



## I-405 Sepulveda Pass ExpressLanes Project

### Frequently Asked Questions

Metro has a plan to make it easier to get around. The I-405 Freeway through the Sepulveda Pass is especially challenging and complex, and Metro has several projects in this area. Along with better transit and other improvements, Metro is working in coordination with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to evaluate alternatives to convert the existing carpool lanes to dynamically-priced, high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, called ExpressLanes, in both directions of I-405 between I-10 and US-101. The [I-405 Sepulveda Pass ExpressLanes Project](#) will include a new overhead tolling system and signage on adjacent portions of the I-405 corridor.

#### 1. OVERVIEW

##### 1.1 Who is leading the project?

Metro is conducting the environmental planning process in coordination with Caltrans, who is the owner/operator of public highways in California. Caltrans is the lead agency for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In addition, Metro is a funding partner and is responsible for transportation improvements in LA County, including the planning of the I-105 ExpressLanes and I-10 ExpressLanes Extension and operation of the Metro ExpressLanes on the I-10 and I-110 freeways.

##### 1.2 Why is the project needed?

The Sepulveda Pass segment of I-405, between US-101 and I-10, provides a vital connection in Los Angeles County between the San Fernando Valley, Westside, and South Bay communities, and has a current daily traffic volume of 289,000 vehicles. This corridor serves various employment, educational, health, cultural and entertainment centers, and also serves as a key link to other significant regional destinations, including the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), the nation's second busiest airport. This segment of I-405 is one of the most congested highways in the U.S., with an average of 56 hours of delay annually per commuter in 2019. Making things worse, the existing vehicle hours of delay experienced in the HOV and general-purpose lanes is projected to increase by 22% through 2050. The congestion on the I-405 Project Corridor is also causing motorists to seek



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alternative routes, including Sepulveda Boulevard and other nearby residential streets and canyons. However, local streets do not provide effective travel route alternatives due to physical inadequacies, numerous traffic signals, access conflicts, and congestion.

### 1.3 What is the current project status? *(Response updated September 9, 2021)*

The project is in the environmental phase and is currently undergoing a formal scoping process that began on August 3, 2021. The scoping process was originally set to include a 30-day comment period, but was recently extended to 60 days through October 1, 2021. The comment period was accompanied by virtual public scoping meetings (held on [August 14, 17 and 18, 2021](#)) to share project updates and promote the submittal of public comments. The intent of the scoping process is to gather input on the purpose and need for the project, the proposed alternatives, environmental issues, local projects that may be proposed in the study area, and the community participation approach. The scoping comments will help inform the areas that may need to be addressed by the environmental and technical studies being developed in support of the Draft EIR/EIS, anticipated for public release in Fall 2022. The release of the Draft EIR/EIS will include a comment period and public hearings to solicit public input.

### 1.4 What is the anticipated project cost, and how will the project be funded?

The project cost estimate is being evaluated as part of the environmental review process and will be available in the Draft EIR/EIS, expected release in Fall 2022. The project has \$260 million in funding from Measure M, the local sales tax passed by LA County voters in 2016. Additional funding sources will be explored as the project advances through the project development process.

## 2. EXPRESSLANES

### 2.1 What are ExpressLanes?

ExpressLanes are designed to improve traffic flow and provide motorists, including solo drivers, a more reliable travel option. ExpressLanes allow those meeting occupancy requirements to travel for free, while also providing single occupant vehicles the option to pay a toll to use the lane. Tolls for vehicles that don't qualify to travel for free are calculated based on traffic conditions and vary according to the level of congestion – tolls are higher when traffic congestion is heavier and lower





when traffic is lighter. The Metro ExpressLanes Program was initiated as a one-year demonstration to assess the use of congestion pricing to ease traffic on LA County freeways. Currently, Metro operates ExpressLanes on the I-110 and I-10 freeways in LA County, and construction of the I-105 ExpressLanes is expected to start in 2024. To learn more, visit the Metro ExpressLanes [website](#).

