



**OCTA
I-405 Improvement Project
Policy Working Group Meeting**

**Minutes of Meeting
Wednesday, August 26, 2009**

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

Attendance

Policy Working Group Members

Name	Organization/Agency
Dave Carmany	City Manager, City of Seal Beach
Gil Coerper	Council Member, City of Huntington Beach
John Collins	Council Member, City of Huntington Beach
Larry Crandall	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Fountain Valley
Cathy Green	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Huntington Beach
Steve Jones	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Garden Grove
Raymond Kromer	City Manager, City of Fountain Valley
Nick Lecong	Office of Supervisor Janet Nguyen
Mark Lewis	Public Works Director, City of Fountain Valley
David Lowe	TCA
Allan Mansoor	Mayor, City of Costa Mesa
Vince Mastrosimone	Public Work Director, City of Seal Beach
John Moorlach	Orange County Board of Supervisors
Janet Nguyen	Orange County Board of Supervisors
Adolfo Ozaeta	Traffic Engineer, City of Westminster
James Pinheiro	Caltrans
Marilynn Poe	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Los Alamitos
Raja Sethuraman	Traffic Engineer, City of Costa Mesa
Bob Stachelski	Transportation Manager, City of Huntington Beach
Tri Ta	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Westminster

Non-Members

Name	Organization/Agency
Niall Barrett	OCTA
Jim Beuer	Caltrans
Tom Bogard	OCTA
Christina Byrne	OCTA
Diana Carey	Stakeholder Working Group / I-405 Ad Hoc Committee Chair
Rose Casey	OCTA
Macie Cleary	Parsons
Neal Denno	Parsons
Evelyn French	Caltrop
George Gonzalez	Consensus Inc.
Kevin Haboian	Parsons
Jennifer Labrado	Consensus Inc.
Iffat Qamar	Caltrans

I. Welcome and Self Introductions

Policy Working Group (PWG) Chairman, Orange County Supervisor John Moorlach welcomed those in attendance and lead self introductions. After introductions, Chairman Moorlach opened the meeting with agenda item #1, public comments.

Diana Carey commented that OCTA needed to look at corridor city income statistics in a more detailed fashion. She indicated that according to her research the average income in Westminster was much lower than what OCTA had indicated in the past. She added that the higher income figures indicated by OCTA will not be looked upon favorably by residents during the scoping meetings as a justification for the fact that High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes are used by individuals of all income levels. Ms. Carey added that the general public has a perception that HOT lanes will only benefit high income individuals.

II. Project Presentation

Rose Casey of OCTA began the project presentation and stated that all corridor cities have been engaged in the project and that the City of Long Beach would also be engaged in the near future.

Ms. Casey shared current traffic volume statistics and stated that by 2035 the I-405 Freeway is expected to have 370,000 vehicles travel through the project area per day and address existing and future congestion.

Ms. Casey proceeded to present and analyze each of the alternatives under consideration for the project. She stated that project Alternatives 1 and 2 were developed by OCTA through the Major Investment Study (MIS). She also indicated that in January 2009, the OCTA Board of Directors approved the consideration of two additional alternatives. These two new alternatives were developed primarily due to the

higher than anticipated costs for alternatives 1 and 2; which is \$1.2 billion or more. She also stated that Renewed Measure M allocated \$500 million to I-405 freeway improvements, however, due to declining sales tax revenue, less than \$400 million is estimated to be available.

Ms. Casey explained that the No Build Alternative would leave conditions as they currently are. The Transportation Systems Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM)/Mass Transit alternative involved low cost operational improvements, rather than major capital projects.

She then explained that Alternative 1 would add a new general purpose lane in each direction and that it would improve mobility and provide travel time savings. She then indicated that this alternative would cost an estimated \$1.2 billion and there currently isn't enough money to proceed with this alternative.

Ms. Casey continued by stating that Alternative 2 would add two general purpose lanes in each direction and that this alternative would cost an estimated \$1.7 billion and mentioned that there currently isn't enough money to proceed with this alternative.

Ms. Casey then explained Alternative 3 and stated that this alternative would add one toll lane to the existing carpool lane in each direction and that the two lanes would be managed together as Express Lanes. The alternative also adds a general purpose lane in each direction north of Euclid Street to the I-605, which meets OCTA's commitment to Renewed Measure M.

Alternative 4 provides an additional general purpose lane at various locations and improves various interchanges from Euclid to I-605. However, this alternative does not meet the intent of Renewed Measure M to add lanes to the I-405 between I-605 and SR-55 and would be more-or-less a phased approach to adding one lane in either direction.

Fountain Valley Mayor Pro-Tem, Larry Crandall asked if OCTA had analyzed the cost for Alternative 3. Ms. Casey responded that the estimated cost for Alternative 3 was in excess of \$1.7 billion, and added that the alternative had not fully been priced out and that they still needed to analyze the infrastructure needs for that alternative.

