



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

**Minutes of Meeting
Tuesday, September 15, 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 and Construction Trades Council
Diana Carey	I-405 Ad Hoc Committee, OCTA
Eloy Gonzalez	Golden Rain Foundation
Janis Mantini	Boeing Company
Mark McCurdy	Fountain Valley Chamber of Commerce
Carol McDermott	OCTA Citizen's Advisory Committee
David Mootchnik	OCTA Citizen's Advisory Committee
Richard Niemeyer	Rossmoor Homeowners Association
Reed Royalty	Orange County Taxpayers Association
Gregg Smith	Seal Beach Naval Weapons Center
Schelly Sustarsic	College Park East Neighborhood Association

Non-Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Niall Barrett	OCTA
Christina Byrne	OCTA
Rose Casey	OCTA
Macie Cleary	Parsons

Neal Denno	Parsons
George Gonzalez	Consensus Inc.
Kevin Haboian	Parsons
Jennifer Labrado	Consensus Inc.
Iffat Qamar	Caltrans

I. Welcome and Self Introduction

Rose Casey opened the meeting, welcomed those in attendance and lead self-introductions. Ms. Casey then provided an overview of the agenda and stated that the meeting would cover two presentation topics: 1.) alternatives and 2.) scoping meetings. She also mentioned that the information shared with the group today would be the same information that would be presented to the general public during the upcoming scoping meetings.

II. Project Alternatives

Kevin Haboian began the presentation by introducing a new version of the project study area map. The map has been revised to reflect where the West County Connectors project intersects with the I-405 Improvement Project.

Mr. Haboian then presented each individual alternative. He began with the No Build Alternative. Mr. Haboian explained that this alternative represents what would happen if nothing is done to change current freeway conditions.

Mr. Haboian then presented the Transportation Systems Management / Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) Alternative. The TSM/TDM Alternative is comprised of low-cost improvements such as traffic light synchronizations that would make improvements to conditions identified in the No Build Alternative, but does not require any major investments.

Carol McDermott asked about the possible “bottleneck” that would be created when the I-405 and I-605 Freeways met.

Mr. Haboian explained that the illustrations in the presentation only represent the northbound direction of the freeway. The possible “bottleneck” situation would be addressed as part of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). He also noted that there is an existing “bottleneck” at Valley View due to the reduction of lanes.

Mr. Haboian continued to outline the details of the four build alternatives. Alternative 1 would add one general purpose lane in each direction. He proceeded to explain Alternative 2, would add two general purpose lanes in each direction, noting that both Alternatives 1 and 2 are derived from the Locally Preferred Strategy (LPS) identified during the I-405 Major Investment Study.

In explaining Alternative 3, Mr. Haboian stated it 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 in Renewed Measure M.

.Mr. Haboian stated Alternative 4 provides an additional general purpose lane at various locations and improves various interchanges from Euclid Street to I-605. However, this alternative does not meet the intent of Renewed Measure M to add a lane in each direction to the I-405 between I-605 and SR-73 and would be more-or-less a phased approach to adding one lane in either direction.

Mr. Haboian stated that there are six alternatives in total, including the No Build Alternative and TSM/TDM Alternative, and that only Alternatives 1 through 4 are build alternatives.

Ms. McDermott then asked if the alternatives are the same in the southbound direction, since the graphic examples provided in the presentation represent northbound traffic.

Mr. Haboian responded that yes, all the alternatives are for both north and southbound traffic.

David Mootchnick asked if there had been any specific kind of traffic flow models that had been used to support the I-405's future traffic forecasts. He also noted that there are several models that are used in other cities and states that might be helpful for OCTA to consider.

Mr. Haboian responded that the models that Mr. Mootchnick referred to are operational models and not travel forecast models. He stated that the travel forecast model being used for this project will allow the team to identify the future demand for the different improvements. He said the operational models are not used for travel forecasting. He added that his team would consider using an operational model in the analysis.

Ms. Casey added that they would check with Caltrans about the specific microsimulation model they will be using for the corridor system management plan.

III. Scoping Meetings

Macie Cleary provided an update on the upcoming scoping meetings, stating that the purpose of the scoping meetings was to obtain public feedback as the project team begins to develop the draft EIR/EIS.

Ms. Cleary stated that the I-405 Improvement Project began in 2004 with the Major Investment Study (MIS), and mentioned that some of those in attendance have been involved in the project since the MIS. The MIS culminated with the identification of a Locally Preferred Strategy.

