



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: MAY 17, 2011

ITEM NUMBER: _____

SUBJECT: I-405 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

DATE: MAY 5, 2011

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT - TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: PETER NAGHAVI, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES DIRECTOR

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: RAJA SETHURAMAN, TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGER, 714-754-5032

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide direction on I-405 Improvement Project alternatives and authorize staff to transmit resident comments and petitions to Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA).

BACKGROUND:

Over the past several years, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), in association with the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the cities adjacent to the I-405 Corridor between the SR-73 and I-605 Freeways, has been working on the I-405 Improvement Project. The goal of the project is to analyze a series of alternatives to improve the capacity in this portion of the freeway.

The City of Costa Mesa participated in the project development with representation in the Policy Advisory Committee by Mayor Monahan and prior Mayor Mansoor, and in the Technical Advisory Committee by the Transportation Services Manager. Mayor Pro Tem Righeimer was appointed to the Policy Advisory Committee in early 2011.

The I-405 Improvement Project has progressed from the Major Investment Study (MIS) phase to Project Report/Environmental Documentation phase. At the conclusion of the MIS phase, the OCTA Board of Directors recommended alternatives for further study, which generally consisted of a **one-lane** or **two-lane** addition to the I-405 Freeway from north of the Santa Ana River to the I-605 Freeway. The alternatives, depicted in Attachment 1, included:

- **Alternative 1** – Add one lane in each direction on the I-405 Freeway between Euclid Street and the I-605 Freeway; and
- **Alternative 2** – Add two lanes in each direction on the I-405 Freeway between Euclid Street and the I-605 Freeway.

Until this point in the study, there was no freeway widening proposed within the Costa Mesa City limits with the above two alternatives.

About five years ago, the City, in cooperation with OCTA and Caltrans, completed two major freeway widening projects; the I-405/SR-55 Transitway Project and I-405/SR-73 Confluence Project. These projects resulted in the construction of new freeway onramps and offramps, reconfiguration of ramps, and widening of the freeway within Costa Mesa City limits to the ultimate configuration as called for by agencies. However, during the initial stages of this new project development, in January 2009, the OCTA Board approved an additional alternative for study involving express lanes between the SR-73 and I-605 Freeways. The following alternative was added:

- **Alternative 3** – Add one lane in each direction on the I-405 Freeway between Euclid Street and the I-605 Freeway, and add High Occupancy Toll (HOT)/Express Lanes on the I-405 Freeway between the SR-73 and I-605 Freeways. This will result in a conversion of the existing High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane to a toll express lane and the addition of a second express lane. In addition, the project includes a direct HOV lane to express lane connectors between the SR-73 and I-405 Freeways.

The project with Alternatives 1 and 2 was originally estimated at approximately \$600 million. This estimate was revised later to approximately \$1.4 billion due to the need for reconstruction of several interchanges and bridges along the I-405 Freeway north of the Santa Ana River. In order to finance this higher than estimated cost, the consideration of HOT/express lanes was included as an additional alternative (Alternative 3). The cost estimate for Alternative 3 is approximately \$1.7 billion. This new alternative was primarily added to address potential funding issues for the implementation of the entire project.

The three alternatives were presented to City Council at the April 12, 2011, Study Session. Staff also presented the input provided by the community on the Project Alternative 3 through letters/e-mails and petitions, and requested City Council approval to forward these correspondences to OCTA. The City Council directed staff to place this item on regular meeting agenda for further discussion and direction.

On April 25, 2011, OCTA staff presented a financial analysis report to their Board of Directors. Based on that report, Alternatives 1 and 2 have potential funding deficiencies of approximately \$700 million and \$800 million, respectively. Based on updated revenue estimates from HOT/Express Lanes for Alternative 3, it is forecasted that there is a potential deficit of \$600 million for its implementation.

ANALYSIS:

The I-405 Improvement Project is envisioned to address the existing and future demands on the I-405 Freeway between the SR-73 and I-605 Freeways. A few years ago, the Costa Mesa portion of the I-405 Freeway, the section south of the Santa Ana River, was widened to its ultimate configuration as part of the I-405/SR-73 Confluence project. There are seven or eight mixed flow lanes and a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction within Costa Mesa City limits. However, north of the Santa Ana River, past the Euclid Street interchange, the number of lanes on the I-405 Freeway drops to four mixed flow lanes and one HOV lane in each direction. This results in significant back up of traffic on the freeway as well as diversion of traffic to other parallel arterials.

