



INTERSTATE 5 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: SAN DIEGO COUNTY LINE TO AVENIDA PICO SCOPING PERIOD FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Project Overview

1 What is the I-5 Improvement Project from the San Diego County Line to Avenida Pico?

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), proposes improvements to increase person and vehicle throughput on Interstate 5 (I-5) between the San Diego County Line and the I-5/Avenida Pico Interchange (Proposed Project) in the city of San Clemente and unincorporated San Diego County. The Proposed Project would add a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in both directions along this 3.5 mile stretch of I-5. This Proposed Project would also reestablish existing auxiliary lanes, widen existing undercrossings, and replace two existing overcrossings to accommodate the proposed HOV lanes. This I-5 corridor improvement project is intended to increase vehicle occupancy and vehicle throughput, improve mobility and trip reliability, provide inter-county and regional system connectivity, provide improvements to accommodate projected regional growth, incorporate environmentally sustainable design elements by developing efficient transportation improvements, and improve multimodal efficiency and provide advanced technology to meet the current and future transportation demands. HOV lane and operational improvements have been made on I-5 north of the project limits. This project is vital to enable the completion of the HOV lane network along the I-5 corridor in Orange County. The need, or current deficiencies of I-5 within the project limits, include a lack of HOV lane connectivity from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County Line, and the existing aging facility lacks advanced technology to meet current and future transportation demands. The Proposed Project is currently in the environmental document and preliminary engineering phase. Two alternatives, including one Build and one No Build Alternative are under consideration.

2 What are the potential alternatives being studied?

- **Alternative No. 1 (No Build)**

The No Build Alternative proposes no improvements to I-5, maintaining the existing four general-purpose lanes throughout the project limits in the northbound and southbound directions. The freeway facility would remain as is, with the exception of other proposed projects that are either under development or currently under construction.

- **Alternative No. 2 (Build Alternative)**

Alternative 2 proposes to add an HOV lane on I-5 in the northbound and southbound directions within the project limits. The Build Alternative would implement ramp improvements where feasible and auxiliary lanes throughout the corridor and would include Transportation System Management / Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) features.





3 What are HOV and auxiliary lanes?

High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, also known as carpool lanes, are a traffic management strategy used to promote and encourage ridesharing. HOV lanes help alleviate congestion and maximize the people-carrying capacity of highways. Auxiliary lanes are provided between on- and off-ramps for weaving, speed change, or for other purposes supplementary to through movement.

4 What are TSM and TDM?

TSM focuses on making operational improvements to existing transportation systems like the I-5 freeway that can maintain or restore performance levels. TDM is about providing travelers with choices to improve travel reliability. Examples of these strategies include the addition of HOV lanes, upgrading traffic signals that are interconnected and coordinated with adjacent signals and ramp meters or adding wayfinding signs on the freeway and adjacent streets.

5 What is the estimated project cost?

The environmental phase of the Project is estimated to cost \$6.4 million. The costs for subsequent phases of the project, including the final design and construction phases will be estimated as part of the Final Project Report.

6 What is the project need?

There is a lack of managed/High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane connectivity from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County Line. In addition, the existing aging facility lacks advanced technology to meet current and future transportation demands.

7 What is the purpose of this project?

The primary purpose of the project is to maximize efficiency of the freeway mainline by increasing person and vehicle throughput on the I-5 corridor from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County Line. This I-5 corridor improvement project is intended to achieve the following purposes:

- Increase vehicle occupancy and vehicle throughput
- Improve mobility and trip reliability
- Provide inter-county and regional system connectivity
- Provide improvements to accommodate projected regional growth
- Incorporate environmentally sustainable design elements by developing efficient transportation improvements; and
- Improve multimodal efficiency and provide advanced technology to meet the current and future transportation demands

8 What is the estimated project schedule?

- a. Mid-2023 – Publish Draft Environmental Document and Conduct Public Hearing
- b. Late 2024 – Publish Final Environmental Document and Identify Preferred Alternative
- c. Mid-2026 – Begin Final Design (Plans, Specifications, and Estimates)*
- d. Late 2030 – Begin Construction*

*Pending available funding.





