



Metro

ATTCHMENT B

I-10 ExpressLanes/Busway

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A DEGRADATION MITIGATION STRATEGY



December 2019

Prepared by:

HNTB

Executive Summary

Introduction

Due to factors such as increased demand, capacity constraints west of the I-710 freeway, operational challenges approaching the I-10/I-605 interchange, and occupancy misdeclaration, degradation on the I-10 ExpressLanes has been increasing. A High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane or ExpressLane is considered degraded if average traffic speeds during the morning or evening weekday peak commute period fall below 45 miles per hour for more than 10 percent of the time over a consecutive 180-day period. Currently, the facility requires three or more persons for toll free travel during the AM and PM peak periods (HOV 3+) and two or more persons for toll free travel (HOV 2+) at all other times.

In response, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (Metro) Board of Directors (Board) put forth a motion in April 2018 that proposed developing a new operating approach on I-10 by increasing the occupancy requirements in the ExpressLanes. The Board motion included the following:

- Metro staff will work with Caltrans and other stakeholders to develop, within existing federal and state guidelines, a pilot exclusively for the I-10 ExpressLanes/Busway that would define carpools as registered vanpools with all other vehicles (other than passenger buses) subject to fees through a "Pay As You Go" model. The zero emission vehicles using the corridor would be eligible for discounts in effect at the time the pilot commences; and
- Metro staff will report back to the Metro Board within 180 days on potential effects, key decision points, and milestones necessary to implement the pilot, including community outreach with feedback and surveys and service analysis on impacts and exemptions for low-income commuters.

In January 2019, the Ad Hoc Congestion, Highway, and Roads Committee issued a motion in response to the April 2018 motion referenced above. This motion requested that Metro Staff report on:

1. Potential effects of implementing the Pilot;
2. Key decision points and milestones for implementation; and
3. Solicitation of feedback and evaluation of potential impacts associated with this Pilot with a focus on low-income commuters.

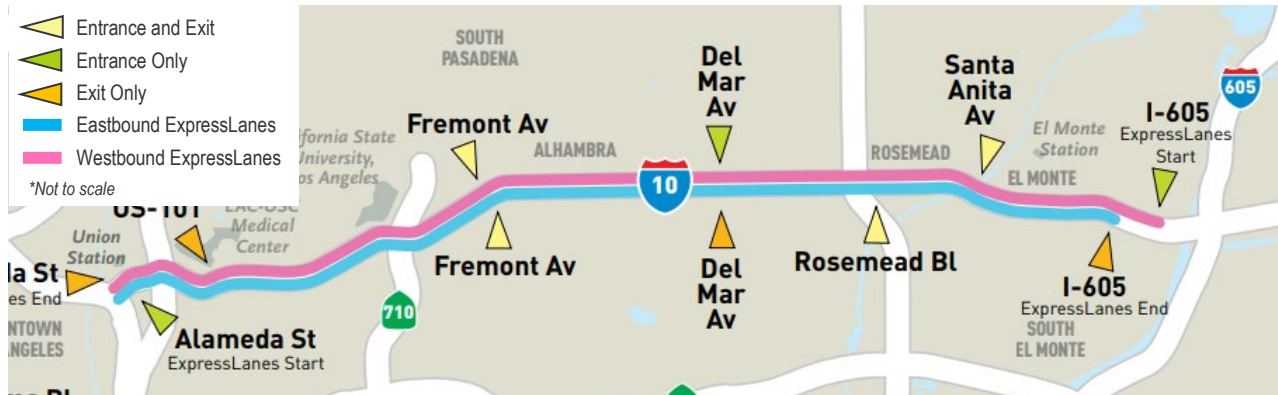
The Board adopted this motion authorizing the development of this Pilot Implementation Plan (PIP) to increase the I-10 ExpressLanes minimum occupancy requirement. Metro and Caltrans staff have also been coordinating with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FHWA has provided authorization to Caltrans and Metro to revise the definition of high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) in the I-10 ExpressLanes.

The PIP proposes a two phased approach to increasing occupancy on the I-10 – first to offer toll-free travel to transit vehicles only (defined as registered vanpools and transit) and then to vehicles with five or more occupants (HOV 5+). To accomplish this task, the PIP outlines the technical and operational requirements, communication and outreach plan, incentivization/mitigation strategies, budget, and schedule for planning and implementation.

Project Area

The project limits are identical to the existing Metro I-10 ExpressLanes between Alameda Street in the west and the I-605 freeway in the east.

