



MINUTES

State Route 91 Advisory Committee Meeting

Committee Members Present

Karen Spiegel, Chair
Tim Shaw, Vice Chairman
Berwin Hanna, RCTC
Kevin Jeffries, RCTC, Alternate
(Teleconference)
Bob Magee, RCTC
(Teleconference)
Adam Rush, RCTC, Alternate
Rebecca Guirado (for John Bulinski,
Caltrans District 8, Ex-Officio)
Gerardo De Santos
(for Ryan Chamberlain, Caltrans
District 12, Ex-Officio)

Staff Present

Darrell Johnson, OCTA, Chief Executive Officer
Anne Mayer, RCTC, Executive Director
Kirk Avila, OCTA, General Manager, 91 Express Lanes
Michael Blomquist, RCTC, Toll Program Director
Olga Prado, OCTA, Assistant Clerk of the Board
Gina Ramirez, OCTA, Deputy Clerk of the Board
James Donich, OCTA, General Counsel
OCTA and RCTC Staff and Members of the
General Public

Committee Members Absent

Al Murray, OCTA
Mark A. Murphy, OCTA
Shawn Nelson, OCTA
Todd Spitzer, OCTA
John Tavaglione, RCTC
Michael Hennessey, OCTA, Alternate
Tom Tait, OCTA, Alternate
(Vacant), SBCTA, Ex-Officio

Call to Order

The September 7, 2018 regular meeting of the State Route 91 (SR-91) Advisory Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Spiegel at 9:05 a.m.

Committee Chair Spiegel announced that several of the Members would participate in today's meeting via teleconferencing, and all votes would be taken by roll call.

Pledge of Allegiance

Committee Vice Chairman Shaw led in the Pledge of Allegiance.



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1. Public Comments

Public comments were heard from:

Joe Morgan, resident of Corona, asked the SR-91 (91) Advisory Committee to consider fully supporting Option 4 of the proposed operation improvements along the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) authorization to implement Option 4 of the proposed operation improvements along the 91 corridor. Mr. Morgan stated that the additional lane has been needed for decades and felt that commuters are now dealing with the consequences of a poorly designed project that virtually focuses all the traffic from Corona into west Corona. He added that this is currently a one-lane ramp and needs to be at least a two-lane ramp.

Matt Olsen, resident of Corona, reported that he is a regular commuter to Los Angeles and Orange counties, and a frequent user of various tolling facilities. He added that his point of ingress onto the freeway is Green River and he experiences the heavy congestion and conflicting movement of vehicles trying to join the State Route 241 (SR-241) segment, others entering Green River to join the Orange County segment, as well as regular commuters on the 91. Mr. Olsen stated that some refer to this section of the highway as the Bermuda Triangle because of the frequency of collisions that occur there. Mr. Olson asked for an update on the status of the 91 Express Lanes project that was in the works to add a direct connector between the SR-241 (241) and the 91.

Wes Speake, representing the Greater Corona Traffic Alliance (GCTA), reported that in May, RCTC approved a couple of projects: northbound Interstate 15 entrance to the 241; and the removal of a weave lane that is currently between Green River and the 241 to provide extra room for ingress and egress onto Green River. Mr. Speake echoed Mr. Morgan's and Mr. Olsen's comments and added that the GCTA recently met with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 8 (D-8) ramp metering staff about some major changes. He felt positive that there would be some opportunity to allow more vehicles to enter Green River.

Dale Ploung, resident of Corona, discussed his concerns on the 91 Project, and stated that Corona homeowners warned the 91 Advisory Committee to not complete the project. He added that there is footage of the dysfunctional traffic in Corona which is becoming intolerable to homeowners in the area. He added that \$1.4 billion were spent on the project, and there is approximately \$200,000 - \$250,000 lost in wages every morning while commuters are waiting in line to get to Green River to enter the freeway. Mr. Ploung urged the 91 Advisory Committee to get this corrected quickly as it is affecting thousands of people's lives daily.



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1. (Continued)

Michelle Wentworth, resident of Corona and representing the GCTA, reported that the 91 Project has been touted as a great success by the RCTC and Caltrans, but feels that residents in the affected areas, the definition of success depends on where they have to enter the freeway in the morning. She added that one of the immediate consequences of the project was the new bottlenecks that were created on top of existing bottlenecks on the 91 and the 15, and questioned where the oversight was. She thanked Senator Richard Roth, Senate District 31, and Assembly Member Sabrina Cervantes, 60th Assembly District, for arranging a meeting with Caltrans to discuss these issues and help with a solution. Ms. Wentworth added that all the agencies on the 91 Advisory Committee share the responsibility for the 91 Project and urged that this issue be agendized for every upcoming meeting to resolve it.

