



INTERSTATE 5 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: SAN DIEGO COUNTY LINE TO AVENIDA PICO SCOPING PERIOD FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1 What is the I-5 Improvement Project from the San Diego County Line to Avenida Pico?

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), proposes improvements to increase person and vehicle throughput on Interstate 5 (I-5) between the San Diego County Line and the I-5/Avenida Pico Interchange (Proposed Project) in the city of San Clemente and unincorporated San Diego County. The Proposed Project would add a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in both directions along this 3.5 mile stretch of I-5. This Proposed Project would also reestablish existing auxiliary lanes, widen existing undercrossings, and replace two existing overcrossings to accommodate the proposed HOV lanes. This I-5 corridor improvement project is intended to increase vehicle occupancy and vehicle throughput, improve mobility and trip reliability, provide inter-county and regional system connectivity, provide improvements to accommodate projected regional growth, incorporate environmentally sustainable design elements by developing efficient transportation improvements, and improve multimodal efficiency and provide advanced technology to meet the current and future transportation demands. HOV lane and operational improvements have been made on I-5 north of the project limits. This project is vital to enable the completion of the HOV lane network along the I-5 corridor in Orange County. The need, or current deficiencies of I-5 within the project limits, include a lack of HOV lane connectivity from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County Line, and the existing aging facility lacks advanced technology to meet current and future transportation demands. The Proposed Project is currently in the environmental document and preliminary engineering phase. Two alternatives, including one Build and one No Build Alternative are under consideration.

2 What is the project need?

There is a lack of managed/High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane connectivity from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County Line. In addition, the existing aging facility lacks advanced technology to meet current and future transportation demands.

3 What is the purpose of this project?

The primary purpose of the project is to maximize efficiency of the freeway mainline by increasing person and vehicle throughput on the I-5 corridor from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County Line. This I-5 corridor improvement project is intended to achieve the following purposes:

- Increase vehicle occupancy and vehicle throughput
- Improve mobility and trip reliability
- Provide inter-county and regional system connectivity
- Provide improvements to accommodate projected regional growth
- Incorporate environmentally sustainable design elements by developing efficient transportation improvements; and
- Improve multimodal efficiency and provide advanced technology to meet the current and future transportation demands





4 What are the potential alternatives being studied?

- **Alternative No. 1 (No Build)**

The No Build Alternative proposes no improvements to I-5, maintaining the existing four general-purpose lanes throughout the project limits in the northbound and southbound directions. The freeway facility would remain as is, with the exception of other proposed projects that are either under development or currently under construction.

- **Alternative No. 2 (Build Alternative)**

Alternative 2 proposes to add an HOV lane on I-5 in the northbound and southbound directions within the project limits. The Build Alternative would implement ramp improvements where feasible and auxiliary lanes throughout the corridor and would include Transportation System Management / Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) features.

5 What is the environmental study process?

The environmental study phase is an important and mandatory part of the project development process. It must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as well as any other applicable federal and state laws. Accordingly, OCTA and Caltrans must analyze potential project alternatives and inform decision-makers and the public about potential environmental effects. As part of this process, OCTA and Caltrans will analyze effects on physical, biological, and human environments. If it is determined that the proposed project may have potentially significant effects, measures to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate such impacts must be considered and implemented. For more information on NEPA, go to www.epa.gov/nepa. For more information on CEQA, go to www.opr.ca.gov/ceqa/.

6 When are right-of-way needs determined?

Potential right-of-way needs are determined through the environmental process and will be addressed in the draft environmental document for public review in mid-2023. The document will contain sufficient preliminary engineering and environmental study information to ascertain potential alignment and right-of-way needs for the project.

7 What is the estimated project schedule?

- a. Mid-2023 – Publish Draft Environmental Document and Conduct Public Hearing
- b. Early 2024 – Publish Final Environmental Document and Identify Preferred Alternative
- c. Mid-2026 – Begin Final Design (Plans, Specifications, and Estimates)*
- d. Late 2030 – Begin Construction*

*Pending available funding.

8 What public agencies oversee this project?

OCTA and Caltrans are working together on this project. OCTA is the sponsoring agency. Caltrans is the lead agency and the owner/operator of the State Highway System. OCTA is producing preliminary engineering plans and conducting environmental studies. Caltrans is charged with environmental oversight and responsible for ultimate approval of the Project Report, Final Environmental Document and documenting a preferred alternative.



9 How can I participate?

The environmental study process is a public process. All comments received will be considered in the environmental documentation. Members of the public are encouraged to sign up to receive project information and to attend the public scoping meeting.

An in-person meeting took place on Thursday, July 28, 2022, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Triton Center at San Clemente High School, 700 Avenida Pico. The in-person event was an open house format, and participants were able to attend at any point during the meeting time to learn more about the project and provide comments.

A virtual meeting also took place on Tuesday, Aug. 2, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. The virtual meeting featured a presentation followed by break-out rooms and Q&A periods. Meeting attendees were able to meet the project team, ask questions, view project information, and provide comments verbatim to a professional, certified court-reporter.

For project resources and updates, visit the Orange County Caltrans webpage at dot.ca.gov/Caltrans-near-me/district-12.

10 How can I submit a comment?

Comments will be accepted throughout the 45-day scoping period from Thursday, June 30, through Monday, Aug. 15, 2022.

All written comments submitted during the scoping period will be considered by the project team.

Submit comments:

- Project email to I-5HOVSouthCounty@dot.ca.gov with the subject line **“I-5 Improvement Project from the County Line to Avenida Pico”**
- By mail to:
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