

# I-5 MANAGED LANES PROJECT

(Red Hill Ave. to OC/LA County Line)



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is the I-5 Managed Lanes Project (Red Hill Avenue to Orange/Los Angeles County Line)?

The I-5 Managed Lanes Project includes a 15-mile section between Red Hill Avenue, south of State Route 55 (SR-55), and the Orange/Los Angeles County Line that will address operational deficiencies related to High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) degradation through studies of alternatives that include Express Lane options. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve the overall movement of people and goods along this section of I-5 through the cities of Irvine, Tustin, Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, Fullerton, Buena Park, La Mirada, and Santa Fe Springs.

### 2. What is HOV degradation?

A HOV lane is a type of managed lane designated for exclusive use by vehicles with two or more occupants for all or part of a day. HOV lanes are a traffic management tool intended to promote and encourage ridesharing to reduce congestion and maximize the people-carrying capacity of California highways.

A HOV lane is considered degraded if the average traffic speed during the morning or evening weekday peak commute hour is less than 45 miles per hour for more than 10 percent of the time over a consecutive 180-day period.

Caltrans has invested in a range of mobility improvements along freeways in Southern California, including HOV lanes. Over time, due to high demand, many HOV lanes have become just as congested as regular lanes. When this occurs on a regular basis, that HOV lane may be considered “degraded.” A HOV lane that is degraded does not provide an incentive for users to carpool or use transit. This lack of incentive can lead to more single occupant vehicles on the road, resulting in increased Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The HOV lanes on I-5 in Orange County are among a number “degraded” HOV lanes, with regular congestion observed on the portions of the HOV lanes between Red Hill Avenue and the Orange/Los Angeles County Line. While there was a reduction during the height of the pandemic, I-5 and most roadways have seen traffic levels steadily increase to 2019 levels. Improvements have been made, such as the addition of a second HOV lane in each direction of I-5 between SR-55 and SR-57.

### 3. Who is the lead agency for this proposed project and who approves this project?

Caltrans is the Lead Agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Caltrans is also responsible for the approval of the project alternative to move forward for design and construction. This will take place after the circulation of the Draft Environmental Document (DED) in Summer 2023.

### 4. Why is this project necessary?

The need for the I-5 Managed Lanes Project (Red Hill Avenue to OC/ LA County Line) is to address issues such as:

- HOV degradation
- Demand that exceeds existing capacity
- Operational deficiencies

### 5. What is the projects purpose?

The I-5 Managed Lanes Project (Red Hill Avenue to OC/LA County Line) proposed project purpose is to:

- Improve the managed lanes network operations
- Improve mobility and trip reliability
- Maximize person throughput by facilitating efficient movement of bus and rideshare users
- Apply technology to help manage traffic demand

### 6. What are the project benefits?

For all Build Alternatives the project will provide the following benefits:

- Reduce travel times
- Improve trip reliability and mobility
- Enable free flow conditions in the managed lanes to provide benefits to the communities along the corridor, Orange/Los Angeles counties, and enhance response times for emergency vehicles
- Reduce vehicle emissions and Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) compared to the No Build
- Provide additional options for multimodal reliable travel
- Encourage a transportation mode shift to take transit, carpool/vanpool, and bicycles



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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 7. How would Caltrans use toll revenue?

With excess toll revenues from Build Alternatives 3 and 4, Caltrans will consider the following:

