



405 Express Lanes General Information & Frequently Asked Questions

The questions and answers below provide current information on the project to improve Interstate 405 (I-405) in Orange County from State Route 73 to Interstate 605.

Why are improvements needed on I-405?

The I-405 freeway experiences heavy traffic congestion and conditions are expected to worsen. Built in the 1960s, the freeway carries between 257,000 and 370,000 vehicles per day depending on location. Near the L.A. County line, the I-405 is the most heavily traveled freeway in the nation and both the regular lanes and carpool lanes are congested daily during rush hour and on weekends.

Traffic along the corridor is expected to grow approximately 35 percent by 2040. Additional lanes and other improvements are needed to improve traffic flow, accommodate growing traffic demand, relieve congestion, and improve overall mobility. The I-405 Improvement Project is critical in order to accommodate expected employment, population and housing growth in not only Orange County but throughout Southern California.

What is planned for the I-405 Improvement Project?

The project will improve 16 miles of I-405 between the SR-73 freeway in Costa Mesa and I-605 near the L.A. County line. The project includes adding one regular lane in each direction from Euclid Street to I-605 and making improvements to freeway entrances, exits and bridges. It also will construct the 405 Express Lanes, two lanes in each direction from SR-73 to I-605. The new express lanes – incorporating the existing carpool lanes and connectors that opened in 2014 – will give solo drivers the choice to speed up their commute for a toll, and carpoolers may ride in the lanes for free.

Where will vehicles be able to enter and exit the toll lanes?

There are seven access points in between SR-73 and I-605, giving drivers sufficient opportunity to reach every interchange and business along the corridor, including the Westminster Mall, car dealerships, Bella Terra, Goldenwest College and South Coast Plaza, and any other destination.

These intermediate access locations minimize right of way impacts to the adjacent community. Additional access points would likely have significant right of way impacts.

The intermediate access points at Magnolia/Warner and Bolsa/Goldenwest were selected largely to serve Beach Boulevard which is roughly midway along the corridor, has the highest arterial volume of any of the arterials crossing the freeway, and has the largest interchange volumes in the corridor.

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The graphic below depicts the 405 Express Lanes intermediate access locations:



Are FasTrak® transponders required to use the 405 Express Lanes?

The 405 Express Lanes will utilize electronic tolling to keep traffic flowing and there will be no cash payments or toll booths. Because of this, transponders will be required for customers to use the express lanes when they open. OCTA will continue to explore technology that may in the future allow drivers to use the express lanes without a transponder.

What is the overall benefit to the project to include the 405 Express Lanes?

Those who choose to pay a toll improve traffic for everyone by freeing up space in the regular lanes, including the additional lane in each direction that is being added as part of the project. Also, if there are excess toll revenues beyond operational, maintenance and financing costs, that provides funding for additional improvements in the corridor. As an example, to date the 91 Express Lanes has provided more than \$22 million for improvements to the freeway and for public transit in the 91 corridor.

Adding Express Lanes, in addition to the new regular lanes, benefits all people who use the I-405. Rush-hour commutes in the regular lanes on I-405 are expected to be reduced by almost 30 minutes versus only building one regular lane in each direction. The bottom line is you don't have to pay one penny more and you'll be home to your family a half-hour sooner.



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What are the toll policy goals of the 405 Express Lanes?

The OCTA Board of Directors (Board), which is leading the freeway improvement project, voted to adopt a number of goals that would guide the development and implementation of the 405 Express Lanes toll policy. The goals focus on providing express lanes customers with a reliable commute while optimizing the number of cars that can utilize the lanes at free-flow speeds, and encouraging ridesharing and transit use.

The complete list of board-adopted 405 Express Lanes goals:

- Provide express lanes customers with a safe, reliable, predictable commute.
- Optimize throughput at free-flow speeds.
- Increase average vehicle occupancy.
- Balance capacity and demand to serve customers who pay tolls as well as people who rideshare or use transit.
- Generate sufficient revenue to sustain the financial viability of the express lanes.
- Ensure all covenants in the financing documents are met.
- Ensure any potential net excess toll revenues are used for Interstate 405 corridor improvements.