I-10 ExpressLanes Project Area Map



Source: LA Metro ExpressLanes website (http://media.metro.net/projects_studies/expresslanes/images/ExpressLanes_Map_Toll_Entry.pdf)

Methodology and Findings

The PIP Development Process graphic below shows the sequence of activities that were used to develop the PIP. The activities were broken down into three phases – Research, Develop, and Implement. The Research phase focused on listening and gathering information to identify opportunities and potential concerns on the transit only and HOV5+ concepts and potential Pilot. The Develop phase includes preparation of mitigation/incentivization strategies, a comprehensive outreach/education plan, and operational considerations. The implement phase will take the plans prepared in the develop phase and put them into operation. All phases will require ongoing stakeholder collaboration/communication and program management coordination, progress reporting, and oversight. The following sections summarize the process, findings, and recommendations by phase and topic.



Research

Peer Agencies Interviews

Metro's research from speaking with peer toll agencies indicated that changing existing HOV occupancy policies is a challenging task when stricter policies are proposed. When comparing interview responses, numerous commonalities emerged as essential to a successful transition, including:

- Obtaining political support; it is key to successful implementation because elected officials and key communicators can help explain, answer questions, and communicate to the public which will help extend the reach of the outreach/marketing campaign.
- Conducting extensive public outreach; develop a robust public awareness/education campaign; and thoroughly educate the public on the new requirements prior to implementation.
- Implementing mitigation strategies to help make the transition to and implementation of new requirements as easy as possible, and offer incentives to ExpressLanes users to form vanpools/vehicle pools, increase transit usage, etc.
- Providing viable transit service options.

More from the interviews with peer agencies can be found in Section 4.

Partner Transit Agencies Interviews

Each partner transit agency interviewed brought a unique perspective regarding how the potential HOV5+ occupancy requirement may affect their service and operations. More detail on the interviews can be found in Section 5. Increasing speeds and decreasing travel times and operating costs were important benefits. However, if the HOV5+ requirement reduces congestion in the ExpressLanes, buses may travel faster than the GP lanes which may entice people to ride transit rather than drive. If the Pilot is implemented, it may have financial ramifications due to agencies needing to purchase more buses and hire additional operators and staff, if there is a significant increase in transit ridership.

Key Stakeholders Interviews

Most of the stakeholders from Caltrans and FHWA feel the ExpressLanes system is effective in reducing overall congestion and improving travel times on I-10. They acknowledged the ExpressLanes are more efficient than GP lanes, but they were concerned with the potential impacts to the GP lanes once this change in occupancy requirement goes into effect. They are concerned it will increase degradation and, in some cases, divert traffic onto local streets to avoid congestion on I-10. The ExpressLanes are susceptible to congestion due to enforcement challenges, especially during peak periods. Stakeholders suggested several potential mitigation strategies to address these concerns, which can be read in Section 5. Metro considered these suggestions and incorporated them into the PIP where feasible.

Preliminary Outreach

To inform development of the PIP and the related outreach and education plan, preliminary outreach activities, including focus groups and electronic/field surveying, were conducted. A detailed description of preliminary outreach activities and findings is included in Section 6.

Focus groups were held with voluntary community participants who commute as solo drivers, vehicle/van pools, or use transit on the I-10 corridor. In addition, Metro conducted field and electronic surveys and received approximately 2,400 survey responses. Focus group and survey findings and recommendations included:

- Existing carpoolers are more likely to seek out a 5+ vehicle pool.
- Financial incentives are the most attractive.
- Simple, straightforward, and transparent communication about the Pilot is desired.

- Communication through radio and newspaper ads, billboards, highway messaging signs, email, text, direct mail, and public outreach materials and events is preferred.
- More effective ExpressLanes enforcement is needed.

Based on these findings, a Comprehensive Outreach and Education Plan (Section 8) was developed. It includes a strategic messaging campaign to help build awareness and consensus and to consistently message the need and benefit of transit only and HOV5+ prior to implementation.

Develop

Based on what was learned in the investigation phase (RESEARCH), Metro considered several activities to include as components of the PIP during its development. These options were evaluated against the Pilot's goals and objectives while considering what would potentially be the most impactful and implemented in a short timeframe. That analysis resulted in the identification of specific activities that formed the PIP (DEVELOP). These are recommended for implementation as part of the PIP (IMPLEMENT).

Phased Approach

Increasing occupancy requirements aligns with the original intent of the El Monte Busway, and it will help mitigate degraded conditions caused by overutilization of the existing ExpressLanes, particularly where capacity is more constrained (e.g., I-10 ExpressLanes single-lane segments).

