



I-10 EXPRESSLANES EXTENSION PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Metro has a plan to make it easier to get around. That plan includes reducing traffic congestion with efforts like the I-10 ExpressLanes Extension project.

Metro, in partnership with Caltrans, is evaluating alternatives to convert the existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to dynamically-priced, high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, also called ExpressLanes, or add a second HOV lane in both directions on Interstate 10 from the current ExpressLanes terminus at approximately Interstate 605 (I-605) to the Los Angeles/San Bernardino County line.

The I-10 ExpressLanes Extension Project will analyze the following alternatives: 1) no build; 2) converting the existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane to a High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane, also known as an ExpressLane, 3) adding an additional ExpressLane/HOT lane in each direction and converting the existing HOV lane to an ExpressLane, or 4) maintain the existing HOV lane and add a second HOV lane in each direction. The study area includes the Cities of El Monte, Industry, Baldwin Park, Covina, West Covina, San Dimas, Walnut, Pomona, Claremont, Montclair as well as unincorporated Los Angeles County.

The Project's purpose is to improve the movement of people and goods, improve safety, enhance mobility and regional connectivity along I-10.

The project aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- > Reduce degradation of HOV/HOT lanes operation in accordance with Federal regulations.
- > Promote equitable and sustainable multi-modal travel options, advance equity by providing additional funding opportunities to implement related projects and facilitate future improvements to enhance livability along I-10.
- > Improve travel times, increase trip reliability, maximize vehicle and person throughput, and enhance safety and mobility by incorporating active traffic management and intelligent transportation system strategies.
- > Address the gap between Metro's existing I-10 ExpressLanes and San Bernardino County Transportation Authority's (SBCTA's) I-10 ExpressLanes facility.
- > Provide interregional continuity and consistency with Metro's Countywide Express Lanes Strategic Plan, Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG's) 2020 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) and the California Transportation Plan 2050 (CTP 2050).

Who is leading the project?

Metro is leading the project approval/environmental document (PA/ED) phase as the local agency in coordination with Caltrans. Caltrans is the lead agency for the environmental document under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Per CEQA and NEPA, Caltrans will be preparing an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA). The EIR/EA is an assessment of the likely influences that future improvements may have on the environment and communities within and adjacent to the study area. It includes analyses of ways to reduce or avoid possible adverse environmental impacts.

Why is the project needed?

The I-10 corridor between I-605 and the LA/SB County line experiences higher travel time and lower trip reliability during peak commute hours. Traffic congestion continues impacting the project corridor with 256,000 vehicles traversing the corridor per day prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with those averages now expected to return to similar levels. Commuters generally average 32 hours of delay yearly traveling east and an average of 22 hours of delay yearly traveling west. Certain segments of the existing HOV lanes are classified as “degraded,” as defined by federal standards, meaning that speeds on the HOV lanes are less than 45 miles per hour more than 10% of the time. Additionally, peak commute rush hour speeds average less than 45 miles per hour for 51% or more of the time (or 16+ weekdays per month).

In addition, the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA) is currently constructing Express Lanes on I-10 between the county line and I-15 and is slated for completion by 2023. Once completed, an ExpressLanes gap will exist between Metro’s existing I-10 ExpressLanes and SBCTA’s I-10 Express Lanes facilities.

What is the project status?

The project is in the environmental phase and is undergoing a 45-day formal scoping process that begins on April 25, 2022 through June 10, 2022. Metro will accept formal comments via email, mail and telephone during this time. The comment period is accompanied by virtual public scoping meetings (held on May 4, May 5 and May 7, 2022) to share project information and promote the submittal of public comments. The intent of the scoping process is to gather input on the purpose and need for the project, the proposed alternatives, environmental issues, local projects that may be proposed in the study area, and the community participation approach. The scoping comments will help inform the areas that may need to be addressed by the environmental and technical studies being developed in support of the Environmental Document, anticipated for public release in mid-late 2023. The release of the Environmental Document will include a public comment period and public hearings to solicit input.

What is the anticipated project cost and how will the project be funded?

The project cost estimate is being evaluated as part of the environmental review process and will be available in the Draft Environmental Document, expected release in mid-late 2023. Potential funding sources will be explored as the project advances through the project development process.

What are ExpressLanes?

Metro ExpressLanes are designed to improve traffic flow and provide motorists, including solo drivers, a more reliable travel option in LA County. ExpressLanes allows those meeting occupancy requirements to travel for free, while also providing single occupant vehicles the option to pay a toll to use the lane.

Tolls for vehicles that don’t qualify to travel for free are calculated based on traffic conditions and vary according to the level of congestion—tolls are higher when traffic congestion is heavier and lower when traffic is lighter.

Metro currently operates ExpressLanes on the I-110 and I-10 freeways in LA County. To learn more, visit the Metro ExpressLanes website at metroexpresslanes.net.

Do all drivers have to pay to access the ExpressLanes? How do you pay?