### 2.2 Do all drivers have to pay to access the ExpressLanes? How do you pay?

No, ExpressLanes allow those meeting the occupancy requirements for the corridor and motorcycles to travel free (like an HOV lane) but also allow single occupant vehicles the option to pay a toll to travel in the lane. Drivers with a qualified Clean Air Vehicle (CAV) decal pay a discounted toll. A “FasTrak Flex®” device allows drivers to declare the number of people (1, 2, 3+) in the vehicle enabling HOV discounts and toll-free trips on the I-10 and I-110 Metro ExpressLanes. FasTrak is an electronic-only toll collection system used in California allowing drivers to drive through designated “FasTrak Only” lanes paying tolls without stopping. Drivers with a non-switchable FasTrak transponder will always pay a toll regardless of the number of occupants in the vehicle. Drivers wanting the option to travel toll-free on the Metro ExpressLanes must upgrade to FasTrak Flex®, which can be used on all toll facilities in California.

Under the new Metro ExpressLanes Pay as You Go pilot, the cost of using the ExpressLanes without a valid FasTrak account/transponder has been reduced to \$4 (from \$25) plus the posted toll rate. The Pay as You Go Notice of Toll Evasion will be mailed to the owner of the vehicle (as registered with the DMV) who is responsible for paying the toll amount, plus a \$4 processing fee. If not paid by the date on the notice, additional penalties and fees will be applied. This option, however, does not allow qualifying carpoolers to access the ExpressLanes at no cost as it’s only available to vehicles equipped with a “FasTrak Flex®” device.

### 2.3 Why consider ExpressLanes as a solution instead of adding more HOV lanes?

Much of the existing I-405 HOV lanes (one lane in each direction) within the project limits are not performing as originally intended as they do not offer trip reliability and improved travel times to carpoolers. As such, ExpressLanes offer a potential solution to improve trip reliability, travel times and traffic flow as well as proactively manage and sustain mobility within the corridor. The project seeks to ease highway and local congestion created by the more than 289,000 cars that travel daily



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through the Sepulveda Pass by providing a mobility alternative. In addition, the ExpressLanes provide a choice to single occupant drivers to save time when necessary.

#### 2.4 How does this benefit carpoolers and transit riders?

Incentives are available to Metro ExpressLanes users that are frequent carpoolers and transit riders, through the Carpool Loyalty (a FasTrak rewards program), and the Transit Rewards Program (a use credits rewards program). The Carpool Loyalty Program automatically enters Metro ExpressLanes FasTrak account holders who use the lanes as carpoolers into a monthly drawing for a chance to win toll credits. Frequent transit riders and FasTrak account holders can also earn a \$5 toll credit to use on the I-10 and I-110 Metro ExpressLanes through the [Transit Rewards](#) program. The Transit Rewards Program is the first of its kind in the transit and toll industry. Furthermore, Metro intends to use net toll revenue to increase transit service in the corridor, as is currently done on the I-10/I-110 ExpressLanes

