



**September 7, 2017**

**To:** Regional Planning & Highways Committee

**From:** Darrell Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

**Subject:** Interstate 5 (Avenida Pico to San Diego County Line) Project Status Update

### **Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority is working to complete a project study report/project development support document for potential improvements to Interstate 5 in San Clemente from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County line. A status update is provided below.

### **Recommendation**

Receive and file as an information item.

### **Background**

In September 2014, the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Board of Directors advanced OCTA's Long-Range Transportation Plan to the Southern California Association of Governments for inclusion in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). As part of OCTA's submittal, a project to extend high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on Interstate 5 (I-5), in the City of San Clemente (City), from Avenida Pico to the San Diego County line was included in the plan (Attachment A). This project is not part of the Measure M2 freeway program of projects. However, it is a vital project for the region as it would complete Orange County's HOV system. It would also tie in to managed-lane improvements immediately south of the study area that are contemplated in the San Diego Association of Governments' (SANDAG) RTP.

### **Discussion**

In 2016, OCTA initiated development of a project study report/project development support (PSR/PDS) document for this project. PSR/PDS documents are planning-level studies that are required by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to be completed before a

project can seek funding and/or completion of subsequent project development activities, such as environmental, final design, and construction. They are also used by agencies like OCTA to gauge a potential project's feasibility (i.e. scope, schedule, and cost). Caltrans has ultimate signing authority and approval for PSR/PDS documents.

Consistent with Caltrans' requirements, staff convened a project development team (PDT), which will continue to be involved at each key milestone of the PSR/PDS process. The PDT is comprised of staff from stakeholder agencies including Caltrans, the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA), the City, and SANDAG. There have been five PDT meetings to date. At the most recent meeting, the PDT discussed traffic data collection efforts and preliminary alignment considerations. The next PDT meeting will focus on finalizing traffic forecasts and developing initial improvement concepts.

To date, progress has been made on several key project milestones. In late May, the PDT reached consensus on the project's Purpose & Need (P&N) Statement that establishes the rationale for the project. The P&N Statement for this project identifies congestion and delay, as well as a lack of managed lane connectivity. To address these needs, the project will need to focus on maximizing efficiency of the freeway mainline, increasing person and vehicle throughput, and reducing traffic congestion.

Data collection efforts for existing traffic volumes were completed in June. Freeway volumes were obtained from the Caltrans' Performance Measuring System. Roadway data from the City and the TCA, as well as from past traffic studies, were used if current data were available. Traffic counts were conducted in locations where current data were not available. These data have been validated by the PDT to ensure both consensus and consistency.

Alternatives development was recently initiated and significant progress has been made on establishing the future Baseline, or "No Build" scenario. This scenario will be used to compare the performance of the project alternatives. The PDT reached consensus on the future Baseline scenario, including all projects that are programmed in the 2017 Federal Transportation Improvement Program, with the exception of the State Route 241 (SR-241) extension, along the "Green Alignment." The exclusion of the Green Alignment from future traffic forecasts is consistent with the TCA's recent settlement agreement with environmental groups. The TCA is currently evaluating various transportation options and SR-241 extension alternatives. However, until the TCA's study is complete, the PDT agrees that the most reasonable and conservative approach is to remove the Green Alignment from the scenario.

Without the assumption of the Green Alignment, any traffic demand related to the SR-241 extension will instead be included in the future forecasts for I-5 traffic volumes.

#### Next Steps

The project team will continue working with the PDT to further develop the alternatives. The concepts listed below reflect a framework for potential alternatives that was recently shared with the PDT. The PDT will continue to discuss these concepts and work towards defining the ultimate alternatives.

- Concept 1: Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management – operational improvements and minimal capacity expansion;
- Concept 2: Managed Lane Addition – addition of a single HOV or high-occupancy toll lane in each direction;
- Concept 3: General Purpose Lane Addition – addition of a single mixed-flow lane in each direction; and
- Concept 4: Reversible Lane Addition – addition of a single reversible lane (based on directional split in traffic demand).

Once the PDT reaches consensus on the alternatives, scoping analysis will be conducted to identify specific components for the ultimate alternatives. This will include more detailed traffic analyses, geometric and structural evaluations, and preliminary environmental and storm water considerations. The project team will also be responsible for developing cost estimates for each alternative. Staff anticipates that these efforts will be conducted throughout the fall, and that a draft PSR/PDS document will likely be submitted to Caltrans in early 2018 for approval.

***Summary***

Development of the I-5 (Avenida Pico to County line) PSR/PDS document has been underway since 2016. In coordination with the study's PDT, progress has been made on several key milestones. These include development of the P&N Statement, traffic data collection efforts, initial traffic forecasts, and consideration of potential concepts for alternatives. The project team will continue with alternatives development and additional technical studies through the end of the year. A draft PSR/PDS document will likely be submitted to Caltrans for finalization in early 2018.

***Attachment***

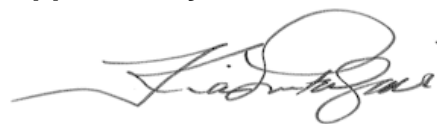
A. I-5 – Pico to San Diego County Line

**Prepared by:**



Carolyn Mamaradlo  
Senior Transportation Analyst  
(714) 560-5748

**Approved by:**



Kia Mortazavi  
Executive Director, Planning  
(714) 560-5741