Ms. Cleary said that there has been some confusion expressed by the general public as to why a new set of alternatives is being considered when an alternative had been selected during the MIS. She explained that this was the EIR process, which is very different from the MIS and that an EIR process dictates that things have to be done in stages. She also mentioned that all public feedback received would be evaluated and that all alternatives would be given equal consideration. Ms. Cleary stated that all recommendations provided during scoping would also be looked at.

Ms. Cleary said that the EIR process had officially begun on September 4 and that public comment period was now open. She informed the attendees that more than 24,000 public notices had been mailed to all addresses along the corridor within a quarter mile radius of the I-405 Freeway. She said that the mailer informed those stakeholders that the EIR process had begun and that they could submit their comments through traditional mail or e-mail. She added that copies of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Notice of Intent (NOI) had been delivered to city libraries and to the cities along the corridor.

Ms. Cleary stated that the NOP/NOI has also been publicized in the Long Beach Press Telegram, the Orange County Register, the Nguoi Viet, Excelsior and the Westminster Herald.

Ms. Cleary said that the information presented to the group today was the same information that would be presented at the scoping meetings and that the attendees should go back to their respective organizations and let their membership know that scoping meetings are the appropriate way for people to provide feedback and have their voice heard. Ms. Cleary explained that the scoping meetings would be held in an open-house format in which expert staff would be placed at different stations throughout the room and available to answer any questions. She also mentioned that those who attend the scoping meeting would have an opportunity to officially submit their comments by either talking to a court reporter or by completing a comment sheet.

Ms. Cleary said that the scoping period ends on Oct. 8.

IV. Project Need

Ms. Casey continued the presentation by providing the group with some background information and data justifying the need for the I-405 Improvement Project. Ms. Casey began by stating that there is an estimated 300,000 vehicles traveling this section of the I-405 every day making it one of the most used corridors in California. By the year 2035, the number of vehicles traveling the section is projected to increase to 370,000 per day. In order to accommodate the anticipated growth, 20 lanes would be required.

Ms. Casey identified the agencies involved in the project. Caltrans is the lead agency, according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for the environmental aspects of the project. OCTA is the funding agency for the project, and the Federal Highway Administration is involved because I-405 is an interstate freeway under their jurisdiction. Ms. Casey added that all of the corridor cities are also participating in the project.

Ms. Casey explained the differences between CEQA and NEPA and stated that an EIR is required for CEQA and that it is an extensive document. An EIS is required for NEPA. Ms. Cleary added that the potential impacts evaluated in the EIR include noise, air quality, aesthetics, biological resources, etc...

Ms. Casey stated that the scoping meetings would be held using an open-house format and that a brief presentation would then take place at 6:30; followed by an opportunity for people to talk to the experts again.

Ms. Casey explained that the project location was from SR- 73 to I-605 and that they were working with all the cities along the corridor, including the City of Long Beach. She said that with the I-405 Improvement Project, OCTA would try to increase freeway capacity, improve traffic, enhance safety, and minimize the amount of right-of-way acquisitions.

Ms. Casey said that the descriptions of the alternatives stated in the presentation were taken directly from the NOP/NOI, but that the language for Alternative 4 was reworded to make it clearer and to explain that Alternative 4 was the funding constrained alternative. She also explained that Alternative 3 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.

Ms. McDermott said that the graphics being presented to illustrate the alternatives were a little confusing and that it wasn't clear why the median in some illustrations was wider than in others.

Mr. Haboian responded that the illustrations were graphically correct, and that the wider median illustrates a wider shoulder.

Ms. Casey then presented information about the estimated costs for each alternative. She began by stating that there is approximately \$300 million in Renewed Measure M funds available to fund the I-405 Improvement Project, which is 40% less than what was originally allocated for the project.

Mark McCurdy then asked Ms. Casey what was the reason for such a shortage of funds? And why was it that these higher cost estimates for each alternative were not accounted for in the initial cost projections?

Ms. Casey responded that the funding shortfall is due to the reduced intake of sales tax revenue for the county given the current economic conditions. She also mentioned the initial cost estimate did not include major interchange improvements as well as increases in construction material costs.

Ms. Casey proceeded to explain that Alternatives 1 and 2 would cost anywhere between \$1.2 and \$1.7 billion. She stated that Alternative 3 would cost an estimated \$1.7 billion or more and that Alternative 4 was limited to the amount of funding currently available, which is \$300 million. Ms. Casey then explained the origins of the Alternatives, and stated that Alternatives 1 and 2 came from the MIS, while Alternatives 3 and 4 were added by the OCTA Board of Directors in order to address the significant funding gap and shortfall of funds.

