



STATE ROUTE 57 NORTHBOUND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT INFORMATION OPEN HOUSE



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND

1. ***What is the SR-57 Northbound Improvement Project?***

The SR-57 Northbound Improvement Project is a proposed freeway improvement project currently in the Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA/ED) phase, commonly referred to as the environmental study phase. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) are studying how to improve both existing and future mobility on northbound SR-57 between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue while minimizing potential environmental impacts. The proposed project will evaluate environmental effects and performance benefits of extending the 5th regular (general-purpose) lane as well as making on-ramp and off-ramp improvements adjacent to the cities of Orange and Anaheim.

2. ***Why is the proposed project necessary?***

The northbound SR-57 freeway plays a central role in Orange County's transportation network, providing essential access to residents, businesses and visitors alike. This stretch of northbound SR-57 from Orangewood Avenue to Katella Avenue is one of the busiest and most congested freeway segments in Orange County. Today, it serves over 120,000 motorists daily, and traffic forecasts predict travel demand will increase 15%, to 140,000, by 2045. The SR-57 Northbound Improvement project aims to provide traffic relief to this crucial segment of SR-57 and keep Orange County moving.

3. ***What agencies are responsible for the proposed project?***

Caltrans is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the lead agency, Caltrans is responsible for oversight and the ultimate approval of a preferred alternative to move forward to design and construction. OCTA is the sponsoring and implementing agency during the environmental study phase. The cities of Anaheim and Orange are project partners and involved providing important feedback.

4. ***How much will this improvement project cost?***

The current total estimated project cost is approximately \$20 to \$30 million, depending on which proposed improvements are ultimately approved. Funding for the environmental study phase of the project is provided by Measure M, Orange County's voter-approved half-cent sales tax for transportation investments, which was approved by voters in 2006. There is currently no funding identified for the design or construction phases.

5. ***What is the project schedule or timeline?***

The environmental study phase was initiated in mid-2016 and is anticipated to conclude in late 2018. Throughout the environmental study phase, preliminary design and technical studies for the environmental document (ED) will be conducted. The draft environmental document is anticipated to circulate for public review and comment in mid-2018. A public open house is proposed during the public review period. During circulation, the public will have 30 days to review and comment on the draft document. At the conclusion of the comment period, the project development team (PDT) will gather the input received and address comments as part of the final environmental document. Release of the final ED is expected by late 2018. However, as with all projects, the schedule is subject to change.



6. ***If a Build Alternative is approved by Caltrans, when will the project be constructed?***

There is currently no funding identified for the project beyond the environmental study phase. However, should funding be secured the project would be “shelf-ready” to advance into final design and construction. As assumed in the technical studies, the earliest construction could begin is 2023 with construction completion around 2025.

PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

7. ***What proposed improvements are being studied?***

- Extension of the 5th regular (general-purpose) lane between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue
- Improve the Katella Avenue off-ramp by widening the bridge over the railroad tracks, or constructing a new, 2-lane bridge over the railroad tracks
- Convert the Orangewood Avenue straight/slip on-ramp to a loop on-ramp

8. ***How were the proposed improvements determined?***

The proposed project improvements were developed through a preliminary planning document, the Project Study Report-Project Development Support (PSR-PDR), and subsequent preliminary engineering analysis at the beginning of the environmental study phase. Approved by Caltrans on October 17, 2014, the PSR-PDR describes the current transportation issues within the project corridor, identifies the scope of viable alternatives, and provides an estimate of the project development support resources required. As technical studies are prepared project improvements can be eliminated, modified or introduced by project development team (PDT) members.

9. ***What is the environmental process and why is it necessary?*** The environmental study process was created to protect the quality of human and natural environments, and is mandated by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In accordance with these laws, agencies must follow a protocol of analysis and public disclosure in their decision making process for any proposed project which may potentially impact the environment. In this process, OCTA and Caltrans will analyze effects on human, physical and biological environments. Numerous environmental areas are studied, including but not limited to: traffic, noise, air quality, water quality, visual/aesthetics, pedestrian and bicycle facilities and community impacts. If it is determined that the proposed project may have potentially significant effects on the environment, measure to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate such impacts must be considered and implemented.

After comments are received from the public and reviewing agencies, Caltrans responds to public comments and finalizes the environmental document by preparing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). Caltrans may (1) give environmental approval to the preferred alternative of the proposed project, (2) do additional environmental studies, or (3) abandon the project. If the preferred alternative is environmentally approved, Caltrans could design and construct all or part of the project.

10. ***Who will approve an alternative?*** The Director of Caltrans District 12 has the authority to identify and approve a preferred alternative. The project development team (PDT), which is comprised of professional and technical staff from OCTA, Caltrans and the cities of Orange and Anaheim – with input from the public - will recommend a preferred alternative. Throughout the environmental study process, members of the PDT will consult with their respective agencies and policy-making officials.



RIGHT-OF-WAY

11. ***Will private property need to be acquired to build this project?*** A goal of the project is to provide the proposed project improvements within the existing State right-of-way throughout the project limits wherever possible. It's too early at this time to determine the project right-of-way needs. Right-of-way needs, if any, will be identified in the draft environmental document. These findings will be available for public review in the draft environmental document, currently estimated to be circulated in mid-2018.

SOUNDWALLS

12. ***What will happen to existing soundwalls? How are soundwalls considered?*** It's too early in the process to confirm potential noise impacts and mitigation plans. It is reasonable to assume existing soundwalls will either remain in place, or be relocated and/or replaced as part of the project. A Noise Study Report (NSR) and Noise Abatement Decision Report (NADR) will be prepared according to regulations to determine if new soundwalls are feasible and reasonable, and if the height of any existing soundwalls need to be modified to obtain proper noise abatement. These findings will be available for public review in the draft environmental document, currently estimated to be circulated in mid-2018.

PUBLIC INFORMATION/COMMUNITY OUTREACH

13. ***How can I get involved?*** The environmental process is a public process. Members of the public will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the project during a public information open house in the summer of 2017 and during a public open house in mid-2018. You can also receive project information and updates by visiting the project webpage and subscribing to the project email list.
14. ***When and where can I read the draft environmental document (ED)?*** The draft ED is anticipated to be published, circulated and available to members of the public for review and comment in mid-2018, for a period of 30 days. The public will be able to access the document online, or read a paper copy at various community locations, such as city halls, libraries, community centers and the like. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions and provide comment on the project during a public open house, as well as provide written comments, during the 30-day circulation period.
15. ***What happens to public comments?*** A large part of public participation throughout the environmental process is in the form of commenting. Comments received outside of the circulation period of the draft environmental document (ED) may not formally be included in the final project report but will be considered as appropriate during development of the project need and purpose, development of alternatives, and evaluation of environmental resources. The official public comment period will occur during circulation of the draft ED, estimated in mid-2018. Comments received during the circulation period will be incorporated and responded to as part of the final ED.
16. ***Where can I learn more about the project?***
You can visit the project webpage at www.octa.net/57fwy, contact Andrea Hammann of OCTA at 714-560-5573 or ahammann@octa.net or contact Fernando Chavarria of OCTA at 714-560-5306 or fchavarria@octa.net. You can also sign-up for the project email distribution list on the project webpage or follow the proposed project on Facebook at www.facebook.com/57freeway and Twitter at [@57fwy](https://twitter.com/57fwy).