- **Expanding Access to Active Transportation**—Caltrans would invest in adding new active transportation infrastructure or improving access to the existing network.
- **Improve Transit, Rail, and Shared Mobility Options**—The increased trip reliability of the dual Express Lanes alternative will encourage and enhance transit ridership and other mobility options in the I-5 corridor; thus, increasing Average Vehicle Occupancy (AVO). The project would provide funds for Caltrans to invest in improving transit, operation and maintenance of rail corridors, and other multimodal mobility options.
- **Expand Access to Jobs, Goods, Services, and Education**—The increased trip reliability and project investments would help Caltrans invest in multimodal mobility options within the study area, providing residents enhanced, reliable, efficient, and safe access to jobs, goods, services, and education.
- **Advance Transportation Equity**—The project would invest to help Caltrans fund programs and services to help low-income communities, people with disabilities, and other disadvantaged groups resulting in a more equitable distribution of transportation resources.
- **Enhance Transportation System Resiliency**—By having Caltrans invest in express lane projects throughout Orange County, the aging infrastructure throughout the County has a mechanism to be modernized, thereby enhancing resiliency to climate change impacts on the region.
- **Strategically Invest in State of Good Repair Improvements**—The toll revenue would provide a sustainable funding source for the repairs, operation, and maintenance of the I-5 corridor and other transit services such as Bus Rapid Transit, park and ride facilities, and rail corridor.

### 8. What is the project schedule to deliver this project?

- SUMMER 2023 – Draft Project Report and Environmental Document Circulation
- FALL 2023 – Selection of Preferred Alternative
- WINTER 2023 – Final Project Report and Environmental Document
- WINTER 2023 – Begin Design
- 2026 – Begin Construction

### 9. How were the alternatives determined?

As with other freeway improvement projects, the proposed project alternatives that meet the project purpose and need were developed through a preliminary planning document, the Project Study Report approved in November 2019 and a Supplemental PSR approved in January 2020. This document describes transportation issues within the project corridor, identifies the scope of viable alternatives, and provides an estimate of the project development support resources required. It is Caltrans' policy to evaluate alternatives that avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse environmental impacts.



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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 10. What are the proposed project alternatives and how will the preferred alternative get selected?

The preliminary alternatives under consideration include one No Build Alternative and three Build Alternatives as described below.

#### **Alternative No. 1 (No Build):**

The No Build Alternative does not include improvements to the existing lane configuration for the I-5. Under the No Build Alternative, no new general purpose (GP) lanes or managed lanes (MLs) on I-5 or new connections would occur. Current MLs within the corridor consist of HOV lanes. This alternative assumes the independent implementation of the other projects on the fiscally constrained project list in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 2016 Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) and the Preferred Plan in the Orange County Transportation Agency's (OCTA) 2014 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) within the project limits.

#### **Alternative No. 2 (High Occupancy Vehicles 3+):**

Alternative 2 would modify existing HOV minimum occupancy requirements from the existing two plus (2+) to three plus (3+) passengers between Red Hill Avenue and the Orange/Los Angeles County Line. Under this alternative, all existing roadway features will remain, and there are no anticipated right-of-way (ROW) impacts. Sign panels and pavement delineation modifications will reflect the latest California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) and Caltrans' Standard Plans.

#### **Alternative No. 3 (Converted Express Lane):**

Alternative 3 would convert existing HOV lanes to Express Lanes (EL) between Red Hill Avenue and the Orange/Los Angeles County Line. This alternative proposes to:

- Convert existing HOV to an EL in each direction between Red Hill Avenue and SR-55
- Convert two existing HOV to EL in each direction between SR-55 and SR-57
- Convert existing HOV to an EL in each direction from SR-57 to the Orange/Los Angeles County Line

#### **Alternative No. 4 (Converted and Expanded Express Lanes):**

4: Alternative 4 would convert the existing HOV lanes to ELs and construct an additional EL lane between SR-57 and SR-91. This alternative proposes to:

- \*Convert existing HOV to an EL in each direction between Red Hill Avenue and SR-55
- \*Convert two existing HOV to ELs in each direction between SR-55 and SR-57
- \*Convert existing HOV to an EL from SR-57 to the Orange/Los Angeles County Line
- Construct one new EL from SR-57 to SR-91

*\*These improvements are also included in Alternative 3*

All technical studies have been completed and the findings are fully described in the DED available to the public for review and comment. After the circulation of the DED, Caltrans will review all the comments and subsequently recommend the Preferred Alternative. The project team members and project development team (PDT), which is comprised of professional and technical staff from Caltrans and other agencies of jurisdiction, will recommend a Preferred Alternative. Throughout the environmental study process, members of the PDT consult with their respective agencies and policy-making officials. The District Director will select the Preferred Alternative based on the PDT recommendation. The Final Project Report and Environmental Document will serve as the approval mechanisms for the "preferred" alternative.