No, ExpressLanes allow those meeting the occupancy requirements for the corridor and motorcycles to travel free (like an HOV lane) but also allow single occupant vehicles the option to pay a toll to travel in the lane. Drivers with a qualified Clean Air Vehicle (CAV) decal pay a discounted toll. A “FasTrak Flex®” device allows drivers to declare the number of people (1, 2, 3+) in the vehicle enabling HOV discounts and toll-free trips on the I-10 and I-110 Metro ExpressLanes.

FasTrak is an electronic-only toll collection system used in California allowing drivers to drive through designated “FasTrak Only” lanes paying tolls without stopping. Drivers with a non-switchable FasTrak transponder will always pay a toll regardless of the number of occupants in the vehicle. Drivers wanting the option to travel toll-free on the Metro ExpressLanes must upgrade to FasTrak Flex®, which can be used on all toll facilities in California.

Under the new Metro ExpressLanes Pay as You Go pilot, the cost of using the ExpressLanes without a valid FasTrak account/transponder has been reduced to \$4 (from \$25) plus the posted toll rate. The Pay as You Go Notice of Toll Evasion will be mailed to the owner of the vehicle (as registered with the DMV) who is responsible for paying the toll amount, plus a \$4 processing fee. If not paid by the date on the notice, additional penalties and fees will be applied. This option, however, does not allow qualifying carpoolers to access the ExpressLanes at no cost as it’s only available to vehicles equipped with a “FasTrak Flex®” device.

How does this benefit carpoolers and transit riders?

Incentives are available to Metro ExpressLanes users that are frequent carpoolers and transit riders, through the Carpool Loyalty (a FasTrak rewards program), and the Transit Rewards Program (a use credits rewards program). The Carpool Loyalty Program automatically enters Metro ExpressLanes FasTrak account holders who use the lanes as carpoolers into a monthly drawing for a chance to win toll credits.

Frequent transit riders and FasTrak accountholders can also earn a \$5 toll credit to use on the I-10 and I-110 Metro ExpressLanes through the Transit Rewards program.

The Transit Rewards Program is the first of its kind in the transit and toll industry. Transit riders will also benefit from increased transit service in the corridor paid for by net toll revenue, as is currently done on the I-10/I-110 ExpressLanes. Finally, both transit riders and carpoolers are expected to benefit from reduced travel time and increased travel reliability on the HOV/ExpressLanes.

What happens to the net toll revenue from the ExpressLanes?

State law requires toll revenues generated from the Metro ExpressLanes be reinvested in the corridor from which they were generated. If ExpressLanes are extended to the I-10 corridor, Metro would use the toll revenues first to pay for the cost of operating the ExpressLanes, including roadway and equipment maintenance, administration, toll collection, debt service, customer service, California Highway Patrol enforcement and Freeway Service Patrol tow trucks. Additional revenues would be reinvested in discount programs for Metro ExpressLanes customers through the Low-Income Assistance Plan, Carpool Loyalty, and the Transit Rewards Program. Remaining revenues could be reinvested into local corridor jurisdictions to improve transit service and active transportation.

How will the ExpressLanes program address equity concerns?

The Metro ExpressLanes program currently offers qualifying LA County residents a one-time \$25 credit when they set up their FasTrak account (proof of eligibility required). The \$25 credit can be applied to either the transponder deposit or pre-paid toll deposit. With this plan, the \$1 monthly account maintenance fee is also waived. To qualify for the Low-Income Assistance Plan, applicants must be LA County residents and have an annual household income equal to or less than twice the Federal Poverty Level (updated on an annual basis) and provide proof of eligibility. Visit metroexpresslanes.net for additional details. In addition, for those who do not drive, Metro expects to reinvest net toll revenue to improve/increase transit service in the corridor, as is currently done with the Metro J Line (Silver) and Foothill Transit.

Where are the proposed ExpressLanes access points?

The project aims to maintain the existing I-10 HOV access points to also serve the proposed ExpressLanes. However, the access points will be reviewed based on the analysis and results of supporting technical studies.

ALTERNATIVES AND OPERATIONS

What are the proposed alternatives for this Project?

The I-10 ExpressLanes Extension Project (Project) will analyze 4 proposed alternatives:

- > Alternative 1: Existing Conditions (no build)
- > Alternative 2: Converting the existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane to a High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane, also known as an ExpressLane
- > Alternative 3: Adding an additional ExpressLane/HOT lane in each direction and converting the existing HOV lane to an ExpressLane
- > Alternative 4: Maintain the existing HOV lane and add a second HOV lane in each direction

How will traffic flow be managed on the ExpressLanes to minimize congestion issues currently experienced in High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes?

ExpressLanes are dynamically priced to ensure vehicles travel at least 45 miles per hour (as required by law), so reliability and time savings are maintained. The I-110/I-10 ExpressLanes rates are updated based on real-time traffic demand on the facility, with prices increasing or decreasing based on the current usage of the ExpressLanes. By using variable pricing to manage travel demand, traffic flow in the ExpressLanes is continuously managed to maintain speed and flow, providing a more reliable option to the heavily congested general purpose and HOV lanes during peak periods.

How will rates in the ExpressLanes be determined?

Tolls for vehicles that don't qualify to travel for free are calculated based on traffic conditions and vary according to the level of congestion – tolls are higher when traffic congestion is heavier and lower when traffic is lighter within the ExpressLanes.

