

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: _____ From: California Department of Transportation, District 4
 _____ 111 Grand Avenue MS 8B
 _____ Oakland, CA 94612

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

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

Project Title: SR 84 Expressway Widening and SR 84/I-680 Interchange Improvements Project

Project Location: Alameda County, State Route 84 Post Mile (PM) 17.9 to 22.9 and Interstate 680 PM 10.3 to 15.3

Project Description: The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the Alameda County Transportation Commission, proposes to widen and conform State Route (SR) 84 to expressway standards between south of Ruby Hill Drive and the Interstate 680 (I-680) interchange. The project would also improve SR 84/I-680 interchange ramps and extend the existing southbound I-680 High Occupancy Vehicle/express lane northward by approximately 2 miles. The purpose of the project is to alleviate traffic congestion on SR 84 and at the SR 84/I-680 interchange, and to improve safety and conform SR 84 to expressway standards between south of Ruby Hill Drive and the I-680 interchange.

This is to inform you that Caltrans will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

A more detailed project description, location map, and description of potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

A copy of the Initial Study (is) (is not) attached.

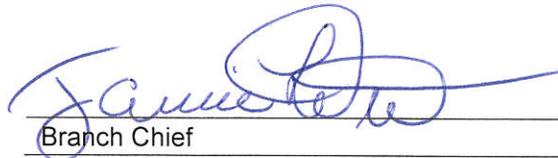
Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Mr. Jamie Le Dent, Branch Chief (telephone 510-622-8729, email 84expresswayproject@dot.ca.gov) at the address shown above. Please supply us with a name for a contact person in your agency.

Date

5/11/2016

Signature
Title


Branch Chief

Supplemental Project Information

Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC), proposes to widen and conform State Route (SR) 84 to expressway standards between south of Ruby Hill Drive and the Interstate 680 (I-680) interchange. The project would also improve SR 84/I-680 interchange ramps and extend the existing southbound I-680 High Occupancy Vehicle/express lane¹ (HOV/express lane) northward by approximately 2 miles. Figure 1 shows the location of the project improvements, which would extend from post mile (PM) 17.9 to 22.9 on SR 84 and PM 10.3 to 15.3 on I-680, in Pleasanton, Sunol, and unincorporated Alameda County.

Project Description

The alternative developed to meet the purpose and need of the project is the Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative is also considered. With the No Build Alternative, no changes would be made to SR 84, the SR 84/I-680 interchange ramps, or I-680; therefore, no construction activities would occur and there would be no change in the operations of the existing facility.

The following sections describe the Build Alternative components by area.

SR 84

The proposed project would widen SR 84 from two to four lanes (two lanes in each direction) and overlay and restripe the roadway. A Class II bikeway² would be provided in each direction. Appropriate median barriers would be placed to enhance user safety.

As part of conforming SR 84 to expressway standards, access would be limited to controlled intersections to improve traffic flow and safety. The project would consolidate existing access openings to private driveways and rural roads at new frontage roads. The frontage roads would connect to a new signal intersection at Vallecitos Atomic Laboratory Road. The new intersection would provide access to frontage roads to the north of SR 84 connecting to Little Valley Road and to the south of SR 84 connecting to private driveways and rural roads. Existing driveways in the Pigeon Pass summit section would be converted to right-in, right-out access.

SR 84/I-680 Interchange and Auxiliary Lanes

At the SR 84/I-680 interchange, the project would reconstruct the existing ramps between SR 84 and northbound I-680. The project would add an HOV preferential on-ramp lane from westbound SR 84 to southbound I-680, making the on-ramp a total of three lanes, and construct

¹ The HOV/express lane is a specially designated freeway lane that is free for vehicles with two or more occupants, motorcycles, and certain alternative fuel vehicles, but also gives single-occupant vehicles the option to pay a toll to use the lane.

² A Class II bikeway provides a striped lane for one-way bike travel.



FIGURE 1
Project Location

an approximately 1,000-foot-long auxiliary lane³ on southbound I-680. A realigned two-lane off-ramp connector would be provided from northbound I-680 to eastbound SR 84, and the existing northbound I-680 auxiliary lane would be lengthened to approximately 1,500 feet. The project would remove the existing on-ramp connection to the northbound I-680 auxiliary lane and provide a new grade-separated access from Paloma Way/Calaveras Boulevard on the east side of I-680 to northbound I-680 and a slip on-ramp to eastbound SR 84. The project would also realign the westbound SR 84 to northbound I-680 connector to merge with the northbound on-ramp to I-680 from Paloma Way.

A new Class I bikeway⁴ would be provided at the interchange to connect the westbound SR 84 Class II bikeway with Paloma Way. A new Class II bikeway would be provided along the southbound I-680 on-ramp from Calaveras Road to connect with the eastbound SR 84 Class II bikeway.

I-680

On southbound I-680, the project would extend the existing HOV/express lane northward from its current entry point at approximately Calaveras Road to approximately 0.8 mile north of Koopman Road, a distance of approximately 2 miles. The pavement in the center median of southbound I-680 would be widened to accommodate the HOV/express lane. Overhead signs (including dynamic message signs [DMS] with pricing information) and toll readers for FasTrak transponders would be installed in the median of I-680. The northernmost overhead sign would be approximately 1.8 miles north of Koopman Road (at PM 14.2). As shown in Figure 1, the project area is currently shown as extending to Sunol Boulevard; however, no ground disturbance is currently planned north of PM 14.2.

Like the existing HOV/express lane, the new segment would allow continuous access between the HOV/express lane and the adjacent mixed-flow (general purpose) lanes. All eligible users, including HOVs, motorcycles, buses, clean air vehicles as authorized by the California Air Resources Board, and toll-paying single occupant vehicles, would be able to access the HOV/express lane. During the hours of operation (Mondays to Fridays from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m.), HOV/express lane use would be as follows:

- Eligible vehicles with HOV status will continue to use the HOV/express lane for free.
- Solo drivers can choose to use the new express lane for a fee.
- Two-axle, delivery-type trucks will also be allowed to use the HOV/express lane, but trucks with three or more axles will be excluded from the lane.

At nights and on weekends, the lane would be open to all drivers for free.

³ An auxiliary lane is a lane used for weaving, truck climbing, speed change, or other purposes supplementary to through movement.

⁴ A Class I bikeway provides a completely separated right-of-way for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians, with crossflow by motorists minimized.

Like the existing HOV/express lane, the new segment would be operated by the Sunol Smart Carpool Lane Joint Powers Authority.⁵

Potential Environmental Effects

Based on preliminary surveys and information, Caltrans identified the following main subject areas for analysis in the EIR. The scope of environmental analysis will be modified based on input from this Notice of Preparation and project scoping.

- Aesthetic/Visual
- Agricultural Land
- Air Quality
- Archeological/Historical
- Biological Resources
- Drainage/Absorption
- Flood Plain/Flooding
- Geologic/Seismic
- Growth Inducement
- Land Use
- Noise
- Paleontology
- Public Services/Facilities
- Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading
- Toxic/Hazardous
- Traffic/Circulation
- Vegetation
- Water Quality
- Wetland/Riparian
- Cumulative Effects

⁵ California Streets and Highway Code Section 149.5 established the Sunol Smart Carpool Lane Joint Powers Authority and authorized the Authority and its members, consisting of Alameda CTC and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, to conduct, administer, and operate a value pricing HOV program in the I-680 corridor in Alameda and Santa Clara counties.