



Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Interstate 5 Managed Lanes Project

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is issuing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a project-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Interstate (I) 5 Managed Lanes Project (Proposed Project) to initiate scoping and solicit input. Caltrans is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is preparing an EIR in accordance with CEQA and an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the Proposed Project. The environmental document will be prepared as a joint document pursuant to CEQA and NEPA. This is the Caltrans Project Approval and Environment Document (PA&ED) phase for this project.

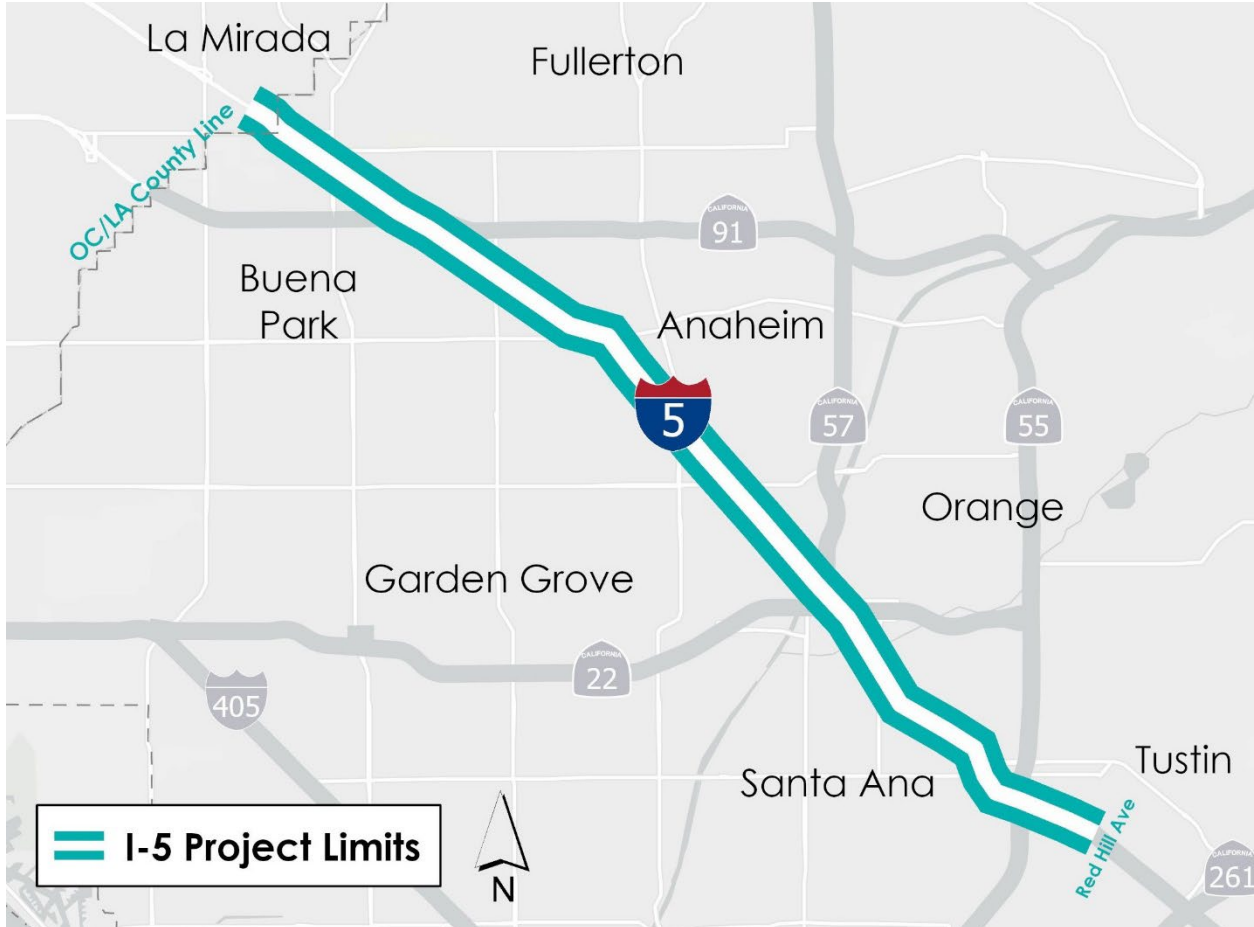
Pursuant to CEQA, Caltrans is distributing this NOP and initiating this early consultation/scoping to notify the responsible agencies, trustee agencies, the Office of Planning and Research, county clerk and involved federal agencies that an EIR/EA is being prepared. The purpose is to solicit guidance from those agencies on the scope and content regarding potential significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and reasonable mitigation measures that should be discussed in the EIR/EA. Your agency will need to use the environmental document prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project. An Initial Study has not been prepared for the proposed project and therefore is not attached to this NOP.