Ned Ibrahim, representing the GCTA, reported that he also met with Caltrans D-8 to discuss the Green River traffic issues and metering of the westbound ramp and its operation during morning peak-hours. Mr. Ibrahim added that he forwarded technical recommendations to Caltrans D-8 and urged the 91 Advisory Committee to give Green River its attention as it is a very unusual ramp with long delays and 50 percent diversion.

Bill Essayli, reported that he is running for State Assembly, 68th Assembly District, and was speaking today about the 91 freeway, which is probably the most impacted corridor in California. He stated that he was disappointed that of the \$52 million gas tax money received, zero dollars were received for this congested corridor. Mr. Essayli felt that the implementation of Option 4 would address the traffic backlog that builds on the Green River onramp, provide an almost instant relief and benefit to commuters, and save commuters between 15 to 30 minutes of commuter time every morning. He urged the 91 Advisory Committee to work together to implement Option 4 as quickly as possible.

Fauzia Rizvi, resident of Corona, reported that, for the last four years, she worked in Orange County and drove 76 miles a day. She stated that the commute has worsened after opening of the 91 Express Lanes extension and added that her toll road fees have increased from \$300 to approximately \$800. Ms. Rizvi urged the 91 Advisory Committee to implement Option 4.

Special Calendar

There were no Special Calendar Matters.



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Consent Calendar (Items 2 and 3)

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Member Hanna, seconded by Member Rush, and following a roll call vote, declared not passed by those present.

Vice Chairman abstained as he was not in attendance at the June 1, 2018 meeting for this item.

3. Joint 91 Express Lanes Monthly Status Reports

A motion was made by Member Hanna, seconded by Member Rush, and following a roll call vote, declared passed 6-0, by those present, to receive and file the Joint 91 Express Lanes Monthly Status Reports for the months of April 2018 through June 2018.

Regular Calendar

4. Riverside County Transportation Commission 91 Express Lanes Toll Policy

Jennifer Crosson, Toll Operations Manager, RCTC, 91 Express Lanes, provided background information and a PowerPoint presentation on this item covering the following topics:

- Current Policy;
- Sixteen Month Post Operation Lessons Learned;
- What Has Been Done;
- Why is Single-Lane Capacity Lower than Expected;
- Eastbound McKinley;
- Proposed Changes to Toll Policy;
- Level of Service Volumes;
- Super-Peak Volume Triggers;
- Super-Peak Toll Adjustment Amounts;
- Annual Inflation Adjustment; and
- Next Step.

Public comments were heard from:

Joe Morgan, resident of Corona, felt this policy has been flawed from the beginning and stated that although the policy is based on demand, the consumer side of this demand is based on a completely different criterion. He added that consumers do not know what their demand is until they are on the freeway, have to use different apps to see the traffic conditions, and decide at that time whether or not to pay the \$30 toll to get home.



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4. (Continued)

Mr. Morgan added that consumers believe this is really a demand pricing model; yet, do not understand the toll pricing policy. Mr. Morgan felt that the solution is to make the general purpose lanes have a reasonable amount of traffic flow so that consumers have an option to get home without having to make economic decisions and spend \$30 a day in toll fees.

Wes Speake, representing the GCTA, asked to show consumers the differences of traveling in the toll lanes versus the general purpose lanes, just like San Diego does. He added that that users should benefit and need to know that they are getting something out of this. Ms. Speake stated that continuing to increase toll pricing gives the impression that the general purpose lanes must be bad, and therefore, users jump on the toll road to get home.

Michelle Wentworth, resident of Corona and representing the GCTA, reiterated Mr. Speake's comments and provided different route and toll pricing scenarios for users traveling on the 91 and 15 freeways both eastbound and westbound. She urged the 91 Advisory Committee to let users know what the time saving is per dollar spent. She added that people in Corona drive it, pay for it, and can only afford to use it one or two days a week.

Committee Chair Spiegel asked staff to provide an overview on how the pricing was formulated and a discussion ensued as follows:

- The model being used is the same model that has been used since 1995 when the lanes opened.
- This is a time-of-day variable pricing and changes by the hour based on congestion levels. The data is collected for the prior 12-week period (each hour of each day, each day of each week), and based on the actual data, prices are adjusted up or down per adopted toll policies.
- Committee Chair Spiegel suggested that other toll policies be examined to see the differences in the pricing structure, and need to work with Caltrans on ramp metering/timing.
- Committee Vice Chairman Shaw liked the idea of having a consistent toll policy for both Orange and Riverside counties.
- Congestion Management pricing versus dynamic pricing.
- The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) conducted focus group studies early on, and one of the key elements that the customers liked was knowing exactly how much was going to be spent for a particular hour.

