft and Supplemental Draft EIS included the no-build and three build alternatives. The three build alternatives were: (1) adding one general purpose lane in each direction; (2) adding two general purpose lanes in each direction; and (3) implementing two express high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes (through the construction of one new lane and conversion of an existing HOV lane) and adding one general purpose lane in each direction.

Alternative 3 became the Preferred Alternative because it best met the purpose and need:

- Reducing congestion;
- Enhancing operations;
- Increasing mobility: move more vehicles and people, more quickly;
- Providing trip reliability;
- Optimizing operations;
- Minimizing environmental impacts;
- Limiting acquisitions of right-of-way; and
- Supporting state, regional, and local plans and policies.

The three build alternatives performed similarly on environmental, social, and economic impacts. The differentiating factors among the alternatives included throughput of persons and vehicles, consistency with system planning,

performance of existing system, trip reliability, and long-term congestion relief.

The alternatives analysis found the HOT express lanes would preserve mobility beyond the design year by using pricing to influence behavior and demand

Although construction costs would be higher for the preferred alternative, the analysis showed that the revenue generation from toll collection, the long-term operational benefits, and transit/carpool encouragement would outweigh any increase in construction cost.

The Record of Decision was issued on May 15, 2015. Construction began in 2018, and Caltrans and OCTA expect the lanes to be operational by 2023.



MEANINGFUL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Early and continuous coordination with the general public, stakeholders, and public agencies was essential.

Approaches included meetings with the interdisciplinary project development team, policy working group, stakeholder working group, corridor city staff, and other organizations or groups as requested, speakers bureau briefings, and interagency coordination meetings. Caltrans and OCTA also placed announcements for public scoping meetings and other opportunities for engagement in local newspapers, the Federal Register, at the County Clerk's office, in public libraries, as well as in e-mail blasts and mailed postcards.

Caltrans and OCTA conducted comprehensive public outreach to educate the cities along the corridor and public on the benefits of the proposed approach. Caltrans and OCTA held one-on-one discussions with stakeholder cities and agencies throughout the process. In addition, Caltrans provided several workshops and engaged in discussions with local city officials to provide guidance and clarity on the tolling component of Alternative 3.

As a result of public and stakeholder engagement, the OCTA Board adopted a phased approach to toll implementation. Initially, the Express Lanes will be free to HOV 2+ during

off-peak times and, during peak hours of operation, free only to HOV 3+ vehicles. After 3.5 years, the lanes will be free only HOV 3+ vehicles because other toll road operators have learned that they cannot keep traffic moving freely – even with dynamic pricing – without the greater occupancy control.



COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Based on the traffic analysis, all population groups would experience an improved facility and benefit from traffic congestion reduction in the general purpose and Express Toll Lanes. Caltrans and OCTA projects a reduction in peak-hour commutes in the general purpose lanes on I-405 of almost 30 minutes compared to building one regular lane in each direction.

Community members living within the vicinity of the corridor and people commuting between Los Angeles County and Orange County would benefit from the reduced congestion and the improved freeway operations. Transit times and reliability will improve as buses use the Express Toll Lanes. Emergency response times would improve because emergency vehicles would have better access through I-405 and local roadways.

Caltrans and OCTA noted that the preferred alternative would benefit community cohesion by reducing cut-through traffic within the adjacent neighborhoods. Currently, motorists traveling along I-405 often exit the facility and seek less-congested alternative routes within the adjacent neighborhoods when freeway conditions deteriorate.

In addition to the new lanes, the project includes 18 bridge replacements plus new and widened bridges, arterial street improvements, and new and replaced sound walls. Caltrans and OCTA will also install new bike lanes and sidewalk improvements in adjacent neighborhoods.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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RESOURCES

I-405 Improvement Project (SR-73 to I-605)-
Website

<http://octa.net/Projects-and-Programs/Under-Construction/I-405-Improvement-Project/?frm=7135#!405ExpressLanes>



PHOTO CREDITS

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