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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 11. What are the changes to the project alternatives since the Scoping Period?

Project scoping was conducted from May 9, 2022, to June 8, 2022. After the project scoping period and reviewing the proposed project alternatives along with screening criteria, the Project Team held meetings on June 20 and June 21, 2022, and determined to remove Alternative 4B from further consideration of the project. With removal of Alternative 4B, Alternative 4A has been retitled "Alternative 4."

The following screening criteria was used as reasons for removing Alternative 4B from further evaluation in subsequent project development phases:

- Right of Way Acquisitions • Project Right of Way Cost
- Public Input during Scoping
  - Community Impacts
  - Visual
  - Air Quality
  - Noise
  - Reduced Access to businesses/parks, etc.
  - Impacts to bike/pedestrian facilities (permanent & temporary)
  - Impacts to Railroads
  - Hazardous Materials
  - Major utilities relocation

**Alternative 4B would have converted the existing HOV lanes to ELs and constructed an additional EL lane between SR-57 and the Orange/Los Angeles County Line.**

**This alternative proposed to:**

- \*Convert existing HOV to an EL in each direction between Red Hill Avenue and SR-55
- \*Convert two existing HOV to ELs in each direction between SR-55 and SR-57
- \*Convert existing HOV to an EL from SR-57 to 0.2 miles south of the Orange/Los Angeles County Line
- \*\*Construct one new EL from SR-57 to SR-91
- Construct one new EL from SR-91 to the Orange/Los Angeles County Line

*\*These improvements are the same as Alternative 3*

*\*\*This improvement is the same as Alternative 4 (previously Alternative 4A)*

### 12. What are the anticipated project costs and how is the project funded?

Proposed project costs range from approximately \$10 million to \$413 million for the proposed build alternatives.

Funding is expected to be provided through a combination of funds, including potential federal and state funding sources, in addition to potential funding from the Toll Revenue Bond funds, Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) funding, or Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles (GARVEE) bonds.

The current environmental project phase is funded by State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and State Highway Operation and Protection Program, (SHOPP), a component under Senate Bill 1 (SB-1, Roads Repair and Accountability Act of 2017).

### 13. What is the environmental study process and why is it necessary?

The environmental study process is mandated by CEQA and NEPA, which were enacted to protect the quality of human and natural environments. In this process, Caltrans analyzes effects on physical, biological, and human environments. If it is determined that the proposed project may have potentially significant effects, measures to avoid, minimize and/ or mitigate such impacts must be considered and implemented. For more information on CEQA, visit [www.opr.ca.gov/ceqa/](http://www.opr.ca.gov/ceqa/), and for more info on NEPA, visit [www.epa.gov/nepa](http://www.epa.gov/nepa). Additional information can be found in the Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference (SER) [www.dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser](http://www.dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser).



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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 14. What did Caltrans do after the Scoping Period?

Since scoping, Caltrans and the project team have met with municipalities along the corridor at periodic project update briefings with elected offices, agency staff, key stakeholders, and other interested parties. Various meetings have been conducted throughout the life of the project in the form of briefings and/or presentations to elected offices, agency staff, neighborhood councils, and other stakeholders. Additionally, a variety of outreach meetings and methods have been conducted to offer a variety of forums and opportunities for stakeholder involvement.

Caltrans hosted two equity workshops in fall 2022 during the preparation of an Equity Study titled "Improving Your Commute on the I-5 in Orange County" to welcome voices from the communities who have experienced disproportionate outcomes from transportation projects and to share how proposed changes to the I-5 corridor could impact and benefit day-to-day life so Caltrans can make recommendations to improve the Project. The workshops were held in a simultaneous hybrid format: In-Person at Ponderosa Park Family Resource Center, 320 E. Orangewood Avenue, Anaheim, California 92802; and Virtually as a live webcast, via Zoom. Discussion items included a Project Overview, Project Alternatives, Environmental Process/Phase Overview. A subsequent Equity Workshop was held in spring 2023, to share the latest Project updates and for members of the public to learn about the preliminary equity ideas and share which ones they are most excited about.