Ms. Casey continued her explanation of the project alternatives and stated that there were several criteria when considering the alternatives. She stated that an important criterion was each alternative's ability to stay generally within the existing right-of-way and another criterion was to look at the funding availability for each alternative. She explained that for each alternative OCTA would conduct a full environmental review and analysis. Ms. Casey also explained that the project corridor had more than 22 freeway overcrossings that would be impacted and that the primary reasons for the cost increases was the inclusion of major interchange improvements as well as increases in construction material costs.

David Lowe then asked Ms. Casey about the cost of concrete and what kind of concrete would be used. Ms. Casey and Kevin Haboian responded by saying that it was yet to be

determined what kind of concrete would be used, but that different options were evaluated when creating the cost estimates.

Mr. Lowe then asked if the construction process would be a design/ build process. Mr. Haboian responded that consideration would be given to design/build and that no decisions had been made.

Mr. Haboian then presented the technical aspects of each alternative. For Alternative 1 he indicated that by adding one general purpose lane, mobility would be improved and that the cost was beyond the available funding. For Alternative 2 he indicated that by adding two general purpose lanes mobility would be improved somewhat more, but that Alternative 2 was also beyond available funds. He added that the technical team was evaluating ways in which to fit the two lanes generally within the existing footprint adopted in the LPS. He then repeated that less than \$400 million is available for these two alternatives.

In explaining Alternative 3, Mr. Haboian added that the team had adjusted the buffer between the Express lanes and general purpose lanes and provided auxiliary lanes only where required. He indicated that with these adjustments this alternative would generally be able to fit within the footprint identified in the MIS. He stated that this is a positive finding, and added that there were currently no fatal flaws identified for any of the alternatives under consideration.

Mr. Haboian then stated that one reason for the cost increase was that the MIS had looked at mainline freeway improvements and had not included improvements to the interchanges located along the project corridor. Mr. Haboian added that the Project Study Report approved by Caltrans provided a more detailed cost analysis that included improvements to the interchanges and overcrossings.

Orange County Supervisor Janet Nguyen asked if the asphalt used would be rubberized or regular asphalt and if there could be a cost comparison between both. Mr. Haboian responded that it had been costed as regular asphalt and that the next phase of analysis would be able to compare the costs of both options.

Huntington Beach City Council Member, Gil Coerper asked how the cost for asphalt and concrete were estimated. Mr. Haboian responded that the costs were based on the most current bids from contractors available at the time.

Council Member Coerper stated that the difference in costs was significant and shocking and asked if it would be cheaper to construct it now. Mr. Haboian explained that there are variations in the cost of construction and that due to the current state of the economy it would be cheaper to construct it now. OCTA CEO Will Kempton added that construction costs were driven by demand and that cost differences today were driven by the current economic conditions.

Garden Grove Mayor Pro-Tem, Steve Jones then asked how old the estimates were and if the finance department was able to purchase materials earlier now that costs were low

or hedging. Mr. Haboian responded that the cost estimates are two and a half years old. Mr. Kempton added that Caltrans had explored the option, but that OCTA as the funding agency did not have the economy of scale to do purchase materials in advance. Mr. Kempton added that the best thing would be to get the project underway as soon as possible to take advantage of the economic situation.

Mayor Pro-Tem Jones then asked if concrete was produced in the Southern California region. Mr. Haboian responded that a lot of concrete was produced in Mexico.

Ms. Casey then continued her explanation of Alternative 3 and stated that it would add one new free general purpose lane and add one new toll lane that in combination with the existing HOV lane, would be operated in a similar way as the 91 Express Lanes. She added that more information about the Express Lanes operation would be presented in the future including access points, HOV policies, and tolling policies.

Supervisor Nguyen asked what is the current usage level of the 91 Express Lanes. Ms. Casey responded that there has been a slight decline in usage, but that it is still profitable and has been able to fund improvements to the 91 Freeway.

Supervisor Nguyen asked if OCTA had looked into opening the HOT lanes for general purpose use in the midnight and after hours. Ms. Casey responded that it can be considered.

Westminster Mayor Pro-Tem, Tri Ta asked what the impact to Westminster would be under Alternative 3 and if the HOT lane can fit into the existing right-of-way. Ms. Casey responded that early analysis shows the alternative would generally fit within the LPS footprint and existing right-of-way without rows of homes being acquired in Westminster.

Ms. Casey then explained the benefits of Alternative 3. It would provide predictable travel time and savings, and provides drivers with a choice. She then stated that the community had concerns about this alternative, such as: limiting access to the HOV lane and the equity of toll lanes. She stated that many residents see this alternative as only benefiting higher income drivers. Ms. Casey added that data from the SR-91 shows that all income groups use the express lanes.