How will toll evasions be enforced on the proposed ExpressLanes?

For the Metro ExpressLanes to operate efficiently, enforcement will be multi-faceted utilizing California Highway Patrol services, technology, and facility design. The FasTrak® Flex transponder occupancy setting (1, 2, 3+) are visible on beacon lights which help CHP perform a visual verification of the vehicle and cite non-compliant drivers. In addition, the Occupancy Detection System is an automated detection system that helps the Metro ExpressLanes back-office know if the FasTrak® Flex switch setting matches the number of people in the vehicle. There can also be channelizers on the road that help separate the general-purpose lanes from the ExpressLanes.

When will this project be constructed?

This project is targeted for completion in 2028. If a build alternative is selected, the anticipated construction timeline will be defined in the Environmental Document.

ENVIRONMENTAL

What is the environmental process for this project? What type of documents are being prepared?

The Project is in the Project Approval/Environmental Document (EIR/EA) Phase (environmental planning phase). Caltrans as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lead agency, in coordination with Metro, will prepare an EIR/EA pursuant to CEQA and NEPA, respectively. The project is in the initial stage of the environmental planning phase, with a formal scoping process starting April 25, 2022 through June 10, 2022. The scoping process will include a 45-day comment period, accompanied by public scoping meetings.

The scoping comments will help inform the areas that may need to be addressed by the environmental and technical studies being developed in support of the draft EIR/EA, anticipated for public release in mid-late 2023. The release of the draft EIR/EA will include a comment period and public hearings to solicit public input.

Metro will also prepare a Concept of Operations (ConOps) and an investment grade Traffic and Revenue Study (T&R) concurrently with the EIR/EA phase. The purpose of the ConOps will be to define facility design, toll collection systems, and operating policies such as ingress/egress locations for the ExpressLanes, signage, enforcement, and toll policies. The purpose of the T&R Study is to consider factors such as congestion, roadway capacity, and potential time savings to estimate toll rates and the potential revenue that could be generated.

What types of impacts are being evaluated? How will impacts be addressed?

The EIR/EA will evaluate potential impacts of the Project on the environment and addresses issues consisting of, but not limited to, air quality, noise, visual, traffic, and community impacts during and after construction. The EIR/EA will include a comprehensive description of the Project and the proposed alternatives, evaluate the Project's effects on the environment, and inform decision-makers and the public of reasonable avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. The proposed alternatives will be evaluated through environmental studies, technical studies, and design reviews to identify a preferred alternative.

If a build alternative is selected, will any properties adjacent to the I-10 corridor be impacted as part of this project?

The goal of the project is to limit the proposed project improvements to the existing right of way in order to avoid impacts to private properties, to the extent possible.

Whether or not property is needed for a project alternative is determined through the environmental planning phase, in compliance with state and federal laws. During this phase, various project improvements are considered and evaluated, in addition to property that might possibly be needed for the project. For additional details, please refer to the Metro Property Acquisition fact sheet.

How will Metro manage the construction impacts of this project?

As part of the EIR/EA, a Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Plan will be developed to outline the steps that will be used to avoid or reduce significant impacts of project construction. Metro will work to minimize impacts on commuters and nearby businesses, residents, and property owners, as well as other project stakeholders.

Mitigation measures might include setting construction times to reduce specific impacts or shorten the overall duration of certain construction activities, fencing and sound walls around staging areas, locating earth removal locations near major streets and freeways, specifying haul routes, etc. Improved communications, including signage and advertising, are typically employed to help maintain access and encourage ongoing patronage to businesses. In addition, a dedicated Metro Construction Relations team will conduct proactive and continuous community outreach to keep stakeholders informed.

Who will select the Preferred Alternative and when is this decision anticipated?

Following the public review period for the EIR/EA, the project development team will recommend a Preferred Alternative for Metro Board's consideration and approval. The Preferred Alternative will then be included as part of the Final EIR/EA with an expected completion date of mid-late 2024.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

How can local communities and the general public participate in this process?

A robust stakeholder engagement program will be implemented in support of the project's environmental planning process with the goal of building an inclusive vision that balances the unique and diverse needs of the corridor stakeholders. Metro is committed to a comprehensive outreach program that provides project stakeholders with the necessary information, tools, and resources to become and remain engaged and informed and provide valuable input at key milestones.

Members of the public and other interested parties are encouraged to participate at public engagement activities, including, but not limited to scoping meetings and public hearings. In addition, comment periods will be offered during the scoping period (45 days) and during the review period for the Draft Environmental Document. Engagement with low-income and minority communities and organizations will also be a key component of this process to ensure equity concerns are considered and addressed as part of this phase of the project. Please sign-up to receive project updates and details on opportunities to get involved via the project website.

STAY CONNECTED

Metro is committed to equity, transparency and maximizing public participation. Metro welcomes your input on the upcoming effort, including comments during the scoping period and future public hearings. Please share your thoughts and comments using any of the contact methods listed below. Metro does not share your contact information with third parties.

CONTACT US

For more information, questions, comments, or requests to join the mailing list, please contact:



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