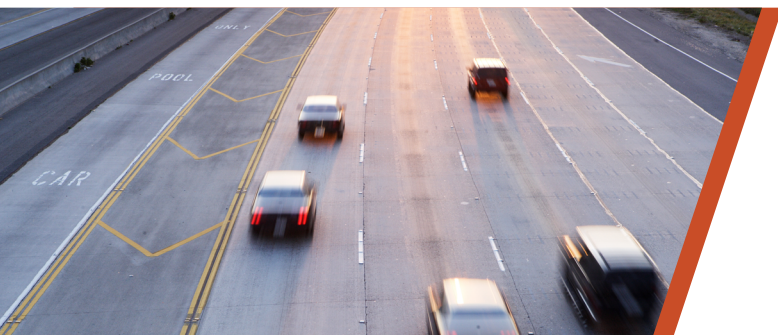
Additionally, environmental and engineering studies were initiated to analyze the effects of the proposed project and its various alternatives.

### 15. What were the studies during the environmental process?

The Technical studies listed below were used in the preparation of the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment:

- Air Quality Assessment Report
- Community Impact Assessment
- Energy Analysis Report
- Equity Study
- Historic Property Survey Report
  - Historical Resources Evaluation Report
  - Archaeological Survey Report
- Phase I Initial Site Assessment
- Jurisdictional Delineation
- Location Hydraulic Study
- Natural Environmental Study
- Noise Abatement Decision Report
- Noise Study Report
- Paleontological Identification Report and Paleontological Evaluation Report
- Project Report
- Preliminary Geologic Study
- Final Traffic/Circulation Impact Report
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Water Quality Assessment Report

All environmental technical studies were performed in accordance with CEQA and NEPA guidelines.



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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 16. What are managed lanes?

The term managed lanes refer to a variety of special-use highway lanes such as:

- Priced Managed Lanes
  - High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes – lanes with price, occupancy, and access restrictions
  - Express toll lanes – dedicated managed lanes within highway rights-of-way that motorists may use by paying a variably priced toll
- HOV lanes – lanes restricted to vehicles with a driver and one or more passengers to encourage ride-sharing
- Truck-only toll lanes – tolled highway lanes available only to trucks

At its broadest definition, managed lanes could refer to any dedicated and restricted lane that is not a general-purpose lane.

Express Lanes concepts, which are part of two of the four alternatives under consideration for the proposed project, could use tolls to improve travel reliability. These types of lanes, which toll one or two lanes – leaving other lanes toll-free – are in place throughout many locations in southern California. Tolls can vary based on congestion levels and other operating metrics, ensuring that the lanes remain reliable for those who choose to use them. Federal and state laws require toll revenues be used to cover the cost to build, maintain and operate the tolling facility. There is no guarantee that toll revenues will generate excess revenues. If there are excess revenues, these will be reinvested back into the corridor to fund improvements that will reduce VMT, including other mobility projects.

### 16. Where are managed lanes in southern California?

Managed lanes, also known as toll lanes or Express Lanes can be found on:

- SR-91 in Orange and Riverside Counties, known as the 91 Express Lanes
- SR 73, 133, 241 and 261, known as The Toll Roads of Orange County
- I-15 in Riverside County, known as the 15 Express Lanes
- I-10 and I-110 in Los Angeles County, known as LA Metro's ExpressLanes

- I-15 and SR-125 in San Diego County, known as the I-15 Express Lanes and South Bay Expressway
- I-405 between SR 73 and I-605 in Orange County tentatively open in late 2023/early 2024

### 18. How and why is Caltrans studying express lanes?

The I-5 Managed Lanes Project (Red Hill Avenue to OC/LA County Line) is proposing to study express lanes as two of its four proposed alternatives under consideration. A project-preferred alternative has not been selected at this time, and as such no decisions or actions have been made to implement potential express lanes within the project corridor. The environmental phase of the proposed project will review preliminary alternatives and their environmental impacts as well as gather public and stakeholder input before moving forward with any subsequent project phases.



