

I-680/ Norris Canyon HOV Direct Ramps Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is a project like this being considered?

In 2004, Contra Costa voters approved Measure J, which continued the Contra Costa half-cent transportation sales tax program to 2035. The Measure was approved by 67 percent among those who voted in San Ramon. The Measure J Expenditure Plan includes a project titled I-680 Carpool Lane Gap Closure/Transit Corridor Improvements. This project will provide funding for significant improvements along the I-680 corridor. An I-680 Investment Options study completed in 2003 identified the I-680 project to be beneficial to improvements along the I-680 corridor. One component of the improvements is the addition of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) access to I-680 for travelers in San Ramon. HOVs include buses, carpools and vanpools.

What will this project do?

The purpose of the project is to promote and facilitate carpooling, vanpooling and transit use by improving freeway access for transit and HOVs traveling into and out of San Ramon. Residents and commuters will have access to the HOV ramps. The project is consistent with the intent of State Legislation (SB 375) to reduce green house gas emissions, and vehicle congestion, improve air quality and increase the use of HOVs. The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) and the City of San Ramon also encourage carpooling, vanpooling and the use of transit as ways to reduce congestion on local roadways, improve air quality, reduce fuel consumption and improve the overall quality of life in our communities. In addition, the project may enhance west-east connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists if the Norris Canyon alternative is built.

Who is working on this project and what are their roles?

The CCTA is the project sponsor, and is working in cooperation with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), who is the lead agency for the Environmental Document. The City of San Ramon is a partner agency facilitating the public outreach effort.

Has the project already been approved?

No, the project has not been approved. The CCTA, Caltrans and the City of San Ramon are beginning the project development and environmental review process that will take place over the next year and a half (through fall 2013). Once project development and environmental review is complete, CCTA, City of San Ramon and Caltrans will decide whether to proceed with the project. The project design will only proceed at this point – after the Final Environmental Document is released and approved. Project construction would begin in the winter 2016 at the earliest, pending the availability of funding.

What alternatives are being studied?

The alternatives being studied include:

1. The addition of on- and off-ramps for HOV and transit use at Norris Canyon Road, including enhanced pedestrian/bike facilities on the overpass.
2. The addition of on- and off- ramps for HOV and transit use at Executive Parkway
3. A “no build” alternative

Who is Funding the Project?

The project is included in Contra Costa Measure J approved by Contra Costa voters in 2004. The project would be funded through a variety of sources, including \$10.2 million from Measure J with the remainder from other State and Federal funding sources. No local funds are required from the City of San Ramon for this project.

Won't this project create a car centric/drive through environment in our community?

Making it easier and more attractive to carpool, vanpool and use transit would result in just the opposite. Studies show that increased carpooling, vanpooling and transit use results in less single-occupant vehicle trips and reduces overall congestion.

Won't the project increase noise, congestion, accidents, pollution, crime and pedestrian/bike safety?

The project is consistent with the intent of State Legislation (SB 375) to reduce vehicle congestion, air pollution and increase the use of HOVs. By conducting a project development and environmental review process, CCTA, Caltrans and the City of San Ramon will determine any potentially significant impacts the project may have on the community. The environmental study will thoroughly evaluate all three (3) alternatives, study potential impacts, and identify ways to avoid, reduce or minimize impacts to acceptable levels. At the end of this process, one of the three alternatives will be chosen. A “no build” alternative may be chosen.

What has happened so far?

The CCTA, City of San Ramon and Caltrans completed a Project Study Report (PSR) in March 2010. However, completion of the PSR does not approve the project for construction. The PSR determines the scope, schedule and estimated cost of the project and allows proceeding with the project development and environmental review phase.

A scoping meeting was held in November 2011 to provide information about the proposed project and receive public input on the range of issues to study during the environmental analysis. Scoping does not result in the ultimate decision about a project or selection of an alternative – it is one of the beginning stages of the overall process to initiate the study of a proposed project.

What happens next?

The CCTA, City of San Ramon and Caltrans will conduct a series of workshops over the next 9-12 months to receive input and feedback during the project development and environmental review process. Engineering and environmental technical studies will be conducted at the same time to evaluate a wide range of topics and issues including traffic, noise, air quality, and community impacts.

This information will be documented in a Draft Environmental Document (Draft ED), which will be made available to the public for review and comment (anticipated in spring 2013). The public will be encouraged to review the Draft ED and submit written comments on the project during this time. A public meeting will also be held, allowing for additional public comments to be submitted.

Once the public comment period for the Draft ED is complete, the next step is to prepare a Final ED which addresses all of the comments received on the Draft ED. The Final ED must also define the “preferred alternative” that the lead agency recommends among all the alternatives considered. The chosen alternative is identified as the most suitable to meet the project’s purpose and need. This could be an action (build) alternative or the “no action” (no-build) alternative. Publication of the Final ED is anticipated to occur in late 2013.

How can I get involved?

Conducting an open process that provides multiple opportunities for community involvement is a key goal of the CCTA, City of San Ramon and Caltrans. A series of workshops will be held over the next 9-12 months to receive input and feedback during the project development and environmental review process. These meetings will be widely publicized in the community and everyone is encouraged to attend. In addition to the workshops, there will be a formal public review period for the Draft ED during which the community will be encouraged to review the Draft ED and provide written comments and input.

Where can I go for more information?

Go to www.ccta.net

Call the CCTA at (925) 256-4700

Email norriscanyonhovproject@gmail.com to ask questions, request information, or be added to our project mailing list.