

Notice of Preparation

Notice of Preparation

To: State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814 (Address)

From: California Department of Transportation
PO Box 23660, MS 8B
Oakland, CA 94623 (Address)

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

The California Department of Transportation _____ will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study (is is not) attached.

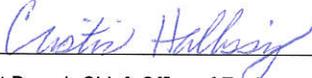
Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Cristin Hallissy, Office of Environmental Analysis at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Project Title: I-680 HOV Direct Access Ramps Project

Project Applicant, if any: _____

Date 2/26/13

Signature 

Title District Branch Chief, Office of Environmental Analysis

Telephone 510-622-8717

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the I-680/ HOV Direct Access Ramps Project

Project Location

The project is located in the city of San Ramon in Contra Costa County, California. The project limits on Interstate 680 (I-680) extend between existing Bollinger Canyon and Crow Canyon. This is shown on the attached map.

Project Description

The project would construct HOV (carpool, vanpool, bus, etc.) on- and off-ramps connecting directly to and from the northbound and southbound median HOV lanes of I-680 in the City of San Ramon between Bollinger Canyon Road and Crow Canyon Road. The proposed HOV on- and off-ramps and auxiliary lanes would be added in the median, and therefore the I-680 mainline lanes would need to be shifted to the outside. Both directions of the proposed I-680 mainline would have one 12' HOV lane, three 12' mixed-flow lanes and one 12' auxiliary lane, in compliance with current highway design standards for lane widths.

A 12' HOV auxiliary lane for a distance of up to 1,000' would be provided in the median upstream and downstream of each HOV ramp, in accordance with the current HOV Guidelines. Both the northbound and southbound HOV off-ramps would be single-lane off-ramps. The proposed ramps would comply with current highway design standards, and would include one 12' lane, 4' inside shoulder and 8' outside shoulder. The HOV on- and off-ramps would be constructed on an embankment retained by retaining walls, which would allow the ramp profiles to rise above the existing grade of I-680.

The freeway widening needed to accommodate the project would require construction of retaining walls along the proposed outside edge of shoulder to minimize right-of-way (ROW) impacts. Widening would also result in the need to reconstruct or remove existing overhead signs, retaining walls, concrete barriers, drainage structures, highway lighting, and highway planting. Temporary construction easements would need to be acquired from several properties abutting the freeway to construct the retaining walls.

Alternatives

The EIR/EA will evaluate two build alternatives, as well as the No Build alternative.

Norris Canyon Alternative

The Norris Canyon Alternative proposes to construct direct on- and off-ramps from the I-680 median HOV lanes in both northbound and southbound directions, at a replaced Norris Canyon Road overcrossing. The proposed Norris Canyon Road Overcrossing would be a two-span, precast concrete I-Girder bridge with spans of 113 feet and 115 feet.

As proposed, Norris Canyon Road would have three through lanes in the eastbound direction, two through lanes in the westbound direction, and one median turn lane between Bishop Drive and San Ramon Valley Boulevard. All six lanes would be 12' wide. Both directions of Norris Canyon Road would have 5' pedestrian sidewalks and 5' shoulders, which can accommodate a Class II bicycle facility (bicycle lane). The resulting roadway cross-section would be wider than the existing by approximately 14'. Due to the constraint with vertical clearance along the southern edge of the existing overcrossing, the additional widening would occur on the north side of Norris Canyon Road. This would require realigning the centerline of Norris Canyon Road to the east, and installing retaining walls along the north side of Norris Canyon Road. Right of Way (ROW) acquisition and temporary construction easements would be needed for construction of the retaining walls and the anticipated utility relocation work.

To accommodate the proposed HOV facility at Norris Canyon Road, the mainline lanes would undergo a transition that begins at Bollinger Canyon Road and ends at Fostoria Way Overcrossing. This transition would consist of restriping and pavement widening. The outside

shoulder would be widened to the standard 10'. The inside shoulder would be 12' wide, except between Crow Canyon Road and Fostoria Way Overcrossings, where the proposed inside shoulder width varies from 2' to 10'. The transition striping at this location is constrained by the existing bridge columns supporting the Crow Canyon Road Overcrossing.