Caltrans proposes to address I-5 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane degradation and improve mobility in Orange County. The environmental document will address impacts associated with the Proposed Project.

Project Location

The proposed Project is located on I-5 from Red Hill Avenue to 0.5 mile north of the Orange/Los Angeles County (OC/LA) line (refer to Project Location Map, Figure 1). The postmiles (PM) within Orange County are PM 29.1 to 44.4 up to the OC/LA County line and PM 0.0 to 0.5 within Los Angeles County. The project limits are within the following cities within Orange County: Tustin, Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, Fullerton, Buena Park, and La Mirada.

Figure 1
Project Location Map





Project History

I-5 is the main Interstate Highway on the West Coast of the United States (US), running south to north from the US/Mexico border to the US/Canada border.

The southern project limit is the section of I-5 that intersects with Red Hill Avenue, south of State Route (SR) 55 in the City of Tustin. The I-5 continues north through the cities of Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, Fullerton, Buena Park, and La Mirada and includes three major freeway-to-freeway interchanges at SR-55, -22/57, and -91¹. The northern project limit is 0.5 miles north of the OC/LA County Line in the City of La Mirada. The existing HOV Direct Connectors (DC) link the I-5 HOV facility with the SR-55, SR-57, and SR-91 HOV facilities. The first HOV lanes on I-5 opened in 1992 with HOV 2+ requirements and have been highly utilized. There are several HOV Direct Access Ramps (DARs) within the project limits at Grand Avenue, Gene Autry Way, Disney Way, and Disneyland Drive.

I-5 currently has at least one HOV lane in each direction within the project limits that is separated with limited ingress/egress buffer openings. In mid-2021, the construction of an additional HOV lane in each direction and removal of the existing northbound and southbound DARs at Main Street was completed within the section of I-5 south of SR-55 at Red Hill Ave and SR-57.

Description of the Project

The Proposed Project would address operational deficiencies related to HOV degradation on I-5 between Red Hill Avenue and the OC/LA County line in both northbound and southbound directions.

The purpose of this project is to improve the overall movement of people and goods along this section of I-5 by:

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

The need, or deficiency, of the project is the existing I-5 HOV lanes between Red Hill Ave and the OC/LA County line experience:

¹ In this document, various adopted state routes are referred to as "SR- "and will include the relevant route identifier.



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

Project Alternatives

Based on conceptual analysis, four (4) alternatives were discussed in the Project Initiation Document (PID). This NOP and other project information documents are available on the Caltrans website at <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-12/district-12-programs/district-12-environmental/i-5-managed-lanes-project>. The preliminary alternatives under consideration include one (1) No Build and three (3) Build Alternatives. Refer to Figure 2 in this NOP for a conceptual representation of the Proposed Project alternatives.

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 requirement from the existing two plus (2+) to three plus (3+) passengers between Red Hill Avenue and the OC/LA County line. Under this alternative, all existing roadway features will remain. However, sign panels and pavement delineation modifications will reflect the latest California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) and Caltrans' Standard Plans. No right-of-way impacts are anticipated under this alternative.

Alternative No. 3 (Converted Express Lane):

Alternative 3 would convert existing HOV lanes to Express Lanes (ELs) between Red Hill Avenue and the OC/LA County line. This alternative proposes:

- 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 in each direction from SR-57 to 0.2 miles south of the OC/LA County Line

