

**OCTA
I-405 Improvement Project
Stakeholder Working Group (SWG)**

**Minutes of Meeting
Tuesday, May 12, 2009**

**9:00 a.m.
Orange County Transportation Authority
600 S. Main Street, Orange CA
OCTA Conference Room 103/104**

Attendance

Stakeholder Working Group Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Marie Antos	Seal Beach Historical & Cultural Society
Hamid Bahadori	Automobile Club of Southern California
Ralph Bauer	OCTA Citizens Advisory Committee
Diana Carey	I-405 Ad Hoc Committee, OCTA
Steve Carpenter	Rebuilding Together OC
Kevin Gilhooley	Office of Senator Tom Harman
Jaime Guerrero	Golden Rain Foundation-Leisure World
Ray Hiemstra	Orange County Coastkeeper
Lacy Kelly	Orange County Division-League of California Cities
Lieutenant Kurt Kruse	California Highway Patrol, Westminster
Al Krippner	Westminster Planning Commission
Lieutenant T. Lindsay	Huntington Beach Police Department
Janis Mantini	The Boeing Company
Robin Marcario	Central Garden Grove Neighborhood Association
Patricia Martz, Ph.D.	California Cultural Resources Preservation Alliance
Mark McCurdy	Fountain Valley Chamber of Commerce
Carol McDermott	ULI Orange County
Charles Mitchell	Garden Grove Sanitary District Advisory Commission
David Mootchnik	OCTA Citizens Advisory Committee
Tam Nguyen	Vietnamese-American Chamber of Commerce
Richard Niemeyer	Rossmoor Homeowners Association
David Olinger	California Cultural Resources Preservation Alliance
Kari Rigoni	John Wayne Airport
Gregg Smith	Seal Beach Naval Weapons Center

Schelly Sustarsic
Marie Tran
Yumiko Whitaker
Paul Wilkinson

College Park East Neighborhood Association
Old World Village Association
IKEA Home Furnishings
Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce

Non-Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Rose Casey	OCTA
Niall Barrett	OCTA
Christina Byrne	OCTA
Dan Phu	OCTA
Ryan Lau	OCTA
Kevin Haboian	Parsons
Macie Cleary	Parsons
Neal Denno	Parsons
Jennifer Labrado	Consensus Planning Group
Michelle Sinning	Consensus Planning Group

I. Welcome and Self Introductions

II. Opening Remarks

Ms. Byrne stated that the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) is one of many avenues that OCTA will be using to communicate with the public. Ms. Byrne discussed the PowerPoint Presentation's slide on community outreach and the ongoing and executed activities, including developing and maintaining a project database; conducting city council briefings; establishing a project hotline, e-mail address, and Web site; and conducting stakeholder interviews and developing online surveys.

III. SWG Roles and Responsibilities

Ms. Byrne explained the roles and responsibilities of SWG members and referred to the PowerPoint Presentation which described the working group's activities. She explained that the SWG provides the project team with input and advice to inform the community, gather feedback, build consensus on the project and be ambassadors for the project. She explained that the project's early action phase will consist of various alternatives. The ideas presented are conceptual and the goal is to arrive at a consensus. As the project works through early action phase through August, she asked that all members make an effort to continue to participate, as their input will be shared with the PWG and the Board of Directors. The Board will ultimately make the policy decisions on the project.

IV. Project Overview

Rose Casey stated that the I-405 project corridor spans 14 miles from the I-405/I-605 interchange through Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach, Seal Beach, Garden Grove, Westminster Los Alamitos and Rossmoor. Ms. Casey explained that the corridor is heavily used, regionally important to goods movement, business and activity centers, and handles 300,000 vehicles per day. Traffic in 2035 is forecast to be 400,000 vehicles per day. If I-405 were built to accommodate demand, it would require 20 lanes by 2025. There is a need for improvement. The project has had a long history.

V. Project Alternatives

Ms. Casey described the I-405 project status and referred to the slide with the timeline of the project. She explained that in 2008, the project study report considered alternatives that added 1 or 2 lanes in each direction. The cost was an estimated \$1.2 to \$1.7 billion for improvements. The current economic conditions and decreased revenue have caused a funding shortfall. In January of 2009, the OCTA Board approved the staff recommendation to look into two new alternatives: a High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes alternative and a “build to available funding” alternative adding a general purpose lane in each direction in a limited number of locations. Funding is projected to be from \$350 to \$500 million under Renewed Measure M.