Several ramps at the Crow Canyon Road Interchange, including the northbound off-ramp, southbound diagonal on-ramp and loop on-ramp, would also need to be slightly realigned as a result of the mainline lane shift.

Executive Parkway Alternative

The Executive Parkway Alternative also proposes to construct direct on- and off-ramps from the I-680 median HOV lanes in both northbound and southbound directions, at a new overcrossing that spans over the northbound freeway lanes and matches to the existing Executive Parkway east of the freeway. The proposed on- and off-ramps and the associated auxiliary lanes would be added in the median, and therefore the I-680 mainline lanes would need to be shifted to the outside between Crow Canyon Road and just south of Bollinger Canyon Road (Figure 2).

The proposed Executive Parkway Overcrossing is recommended to have two 12' lanes in the westbound direction and one 12' lane in the eastbound direction. The existing Executive Parkway would need to be raised and reconstructed as it approaches to the new overcrossing, which would provide standard vertical clearance over the northbound lanes on I-680 as well as Bishop Drive.

Bishop Drive, a frontage road east of I-680 between Norris Canyon Road and Bollinger Canyon Road, is proposed to be realigned to cross underneath the new overcrossing. The existing intersection of Bishop Drive and Executive Parkway would need to be relocated and reconfigured due to the significant difference in grades between the two roadways. Several options were evaluated for the configuration of the proposed HOV ramp terminus at Executive Parkway. Caltrans, City of San Ramon and key stakeholders have selected a configuration that resembles a "jug-handle", formed by the proposed HOV ramp, the realigned Executive Parkway and Bishop Drive (Figure 3). ROW acquisition and temporary construction easements would be needed for to establish the jug-handle configuration and the associated utility work.

The existing bicycle facility on Bishop Drive and Executive Parkway would be reconstructed along the proposed roadways. Since the HOV ramp terminus would be a new freeway entrance with access control, pedestrian and/or bicycle facility would not be provided along the HOV ramp or the new overcrossing.

It is proposed to construct a retaining wall in front of the bridge abutment of the existing Norris Canyon Road Overcrossing in both northbound and southbound directions to construct the necessary widening on I-680 while protecting the structure in place.

To accommodate the proposed HOV facility at Executive Parkway, the mainline lanes would undergo a transition that begins south of Bollinger Canyon Road Overcrossing and ends at Crow Canyon Road Overcrossing. This transition would consist of restriping and pavement widening. The outside shoulder would be 10' wide to meet standards. The inside shoulder would be 12' wide, except at Bollinger Canyon Road and Crow Canyon Road Overcrossings, where the proposed inside shoulder width varies from 2' to 10'. The transition striping at this location is constrained by the existing bridge columns supporting both overcrossings.

Several ramps at the Bollinger Canyon Road and Crow Canyon Road Interchanges would also need to be slightly realigned as a result of the mainline lane shift.

No Build

The No-Build alternative would leave the current HOV facility on I-680 unchanged. The express HOVs that utilize the HOV lanes are currently required to weave across all mixed-flow lanes from the median HOV lane to exit at either Bollinger Canyon Road or Crow Canyon Road, and vice versa in the other direction (entering the freeway via either Bollinger or Crow Canyon and weaving across all mixed-flow lanes to the median HOV lane).

Environmental Effects

In late November/early December of 2011 a comment period was held for the public to offer input on the scope of environmental studies to be conducted for the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) that was being prepared for this project. A public meeting was held as a part of this scoping process on November 29, 2011. After taking all comments into consideration, the document level was elevated from an Initial Study to an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in response to potential public controversy. In addition, a second build alternative was added, the Executive Parkway alternative, so two build alternatives and the no build alternative will be studied in the EIR.

Project Scoping

Public participation in the environmental scoping process is an important step in determining the full scope of issues to be addressed in the EIR. Comments on the scope and content of the EIR, as described in this NOP are requested. A formal scoping meeting, in an Open House format, has been scheduled for March 13, 2013 from 7-8:30 PM at the San Ramon Community Center, Terrace Room, 12501 Alcosta Blvd, San Ramon, CA. Notices will be published in the local newspaper, and mailed to landowners, local agencies, resource and permitting agencies, and other stakeholders. The Project Development Team will be present to answer questions.