



I-405 SOUTH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT FROM I-5 TO SR-55

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. WHAT IS THE I-405 SOUTH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT?

The I-405 South Improvement Project from I-5 to SR-55 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 address congestion and enhance freeway operations between the I-5 and SR-55 freeways, by adding one or two general-purpose (regular) lanes in each direction, converting buffer-separated HOV (carpool) lanes to continuous access, extending merge lanes, and making various operational improvements to I-405 in the City of Irvine.

2. WHY IS THE PROPOSED PROJECT NECESSARY?

The I-405 freeway through Irvine plays a central role in progressing Orange County's mobility, economy and quality of life. This section of I-405 is already at capacity and in need of operational improvements. Studies forecast that average daily traffic will grow from 255,000 to 291,000 by 2050. So, improving operations is necessary to keep this segment of I-405 and Orange County moving.

3. WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE BEING STUDIED?

Three alternatives were evaluated in the draft environmental document, including one No Build Alternative and two Build Alternatives. Alternative 1 represents the No Build Alternative which includes no improvements from the proposed project but assumes completion of other planned improvements in the study area that are currently underway by Caltrans. Two Build Alternatives add lanes from north of Irvine Center Drive to south of Jamboree Road. Alternative 2 adds a single general-purpose (regular) lane and an auxiliary (merge) lane in each direction. Alternative 3 includes the general-purpose (regular) lanes described in Alternative 2 and an additional general-purpose (regular) lane in each direction. Build Alternatives 2 and 3 also propose ramp capacity improvements, changing the existing HOV (carpool) lane buffer to continuous access, as well as numerous operational improvements.

4. WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY PROCESS AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

The environmental study is mandated by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which were enacted to protect the quality of human, physical, and

biological environments. 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 analyze effects the project may cause 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 CEQA, go to www.resources.ca.gov/ceqa, and for more info on NEPA, go to <https://ceq.doe.gov/guidance/guidance.html>.

5. WILL PRIVATE PROPERTY NEED TO BE ACQUIRED TO BUILD THIS PROJECT?

Yes. Consistent with Measure M, Alternatives 2 and 3 would mostly be constructed within the existing public right-of-way. No full acquisitions, residential displacements, or nonresidential displacements are proposed. However, one partial acquisition and some temporary construction easements would be required to construct the proposed improvements, including soundwalls. The area subject to partial acquisition is generally the back slope of the parking lot serving commercial property. For more information on right-of-way, refer to Chapter 2.1.4.2 of the draft environmental document and/or speak with a Right-of-Way Specialist at the public hearing.

6. WILL NEW SOUNDWALLS BE BUILT AS PART OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT?

A Noise Study Report (NSR) and Noise Abatement Decision Report (NADR) were completed as part of the environmental study. Noise abatement in the form of soundwalls are proposed when the future noise level with the project exceeds or approaches the noise abatement criteria (NAC) and are feasible and reasonable. The final decision on noise abatement will be made upon completion of the project design. Feasibility generally relates to a soundwall's expected capacity to reduce noise, while reasonability generally relates to the soundwall's cost. As part of Alternatives 2 and 3, six soundwalls are proposed for further consideration along the project to reduce noise impacts. Existing soundwalls that will not be relocated or replaced will remain in place.

7. WHAT IF NO SOUNDWALL IS BEING PROPOSED FOR MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

Members of the public can view noise study results in the NSR. Similarly, members of the public can view reasonable allowances, estimated costs and noise barrier recommendations in the NADR. By consulting these documents and data, members of the public will confirm why a studied soundwall was determined to be not feasible and/or not reasonable.

8. WILL ANY BRIDGES NEED TO BE RECONSTRUCTED?

Yes. In Alternatives 2 and 3, two bridge structures including the San Diego Creek Channel Reach 1 and San Diego Creek Channel Reach 2 would be widened to the north. In addition, a new bridge is proposed on the northbound side of I-405 for new braided ramps between SR-133 and Sand Canyon Avenue.

9. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO EXISTING BIKING AND WALKING PATHS?

Alternatives 2 and 3 would not result in any direct permanent impacts to recreation areas. During construction, however, Alternatives 2 and 3 would result in temporary impacts to the San Diego Creek Trails (north and south) and the Freeway Trail. On these trails, full closure would likely be necessary for a period of time to accommodate bridge widening and soundwall construction. Detour paths will be provided during closure. For more information, refer to Appendix A of the draft environmental document.

10. WILL THERE BE ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PROJECT CORRIDOR THAT WILL AFFECT THE PROPOSED PROJECT?

Caltrans is currently managing and implementing a series of planned improvements that are intended to further enhance safety and improve traffic operations along I-405 within the study area of the proposed project. These improvements are expected to be completed by the time the proposed project may begin construction, should a Build Alternative be approved. The I-405 South Improvement Project assumes completion of these improvements in all alternative designs.

11. HOW WILL THE PROPOSED PROJECT EFFECT THE EXISTING NATURAL LANDSCAPE?

Alternatives 2 and 3 would likely decrease the amount of vegetation along the freeway and change the visual character and quality of the corridor, but would not be adversely impacted. Construction of the Build Alternatives would replace landscaping and replant trees to minimize visual impacts. The replanted trees would be skyline trees,

more than 40 feet tall at mature height, which would help provide a similar character to the corridor over time. For more information, refer to Chapter 2.1.7 of the DED.

12. WHO WILL APPROVE AN ALTERNATIVE?

Caltrans is legally responsible for operating the I-405. As a result, the Director of Caltrans District 12 has the authority to approve a preferred alternative. The project development team (PDT), which is comprised of professional and technical staff from OCTA, Caltrans, the City of Irvine, and other agencies of jurisdiction, will recommend a Preferred Alternative.

13. WHAT HAPPENS TO PUBLIC COMMENTS AND WHEN WILL RESPONSES BE COMPLETED?

Public comments received during the public review period of the draft environmental document will be reviewed and considered by Caltrans in the selection of the preferred alternative. Comments will be recorded and responded to within the final environmental document, and responses will not be sent directly to commenters. Responses will be available for the public to view in the final environmental document, anticipated to be approved mid-2018.

14. IF A BUILD ALTERNATIVE IS APPROVED, WHEN WILL THE PROJECT BE CONSTRUCTED?

Based on current information, the earliest construction could occur is 2025. However, funding sources for the subsequent development phases, beyond the environmental study phase, have not yet been identified.

15. WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT?

You can visit the project webpage at www.octa.net/oc405south, contact Fernando Chavarria of OCTA at 714-560-5306 or fchavarria@octa.net, or contact Andrea Hammann of OCTA at 714-560-5573 or ahammann@octa.net. You can also sign up for the email distribution list on the project webpage or follow the proposed project on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oc405south and Twitter at [@oc405south](https://twitter.com/oc405south).

Additional frequently asked questions are available on the project website.

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