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

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

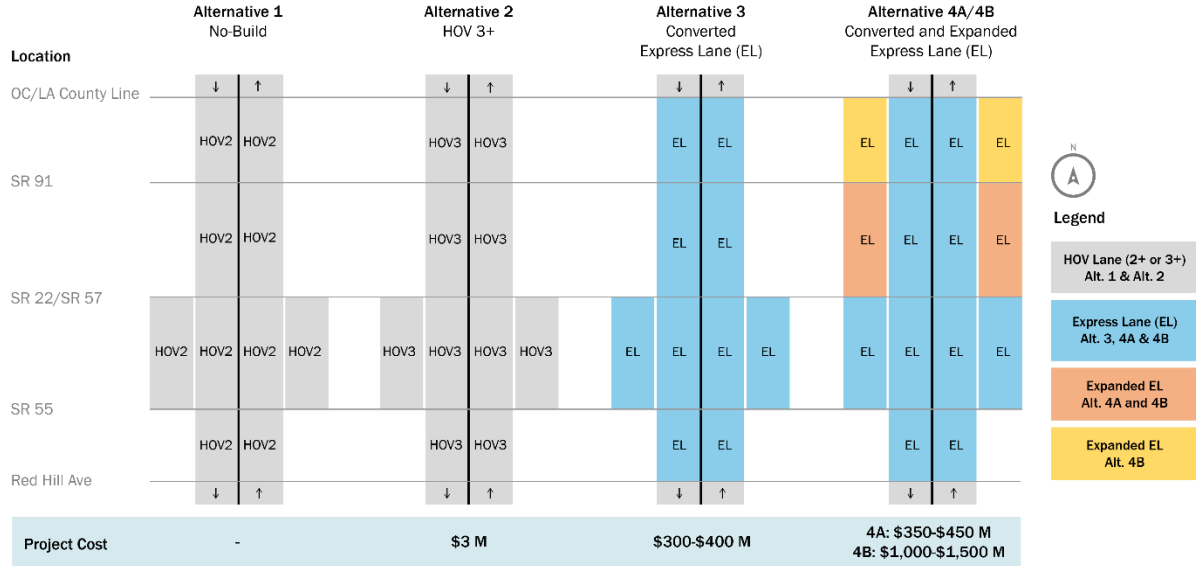
- *Convert existing HOV to an EL in each direction between Red Hill Avenue and SR-55
 - *Convert two existing HOV to ELs in each direction between SR-55 and SR-57
 - *Convert existing HOV to an EL in each direction from SR-57 to 0.2 miles south of the OC/LA County Line
 - Construct one new EL from SR-57 to SR-91
- *These improvements are the same as Alternative 3

4B: Alternative 4B would convert the existing HOV lanes to Express Lanes (ELs) and construct an additional EL between SR-57 and the OC/LA County line. This alternative proposes:

- *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 in each direction from SR-57 to 0.2 miles south of the OC/LA County line
 - **Construct one new EL from SR-57 to SR-91
 - Construct one new EL from SR-91 to 0.2 miles south of the OC/LA County Line
- *These improvements are the same as Alternative 3
**This improvement is the same as Alternative 4A



Figure 2 Alternatives





Environmental Factors

The purpose of the PA&ED phase is to explore the effects of the Proposed Project on the physical, human, and natural environment. Caltrans will evaluate all environmental, social, and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the Proposed Project. Impact areas to be addressed in the EIR/EA include, but may not be limited to traffic, land use, regional growth, land acquisition, displacements and relocations, cultural resources, recreational resources, air quality, biological resources, noise and vibration, and environmental justice. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate all adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated.

Public Scoping Meetings

In addition to on-going public engagement and outreach that will occur during the PA&ED phase, Caltrans will hold one (1) in-person scoping meeting and one (1) virtual scoping meeting. The purpose of the scoping meetings is to provide information to agencies and the public regarding the Proposed Project and to obtain feedback on the scope and content that should be addressed in the EIR/EA. Comments and suggestions on additional EIR/EA scope elements described in this NOP are invited from all interested agencies and the public to ensure the full range of issues related to the Proposed Project and all reasonable alternatives are addressed and all issues are identified.

Caltrans is interested in whether there are areas of environmental concern that should be identified as having the potential for impacts. In response to this NOP, public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise Caltrans of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Proposed Project.

The in-person scoping meeting will be held at the following location, date, and time:

Location: Downtown Anaheim Community Center
250 E. Center Street, Anaheim, CA 92805

Date: Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Time: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The virtual scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, May 26, 2022 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. To access the virtual meeting, please visit the Caltrans website at <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-12/district-12-programs/district-12-environmental/i-5-managed-lanes-project>.



Information regarding the project scope, alternatives under consideration, and technical analysis that will be conducted for the EIR/EA will be available at the scoping meetings.

Comments

Comments can be submitted during the public scoping period (May 9, 2022 – June 8, 2022) in any of the following formats:

- Online comment form at the Caltrans website: <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-12/district-12-programs/district-12-environmental/i-5-managed-lanes-project>
- Project email to **I-5ManagedLanesProject@dot.ca.gov** with the subject line “**I-5 Managed Lanes Project**”
- Regular mail to Jayna Harris, Associate/Senior Environmental Planner, 20 Executive Park, Suite 200, Irvine, CA 92614.
- Court reporter during our scoping meetings.

Please submit your comments no later than **5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 8, 2022.**

Additional Information

To obtain more information on the Proposed Project, scoping process, and scoping meetings please visit the Caltrans website above. To request alternative accommodations for accessing project information or for attending public scoping meetings please contact: District 12 Public Information Office at (657) 328-6000. TDD users may contact the California Relay Service line at 1 (800) 735-2929 or Voice Line at 1 (800) 735-2922. Requests for alternative accommodations to attend scoping meetings must be made 15 days prior to the scoping meeting.

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, and 15375