Supervisor Nguyen then asked if income data were available on a city by city basis. Ms. Casey responded that the data were available. Ellen Burton stated that in the case of the 91 Express Lanes, which has been in operation since 1995, data indicated that users came from all parts of the Inland Empire and that economic analysis indicated that users of the express lanes came from a variety of economic backgrounds.

Huntington Beach Council Member John Collins added that regardless of data, there needs to be a detailed evaluation of lower income users and ability to use the lanes.

Ms. Nguyen then asked if the current users of the 405 Freeway are mostly Orange County and Los Angeles County residents. Ms. Burton responded that most of the users are likely Orange County and Los Angeles County residents.

Ms. Casey then stated that initial conclusions of Alternative 3 indicate that the alternative is viable and will be recommended for further evaluation.

Costa Mesa Mayor Allan Mansoor then asked if there were no impacts with alternatives 1 and 2. Mr. Haboian responded that there were impacts, but that those impacts generally fell within the identified LPS footprint.

Los Alamitos Mayor Pro-Tem Marilyn Poe then asked if Alternative 3 would still be considered if funding was available for the first two alternatives. Ms. Casey responded that because funding was an issue, it was one major reason for including the alternative also provides choice of trip reliability.

Mayor Pro-Tem Poe stated that she was concerned with this alternative and that she had several residents attend city council meetings and state their unfavorable views of this alternative.

Supervisor Moorlach then asked Ms. Casey the reasons for pushing this alternative if she had already received negative feedback from the OCTA Board of Directors. Ms. Casey responded that this alternative was being driven by the lack of funding currently available and that the OCTA Board had directed the staff to make a preliminary study of it.

Member John Collins then asked how the cost difference between \$400 million and \$1.7 billion will be funded, and where would the money come from. Tom Bogard responded that they would have to come back with more information regarding funding. Mr. Kempton added that preliminary numbers indicate the express facility could generate \$300 million per year in revenues.

Council Member Collins asked if Alternatives 1 and 2 would also be retained for further analysis. Mr. Kempton responded that yes, Alternatives 1 and 2 would be further analyzed.

Huntington Beach Mayor Pro-Tem, Cathy Green commented that she does not consider herself to be upper income, but would jump on the 91 Express Lanes anytime in order to avoid traffic. She stated that this alternative does help all freeway commuters because it would decrease congestion from the general purpose lanes. She also added that in her view as long as taxpayers were protected, she didn't care who used the HOT lanes if they helped pay for other improvements.

Mayor Pro-Tem Poe stated that she believes that the 405 Improvement Project should be a design/build project just like the 22 Freeway, so that the project would get built faster. Mr. Haboian responded that the project is not currently targeted to be a design/build. Ms. Casey added that design/build could be an option through legislation. Mr. Kempton added that OCTA might be able to negotiate that option with Caltrans without having to take the matter to the state legislature.

Supervisor Moorlach asked the group to discuss Alternative 4 and stated that this alternative won't do much. He then asked why this alternative was included.

Council Member Collins suggested that the list of alternatives needed to be reduced, and that Alternative 4 could be included as part of Alternative 2. He then asked why Alternative 4 should go to the public if it did not meet the criteria for Measure M. He suggested eliminating Alternative 4. Mr. Haboian indicated that because of the federal environmental document, there needs to be a full range of alternatives and each needed to be weighed against the other. Mayor Pro-Tem Green added that because of the Environmental Impact Report, and the reasons mentioned by Mr. Haboian, the group should not vote to eliminate alternatives. Mr. Haboian added there is a process that needs to be followed and the purpose of the process is to demonstrate that a wide range of alternatives have been considered even if some have been eliminated.

Macie Cleary then presented the environmental process timeline to the PWG. She indicated that there will be four scoping meetings in September and October which will be an open house format. She explained that meeting ads were placed in newspapers and that there will be information mailed about the scoping process and meetings to residents and businesses within a ¼ mile of the freeway corridor.

Christina Byrne then informed the group of updates to the web site. She added that there has been an extensive outreach effort to civic and community organizations as well as a survey posted on-line and 5,000 post cards mailed to clean-up the database.

Supervisor Moorlach indicated he would like to hear from Parsons and OCTA staff if Alternative 4 should be dropped. Mr. Haboian indicated that the alternative can be eliminated, but that there needed to be a good justification.

Ms. Carey then indicated that some community members had a concern with the proposed express facility creating congestion at the intersection of the 605 freeway where additional lanes would terminate. Mr. Haboian indicated that the technical team would be assessing that specific situation.

Ms. Carey then asked if this project impacted the West County Connectors project. Mr. Haboian responded that no, this project has already taken the West County Connectors Project into consideration.

Ms. Casey then indicated that the next PWG meeting would be held in early 2010.

Supervisor Moorlach concluded the meeting.