# I-5 MANAGED LANES PROJECT

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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 19. How can I get involved and submit a comment during the DED circulation period?

The environmental study process is a public process. Members of the public are encouraged to attend a Caltrans' Public Hearing (Open Forum) for the DED. An in-person public hearing (open-forum) will take place on Wednesday, June 28, 2023, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Caltrans' office, located at 1750 E. 4th Street, Suite 100 in Santa Ana. A virtual public hearing (open forum) will take place on Thursday, June 29, 2023, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. Public hearing attendees can ask questions, view project information and comment on the DED.

You can submit your comments anytime during the 45-day DED circulation period which begins on Monday, June 5, 2023 and ends Thursday, July 20, 2023, no later than 5:00 p.m. All written comments submitted during the DED circulation period will be documented. You can submit a public comment in any of the four methods below.

- Online comment form**, please visit [bit.ly/I5MLProject](https://bit.ly/I5MLProject)
- By mail**, please write to:  
Jayna Harris, Associate/Senior Environmental Planner  
3210 El Camino Real, Suite 100  
Irvine, CA 92602
- By email** using the "I-5 Managed Lanes Project" as the subject line of the email and submitting your email to [I-5ManagedLanesProject@dot.ca.gov](mailto:I-5ManagedLanesProject@dot.ca.gov).
- Speak to a court reporter** at a public hearing.

### 20. What is the purpose of the Public Hearings?

The purpose of the public hearings is to promote and encourage public participation, solicit comments, and to ensure that transportation decisions are consistent with the goals and objectives of federal, State, and local entities. Comments received during public circulation are addressed in the Final Environmental Document (FED) and will help Caltrans in selecting a PA.

### 21. What has changed for Traffic Analysis in CEQA?

Traditionally traffic analysis used a metric called Level of Service (LOS) to make a significance call under CEQA. On our Caltrans Sustainability, SB 743 webpage:

"The legislation has prompted a change in the way the state measures the impacts of new development and transportation projects. In the past, projects were evaluated based on the potential increase in traffic in the immediate area. The new approach (called "Vehicle Miles Traveled" or "VMT") looks at the number and length of car trips induced by development projects and transportation."

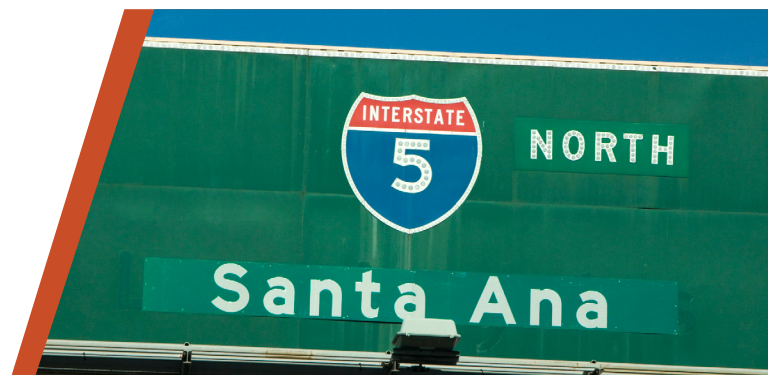
#### The Old Way

- Measured how fast cars go during rush hour
- Compelled communities to expand highways
- Induced more driving, creating more congestion and emissions

#### The New Way

- Measures distance vehicles travel, measured as VMT
- Encourages walkable communities with less traffic and more transportation options
- Avoids expensive expansions

More on this topic can be found on our Caltrans Sustainability, SB 743 webpage: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/sustainability/sb-743>



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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 22. What are the benefits of Tolling vs. Non-tolled Managed Lanes?

Managing the traffic flow in a particular lane or lanes through use of technology and pricing structure enables the lanes to provide a reliable trip time to the users.

The Express Lanes would require single occupant vehicles to pay a toll. The objective is to open the tolled Express Lanes with some level of HOV occupancy free to encourage rideshare and transit usage.

