

**OCTA
I-405 Improvement Project
Stakeholder Working Group**

**Minutes of Meeting
Thursday, July 2, 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>
Jim Adams	LA/OC Building & Construction Trades Council
Hamid Bahadori	Automobile Club of Southern California
Garry Brown	Orange County Coastkeeper
Jill Cagle	Building Industry Association of Orange County
Diana Carey	I-405 Ad Hoc Committee, OCTA
Art De Bolt	Los Alamitos Planning Commission
Kevin Gilhooley	Office of Senator Tom Harman
Clark Hampton	Westminster School District
Lieutenant Kurt Kruse	California Highway Patrol, Westminster
Sergeant Laureano	California Highway Patrol, Westminster
Janis Mantini	The Boeing Company
Mark McCurdy	Fountain Valley Chamber of Commerce
Charles Mitchell	Garden Grove Sanitary District Advisory Commission
Richard Niemeyer	Rossmoor Homeowners Association
Reed Royalty	Orange County Taxpayers Association
Peter Sinambal	Asian Business Association of Orange County
Gregg Smith	Seal Beach Naval Weapons Center
Schelly Sustarsic	College Park East Neighborhood Association
Lea Umnas	John Wayne Airport
Jay vanWormer	Fountain Valley Homeowner's Association
Paul Wilkinson	Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce

Non-Members

Name	Agency
Rose Casey	OCTA
Christina Byrne	OCTA
Niall Barrett	OCTA
Iffat Qamar	Caltrans
Kevin Haboian	Parsons
Macie Cleary	Parsons
Neal Denno	Parsons
Jennifer Labrado	Consensus Inc.
Michelle Sinning	Consensus Inc.

I. Welcome and Self Introductions

Christina Byrne opened the meeting and provided an overview of the agenda

Kevin Haboian stated that OCTA will present the early action plan conclusions for consideration and will try to summarize questions regarding HOT lanes. He added that the early action plan is the result of the addition of two new proposed alternatives. Mr. Haboian stated that there will also be an overview of project outreach efforts.

II. Early Action Plan Purpose and Objective

Mr. Haboian stated that two new alternatives had been proposed, and that is why they are conducting the early action plan. He stated that the project extends from the SR-73 to the I-605 freeway. OCTA is also in the process of developing the West County Connectors. The WCC project is finishing the design phase and construction is expected in late January 2010. The I-405 project will be in addition to those improvements. He stated that the early action plan phase evaluates several alternatives, two of which have been studied previously. The two new alternatives need to be studied for viability, including impacts, revenue potentials, and if they are worthy of further study in the EIR. He added that if OCTA finds they are viable, they will be part of the environmental document development stage.

III. Viability of Alternatives

Alternative 1 was the locally preferred strategy recommended after the Major Investment Study. It adds 1 general purpose lane in each direction and potentially auxiliary lanes. Alternative 2 adds two general purpose lanes in each direction, and Alternative 3 is a new alternative suggested to start at this phase. Alternative 3 adds a HOT lane to combine with the HOV lane to create a two lane HOT facility and adds a general purpose lane.

A SWG member stated that Costa Mesa has already gone through improvements and asked if the HOT lane would start in Costa Mesa and extend south of the Santa Ana River, and if so, will there be impacts south of the Santa Ana River?

- Mr. Haboian responded that Alternative 3 would extend further south than Alternatives 1 and 2, and could potentially have impacts south of the Santa Ana River to SR-73.

A SWG member asked if the existing carpool would be eliminated in Alternative 3 if there are two HOT lanes.

- Mr. Haboian replied that the existing HOV lane would be converted to a HOT lane, creating a 2 HOT lane facility. However, carpool users would be able to access the HOT lanes at either a reduced toll or free.

A SWG member asked what would happen if OCTA completely eliminates the free HOV lanes.

- Ms. Casey responded that OCTA has not determined policy for operational issues such as this one. This is a future policy issue and decision.

Diana Carey stated that in 2005 an express lane Alternative was presented and homes would be taken. A member noted that in the Project Study Report , Alternative 2 had narrower lanes and asked if this was the standard lane width or the smaller lane width.

- Mr. Haboian stated that OCTA has looked at implications of widening along both sides of the freeway and will address that later in the presentation.

IV. Optimized Design Process

Mr. Haboian stated that the early action plan was developed to evaluate whether the alternatives can fit within the existing Locally Preferred Strategy foot print. The design process was optimized to address the alternatives with wider footprints. The process looks at locations where the impact would go beyond the Locally Preferred Strategy (LPS) footprint. The early action plan then looked at minimizing those impacts to see what savings could be achieved. Mr. Haboian discussed two examples to illustrate the process. In the first example there are houses on both sides of the freeway. Prior to optimization, Alternatives 2 and 3 have widths exceeding the existing right of way.

Diana Carey asked what could be done to minimize the impact?