The proposed improvements originally approved by the OCTA Board in February 2006, considered the potential right-of-way impact of widening, and limited the alternatives to those that would add one or two lanes in each direction generally within the existing freeway right-of-way. The initial plans for this project, therefore, did not include any widening or impacts in Costa Mesa. However, the proposed new alternative (Alternative 3) to add express lanes between the SR-73 and I-605 Freeways, and a direct connector between the SR-73 and I-405 Freeways, will require widening within the Costa Mesa City limits.

Alternative 3, which is the HOT/Express Lane Alternative, will result in the widening of the freeway, thereby bringing the new lanes closer to the neighborhoods within the Costa Mesa section and will also create significant potential aesthetic impacts due to new direct connector ramps between the I-405 and SR-73 Freeways. In addition, the Fairview Road Bridge over the I-405 Freeway will need to be demolished and replaced to accommodate proposed new HOT/Express lanes. Within Costa Mesa City limits, Alternative 3 will result in the conversion of an existing free HOV lane to a HOT/Express lane. However, there will be no addition of a mixed flow lane in either direction. North of the Santa Ana River, the HOT/Express lane alternative adds one mixed flow and one express lane and converts the existing HOV lane to a HOT/Express lane.

While the Express Lane Alternative 3 improves the operations of express lanes, projected traffic conditions for a **majority** of motorists traveling on the mixed flow lanes are expected to improve with the implementation of Alternative 2. This is because Alternative 2 adds two mixed flow lanes in each direction that will benefit a majority of motorists traveling on those lanes. Within Costa Mesa City limits, there is no change to the number of mixed flow lanes under any of the Alternatives.

The potential impact of Alternative 3 is a significant concern to the residents of Costa Mesa, especially those adjacent to the I-405 Freeway. Over the past few months, staff has provided presentations on the proposed I-405 Improvement Project, including Alternative 3, to various neighborhood associations in the vicinity of the I-405 Freeway. The general consensus among the residents is that the ultimate improvements to I-405 Freeway were already completed in Costa Mesa as part of the SR-73/I-405 Confluence Project and that these new proposed improvements in Alternative 3 are not needed, do not benefit the City, and are intrusive to the residents. The City received several letters/e-mails and petitions from over 260 residents in opposition to Alternative 3. The letters/e-mails are included as Attachment 2, and the petitions are available for review at the City Hall Public Services Counter.

The Environmental Document preparation for the I-405 Improvement Project is currently underway and the draft document for public review is expected to be released in early 2012.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No alternatives other than those proposed as part of this project are presented.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There is no fiscal impact to the City with the presentation of this item.

LEGAL REVIEW:

Legal review is not required for this item at this time.

CONCLUSION:

OCTA has initiated the Project Report/Environmental Documentation phase of the I-405 Improvement Project. The OCTA Board initially approved consideration of a one-lane or two-lane addition to the Freeway north of the Santa Ana River in February 2006. However, during the initial stages of project development, an additional alternative (Alternative 3) was added to the study. This alternative includes addition of HOT/Express Lanes on the I-405 Freeway between the SR-73 and I-605 Freeways.

The addition of HOT/Express Lanes will result in widening of the I-405 Freeway within Costa Mesa City limits and will require total reconstruction of the Fairview Road Bridge over the I-405 Freeway. While the widening will be within Caltrans' right-of-way, the resultant freeway widening will result in mainline lanes pushed outward closer to residential development on both sides of the Freeway.

Based on traffic analyses submitted to date, the proposed improvements do not significantly benefit the City, and the potential widening of the freeway and reconstruction of Fairview Road/I-405 Interchange creates significant impacts to the community. The area residents have submitted several letters and petitions opposing further consideration of Alternative 3 within the City limits.

Raja Sethuraman, Manager
Transportation Services

Peter Naghavi, Director
Department of Public Services

ATTACHMENTS: 1 - [Proposed I-405 Improvement Alternatives](#)
 2 - [Letters/E-Mails from Residents](#)

DISTRIBUTION: Chief Executive Officer
 Assistant Chief Executive Officer
 City Attorney
 City Clerk
 Development Services Director

5-17-11-I-405 Improvement Project

5/5/11

9:00 a.m.