



241/91 Express Connector - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. When will the environmental document be available for public review and comments? How can I submit a comment?

The public comment period for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement was held from November 7, 2016 to January 9, 2017. The Project Development Team is reviewing and evaluating all comments received. Responses to these comments will be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record Of Decision (FEIS/ROD). The FEIS/ROD will be posted to the Caltrans project website: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/d12> and TCA project website: www.thetollroads.com/241-91Connector in approximately December 2017. Please note, the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement can still be found on both websites but comments are no longer being formally accepted.

2. What is the project purpose and need?

The connection between the 241 Toll Road and the 91 freeway presents daily challenges for commuters, especially those heading west on weekday mornings and those heading east on weekday evenings. Demand exceeds capacity on the existing connector from the northbound 241 Toll Road to eastbound State Route 91. Motorists heading north on the 241 Toll Road cannot access the eastbound 91 Express Lanes, and motorists heading west on the 91 Express Lanes cannot access the southbound 241 Toll Road. Weaving between the existing connectors and lanes slows the flow of traffic and can lead to traffic accidents.

3. How will the Express Connector improve traffic flow? Will more vehicles be able to travel through the area?

A traffic analysis was conducted as part of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS. The study determined that the Express Connector would help overall traffic flow on all lanes in the project area. Upon opening, the connector would draw 1,700 vehicles to the 241 Toll Road from the 5 and 55 freeways and other major streets during peak commuting hours, allowing seven percent more vehicles to pass through the area in the opening years. This improvement would enhance travel and relieve traffic congestion between Orange County and Riverside County. Full traffic analysis details are available in the technical reports of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

4. What is the history of this project?

The 1992 and 1994 Eastern Transportation Corridor (SR-241) environmental documents evaluated a direct connector from the 241 Toll Road to the 91 freeway median. At that time the median was considered to be carpool lanes. Prior to the start of construction, the connector project was deferred to a later time, when traffic levels demanded. Following that, the decision to build toll express lanes in the median was approved and construction began. The Express Lanes opened in 1995 and the 241 Toll Road connecting to SR-91 opened in 1998.

5. Why wasn't the project built earlier?

In 2009, TCA resurrected the Express Connector project, when the Riverside County Transportation Commission began plans to extend the 91 Express Lanes to Interstate 15. In 2010, TCA worked jointly with the Orange County Transportation Authority to prepare a feasibility study. The following year, TCA began development of preliminary design plans and started work on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS. This supplemental document is required, with updates to all of the technical areas, to meet requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). CEQA and NEPA require agencies to analyze and fully disclose potential impacts to the environment of proposed projects and to adopt measures to mitigate those impacts.

6. What environmental studies were completed?

Twenty-five technical studies were completed and are summarized in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS. Studies cover the following topics:

- » Land Use
- » Growth
- » Community Impacts
- » Utilities/Emergency Services
- » Traffic and Transportation
- » Visual/Aesthetics
- » Cultural Resources
- » Water Quality/Storm Water Runoff
- » Geology/Soils/Seismic Topography
- » Paleontology
- » Hazardous Waste/Materials
- » Air Quality
- » Noise
- » Energy
- » Natural Communities
- » Wetlands, Other Waters
- » Plant Species
- » Animal Species
- » Threatened/Endangered Species
- » Invasive Species
- » Short-Term vs. Long-Term Uses
- » Commitment of Resources
- » Cumulative Impacts

7. What other alternatives were considered, other than the 241/91 Express Connector?

A “No Build” alternative was analyzed which would maintain the existing condition, rather than build the 241/91 Express Connector. The “No Build” alternative establishes a baseline condition with which to compare the impacts of the project improvements. After completing the technical studies for the project, the Project Development Team, comprised of representatives of TCA, Caltrans, OCTA and RCTC, identified the 241/91 Express Connector as its Preferred Alternative over the “No Build” alternative.

8. Will any neighborhoods be able to see the Express Connector?

Residents or businesses that can currently see the 241 Toll Road/91 Freeway interchange will see an additional bridge between the current bridges heading east from the 241 to the 91.