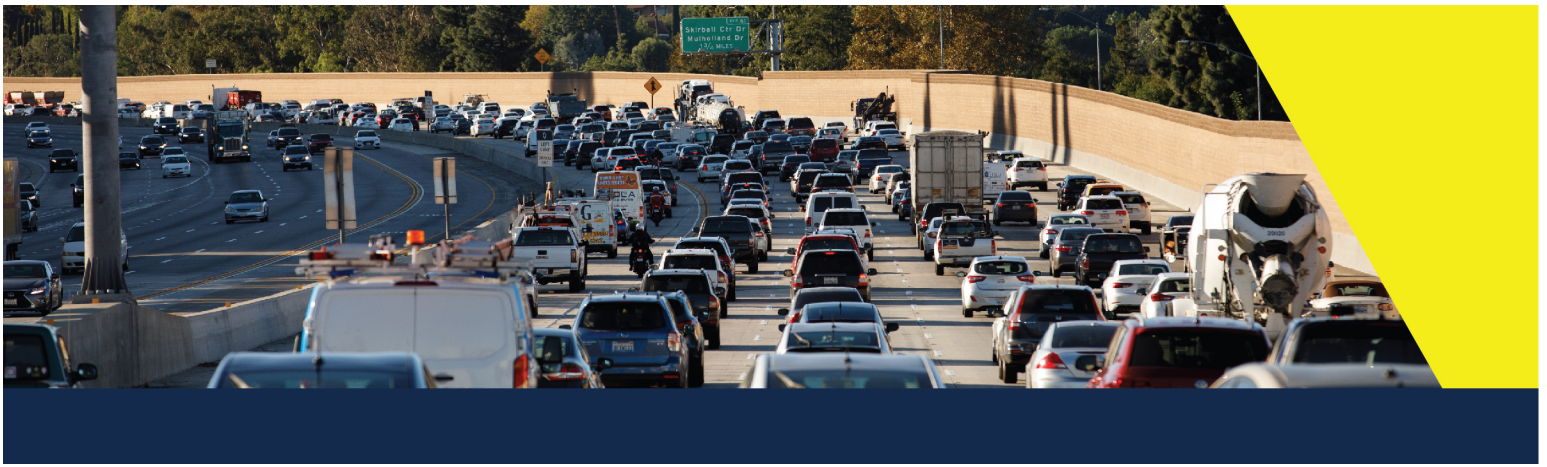
#### 2.5 What happens to the surplus toll revenue from the ExpressLanes?

State law requires toll revenues generated from the Metro ExpressLanes be reinvested in the corridor from which they were generated. If ExpressLanes are added to the I-405 Sepulveda Pass corridor, Metro would use the toll revenues first to pay for the cost of operating the ExpressLanes, including roadway and equipment maintenance, administration, toll collection, debt service, customer service, California Highway Patrol enforcement and Freeway Service Patrol tow trucks. Additional revenues would be reinvested in discount programs for Metro ExpressLanes customers through the Low-Income Assistance Plan, Carpool Loyalty, and the Transit Rewards Program. Remaining revenues could be reinvested into local corridor jurisdictions to improve transit service, transportation infrastructure and systems.

#### 2.6 How will the ExpressLanes program address equity concerns?

The Metro ExpressLanes program currently offers qualifying LA County residents a one-time \$25 credit when they set up their FasTrak account (proof of eligibility required). The \$25 credit can be applied to either the transponder deposit or pre-paid toll deposit. With this plan, the \$1 monthly account maintenance fee is also waived. To qualify for the Low-Income Assistance Plan, applicants must be LA County residents and have an annual household income equal to or less than twice the





Federal Poverty Level (updated on an annual basis) and provide proof of eligibility. [Click here](#) or visit [metroexpresslanes.net](http://metroexpresslanes.net) for additional details.

### 3. ALTERNATIVES & OPERATIONS

#### 3.1 What are the proposed alternatives for this Project?

The proposed project is considering build alternatives intended to reduce congestion, encourage carpooling and transit, improve trip reliability, reduce degradation of the carpool lanes, increase person throughput, and apply technology to help manage traffic. In addition to the general improvements described below for each of the build alternatives (alternatives 2-5), these would require the construction of retaining walls and sound walls, utility improvements, and drainage improvements as well as toll and communication infrastructure and modification/installation of overhead signs.

- **Alternative 1:** Existing Conditions (no build)
- **Alternative 2:** Convert HOV to one ExpressLane
- **Alternative 3:** Convert HOV to two ExpressLanes (non-standard lane widths)
- **Alternative 4:** Convert HOV to two ExpressLanes (standard lane widths)
- **Alternative 5:** Add an additional HOV lane (non-standard lane and shoulder widths)

#### 3.2 Where are the proposed ExpressLanes access points along the I-405 Sepulveda Pass?

The project aims to maintain the existing I-405 Sepulveda Pass HOV access points to also serve the proposed ExpressLanes. However, the access points will be reviewed based on the analysis and results of supporting technical studies. The existing southbound HOV access points within the project area are (from north to south): Valley Vista Bl, Skirball Center Dr/Mulholland Dr, Getty Center Dr, Sunset Bl, Wilshire Bl/Santa Monica Bl, W Olympic Bl/W Pico Bl, and Venice Bl. The existing northbound HOV access points include (from south to north): just prior to the Santa Monica Bl/Wilshire Bl access point, Sunset Bl/Moraga Dr, just prior to the Getty Center Dr HOV access point, Skirball Center Dr/ Mulholland Dr, Ventura Bl and Burbank Bl.



