

**Air Quality Conformity Task Force
Summary Meeting Notes
June 29, 2011**

Attendance:

Ginger Vagenas – EPA

Mike Brady – Caltrans

Dick Fahey – Caltrans

Ted Matley – FTA

Jeffrey Zimmerman – URS

Lynn McIntyre – URS

Chadi Chazbek – URS

Stephen Haas – ACTC

Stew Sonnenberg– FHWA

Ashley Nguyen – MTC

Brenda Dix - MTC

1. PM_{2.5} Project Conformity Interagency Consultations

Ashley Nguyen (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:35am. See attendance roster above.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) mentioned that Amy Crenshaw (FHWA) made an announcement at the SCAG meeting that she will no longer be doing air quality so staff at FHWA is stretched thin.

Ashley stated that this meeting is a follow up on the I-580 express lane project that was brought to the May Task Force Meeting. She stated that Ginger has been able to touch base with OTAQ and Karina to shed more light on EPA's perspective on the project.

Ginger Vagenas (EPA) communicated that EPA felt rational for dismissing the assumption that the modeled information that showed a significant increase in diesel truck traffic was incorrect. EPA believes this is a POAQC and the sponsor can do additional modeling to detail that this is not a POAQC or they can complete a hot-spot analysis.

Ashley re-caped that there had previously been mixed views on whether or not this project is a POAQC based on the received traffic data.

Mike stated he has seen other HOV lane projects and to justify labeling them as not a POAQC they require a more detailed analysis of what will happen to truck ADT. In order to properly model the lane, it cannot be assumed that adding an HOV lane is the same as adding a mixed flow lane.

Ashley stated that there were equal 20% truck volume increases in build and no-build so the project itself has no impact on the truck levels.

Mike responded that as long as there were no other components of the project (auxiliary lanes, etc.) then this should not be a POAQC.

Stephen Haas (ACTC) confirmed there are no additional components to the project and that the HOV lane is being converted to a HOT lane and an additional HOT lane will be added. No other lanes are being added. Mike commented that the additional lane is modeled like any other lane addition which creates the problem of increasing truck ADT.

Chadi Chazbek (URS) added that the project is constrained by a bottleneck to the west which limits the traffic and truck flow through the area so even if the added lanes had been mixed flow the traffic could not increase. This project simply improves the operations within the project area. The total increase of trucks could only be 64 trucks and these would likely be diverted from local ramps. Overall the project should have a positive impact by increasing speeds through the corridor. The perceived increase in truck traffic is just moving trucks through the corridor faster so they are appearing in multiple segments.

Mike asked if this project would affect the BART expansion.

The BART expansion will continue in the median and will divert into downtown using an old railroad route so this project will not affect the BART expansion.

Ginger believes that traffic increases in the segments is what concerned OTAQ.

Mike compared the project to one in Sacramento where further analysis showed that the additional HOV lanes would not add to truck traffic and therefore was not a POAQC but reservations remained since the total truck traffic was still so high.

Ginger related the project to a national scale where in other areas similar projects have been considered a POAQC. EPA also had reservations with the modeling.

Ted Matley (FTA) stated that since there wasn't a grade in the project limits then there is less concern of it being a POAQC. However, the project is still over the threshold of 125,000 AADT and 8% trucks.

Ginger, Dick Fahey (Caltrans), and Mike were concerned that the numbers presented were only for the east bound direction so total AADT would actually be much higher. This high level of AADT may automatically qualify the project as a POAQC. This may have been the basis of OTAQ's concern.

Ashley reiterated that the project is only on the east bound direction and this is a major truck route but the project itself doesn't increase truck volumes since there is a bottleneck to the west.

Mike pointed out that in 2035 there is an increase in the number of trucks but this increase may be due to an overall increase in traffic, he asked if this project is what enabled there to be more traffic since it is the only project in the area.

Chadi clarified that there is the same amount of truck traffic entering and exiting the project but since the trucks are moving faster they appear in the downstream segments as well. Essentially, some of the traffic is now being double counted since it is moving faster then it could before.

Mike questioned if the 6% increase in truck traffic between build and no build is significant. He asked if it is significant then where are those trucks diverted from?

Chadi responded that the trucks are just a percent of total traffic so they do not necessarily represent actual trucks. They may be diverted from local ramps or they may just be double counted due to their increased speeds.

Mike pointed out that the lack of residential land use may make this project less likely to be a POAQC. There are no sensitive receptors in the central part of the project which is where there is an increase in truck traffic.

Mike suggested that the sponsor re-model the project by splitting the mixed flow lanes from the other lanes. This analysis would show how much extra space is left for trucks in the mixed flow lanes due to the shift of light duty trucks to the express lanes.

It is unclear how much time and costs would be involved in providing the analysis. It may be easier to complete the hot spot analysis.

Ashley asked for clarifications on OTAQ's concerns.

Ginger reiterated that they had issues with the modeling approach. She suggested additional calls with Karina or OTAQ to further discuss their concerns.

Ashley suggested that in the future OTAQ or Karina submit comments in writing so the sponsor can have more detailed information about their concerns.

Ginger will talk to Karina or OTAQ to further discuss the project and request that they speak with Chadi about the modeling assumptions. EPA looks to FHWA to provide more detailed instructions on how to model the project.

Ashley stated that the sponsor can decide to either do additional modeling or complete the hot spot analysis. In the end, there must be concurrence from EPA and FHWA. If this is deemed a POAQC then a hot-spot analysis must be completed and the Task Force must review it. Once the review is complete, the sponsor may get approval of the hot-spot analysis off-line.

Mike stated that the sponsor can come to the task force for approval of their methods and assumptions before completing the hot-spot analysis since this is all that the AQCTF is tasked with reviewing.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) approves the approach of Chadi speaking with OTAQ or Karina to see if the traffic analysis can be refined to make the determination that the project is not a POAQC and if not then the sponsor can move forward with the hot-spot analysis.

The next meeting of the AQCTF is July 28th. There may not be an August meeting.

2. Other Business/Adjourn

With no other business, Ashley Nguyen (MTC) adjourned the meeting at about 10:30 a.m.