9. Will there be any impacts to the natural environment?

Approximately five acres of land on the slope south of State Route 91, approximately 3,600 feet west of Coal Canyon, would be permanently acquired for the proposed project. The acquired land is currently part of the Irvine Ranch Natural National Landmark (NNL), owned by the County of Orange with a Conservation Easement held by the Nature Conservancy. Impacts to coastal sage scrub in coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat or designated critical habitat will be mitigated at a ratio of at least 2:1 for permanent impacts. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also will occur to address effects to the coastal California gnatcatcher and its habitat.

10. How will this project impact or improve air quality?

As part of the environmental process, studies have been performed to determine if the project will affect air quality. According to the air quality studies, this project is not considered a Project of Concern regarding particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5).

11. Will residents near the construction area be affected?

A Noise Study was performed that examined permanent and temporary impacts of noise to the environment. If the 241/91 Express Connector is built, noise levels would increase by three decibels or less, which is barely perceptible to the human ear. Because there would not be a substantial increase in noise, there is no need to build sound walls or use other noise reduction measures. However, some intermittent noise would occur during construction, but it would be short-term and overshadowed by local traffic noise. Other construction impacts include the potential for short-term closures, detours and travel delays. These closures and detours may affect motorists on State Route 91, the Gypsum Canyon Road on-ramps and off-ramps, Gypsum Canyon Road, local neighborhoods and businesses.

12. What plans are in place to reduce these impacts?

A public outreach program and advanced temporary signage will be in place to inform motorists, residents, businesses and other stakeholders of construction activity, detour routes, and the importance of allowing extra travel time through the area. The public outreach program will emphasize ways to stay connected to the project, including a helpline, website, email notices and social media.

13. What is the anticipated project schedule?

Caltrans and TCA are reviewing public and agency comments to the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS and anticipate completion of the Final Environmental Document in late 2017. Pending project approval, final design would be completed in mid-2018. Construction is anticipated to start in early 2019 and be complete by early 2021. This schedule is an estimate and subject to change.

14. How much will this project cost and how will it be funded? Is it being funded with tax dollars?

The total project cost is an estimated \$180 million. Funding would be provided primarily by toll revenue collected on the new Express Connector.

15. What will the toll be to use the Express Connector?

The Express Connector would use dynamic pricing, which updates toll rates throughout the day, based on traffic conditions. The toll rates fluctuate in order to maintain free-flow conditions on the 91 Express Lanes. The range of toll rates is yet to be determined. Toll rates will be posted on signs to inform motorists of the rates, prior to Express Connector entry points.

16. How will tolls be collected on the Express Connector? Will I need to have a FasTrak transponder?

Tolls will be collected electronically with a FasTrak transponder. Other forms of electronic toll payment will not be accepted, because the motorists who use the 241/91 Express Connector to travel east will transition directly into the 91 Express Lanes, and the 91 Express Lanes only accept FasTrak transponder payment.

17. Why do we have to pay to use the new lanes when we already pay gasoline taxes and a local sales tax for transportation?

State and federal gas taxes do not generate enough revenue to maintain the current highway system in California, and unfortunately are not enough to pay for additional transportation capacity improvements. Many states rely on tolls to help build and maintain their transportation systems. Tolls are seen as one of the fairest types of funding, since they are tied directly to use of the tolled facilities.

The Toll Roads were originally planned as freeways, but due to a lack of state funding, they had to be built as tolled roads. To finance the roads, toll revenue bonds were sold as the major funding source and development fees were assessed on new construction. Construction of the roads were funded through the sale of these bonds to both private individuals and institutional investors and the roads became tolled facilities in order to repay the bond debt. The bonds can only be repaid through tolls and development fees. The majority of the toll revenue collected goes to repaying the bonds issued to fund construction.

18. How can I stay connected to this project?

Please visit and sign up for project updates at www.thetollroads.com/241-91connector and email 241-91expressconnector@thetollroads.com to receive future project related information.

CONTACT US



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