

I-5 MANAGED LANES PROJECT (SR-55 TO OC/LA COUNTY LINE)



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the I-5 Managed Lanes Project (SR-55 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 Tustin, Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, Fullerton, Buena Park and La Mirada.

In Spring 2022, the California Department of Transportation District 12 (Caltrans) began the environmental phase of the I-5 Managed Lanes Project (SR-55 to OC/LA County Line). Environmental studies will look at proposed alternatives. A critical component of the environmental phase is inclusive public engagement with all members of the public with an emphasis on priority populations that encourage transparent dialogue to address disproportionate benefits and adverse outcomes for underserved people and communities. An equity study will produce recommendations that will be included in the project's mitigation strategy. Public scoping will begin in May 2022.

2. What is HOV degradation?

An 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.

An 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." An 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 SR-55 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 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.

4. Why is this project necessary?

The need for the I-5 Managed Lanes Project (SR-55 to OC/LA County Line) is to address issues such as:

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

5. What are the proposed project's benefits?

The I-5 Managed Lanes Project (SR-55 to OC/LA County Line) proposed benefits would:

- 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 is the project schedule?

- **SUMMER 2023** – Draft Project Report and Environmental Document
- **WINTER 2023** – Final Project Report and Environmental Document
- **WINTER 2023** – Begin Design (Plans, Specifications, and Estimate)
- **2026** – Begin Construction



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Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

7. What are the proposed project alternatives and who will decide?

Based on conceptual analysis, four proposed alternatives were discussed in the Project Initiation Document (PID). The preliminary alternatives under consideration include one No Build Alternative and three Build 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 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 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 0.2 miles just south of the Orange/Los Angeles County Line

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

4A: Alternative 4A 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 0.2 miles south of the Orange/Los Angeles 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 ELs and construct an additional EL lane between SR-57 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 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 0.2 miles south of the Orange/Los Angeles County Line

**These improvements are the same as Alternative 3*

***This improvement is the same as Alternative 4A*

All technical studies will be compiled into a Draft Environmental Document (DED) available to the public for review and comment in 2023. After the circulation of the DED, Caltrans will review all the comments and subsequently recommend the Preferred Alternative. The District Director will select or approve the Preferred Alternative.

8. What are the anticipated project costs?

Proposed project costs range from \$3 million to \$1.5 billion for the proposed build alternatives.



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Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

9. 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 accordance with these laws, agencies must follow a protocol of analysis and public disclosure in their decision-making process for any proposed project which may potentially impact the environment. In this process, 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 CEQA, go to www.opr.ca.gov/ceqa/, and for more info on NEPA, go to www.epa.gov/nepa. Also refer to Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference (SER) www.dot.ca.gov/programs/environmental-analysis/standard-environmental-reference-ser.

10. What will be studied during the environmental process?

Numerous environmental areas are studied, including, but not limited to:

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

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

11. 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 ridesharing
- 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.

12. 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



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Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

13. How and why is Caltrans studying express lanes?

The I-5 Managed Lanes Project (SR-55 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 at this time. 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.

14. How can I get involved?

The environmental study process is a public process. Members of the public are encouraged to sign up to receive project information and attend a Caltrans Public Scoping Meeting. An in-person meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 24, 2022 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Downtown Anaheim Community Center, located at 250 E. Center Street in Anaheim. A virtual meeting will take place on Thursday, May 26 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. Meeting attendees can ask questions, view project information and comment on the scoping phase of the environmental process. Throughout the environmental study process, Caltrans will implement a public communications and community outreach program. You can receive project information and updates by visiting the project webpage www.dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-12/district-12-programs/district-12-environmental/i-5-managed-lanes-project and subscribing to the project email list.

15. What is the purpose of the Public Scoping Meetings?

The purpose of the public scoping meetings is to obtain comments and to ensure that transportation decisions are consistent with the goals and objectives of federal, State, and local entities.

16. How can I submit a comment?

You can submit your comments anytime during the 30-day scoping period which ends Tuesday, June 8, 2022. All written comments submitted during the scoping period will be documented.

You can submit your comments online via an online comment form, by mail or on Tuesday, May 24 or Thursday, May 26, 2022 during our Public Scoping Meetings with the court reporter.

- a. **Online comment form**, please visit www.dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-12/district-12-programs/district-12-environmental/i-5-managed-lanes-project.
- b. **By mail**, please write to:
Jayna Harris, Associate/Senior Environmental Planner
20 Executive Park, Suite 200
Irvine, CA 92614
- c. **By email** using the "I-5 Managed Lanes Project" as the subject line of the email and submitting your email to I5ManagedLanesProject@dot.ca.gov.
- d. **During the in-person meeting** on Tuesday, May 24, 2022 via a comment card or with the court reporter; or **during the virtual meeting** on Thursday, May 26, 2022 via a Zoom Breakout room with the court reporter.