The Metro Board's April 2018 motion was to implement a Pilot that increases toll-free occupancy requirements from HOV2+/HOV3+ to transit (buses and vanpools only) to preserve the ExpressLanes as a fast, reliable travel option. After the motion was approved, Metro prepared the *I-10 ExpressLanes/Busway Preliminary Assessment* (October 2018), which provided an alternative option of allowing HOV5+ vehicles to travel toll free. As a result, the PIP proposes a two phased approach to increasing occupancy as follows:

- **Phase 1:** Transit only (buses and registered vanpools) travels toll free in the ExpressLanes; all others pay the full toll. (add how you would register a vanpool)
- **Phase 2:** Addition of HOV5+ vehicles travel toll free in the ExpressLanes; introduction of an occupancy declaration/verification mobile application (app).

Under the Pilot, Metro would revise the current definition of the HOV policy of HOV3+ (three-or-more-person vehicle pool) during peak and HOV2+ (two-person vehicle pool) during off-peak periods to transit only (buses and registered vanpools) in Phase 1 and then add HOV5+ (five-person vehicle pool) in Phase 2 for toll-free travel in the ExpressLanes.

In Phase 2, HOV5+ vehicles wishing to take advantage of toll-free travel will need a valid FasTrak® account and transponder or sticker tag on a vehicle's windshield, and they would have to declare a vehicle occupancy of at least five people using a mobile application (app).

PIP Support Strategies

The PIP also identifies potential mitigation and incentivization support strategies. Their purpose is to mitigate the Pilot's impacts on current HOV2+/3+ ExpressLanes users who will have to pay a toll under the Pilot and to encourage transit use and the formation of vanpools and 5+ vehicle pools. Certain existing Metro programs will also be featured as support strategies. The recommended mitigation and incentivization strategies are consistent with input received from focus groups and

field/online surveys conducted as part of the preliminary outreach efforts which informed development of the PIP.

Mitigation Strategies

The purpose of mitigation strategies is to offset the real or perceived impacts of changing the toll-free occupancy requirement from 2+/3+ to transit only and then HOV5+. The top mitigation strategies recommended for the Pilot include:

- Provide an introductory grace period of two months for 2+/3+ carpools (depending on peak period) where they can travel for free before the full implementation of each phase.
- Expand the existing 2+/3+ Carpool Loyalty Program.
- Expand the existing Transit Rewards Program.

Incentivization Strategies

Incentivization strategies are designed to encourage transit use and the formation and use of vanpools and 5+ vehicle pools beyond the financial incentive of toll-free travel. The top incentive strategies recommended for the Pilot are:

- Develop Vanpool and HOV5+ Vehicle Pool Loyalty Toll Credit Drawing Programs (similar to the current HOV2+/3+ program).
- Establish a Vehicle Pool Rewards program where the HOV5+ vehicle pool driver would receive a toll credit after 16 one-way trips during peak periods.

Existing and Potential Programs

The Pilot will benefit from the continuance of Metro's current Low-Income Assistance Plan and Guaranteed Ride Home Program. These programs will be continued, and ongoing outreach and education will be provided as part of the PIP. Metro will also continue current internal/external programs and relationships during the Pilot by collaborating with Metro Transit and other transit partners, 511, and third-party traffic information providers (e.g. Waze) or similar programs.

Additionally, an opportunity exists to further develop the concept of a Transit Re-Investment Program which would use excess toll revenues to enhance existing transit operations. This could encourage commuters to use transit over vehicles and increase passenger throughput, a goal of Metro's Congestion Reduction Program and this Pilot. As part of the Pilot's next steps, staff will collaborate with I-10 ExpressLanes transit operators (Metro and Foothill Transit) and continue to develop guidelines/criteria for participation in this potential program.

Disadvantaged Community and Equity Considerations

In all PIP and Pilot activities, Metro will focus on reaching and meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities and addressing equity concerns and opportunities. For the PIP, this primarily includes outreach activities and the continuance of the Low-Income Assistance Plan. Should the Pilot be successful and become permanent or extended to other Metro ExpressLanes facilities, there may be opportunities to further enhance these programs based on lessons learned during the Pilot.

Comprehensive Outreach and Education Campaign and Support Strategies Implementation

Section 8 discusses Metro's plan to implement a comprehensive public outreach/education campaign to support the Pilot. The program was developed based on input from focus groups,

surveys, stakeholders, and peer agencies and in close coordination with the Metro Marketing and Community Relations teams. The program's purpose is to 1) ensure I-10 corridor travelers are informed about the Pilot and the changes that will come with each phase; 2) mitigate impacts from the Pilot on current ExpressLanes users; and 3) encourage transit use and the formation of vanpools and HOV5+ vehicle pools as an alternative to driving alone or in smaller carpools. It will focus efforts on historically underserved and low-income populations and ensure all the appropriate audiences are reached.

