

**Air Quality Conformity Task Force
Summary Meeting Notes
October 25, 2012**

Participants:

Dick Fahey – Caltrans

Stew Sonnenberg - FHWA

Mike Brady – Caltrans

Kanda Raj – Kimley-Horn Associates

Scott Steinwert – Circlepoint

Tim Lee – WMH Corporation

Stefanie Hom - MTC

Sri Srinivasan – MTC

Adam Crenshaw – MTC

Brenda Dix - MTC

1. **Welcome and Self Introductions:** Brenda Dix (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. See attendance roster above.

Ted Matley (FTA) and Ginger Vagenas (EPA) were not in attendance at the meeting. Brenda indicated that the Task Force members in attendance would make recommendations on projects, but final determinations would be made after Ted and Ginger's comments were received.

2. **PM_{2.5} Interagency Consultations**
 - a. **PM_{2.5} Conformity Exempt List Review**

Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC): I-680 NB HOV/Express Lanes

Kanda Raj (Kimley-Horn Associates) provided an overview of the project. The Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) proposes to construct an approximately 15-mile High Occupancy Vehicle/High Occupancy Toll (HOV/HOT or express lane) project on northbound I-680 from south of SR-237 in Santa Clara County to north of SR-84 (Vallecitos Road) in Alameda County. Auxiliary lanes connecting on-ramps and off-ramps in the northbound direction will be constructed between the following six freeway interchanges: Jacklin Road, Scott Creek Road, Mission Boulevard (SR-262), Durham Road (Auto Mall Parkway), Washington Boulevard, and Mission Boulevard (SR-238).

Tim Lee (WMH Corporation) provided an overview of the traffic analysis for the project. There is currently recurring traffic congestion and travel delays on portions of northbound I-680, with travel delays exceeding 10 minutes per vehicle during a multiple-hour peak period. This level of congestion is expected to worsen as traffic volumes are expected to increase. The project would increase the efficiency of the transportation system by optimizing capacity on northbound I-680 between SR-237 and SR-84 to accommodate current and future traffic demand. The project would also extend the regional carpool lane system to improve travel time and travel reliability for all users and optimize freeway system management and traffic operations by making use of available unused capacity in the HOV lane.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) asked about location of the traffic counts. Were the counts taken from one location, or are they an average of the entire corridor?

Tim responded that the numbers were taken from the Sunol Grade, which is where most of the traffic occurs. The numbers are consistent with annual data that Caltrans uses.

Dick indicated that he does not think the truck volumes are significant and does not think this is a project of air quality concern.

Brenda Dix (MTC) indicated that she does not think the project is a project of air quality concern.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) indicated that he does not think the project is a project of air quality concern. The project is adding a lane, but it is not a truck lane. Will the auxiliary lanes be modified?

Tim responded that the auxiliary lanes will be looked at in the traffic studies. The area between Jacklin Road to Mission Boulevard/SR-238 and the areas between interchanges will be considered for auxiliary lanes.

Mike asked how will the auxiliary lanes change the capacity of the network and how much are they going to change traffic? He assumed they won't change trucks much, except on SR-237, since the project area does not feed-off into industrial areas.

Tim responded that they are focused on the operational aspects of the auxiliary lanes. There is a separate project to do ramp metering which would control volumes during peak periods. Auxiliary lanes would control the way trucks gets off the freeway.

Scott Steinwert (Circlepoint) added that there are six interchanges where the auxiliary lanes could be between. The modeling assumptions for the traffic forecast did include auxiliary lanes as well as HOV lanes. The model results did not predict there would be an influx of trucks with the auxiliary lanes in the network.

Mike asked if all of the interchanges would have auxiliary lanes in between them.

Scott responded that yes, the traffic study will confirm whether or not all the auxiliary lanes would be needed.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) asked if the auxiliary lanes would be between interchange to interchange. Would they drop at each interchange, and then pick up at each interchange?

Tim responded that, yes, the auxiliary lanes would be from on-ramp to off-ramp. They may not extend the entire distance between each interchange. The traffic study will look at that. It may not be effective to create long auxiliary lanes, since they might just become an extra lane.