- Mr. Haboian stated that auxiliary lanes could be eliminated in some locations to allow Alternatives 3 and 4 to stay within the LPS.
- Mr. Haboian also stated that the buffer separation between the HOV/HOT and general purpose lanes could be reduced from 4 feet to one foot and still be in accordance with state guidelines. He stated that with these modifications it does not appear that any residences would have to be acquired in the example area.

- Mr. Haboian also indicated that they were surprised that the modified alternative did not have any significant impacts to residential property. Afterwards, Mr. Haboian referenced a second example location at the Warner and Magnolia intersection. He stated that there are homes on one side of the freeway in this location and commercial properties on the other. He then clarified that the Locally Preferred Strategy (Alternative 1) already did have property acquisition impacts in this location on the commercial side. He said that the modifications resulted in impacts to properties impacted under the LPS and that the impacts to those properties were a bit more because of interchange improvements that were not part of the LPS consideration.

Art DeBolt asked if the overhead illustration had an existing sound wall, and if the right of way was the same as the property line and the sound wall.

- Mr. Haboian answered that where there are residents, yes, but not so for the commercial properties. It depends on the type of property whether there is a sound wall or not.

Reed Royalty asked if the properties were being impacted by shrinking the buffers. He asked if OCTA is decreasing the safety of homeowners in the event of a major accident. Mr. Haboian answered that safety is a priority. Safety barriers are used including sound walls and designed to withstand vehicle impact. While the sound walls may be closer, all designs are based on Caltrans safety standards.

Hamid Bahadori stated that safety should not be compromised.

- Iffat Qamar from Caltrans stated that Caltrans' priority is safety.

Mr. Haboian referred to a slide regarding the initial early action plan conclusions. He stated that Alternative 3's impacts are roughly the same as the LPS. Therefore there are currently no fatal flaws. He added that this could change as the study moves forward and that refinements must be looked at in the next stage. This includes design of interchanges and arterials, with wide freeway and longer bridges. He added that this takes time and creates issues along the arterials.

Mr. Haboian stated that Caltrans requires maintenance areas at certain locations and there may be some spot locations with a right of way issue. Mr. Haboian added that overhead sign posts are generally located on the right side of the freeway and may create a separate right of way need. He stated that evaluations will be continued in the next stage and further environmental and engineering will determine if alternatives move forward or are eliminated. He stated that there are no fatal flaws thus far and the alternatives appear viable at this stage. The alternatives are worthy of further consideration.

A SWG member asked if in the West County Connector project bridges are being rebuilt to accommodate the I-405 improvements.

Ms. Casey responded that the WCC bridge designs considered potential subsequent improvements. Mr. Haboian stated that Neal would address questions from the last meeting related to HOT lanes.

V. HOT Lane Information

Neal Denno stated that some HOT lane questions would be addressed and that they would provide further information on HOT lanes. He added that in doing this, they are mindful that in this stage they are just considering if the HOT lanes are viable. He added that OCTA does not have a lot of details on the operation yet, such as enforcement, how to collect tolls, and whether they would have a 2-lane HOT facility or a separate HOT and HOV lane. He went on to state that certain operational issues cannot be addressed at this time in detail, they will include them in the EIR process. He stated that there are some complex operational questions to discuss, including would HOT lanes have continued or limited access?

Mr. Denno stated that there are pros and cons, and as for pros, motorists would be able to get in the HOT lanes anytime they wanted with equal access at any point. The cons of the lanes would be that the HOT lanes could be used as passing lanes. He added that continuous access would require a continuous collection system. He noted that there is a potential problem with motorists moving out of the General Purpose lane into the higher speed HOT lane. He stated that mixing slow and fast moving vehicles is not the ideal situation.

A SWG member asked what is the distribution of income in users of HOT lanes?

- Mr. Denno answered that the study of SR-91 express lanes found that utilization is across all income groups. The choice to use the lanes is not just a function of income.

A SWG member asked what was the cost of the toll when they studied the SR-91.

- A SWG member commented that the tolls have gone up. Mr. Denno responded that the toll increase is a result of the lanes being used, since pricing is based on demand in order to keep the Express Lanes working.

Mr. Denno stated that in Riverside, the 91 Express Lanes are being extended, and the I-10 in Los Angeles is currently a demonstration project. He stated that the San Bernardino County I-10 study is investigating whether to extend the HOV lane or provide an HOT lane. He stated that there are 51 miles of toll roads in Orange County.

Diana Carey stated that she knows that Mr. Denno is saying the income levels of toll users are broad, but the average income in Orange County is \$40,000 a year. She asked if the incomes are comparable to the incomes of the people where the lanes will be built.

- Mr. Denno stated that the most recent census estimated the average income in Orange County is over \$73,000. However income is not the only component to predict use.

Ms. Carey stated that we should be clear about the objective, whether it's revenue or promoting carpooling.

- Mr. Denno stated that there are two objectives and one is generating revenue. He added that these lanes provide mobility, continuous flow, and revenue generation. He added that they still have to analyze pricing and revenue generation to help determine the viability of the alternative.