Kevin Haboian informed the SWG that he would talk about alternatives and the environmental process. He encouraged the SWG to ask questions along the way. He stated that the project team is trying to address all issues and wants to have an open dialogue with the SWG, as representatives of the community. The project team wants to address concerns and issues so that in the end they have a project the SWG members can buy into. The project team is developing the project in conjunction with Caltrans, since it's their facility and they will be operating and maintaining it. Two alternatives currently under consideration have been studied over the last four years and two alternatives are new to the process.

Mr. Haboian described the alternatives:

- There is a no build alternative.
- Alternative 1 adds one general purpose lane in each direction. This alternative was approved as the Locally Preferred Strategy (LPS) by the OCTA Board after the Major Investment Study phase. It would add auxiliary lanes to the freeway between on-ramps and off-ramps.
- Alternative 2 adds two general purpose lanes in each direction.
- Alternative 3 adds a HOT lane in each direction and incorporates the existing HOV lanes within the HOT lane component. This alternative was added to the study recently.

- Alternative 4 studies localized improvements. Measure M money has been identified for this project. The proposed improvements would stay within the projected Measure M budget envelop.

Mr. Haboian explained that Alternatives 1 and 2 range in cost from \$1.4 billion for Alternative 1 to \$1.8 billion for Alternative 2. This phase will study what potential revenue could be raised from HOT lanes, and whether the a HOT lane alternative is viable.

Al Krippner stated that the No Build Alternative is not truly an alternative as it has not been assigned a number.

Mr. Haboian explained that it is indeed a potential alternative which must be consider and is used for measuring impacts.

Robin Marcario asked if OCTA is looking into changing HOV lanes to HOT lanes. Mr. Haboian stated that the HOT lane alternative includes two lanes in each direction, one of which is the existing HOV lane and one of which is a new lane. OCTA may or may not charge HOVs using the HOT lane. Mr. Haboian noted that the existing 5 general purpose lanes would be expanded to 6 general purpose lanes under the HOT lane alternative.

Mr Haboian stated that the main objective the team is focusing on in the Early Action phase is to see if they can make the alternatives fit within the right-of-way footprint that was defined in the LPS and adopted by the OCTA Board. He stated that Caltrans has safety standards for freeways. In locations where there may be an impact, the project team will work with Caltrans to consider reduced standards to respect within the footprint. The project team is currently working on that and the information developed will be presented to the Board.

Mr Haboian referred to a schematic of the project alternatives. The schematic shows the addition of the West County Connector project. That project will add an additional HOV lane along I-405 in each direction between the SR-22 Freeway and I-605 Freeway.

Mr. Haboian noted that the potential improvements to I-405 will include additional general purpose lanes and auxiliary lanes, which connect on-ramps to off-ramps. Alternative 1 provides standard shoulders on the left-hand side of the freeway. The full standard shoulder is 10 feet wide. Every arterial overcrossing will be torn down and replaced with new ones to accommodate the freeway widening.

Mr. Haboian stated that Alternative 2 looks at providing two general purpose lanes in each direction. He referred the SWG to lanes 6 and 7 on the schematic. He said that in order to minimize widening beyond the LPS right-of-way footprint, the second additional general purpose lane in Alternative 2 would generally take the place of the auxiliary

lanes in Alternative 1. Where there is sufficient room, auxiliary lanes will be accommodated.

Alternative 3 is the HOT lane alternative. The HOV lane is converted to a HOT lane.

Mr. Haboian referred SWG members to review the PowerPoint Presentation slide explaining what an HOT lane is. Essentially, HOT lanes are high occupancy vehicle lanes that HOV commuters could use free or for a reduced fee, while allowing the opportunity for solo drivers to use the two-lane HOT facility for a fee. Single occupant motorists can choose to “buy into a lane”.

Ray Hiemstra stated that as a motorcyclist he uses the lanes for free. For safety purposes, how will motorcyclists be accommodated? Lieutenant Kurt Kruse stated that the 91 freeway requires motorcyclists to have a transponder. Mr. Haboian stated that he assumed a transponder would be used on the I-405.

Ms. Marcario asked why there is not an alternative having one HOT lane and one HOV lane. She stated that taxpayers already paid for an HOV lane and asked why it should be made private. Mr. Haboian stated that Ms. Marcario brought up a good point. However, HOVs nearly fill the existing one lane in each direction. For single occupant vehicles to use the lane and be willing to pay a fee, there would need to be an improved level of service. If all lanes were flowing well, there would be no need for a HOT facility because everyone is moving. Ms. Marcario stated that if we choose to have that option, we can use an HOV and a HOT lane. Under what is proposed, she stated that both are HOT lanes and you could or could not be charged. She asked Mr. Haboian to clarify if one is an HOV lane and if the other is a HOT lane, and if we have the choice to pay or not pay. Mr. Haboian replied that motorists will have the choice to pay or not. He also indicated that having separate HOT and HOV lanes could create problems with accessibility. He asked whether the HOV lane is the first lane or the second lane. Ms. Marcario stated that the closest to the general purpose lane should be an HOV and the HOT lane should be against the median. Mr. Haboian stated that if this were the case, then single occupancy drivers would be driving into an HOV lane to access the HOT lane. This would cause an enforcement problem. The CHP would not be able to enforce the integrity of the lanes. Ms. Marcario stated that we have to work on two lanes.