Mike indicated that he was concerned about the length of the auxiliary lanes; some of the distances between interchanges look far apart. An auxiliary lane longer than a mile starts to look like an extra mixed flow lane.

Stew agreed with Mike. The auxiliary lanes should be under a mile and be well marked so the general traveling public doesn't confuse them as a separate lane and add capacity to the network.

Stew had a question on the attached memo. The footnote indicates the study used level of service thresholds from Florida DOT. Was that one of the sources or was that a misprint?

Scott indicated that they used methodology from Florida DOT, but the data is not from Florida.

Stew asked if Caltrans has that data.

Tim indicated that the Caltrans data geared towards peak periods only, when the project needed a methodology for average daily LOS. Florida DOT has recognized guidance for that.

Scott indicated that they would clarify with their consultant, Fehr & Peers, regarding why the Florida DOT threshold was used. They don't typically do LOS for freeway mainlines.

Dick indicated that Florida DOT's methodology is geared toward this analysis, whereas Caltrans doesn't.

Mike asked if this project will have any effect on parallel local streets.

Kanda responded that the traffic studies included an expanded scope that will look at the effects of express lanes on local streets and arterials. The traffic study will look at the additional traffic going into off-ramps and that will determine if it will have effect on local streets.

Tim added that commuters are coming up with creative detours during peak period to avoid traffic, sometimes traveling twice the distance.

Kanda indicated that the express lane on I-680 will help with traffic on local streets and they have support for the project from the City of Fremont.

Stew indicated that he does not think the project is a project of air quality concern. The truck volumes would increase, but the percentages would decrease.

Mike asked if buses will use the express lanes.

Kanda responded that the express lanes should help provide reliable transit times. They will be conducting an after-study early next year on southbound I-680 to determine the effects of traffic.

On October 25, 2012, Scott emailed Brenda clarifying the use of Florida DOT's methodology:

"Florida DOT thresholds are a standard reference used throughout the industry to define LOS based on ADT. They explained it to me that the Florida Threshold provides a fairly straightforward way to calculate a LOS across all lanes based on ADT. Other thresholds typically used look at peak hour LOS or LOS by lane on a multi-lane freeways. "

On October 26, 2012, Ted Matley and Ginger Vagenas emailed the Task Force and indicated that they believe this project is not a project of air quality concern.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans), Ted Matley (FTA), Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA), Ginger Vagenas (EPA), Mike Brady (Caltrans), and Brenda Dix (MTC) agreed that the project is exempt.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that the project is exempt from PM_{2.5} project level analysis.

b. Confirm Projects are Exempt from PM_{2.5} Conformity

Regional Real-Time Transit Information at BART

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) questioned whether the exemption should be categorized as either of the following:

- Mass Transit – Construction of small passenger shelters and information kiosks
- Mass Transit – Construction or renovation of power, signal, and communications systems

Mike Brady (Caltrans) indicated that the “information kiosks” exemption code seemed appropriate.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans) agreed that the existing exemption code should be changed to one of the exemption codes Stew recommended. He asked if there was a similar project we could look to.

On October 26, Ted Matley (FTA) emailed the Task Force and indicated the “construction or renovation of power...” exemption code seemed appropriate for the project, but didn’t have a strong preference.

On October 29, Ginger Vagenas (EPA) emailed the Task Force and indicated that she discussed the exemption code with Karina O’Connor (EPA); Karina recommended the “construction or renovation of power...” exemption be used.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that the projects on the exempt list are exempt from PM_{2.5} project level analysis. The exemption code was changed to “Mass Transit - Construction or renovation of power, signal, and communications systems.”

3. Consent Calendar

a. September 25, 2012 Air Quality Conformity Task Force Meeting Summary

There were no comments on the consent calendar.

4. Other Items

Mike Brady (Caltrans) announced that he will be retiring next year.

5. Next Meeting

Stefanie Hom (MTC) indicated that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 6, 2012, from 9:30 to 11:30 am.

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