9 What public agencies oversee this project?

OCTA and Caltrans are working together on this project. OCTA is the sponsoring agency. Caltrans is the lead agency and the owner/operator of the State Highway System. OCTA is producing preliminary engineering plans and conducting environmental studies. Caltrans is charged with environmental oversight and responsible for ultimate approval of the Project Report, Final Environmental Document and documenting a preferred alternative.

10 Is this project connected to the Transportation Corridor Agencies' South County Traffic Relief Effort (SCTRE) Project?

No. The TCA formally ended its South County Traffic Relief Effort Project and discontinued development of the associated Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) in 2020.

To address current and future transportation demand, OCTA, TCA and Caltrans agreed to improve mobility in south Orange County by moving forward the following three projects:

1. HOV improvements along I-5 between San Diego County Line to Avenida Pico
2. An untolled extension of Los Patrones Parkway to Avenida La Pata
3. Widening Ortega Highway between Calle Entradero and Reata Road

11 Will the HOV lanes extend into San Diego County?

The proposed HOV lanes will extend to just north of the Orange County/San Diego County Line.

12 Is the Concordia Pedestrian Overcrossing part of the project and what work will be done?

The Concordia Pedestrian Overcrossing is within the project limits. The overcrossing will be reconstructed to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and provide enhanced pedestrian and bicyclist access.

Environmental

13 What is the environmental study process?

The environmental study phase is an important and mandatory part of the project development process. It must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as well as any other applicable federal and state laws. Accordingly, OCTA and Caltrans must analyze potential project alternatives and inform decision-makers and the public about potential environmental effects. As part of this process, OCTA and Caltrans will analyze 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 NEPA, go to www.epa.gov/nepa. For more information on CEQA, go to www.opr.ca.gov/ceqa/.



14 What will be studied during the environmental process?

- a. The technical studies will be in accordance with the CEQA and NEPA guidelines. Environmental areas being studied include but are not limited to:

Aesthetics	Land Use/Planning
Air Quality	Mineral Resources
Biological Resources	Noise
Coastal Zone	Population/Housing
Cultural Resources	Public Services
Energy	Recreation
Geology/Soils	Transportation and Traffic
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Tribal Cultural Resources
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Utilities/Service Systems
Hydrology/Water Quality	Wildfire
Community Impacts	Mandatory Findings of Significance

15 What is the purpose of the public scoping meeting?

The public scoping meeting is to inform the public that Caltrans is evaluating a project under NEPA/CEQA, to provide general information about the project to the public, and to solicit comments from the public regarding the type and extent of analyses to be undertaken during the environmental phase.

Public Involvement

16 How can I participate?

The environmental study process is a public process. All comments received will be considered in the environmental documentation. Members of the public are encouraged sign up to receive project information and to attend the public scoping meeting.

An in-person meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 28, 2022, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Triton Center at San Clemente High School, 700 Avenida Pico. The in-person event is an open house format, and participants may attend at any point during the meeting time to learn more about the project and provide comments.

A virtual meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 2, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. The virtual meeting will feature a presentation followed by a Q&A session. Meeting attendees will be able to meet the project team, ask questions, view project information, and provide comments.

Visit the Orange County Caltrans webpage at dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-12 for project resources and updates.



17 How can I submit a comment?

Comments will be accepted throughout the 45-day scoping period from Thursday, June 30, through Monday, Aug. 15, 2022. All written comments submitted during the scoping period will be considered by the project team.

Submit comments:

- a. During scoping meetings on Thursday, July 28, 2022 and Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, via court reporter
- b. Project email to I-5HOVSouthCounty@dot.ca.gov with the subject line **“I-5 Improvement Project from the County Line to Avenida Pico”**.
- c. By mail to:
Jayna Harris, Associate/Senior Environmental Planner
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