Mr. Carey stated that there are a lot of users in HOT lanes with blocked or exempt license plates. She stated that these people should also have to pay. She added that it's a huge problem and asked if it was part of the analysis.

- Mr. Denno answered that it will be considered in the next phase.

Janis Mantini stated that it sounds like the general purpose lanes are more expensive to build than a HOT lane.

- Mr. Denno replied that OCTA is looking to see if the revenue will fund maintenance and construction.

Garry Brown asked if there is a policy to ensure that revenue covers HOT lane maintenance and is not funded by tax payer money. He asked if there has been a policy that the HOT lane should pay for itself.

- Mr. Denno replied that the intent is to determine if the HOT lane could pay not only for itself but also fund the additional general purpose lane.

Paul Wilkinson stated that just because the HOT lane does not work for you doesn't mean that it does not work. He stated that the general purpose lanes have to function, otherwise it is all lost. He stated that the 405 freeway is the pipeline for Orange County and that people come from all over the place. He stated that the segment is very important. If the other lanes are not functioning, then what is the value of the HOT lane if the General Purpose lane is not functioning?

Diana Carey stated that when Measure M was passed, it allocated \$500 million to cover Alternative 1 and Alternative 2. She stated that the costs are too high now. She asked how can cost estimates be so wildly off, growing to 1.2 to 1.7 billion in 4 years? Mr. Haboian replied that the MIS only looked at mainline freeway improvements only. Interchange improvements were subsequently added. He added that construction costs have also gone up 30% overall.

Hamid Bahadori stated that the dollar values for Renewed Measure M are not meant to pay for the whole cost of the project. He stated that at best they were meant to pay for

half of the project. He added that the assumption was that the projects would get additional funding from federal and/or state allocations.

A SWG member asked if that was made clear to the voters?

Mr. Bahadori stated that yes, he thinks it was. He stated that these will only be matching funds.

Charles Mitchell asked is tolls are based on a flat rate.

- Mr. Haboian replied that it will be charged each time you enter, but will be further studied.

Mr. Mitchell asked what type of monitoring devices are being used right now and if its cameras, how is it enforced?

- Mr. Haboian responded that OCTA uses electronic tags and transponders. He stated that overhead readers scan the transponder and are not embedded in the road. He stated that Los Angeles County will use the same technology.

Mr. Mitchell stated that when you go eastbound on the 91 Express Lanes it mixes with the general purpose lanes and it all slows down. He asked, what will happen if you hit Los Angeles County and they don't have a HOT lane.

Richard Niemeyer asked what the impact to his community would be. He asked about the impact of the county border and whether people will use more surface streets. He asked how it would be addressed and if OCTA will be working with Long Beach and other cities.

- Mr. Haboian replied that we are looking to see how we can improve merges onto the 605 and 405.

Mr. Niemeyer asked, if the problem is going to be that everyone slows down, what is the purpose of the lane and why can't we just continue to operate HOV lanes like in the past?

- Mr. Denno replied that carpool lane success is leading to their demise. He stated that HOV lanes are not effective because traffic has grown. He stated that the State and Federal standards for having high speed congestion free standards are not being met. He stated that from the 73 and 405, most of the HOV lanes do not meet congestion free travel on those lanes and if we continue to operate this way, they will continue to decay.

A SWG member asked why not make it 3 people or more to avoid congestion?

- Mr. Denno stated that this is clearly an option. He added that when you go from 2 to 3 occupant requirements, now those 2 riders are on the General Purpose lane.

Only 20% of HOVs have 3 riders. That creates underused HOV lanes. We need to optimize utilization of all the lanes.

The SWG member added, what if you make them all general purpose lanes?

- Mr. Denno stated that it would not be beneficial to congestion relief.

Richard Niemeyer asked, if there is revenue used to support the CHP for enforcement?

- Mr. Haboian stated that is possible, and part of the operation cost. Mr. Niemeyer asked if there is state funding for General Purpose lane enforcement.

Jim Adams stated that considering the state of the state budget, Measure M can only do so much. He stated that we need to assume some of the costs and it would be foolish not to consider HOT lanes. It's the real world, and we need to help ourselves. This will alleviate traffic and create jobs. He added that we need both desperately.

Charles Mitchell wondered how secure the Measure M funds are considering the state budget?

Richard Niemeyer asked if there are any additional exhibits, and could the members see plans for the entire region.

- Mr. Haboian stated that a regional congestion pricing study was recently begun by SCAG.

VI. Outreach Update

Christina Byrne recommended that the Stakeholder Working Group visit the project website. She stated that if they are interested in presenting information to their organizations, OCTA can provide assistance. Also, OCTA will be sending a post card to drive folks to an online survey and a newsletter will be released in early September.

VII. Next Steps

Christina Byrne stated that the next Stakeholder Working Group meeting is August 6th and revenue generation will be discussed.

- Mr. Haboian added that he wants the members to talk about these initial alternatives with their constituents so that we can get further feedback. He requested that members let OCTA know if they can help make a presentation.