The 405 Express Lanes will use congestion management pricing. This type of pricing was pioneered on the 91 Express Lanes, also operated by OCTA.

Congestion management pricing is designed to optimize express lanes traffic at free-flow speeds. To accomplish this OCTA monitors hourly traffic volumes. Tolls are increased when traffic volumes consistently reach a trigger point where traffic flow can become unstable. If traffic drops below the optimal traffic volume, tolls are lowered to encourage usage.

The tolls can vary by hour, day of the week and direction of travel. Traffic volumes are continuously monitored and if warranted, tolls are adjusted quarterly. This approach balances traffic engineering with good public policy and gives customers an opportunity to know the toll price before they make their trip.

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What is the toll policy for carpools?

The graphic below depicts the initial 405 Express Lanes Toll Policy adopted by the OCTA Board on May 23, 2016.

	Solo Drivers	2-Person Carpools	3+ Person Carpools
405 Express Lanes Initial Toll Policy			
First 3 ½ Years After Opening*			
▪ Peak Hours	Toll	Toll	Free
▪ Non-Peak Hours	Toll	Free	Free
After 3 ½ Years			
▪ Peak Hours	Toll	Toll	Free
▪ Non-Peak Hours	Toll	Toll	Free

*Opening Expected Jan. 2023

- ❖ Weekday Peak – 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- ❖ Weekend Peak – 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

- ❖ Weekday Non-Peak – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- ❖ Weekend Non-Peak – All times except for 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Why does the proposed 405 Express Lanes Toll Policy change after 3.5 years?

Two goals of the 405 Express Lanes are: (1) balance capacity and demand to serve customers who pay tolls as well as people who rideshare or use transit, and (2) generate sufficient revenue to sustain the financial viability of the express lanes. The first 3.5 years after the 405 Express Lanes open is a ramp-up period. In order to continue to guarantee free-flow speeds and achieve the two goals listed above the toll structure must be adjusted.

Why are two person carpools only free during certain hours and during the first 3 ½ years?

The current traffic data shows that the existing carpool lanes do not provide a faster commute and the lanes are experiencing degradation - as you will notice, they often are moving just as slow as or sometimes slower than the regular lanes. This is the reason Caltrans studied carpool lanes and developed the HOV Degradation Report -

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/tm/docs/2015-HOV-degradation-report.pdf>



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Will motorcycles be allowed to drive for free in the 405 Express Lanes?

All vehicles, including motorcycles, must have a transponder in order to use the 405 Express Lanes. Per the toll policy, motorcycles are allowed free travel at all times and are eligible for the Special Access account.

Will zero emissions vehicles be allowed to drive for free in the 405 Express Lanes?

At this point in time, we are planning to treat zero emission vehicles similar to HOV3+ vehicles – allowing free travel (but they will still require a transponder). However, OCTA will comply with the legislation that is in place when the 405 Express Lanes open in 2023. The current state legislation (which includes information on white [hybrids] and green [zero emissions] vehicle sticker programs) expires in 2019. If it is not extended, the OCTA Board of Directors may ask staff to develop a policy to address this matter. For more information on California's Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Program, please visit <http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/zevprog/zevprog.htm>.

What is the schedule moving forward?

The Design-Build contract was awarded to OC 405 Partners, on Nov. 14, 2016 and they are currently developing a project schedule. Construction activities have begun and include restriping portions of the freeway and setting up concrete barrier on the outside of the freeway to protect work areas for activities such as tree removals and grading. Weather permitting, more significant construction activities, such as the first paving operations and bridge demolition activities, are anticipated to commence later this year. The project is anticipated to be complete in 2023.

If you have further questions, please contact the 405 Community Outreach Team, by calling (888) 400-8994 or by email 405project@octa.net.