Time-of-day pricing and dynamic pricing methods are being analyzed for their application on the Project. Toll rates would be set in response to vehicle demand and would be adjusted as necessary to regulate volume in the Express Lanes to maintain traffic flow at a predetermined LOS. The Traffic and Revenue (T&R) will study the estimated toll rates and potential toll revenue.

The pricing structure and details will be evaluated further during final design. No tolling amount or pricing decisions have been made at this time.

The I-5 Express Lane Facility is expected to use FasTrak, an all-electronic-only toll collection system and would not accept cash or credit card payment on the facility. FasTrak allows drivers to easily pay tolls on every tolled facility, bridge, lane and road throughout California.

### 23. Are there significant impacts for this project? And how are these significant impacts mitigated?

Yes, for Traffic under Alternative 4 we will have an increase in VMT. To mitigate for this significant impact Caltrans is proposing the following mitigation measures:

- **TR-1 Housing Density and Affordability.** Caltrans shall contribute to affordable housing projects throughout Orange County.
- **TR-2 New Transit Service (BRT, Increased Service).** Caltrans shall contribute monies to the following routes that would benefit from increased bus services on existing routes as identified through Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Making Better Connections Study: 33 locally fixed routes, 6 community routes, 2 Intra-county express routes, 1 Metrolink Station route, 3 Inter-county express routes.

- **TR-3 Transit Efficiencies (Improve Existing Service).** Caltrans shall contribute to existing transit service for improved efficiencies that would result in VMT reduction.
- **TR-4 Transit Pass Subsidies.** Caltrans shall provide transit pass to encourage mode shift in transportation and reduce VMT.
- **TR-5 Active Transportation (Bike-New Parallel Facilities).** Caltrans shall invest into new Class II bikeway facilities.

Further discussion on the significant impacts of VMT and the mitigation measures can be found in Chapter 3 of the DED.

### 24. How will this project address climate change and the climate change stressors?

Neither the U.S. EPA nor the Federal FHWA has issued explicit guidance or methods to conduct project-level greenhouse gas analysis. FHWA emphasizes concepts of resilience and sustainability in highway planning, project development, design, operations, and maintenance. Because there have been requirements set forth in California legislation and executive orders on climate change, the issue is addressed in the CEQA chapter of the Environmental Document. The CEQA analysis may be used to inform the NEPA determination for the project.

### 25. What are the climate change stressors that this project is exposed to?

Described in more detail in Chapter 3 of the DED, the climate change stressors that this project is exposed to are: temperature rise, changing precipitation, and storm surges.

### 26. How do you access the new managed lanes?

Ingress/egress (enter/exit) access points are being considered at designated locations along the corridor. At access points, an additional lane between the Express Lane and the general purpose lanes are proposed to provide a dedicated lane for speed adjustments and weaving between the Express Lanes and the general-purpose lanes during heavily congested peak period.





# I-5 MANAGED LANES PROJECT

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## Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

### 27. What are the Right-of-Way requirements?

Additional right-of-way would not be required for the construction of the Build Alternatives. All proposed work is within the state's right-of-way and the acquisition of fee, permanent easements, or temporary construction easements are not needed.

### 28. What is an Equity community and why are we studying them?

An equity community is a historically underserved, overburdened, and marginalized population. Equity Workshops were held to welcome voices from the communities who have experienced disproportionate outcomes from transportation projects and to share how proposed changes to the I-5 corridor could impact and benefit day-to-day life so Caltrans could make recommendations to improve the Project.

### 29. How is the Equity Study being used for this project?

An Equity Study outlines equity program, policy, and process recommendations to optimize the distribution of Project benefits to equity communities (historically underserved, overburdened, and marginalized populations). Although an equity study is not required as part of this CEQA/NEPA Process it was prepared in conjunction with the Environmental Document in support of the Project and is scheduled to be completed in Winter 2023.

Equity recommendations will be further analyzed throughout the PS&E and construction phases to determine community preferences, operational and administrative feasibility, and implementation.