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### 3.3 When will this project be constructed?

The project is targeted for completion in advance of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games. If a build alternative is selected, the anticipated construction timeline will be defined in the Draft EIR/EIS.

### 3.4 Is Metro considering a future extension of the proposed Sepulveda Pass ExpressLanes to connect with the future I-105 ExpressLanes?

Yes, the entire stretch of the I-405 in LA County is envisioned as part of the Metro ExpressLanes Network and would allow for future connections to the environmentally cleared I-105 ExpressLanes as well as the existing I-110 ExpressLanes. Due to the success of the I-10 and I-110 ExpressLanes, the Metro Board directed staff to prepare the [Countywide ExpressLanes Strategic Plan \(Plan\)](#) that identifies and recommends potential corridors that could benefit from ExpressLanes conversion which are organized into three tiers of projects comprising a 310-mile ExpressLanes network. The Plan identifies the corridor limits proposed for this project (from US-101 to I-10) as well as the remaining southern portion of I-405 (from I-10 to the LA/Orange County line) as Tier 1 priority projects for implementation within 5-10 years. As such, the Sepulveda Pass is considered as a potential first phase of the Metro ExpressLanes program envisioned for I-405 in LA County. Separate environmental planning processes are anticipated for the future phases of the I-405 ExpressLanes program.

### 3.5 How will traffic flow be managed on the ExpressLanes to minimize congestion issues currently experienced in High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes?

ExpressLanes are dynamically priced to ensure vehicles travel at least 45 miles per hour (as required by law), so reliability and time savings are maintained. The I-110/I-10 ExpressLanes rates are updated based on real-time traffic demand on the facility, with prices increasing or decreasing based on the current usage of the ExpressLanes. By using variable pricing to manage travel demand, traffic flow in the ExpressLanes is continuously managed to maintain speed and flow, providing a more reliable option to the heavily congested general purpose and HOV lanes during peak periods.





### 3.6 How will rates in the ExpressLanes be determined?

Tolls for vehicles that don't qualify to travel for free are calculated based on traffic conditions and vary according to the level of congestion – tolls are higher when traffic congestion is heavier and lower when traffic is lighter within the ExpressLanes.

### 3.7 How will toll evasions be enforced on the proposed ExpressLanes?

In order for Metro ExpressLanes to operate efficiently, enforcement will be multi-faceted utilizing California Highway Patrol services, technology and facility design. The FasTrak Flex® transponder occupancy setting (1, 2, 3+) are visible on beacon lights which help CHP perform a visual verification of the vehicle and cite non-compliant drivers. In addition, the Occupancy Detection System is an automated detection system that helps the Metro ExpressLanes back-office know if the FasTrak Flex® switch setting matches the number of people in the vehicle. There can also be channelizers on the road that help separate the general-purpose lanes from the ExpressLanes.

## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL

### 4.1 What is the environmental process for this project? What type of documents are being prepared?

The Project is in the Project Approval/Environmental Document (PA/ED) Phase (environmental planning phase). Metro, in coordination with Caltrans as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lead agency, will prepare an EIR/EIS pursuant to CEQA and NEPA, respectively. The project is in the initial stage of the environmental planning phase, with a formal scoping process anticipated in Summer 2021. The scoping process will include a 30-day comment period, accompanied by public scoping meetings. The scoping comments will help inform the areas that may need to be addressed by the environmental and technical studies being developed in support of the Draft EIR/EIS, anticipated for public release in Fall 2022. The release of the Draft EIR/EIS will include a comment period and public hearings to solicit public input.