Following the discussion, no action was taken on this receive and file information item.



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5. 91 Express Lanes Customer Service Center Relocation Status Update

Michael Blomquist, Toll Program Director, RCTC, 91 Express Lanes, provided background information and reported that the 91 Express Lanes Customer Service Center (CSC) provides customers with account and transponder services, and houses both a call center and customer walk-in center. He provided a PowerPoint presentation on this item covering the following topics:

- CSC: Primary Focus and Current Facility;
- Toll Building Program;
- Express Lanes Building Locations;
- Corporate Terrace Business Park;
- 91 Customer Service Center (CSC) History;
- 91 CSC Build-Out, Relocation;
- 91 CSC Build-Out Schedule; and
- Stay Connected.

Public comments were heard from:

Joe Morgan, resident of Corona, reported that he found it serendipitous that the building the 91 Express Lanes CSC is currently located at is slated to be torn down, the Corona City Council has decided to build the McKinley Avenue bridge on that location, and the CSC building is being desired by another developer.

Bill Essayli started to provide comments unrelated to this Agenda Item and Committee Chair Spiegel asked that staff address his comments after the meeting adjourns.

Committee Chair Spiegel asked that Mr. Blomquist address Mr. Morgan's public comment.

Mr. Blomquist reported that the relocation of the 91 Express Lanes CSC has to do with RCTC having purchased approximately 16,000 square feet of building space and part of that purchase was to meet immediate needs and have the capacity for future needs for toll operations. He added that when that purchase was completed, it was apparent that one of the two buildings was needed, leaving the other building available to either lease or find a use for RCTC, and that is when the idea to relocate the 91 Express Lanes CSC occurred. Mr. Blomquist provided additional background and timing information on the purchase.



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5. (Continued)

Kirk Avila, General Manager, OCTA, 91 Express Lanes, added that staff has been at the CSC since 2004 and the lease is expiring early next year. Additionally, staff has been considering potential options for several years, including the building that was purchased, with the intent to move from the current CSC facility due to several issues with the location and the building's property owner.

Following the discussion, no action was taken on this receive and file information item.

Discussion Items

6. General Manager's Report – Orange County Transportation Authority

Kirk Avila, General Manager, OCTA, 91 Express Lanes, reported on the following:

- For fiscal year (FY) 2017-18, OCTA ended with the highest traffic volumes on record, with 16.7 million trips on the Orange County side.
- For the first couple of months of FY 2019, traffic volumes continued to increase, with slightly 7 percent over the prior year, and 6 percent increase in toll revenues.
- High-occupancy vehicle ridership has increased since the opening of the RCTC extension.
- Since the last 91 Advisory Committee meeting, both RCTC and OCTA Board of Directors (Board) have approved changes to account structures as a result of the changes that will be forthcoming in 2019.
- The procurement of the transponders will happen by the end of this calendar year in anticipation for distribution next year. Both agencies are working together on the development and re-design of the customer brochures, as well as collateral material.
- Staff is working on the tolling equipment to transition to the new technology.

7. Toll Program Director's Report – Riverside County Transportation Commission

Michael Blomquist, Toll Program Director, RCTC, reported on the following:

- The RCTC Board approved two restriping/channelizing projects –
 - Restriping at the east end of the 91 Express Lanes; and
 - Restriping of the existing ingress/egress areas to a continuous weave lane on the 91 general purpose lanes westbound, near the County Line.
- Last week, the RCTC received a toll revenue bond rating of BBB–/BBB.



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8. Committee Members' Reports

Committee Vice Chairman Shaw reported that since the last 91 Advisory Committee meeting he had the opportunity to join OCTA staff and a few Members of the OCTA Board to the annual New York meetings with the rating agencies and financial institutions. He added that he reported on the 91 Express Lanes and the folks at the meetings were very familiar with the 91 corridor. Committee Vice Chairman Shaw stated that he ensured to reemphasize the great partnership and relationship OCTA has with RCTC and his comments were well received at those meetings.

Committee Chair Spiegel commented on the expressed concerns received this morning from the community of Corona (GCTA) who want their voices heard. She added that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed and they asked to hear about issues that the Orange County side is dealing with. Committee Chair Spiegel expressed her appreciation to Caltrans for stepping in. She added that Senate Bill 132 funding should be used toward helping make the freeways better for commuters.

9. Closed Session

There were no Closed Session items scheduled.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of this Committee will be held at **9:00 a.m. on Friday, December 7, 2018**, at the:

Orange County Transportation Authority Headquarters
550 South Main Street
Board Room – Conf. Room 07
Orange, California

ATTEST

Olga Prado
OCTA Assistant Clerk of the Board

Karen Spiegel
Committee Chair