Comprehensive outreach/education activities include:

- Communicating directly with Metro ExpressLanes FasTrak® customers.
- Engaging existing partnerships with key stakeholder groups within the San Gabriel Valley, sharing information with new stakeholders, and distributing collateral materials online, in-person, and by mail.
- Participating in targeted community events and meetings with community leaders in known I-10 commute sheds, with a focus on low-income and disadvantaged communities.
- Advertising on radio, digital display boards, and local newspapers, and Metro-owned media, including onboard rail/transit/bus advertising, 511, Metro and partner websites, and Metro Source articles.
- Leveraging Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which will act as tools to monitor and respond to public reactions to the Pilot.
- Utilizing free mediums available (social, digital, and press release [PR], editorial board, etc.) to maximize the number of impressions¹ and the budget.
- Conducting focus groups and electronic surveys to gather feedback.

Metro will also perform further education and outreach activities to support continuance of the Pilot or to revert to pre-Pilot operations depending on the Board's direction.

Operational Considerations

There are several operational considerations to be addressed for successful implementation of the Pilot. The Implementation Roadmap includes the following activities:

- Implement required signage changes to reflect the change to buses/registered vanpools only and then HOV5+ for toll-free travel in the I-10 ExpressLanes (Section 9 and Appendix A).
- Develop pre- and post-Pilot data needs and establish a baseline data and collection plan to assess impacts from each phase (Section 10).
- Procure and implement the mobile app for occupancy declaration prior to beginning Phase 2 (Section 9.4).
- Assess and implement needed modifications to BOS and customer service center (CSC) technology to support the Pilot.
- Train CHP enforcement officers, ExpressLanes customer service representatives, and other Metro staff for the Pilot.

¹ Impressions are the number of times an advertisement is viewed/heard by the public.

These activities will need to be completed before Go Live for Phases 1 and 2. Some of these activities are already underway. For example, Metro continues to meet with Caltrans and FHWA regarding signage changes and to identify data needs to evaluate the Phase 1 implementation. Also, preparations are underway for the mobile app procurement and to address potential customer service technology needs.

Implement

Program/Project Management

The PIP and the Pilot will be implemented and managed by Metro's Congestion Reduction Department. Program/ Project Management will be ongoing throughout the develop and implement phases. Specific program management tasks will include progress reporting, defining the decision-making structure, establishing a risk register/mitigation strategy (Appendix C), budget management, regularly reviewing the schedule and identifying critical path tasks, maintaining open issues lists, and conducting regular project team meetings.

Stakeholder Collaboration

Beginning shortly after Board approval and leading up to and during the Pilot, Metro will continue ongoing stakeholder collaboration with peer transit agencies, Caltrans, FHWA, CHP, and other stakeholders that provided input for the PIP, including KPIs to measure Pilot success. Collaboration activities will include meetings with stakeholders to review the PIP, establishing regular meetings leading up to and during the Pilot to share information, evaluating how the Pilot is progressing, and making course corrections as needed. PIP and Pilot Budget

As indicated below, the budget for the Pilot is expected to be around \$7.9 million. A description of the cost estimate methodology is provided in Section 11.

TASK	COST
Outreach/Education/Marketing	\$1,895,215
Mitigations/Incentives	\$2,450,910
Operational Elements (i.e., design, signage changes, CSC/BOS, mobile app)	\$2,109,575
Before/After Data Collection and Management	\$1,244,300
TOTAL	\$7,700,000

PIP Implementation Schedule

The PIP implementation schedule includes activities that need to be completed prior to Go Live, as well as activities that will be ongoing during the Pilot's phases and potentially occur post-Pilot. Metro anticipates that it will take approximately eight months to complete all the pre-Go Live activities for Phase 1. Metro anticipates a 14-month operational period for each phase that includes a two-month "grace period" to mitigate potential confusion by customers. The decision to implement Phase 2 will be dependent on the performance evaluation data from Phase 1 as well as the readiness of the mobile app. A high-level PIP implementation schedule is in Section 3 (Figure 11).

Proposed PIP activities are described in Sections 7 (Pilot Implementation Plan Support Strategies), 8 (Comprehensive Outreach and Education Plan), 9 (Operational Considerations, and 10 (Data Collection and Analysis Plan) of this document, and they are further expanded upon in the Implementation Roadmap and Master Schedule in Appendix B.

Next Steps

Metro is prepared to implement the PIP and will begin preparing for Phase 1 upon Board approval. The estimated Timeline of Pilot Implementation Activities is provided below:

Timeline of Pilot Activities