Janis Mantini interjected and stated that it's an option.

Diana Carey stated that anytime you talk about a HOT lane and charging people, it becomes a red flag. She suggested that the SWG members review an OC Register article that discusses this. She explained that it might be beneficial to educate the public on HOT lanes. She noted that if we cannot afford to improve without HOT lanes, the public should be educated about this. She indicated that people don't realize that there has not been an increase in gas or excise taxes since 1993 and 1994, respectively. Ms. Carey stated that the people with whom she's spoken ask if the money charged for the I-

405 is for the project or for the community. She stated that there needs to be more information on reasons for the HOT lanes. Ms. Carey also recommended a paper by the Rand Corporation that clearly articulates the need for HOT lanes. However, OCTA may get a lot of blowback unless they articulate why HOT lanes are needed.

Mr. Haboian responded that there are a lot of costs associated with the project. Raising revenues through tolls offsets the cost. Ms. Carey responded that the community doesn't understand that.

David Mootchnik stated that OCTA has pushed for continuous access to HOV lanes on SR-22 and other freeways. He stated that the HOT lane alternative sounds like the opposite direction, similar to the SR-91 expressway, which has 10 miles without access. He asked if this was a 10-mile stretch and if it offered continuous access or not. Mr. Haboian stated that Mr. Mootchnik brought up a good point. He stated that this is another issue the project team is considering. The project team is considering up to three locations for intermediate access. The team is determining the optimum locations for access points to maximize accessibility. Mr. Haboian noted that there will be access restrictions.

Mr. Mootchnik stated that it sounds more restricted for HOV people than we have now, with one exit for every freeway interchange. Mr. Haboian stated that this is correct.

Charles Mitchell asked why we were considering penalizing people for carpooling for the benefit of those that have money to pay a toll. He stated that it is not fair. Mr. Haboian stated that we are looking at different scenarios. HOVs may retain free access to the facility as they have now with a charge only for single occupancy vehicles. He stated that the project team will be looking at how much revenue would be raised if HOVs travel at a reduced rate or free. Single occupancy vehicles will be charged. The team wants to get a range of potential revenue before recommending how to address HOVs.

Al Krippner stated that this project heavily affects Westminster. He asked if the project team has considered whether some homes would be taken to allow space for the project. He asked how many homes would be taken. He asked if there has been consideration of flyovers, ramps, and access roads. Mr. Haboian stated during the MIS, OCTA looked at improvements along the freeway main line and the LPS adopted by the OCTA Board had some right-of-way impacts. It was recognized that at interchanges there might be some additional right-of-way impacts. Ms. Carey stated there are a total of five homes along Abraham Street in Westminster that were impacted under the LPS. Mr. Krippner stated that sounds like OCTA is saying it's a zero number, but really it's more than that. Mr. Haboian stated that there are things OCTA can do, such as modifying alignments and creating flyovers, that would reduce the impacts. During the MIS phase the project team looked at a concept for an elevated viaduct that would reduce the footprint of the freeway. They provided renderings at different public

meetings and the feedback was that people don't want an elevated roadway because of the visual effect.

Mr. Krippner stated that people don't want change, and that's natural. However, if we make changes now, and consider problems that may occur 20 years from now, it will be easier to deal with and solve those issues.

Mr. Haboian stated that OCTA conducted an assessment of what it would take to satisfy traffic demand in the I-405 corridor. The conclusion of the assessment was that 11 travel lanes would be needed in each direction. He stated that such a facility is not feasible. Even with improvements there will still be congestion

Mr. Krippner stated that his sister lives near LAX, and sometimes you are better having your home taken, than having the freeway built around your home and suffering the impacts.

Ms. Mantini asked if OCTA is worried about people sneaking in and out of the toll lanes to avoid paying. Mr. Haboian responded that in general, there is separation between the toll and general purpose lanes to control such behavior. He stated that people do funny things to avoid a toll, and based on experiences, weaving in and out creates unsafe conditions for other travelers. He stated that technology is improving and there are ways of enhancing safety.