Ms. Casey explained that OCTA knows that right-of-way acquisition is an important issue. The design team has taken significant steps to minimize the right-of-way impacts, including eliminating auxiliary lanes in some areas, reducing the carpool lane buffer (using a one-foot buffer instead of a 4-foot buffer), and moving the centerline of the freeway. Ms. Casey added that with the current designs of the alternatives, it is possible to stay generally within the right of way and still provide up to two lanes in each direction.

She also explained the public involvement opportunities graph in the presentation and noted the key opportunities for the attendees and their memberships to be involved.(i.e. Scoping and Draft EIR/EIS public meetings).

Ms. Casey also noted that there will not be any land acquisitions until an approved environmental document has been provided and a preferred alternative identified.

Richard Niemeyer asked, what level of detail will be presented at the scoping meetings? Will engineering plans be shown?

Ms. Casey responded that engineering plans will not be available, and that information provided on the PowerPoint was the information that would be provided at the scoping meetings.

Mr. Haboian added that for each interchange location there will be a board that will highlight the improvements at each location.

Mr. Niemeyer asked, will you show the impacts at the more localized level? The more information you present the more accurate comments you will get.

Mr. Haboian replied, yes, this is what we will be presenting.

Reed Royalty asked, when were the Renewed Measure M projections put together?

Ms. Casey responded that the current projections of Renewed Measure M funds were put together by the OCTA finance staff within the past few weeks. She added that the figures could change if the economic situation improves and more sales tax revenue is collected.

Jay Van Wormer commented that the language of the description for Alternative 3, was inconsistent from one section of the presentation to another.

Ms. Casey responded that the wording under the alternatives is the wording in the NOP/NOI, which was a slightly different description but it means the same. She added that the other wording came after a discussion with the OCTA Board of Directors in order to be more clear.,

Mr. Van Wormer then asked, how will it work? Will it be HOV or HOT lanes?

Ms. Casey responded the Express Facility Alternative adds one lane adjacent to the existing carpool lane in each direction. Both lanes will be managed together as the Express Lane Facility. This alternative will also add one new general purpose lane.

Ms. Janis Mantini then asked, can for an explanation of how the funds will be collected or where the funds will come from? Ms. Casey responded that build Alternative. 3 could be a self-funding alternative because much like the 91 Freeway Express Lanes, this alternative could generate funding to construct the improvements.

Mr. Niemeyer asked, when in the process will we know when the right-of-way acquisitions will take place?

Ms. Casey responded that the right-of-way acquisitions would not take place until a final EIR is approved and a preferred alternative identified.

Mr. Niemeyer then asked, when will the preferred alternative be revealed?

Ms. Casey responded, our goal is to have a recommended alternative in the draft EIR.

Mr. Mootnick then stated that staff needed to make a better case for why the project is needed, that there needs to be more explanation than the statistics.

Ms. Casey responded, we will evaluate your suggestions and take your input into consideration for the scoping meeting presentation.

Eloy Gonzalez asked, will the bridges still be redone regardless of the alternative selected?

Ms. Casey responded, yes.

Ms. McDermott commented that in making a stronger case for the need of the project, OCTA should include information on the impacts on the surrounding local streets.

Mr. Mootnick added that there needs to be a focus on the side street traffic so that people could sympathize more with the project.

Ms. Casey thanked them for their input and explained that their input would be taken into consideration.

Mr. Mootnick stated that as cities evaluate need for street lights, they use warrants and other measurements that help explain the need for that light. He then suggested that OCTA look at the frequency of accidents along that stretch of the I-405 and that maybe the same model can be used to make an argument in support of the project.

Ms. Casey thanked him for his input.

V. Conclusion

Christina Byrne informed the attendees that 5,000 postcards were mailed to stakeholders in the existing project database in order to update contact information. Recipients were also asked to respond to a survey. She said that there had been close to 300 responses, and that of those respondents, 70% were aware of the project. She reminded the attendees the address for the project Web site www.octa.net/405improvement and that it would be updated in the near future with the project fact sheet and project newsletter.

Ms. Byrne said that after the scoping period OCTA would continue to conduct community and elected official briefings as requested

Ms. Byrne concluded the meeting by stating that the SWG would meet again in early 2010, and that they should expect to meet 2 to 4 times per year from this point on.

She added that at the next SWG meeting, comments and a summary of the scoping meeting would be provided.