Metro will also prepare a Concept of Operations (ConOps) and a Traffic and Revenue (T&R) Study concurrently with the PA/ED phase. The purpose of the ConOps will be to define facility design, toll collection systems, and operating policies such as ingress/egress locations for the ExpressLanes, signage, enforcement, and toll policies. The purpose of the T&R Study is to consider factors such as







congestion, roadway capacity, and potential time savings to estimate toll rates and the potential revenue that could be generated.

#### **4.2 What types of impacts are being evaluated? How will impacts be addressed?**

The EIR/EIS will evaluate potential impacts of the Project on the environment and addresses issues consisting of, but not limited to, air quality, noise, visual, traffic, and community impacts during and after construction. The EIR/EIS will include a comprehensive description of the Project and the proposed alternatives, evaluate the Project's effects on the environment, and inform decision-makers and the public of reasonable avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. The proposed alternatives will be evaluated through environmental studies, technical studies and design reviews to identify a preferred alternative.

#### **4.3 If a build alternative is selected, will any properties adjacent to the I-405 corridor be impacted as part of this project?**

The goal of the project is to limit the proposed project improvements to the existing right of way in order to avoid impacts to private properties, to the extent possible. Whether or not property is needed for a project alternative is determined through the environmental planning phase, in compliance with state and federal laws. During this phase, various project improvements are considered and evaluated, in addition to property that might possibly be needed for the project. For additional details, please refer to the Metro Property Acquisition [fact sheet](#).

#### **4.4 How will Metro manage the construction impacts of this project?**

As part of the EIR/EIS, a Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Plan will be developed to outline the steps that will be used to avoid or reduce significant impacts of project construction. Metro will work to minimize impacts on commuters and nearby businesses, residents and property owners, as well as other project stakeholders. Mitigation measures might include setting construction times to reduce specific impacts or shorten the overall duration of certain construction activities, fencing and sound walls around staging areas, locating earth removal locations near major streets and freeways, specifying haul routes, etc. Improved communications, including signage and advertising, are typically employed to help maintain access and encourage ongoing patronage to businesses. In addition, a





dedicated Metro Construction Relations team will conduct proactive and continuous community outreach to keep stakeholders informed.

#### 4.5 Who will select the Preferred Alternative and when is this decision anticipated?

Following the public review period for the Draft EIR/EIS, the project development team will recommend, and the Metro Board is expected to select, a Preferred Alternative by 2023. The Preferred Alternative will then be included as part of the development of the Final EIR/EIS with an expected completion date of fall 2023.

## 5. NEARBY PROJECTS

### 5.1 How does this project relate to other Metro projects?

Our region has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine mobility on the Sepulveda Pass corridor, one of America's most challenging travel corridors. As such, Metro is evaluating a variety of projects that could offer a range of multimodal mobility options to address existing and future transportation needs. The I-405 Sepulveda Pass ExpressLanes is just one of the projects considering mobility improvements. Other projects include the Sepulveda Transit Corridor, I-405 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan (CMCP), and the Traffic Reduction Study.

### 5.2 How does this project relate to the I-405 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan?

Metro is leading the development of a comprehensive planning vision for the I-405 in LA County. The goal of the [I-405 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan \(CMCP\)](#) is to address the transportation demands in and around the corridor, understand the diverse users and communities relying on and impacted by the I-405 Corridor, solicit their feedback and demonstrate how multimodal improvements can ease congestion, efficiently move more people and goods, increase accessibility for all users, support our economy, and advance equitable outcomes for historically disadvantaged communities. The I-405 CMCP will capture the universe of planned transportation improvements within the I-405 CMCP Study Area, including the I-405 ExpressLanes Project. Additional information on the I-405 CMCP is available at [metro.net/i405-cmcp](http://metro.net/i405-cmcp).