Charles Mitchell stated that looking at the project from an environmental point of view, there is vegetation on both sides of the freeway. He stated that one of the graphics of alternatives don't show vegetation on the sides as in the existing condition. He asked if we are required to replace vegetation and take more properties to replant the vegetation. Mr. Haboian responded that the vegetation would not be replaced and that the strategy is to minimize right-of-way impacts.

Kevin Gilhooley asked if the right-of-way impacts would be only for Alternative 1 and 2, or for all the Alternatives. Mr. Haboian answered that Alternatives 1 and 2 would have some right-of-way impacts, but we want to stay within the right-of-way footprint of the LPS. He stated that Alternative 3 is a new alternative and the project team will be studying how it affects properties. Mr. Gilhooley asked if five properties are minimum that will be taken and if OCTA has the authority to convert HOV lanes to HOT lanes, or if special legislation will be required for that. Mr. Haboian and Ms. Casey both answered that there will be a need for special legislation.

Mr. Haboian stated that even with the HOT lane alternative, a general purpose lane is added. He referred to the HOT lane PowerPoint slide and stated that the fourth bullet point shows how an HOV is combined with the existing HOV lane to create a two-lane facility. He asked the SWG to review Alternative 4, which provides localized improvements based on available funding of \$300 million to \$500 million. The

improvements are identified as A, B, and C. They could be all implemented or just A and B, or just C, depending on the cost.

Mr. Haboian stated that Option A under Alternative 4, would extend a general purpose lane and improve bottlenecked traffic along the south portion corridor. Option B would improve the Beach Blvd. interchange Improvements would include flyover and braided ramps to improve traffic flow better. Option C would provide an additional lane on I-405 between the SR-22 to the I-605 freeways.

Ralph Bauer asked what would happen with the Los Angeles County Section of the I-405 freeway. Mr. Haboian stated that they are talking with Los Angeles to make sure their project would blend in to the existing facilities in LA County. The project team wants to transition safely into the Los Angeles section. He stated that there have been joint meetings between Orange and LA Counties. Mr. Bauer stated that Los Angeles seems reluctant to improve freeways. He asked if the positive impact would be upset by Los Angeles. Mr. Haboian stated that there are ongoing meetings to address this.

Richard Niemeyer stated that Rossmoor has concerns that the envisioned lanes would come to a screeching halt and pour out onto Seal Beach Boulevard. The community is concerned that a widened freeway would end at the county line. Mr. Haboian stated that concern was a good segue into the presentation on the environmental portion of the study.

VI. Environmental Process

Ms. Cleary stated that the purpose of the environmental process identifies the impacts of the alternatives as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The process will be conducted in conjunction with Caltrans. Caltrans is the lead agency for the environmental process.

Ms. Cleary stated people want to know why we are studying the alternatives again. Ms. Cleary stated that the EIR must be at a higher level of detail than in previous documents.

Ms. Cleary referred the SWG to the slide on the EIR/EIS technical studies including the floodplain evaluation, water quality report, cumulative impact analysis, induced growth analysis, and traffic and circulation report. She stated that the project team will look at the impacts and how to minimize those impacts. The subsequent slide explained the schedule for completing the environmental document. She stated that the project team will be working on the technical documents and putting together the draft EIR and EIS. She stated that the first public meetings are the scoping meetings in the fall. Subsequently, public comment on the draft EIR/EIS, will be sought and is currently scheduled for May 2011. Ms. Cleary stated that the process is long because they must review all the issues on traffic, air quality, and other impacts. The team is interfacing with

agencies and Caltrans, and they need to make sure impacts are documented fully. Four scoping meetings are scheduled this fall, and the four dates are at different locations in cities along the project.

Hamid Bahadori asked if the project falls under the terms of AB 32 and SB 375.

Ms. Cleary responded that they would greenhouse gases into consideration.

Marie Tran asked if the EIR seeks to identify and minimize impacts and identify what's need to be in compliance with environmental rules Ms. Cleary stated that the environmental process will evaluate and discuss laws and applicable standards. Ms. Tran asked if they will have the details only for the future, or would the EIR include the current status to use as a baseline. Ms. Cleary stated the report would be a robust analysis and there would be a baseline.

Ms. Marcario asked if there would be any difference in environmental impacts in keeping an HOV and adding a HOT lane. Mr. Haboian stated that sometimes options of alternatives may have different impacts and these would all be covered in the environmental analysis.

Ms. Carey asked for clarification of the summary page. Mr. Haboian stated that in looking at the alternatives, the project team wants to study two alternatives that have not been studied to date. The objective is to stay within the footprint of the LPS. If the project team determines that the footprint has a wider impact, opportunities to reduce impacts will be investigated. The project team will need to present both options in an environmental analysis. Caltrans will determine whether reducing standards is acceptable on a case by case basis, because they have to provide a safe facility. Ms. Carey stated that in 2005, Alternative 8 was Alternative 3. That plan entailed taking 77 homes. Since it was already rejected, would the project team still do an environmental impact report on a rejected alternative. Mr. Haboian responded that Alternative 8 included auxiliary lanes and resulted in home impacts. The project team is evaluating whether removing auxiliary lanes would result in lower impacts.

Ms. Carey asked if Alternative 3 would consist of HOT lanes with continuous access. She stated that right now, the HOV lanes are blocked off. Mr. Haboian stated that the current plan is that there will be intermediate access locations for people to get in and out of the HOT lanes. Ms. Carey asked if Alternative 1 would maintain a shoulder of 10 feet and if each of the alternatives would have a shoulder for vehicles that break down. Mr. Haboian stated that currently the alternatives have shoulders on both sides. However, a large row of homes is impacted the project team may consider mitigating that impact by reducing or eliminating a shoulder.

Mr. Krippner stated that he would suggest that the alternatives not be numbered numerically and instead be named using letters. Mr. Haboian stated that the team debated that. He went on to explain that his presentation phase was complete.

Mr. Niemeyer asked if the PowerPoint presentation would be on the Web site. Carol McDermott asked if all the information is currently on the Web site. Christina Byrne answered that it is not currently on the Web site but she can post it. Ms. McDermott answered that it would be helpful to use the information as the basis of her presentation to her organization.

Ms. Tran asked contractually, who is doing the EIR? Ms. Haboian answered that Parsons is contracted by OCTA, and OCTA will review the work, as will Caltrans. They have to get buy-in from both entities. Ms. Tran asked if a company that does the EIR should be independent of the company that designs the project. Mr. Haboian answered that they will be doing the EIR, and OCTA and Caltrans will sign off to present to the government agencies.

Ms. Cleary stated that the responsible agency is OCTA, and the lead agency is Caltrans. Caltrans is the federal approving authority. Parsons is doing the environmental and engineering report in support of the project. They will do the report and the engineering but the final design and construction will be separate contract efforts selected by OCTA.

Kevin Gilhooley asked if we anticipate environmental problems in the wetlands at Seal Beach. Ms. Cleary answered that those answers will be provided in the EIR document. The previous document in the MIS did a cursory review of environmental impacts, but because it's an urban area, they don't anticipate wetland or biological impacts. She stated that they are trying to get an initial sense of some impacts during the early action phase. The project team will be studying and giving initial indications at the upcoming meetings.

Mr. Niemeyer asked, if there is only money for Alternative 4, then why study other alternatives? Ms. Cleary responded that they look at Alternative 4 as a sequencing strategy. OCTA is actively looking at sources of additional funds. While Alternative 4 could be the first step in a sequence, it must stand alone with short terms benefits. The project team needs to look at Alternative 3 as a demand management strategy and revenue source. In Southern California there are lots of lanes being considered for conversion from HOV to HOT lanes. The FHWA is involved in this and the state is involved. This is a point on which we will provide more information as we move forward.

Ms. Carey asked if the reason for the difference in costs for Alternative 1 from the initial study is inflated costs. Mr. Haboian stated that the cost is such because the initial cost estimate for Alternative 1 prepared during the MIS was focused on mainline improvements. During the MIS, there were not any improvements to interchange configurations. Additionally, there was a major spike in engineering costs and steel costs and it all contributes to the increase in cost.

Charles Mitchell asked if improving the HOT lanes has the potential for allowing the revenue to be returned to OCTA or if it would be sold to a vendor. Mr. Haboian stated that the initial concept is that excess revenue will be reinvested into the corridor to offset the capital cost. Rose Casey stated that OCTA is not close to a decision about whether OCTA would take the lead or use a private firm. OCTA purchased the lanes on the 91 freeway and the excess revenue funds improvements within the corridor. One option is that OCTA may move forward to fund and implement the lanes. However, they need legislation to do so.

Ray Hiemstra asked if the private company would be TCA. Ms. Casey stated that OCTA has had good success with its ownership of the the 91 express lanes.

David Mootchnik asked when the next meeting would be and how often the SWG would meet.

VII. Closing

Rose Casey stated that the next meeting is scheduled for July 2, 2009. The meeting will be at 9:00 a.m. in the OCTA conference room at 103/104 on the first floor. The third meeting is August 6, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. in the same conference room. She stated that potential future meetings are two per year. Ms. Casey stated that Christina will send out a reminder to save the date. She thanked the SWG for participating.