### 5.3 How does this project relate to Metro's Traffic Reduction Study?

The [Traffic Reduction Study](#) will explore how to reduce traffic through congestion pricing (i.e. tolls) and providing more high-quality transportation options. In early 2021, Metro introduced four early concepts that are being studied to see if a traffic reduction program pilot could be successful in our region, including parts of LA County that have long suffered from chronic traffic. One of the concepts includes the Santa Monica Mountains Corridor that will explore managing traffic on freeways and parallel roadways that cross the Santa Monica Mountains between I-405 and I-5 to reduce heavy congestion from trips between the LA Basin and the San Fernando Valley. With few roads across the mountains, terrible traffic has for decades plagued the roads in the area. This study is not expected to impact the environmental planning process for the I-405 Sepulveda Pass ExpressLanes project. However, both projects will continue monitoring progress on each of the counterpart efforts and coordinate to avoid any potential conflicts. At the earliest, a traffic reduction pilot program would not begin until 2025 — after a lot more planning, public engagement and necessary approvals from the Metro Board of Directors and other governmental bodies. Additional information on the Traffic Reduction Study is available at [metro.net/trafficreduction](https://metro.net/trafficreduction).

### 5.4 How does this project relate to the Sepulveda Transit Corridor project?

The [Sepulveda Transit Corridor](#) will connect the San Fernando Valley with the Westside and eventually with LAX via a high-speed, high-capacity transit line. Metro is preparing for the environmental analysis that will carefully evaluate each of the alternatives for the Project, including the alternatives being developed by the contractors procured through the Pre-Development Agreement process. This process was approved by the Metro Board and allows PDA partner teams to work with Metro during the Environmental Phase. The transit concepts included with the PDA proposals were a starting point to inform the alternatives Metro will evaluate during environmental review.

The Sepulveda Transit Corridor and I-405 Sepulveda Pass ExpressLanes projects will coordinate closely as both projects advance through their respective environmental processes and more information about potential impacts is developed.

Additional information on the Sepulveda Transit Corridor is available at [metro.net/sepulvedacorridor](https://metro.net/sepulvedacorridor).





**5.5 If built, are the ExpressLanes going to be used until the Sepulveda Transit Corridor project is complete or will they remain after?**

The ExpressLanes would remain after the transit project is complete, providing transportation options for residents and commuters of LA County.

**5.6 Does the ExpressLanes project moving forward preclude the possibility of building the Sepulveda Transit Corridor project along the median of the I-405 Freeway?**

The Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project assumes implementation of the I-405 ExpressLanes. Close coordination within Metro and with public agencies, including Caltrans, will be needed as both projects move through the environmental process.

**5.7 What is the relationship between the I-405 ExpressLanes and the Sepulveda Transit Corridor monorail alternatives?**

Two of the five Sepulveda Transit Corridor alternatives include an elevated monorail alignment in the ROW of I-405. It is expected that these monorail alternatives would coexist with the ExpressLanes, and that neither project would compromise the performance of the other. Designs for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor alternatives, including the monorail alternatives, will be further defined and analyzed during that project’s upcoming environmental phase.

**6. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

**6.1 How can local communities and the general public participate in this process?**

A robust stakeholder engagement program will be implemented in support of the project’s environmental planning process with the goal of building an inclusive vision that balances the unique and diverse needs of the corridor stakeholders. Metro is committed to a comprehensive outreach program that provides project stakeholders with the necessary information, tools and resources to become and remain engaged and informed and provide valuable input at key milestones.

Members of the public and other interested parties are encouraged to participate at public engagement activities, including, but not limited to scoping meetings and public hearings. In addition, comment periods will be offered during the scoping period (30 days) and during the review period for the Draft EIR/EIS. Engagement





with low-income and minority communities and organizations will also be a key component of this process to ensure equity concerns are considered and addressed as part of this phase of the project. Please sign-up to receive project updates and details on opportunities to get involved.

### 6.2 How can I stay involved?

Metro welcomes your input on the upcoming effort, including comments during the scoping period expected in summer 2021. Please share your thoughts and comments using any of the contact methods listed below. Metro does not share your contact information with third parties.

To sign-up for regular project updates/notifications or to submit comments, please use any of the following communication tools:



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