



The I-710 Major Corridor Study Report to the Public: January 2005

A regional study of interest to the residents of Bell, Bell Gardens, Carson, Commerce, Compton, Cudahy, Downey, East Los Angeles, Huntington Park, Long Beach, Lynwood, Paramount, Maywood, Rancho Dominguez, South Gate, and Vernon

The Challenge

Traffic congestion, truck traffic, traffic safety and diesel emissions are major challenges on and around the I-710 Freeway. This study is the first step in a program that could take 20 years to complete. In this study, transportation professionals worked with community leaders to identify:

- **where** improvements are needed;
- **what** improvements are reasonable;
- **how** the improvements will affect local communities and congestion; and
- **when** to expect these improvements

Improvements to major surface streets, adding lanes to the freeway and freeway interchanges, and improving how the existing streets and freeways operate are all being considered. In addition, such environmental measures as air quality improvements, soundwalls, landscaping, and public art were discussed.

The Need for I-710 Improvements

There were five major goals for the I-710 freeway corridor:

- **Improve Public Safety:** *The I-710 is one of the most unsafe freeways in California. An average of 5 accidents occur each day on the I-710.*
- **Improve Public health:** *Air pollution from I-710 traffic, including diesel particulates from trucks, already poses a health hazard to nearby communities. These conditions are aggravated by trucks idling in traffic congestion. Action is needed to reduce congestion levels on I-710 and encourage the use of cleaner fuels and truck engines.*

- **Improve Mobility:** Daily traffic volumes on the already congested I-710 are forecast to grow from 240,000 in 1999 to over 300,000 by 2025. Daily truck volumes are forecast to grow from 29,000 to 91,000 in the same period. Trade growth and population growth combined with the outdated design of this 1950's era freeway will lead to increasing congestion and delay and decreasing travel speeds. The Study's Oversight Policy Committee (OPC) also notes that the I-710 serves as part of a regional transportation system that needs improvements to all of its components including rail and transit.
- **Reinvigorate Corridor Communities:** Many good manufacturing and aerospace jobs have left this area over the past decades, but international trade is a bright spot in the economy adding much needed business and employment. Infrastructure to accommodate this trade can encourage the growth of local jobs and businesses. At the same time, the corridor program can beautify and improve corridor communities by such strategies as public art, landscaping, soundwalls, graffiti removal, greenbelts, local street improvements, and improved transit service.
- **Sustain Regional, State and National Economies:** The I-710 corridor is not only important to the local economy, but the national economy. The Ports of Long Beach

and Los Angeles carry 35% of all waterborne container cargo in the United States and account for 600,000 regional jobs and several times that in national employment. Trade value, income and tax revenue generated are all counted in the billions of dollars. The nationwide impact of the fall 2002 Port work stoppage clearly demonstrated that this is not only a local issue. International trade is also expected to result in a doubling of *truck traffic by 2025*. This study recognizes that changes are coming and that local leaders want to work together to maximize the benefits and minimize the negatives for local residents.

Study Approach

The Major Corridor Study is the first step in what is likely to be a 15 to 20 year program. The study team compiled five different sets of concepts (termed Alternatives A through E) and studied these for their possible benefits and costs. Their findings were presented for resident comment at a series of Open Houses and community meetings in April and May 2003.

In May, 2003, after receiving the public's input, the Oversight Policy Committee (OPC), comprised of City Council members from the 14 local cities noted above, the County of Los Angeles, the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, Caltrans, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Southern California Association of Governments, took three important steps:

1. The OPC adopted the following guiding principles:
 - Minimize right-of-way acquisitions with the objective being to preserve existing houses, businesses and open space.
 - Identify and minimize both immediate and cumulative exposure to air toxics and pollution with aggressive advocacy and implementation of diesel emissions reduction programs and use of alternative fuels, as well as in project planning and design.
 - Improve safety by considering enhanced truck safety inspection facilities and reduced truck/car conflicts and improved roadway design.

- Relieve congestion and reduce intrusion of traffic into communities and neighborhoods by employing a comprehensive regional systems approach that includes adding needed capacity as well as deploying Transportation Systems Management (TSM) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) technologies to make full use of freeway, roadway, rail and transit systems.
 - Improve public participation in the development and consideration of alternatives and provide technical assistance to facilitate effective public participation.
2. The OPC determined that none of the alternatives as originally developed and analyzed was acceptable to the community. Instead, the OPC directed that a hybrid alternative be developed that combines appropriate elements from all 5 alternatives. These elements must be acceptable to each affected city with the purpose of minimizing right-of-way acquisitions and the objective of preserving existing housing stock, yet work together as an integrated strategy consistent with adopted guiding principles.
 3. The MTA Board and OPC called for another round of community outreach that led to the establishment of Community Advisory Committees at both the corridor level and the community level to advise the OPC on study decisions.

With the help of a professional facilitator and a professional engineer, the community advisory committees formed and met over a period of months. They formulated both a hybrid design concept and extensive recommendations which can be found in the report entitled "Major Opportunity/Strategy Recommendations and Conditions" (known as the Tier 2 Report.)

Study Outcomes

In November, 2004, after hearing community and technical recommendations, the OPC took the following actions:

- Adopted a Locally Preferred Strategy consisting of 10 mixed flow lanes, four dedicated truck lanes, interchange

improvements, arterial improvements, truck inspection facilities and transportation demand and system management techniques for purposes of further study and environmental analysis, and set the goal of seeking funding for an EIR/EIS.

- Requested that the Gateway Cities Council of Governments return with suggested steps for initiating the development and implementation of a corridor level Air Quality Action Plan.
- Forwarded the Tier 2 report in its entirety as pre-scoping guidance for the preparation of the EIR/EIS.
- Requested that GCCOG identify and pursue appropriate opportunities to implement those Tier 2 recommendations that prove to exceed the scope of the I-710 transportation improvement project.
- Requested that MTA and GCCOG develop a process and structure for continuing community participation throughout the environmental analysis.

On January 24, 2005, the MTA Board took the following actions:

- Adopted the Draft Final Report on the I-710 MCS.
- Directed staff to report back on the results of the East Los Angeles mini-study and to incorporate those results into the LPS prior to initiation of environmental work.

- Received the Tier 2 Report which is to be accepted and utilized as pre-scoping guidance for the EIR/EIS.
- Directed staff to work with others to form a multi-jurisdictional entity to coordinate (i) the development of an EIR/EIS funding plan with funding sources from multiple partners, and (ii) identification of strategies for achieving near-term improvements to the corridor's air quality prior to the initiation of consultant selection for an EIR/EIS.

Next Steps

A mini-study in the northern portion of the study area, primarily East Los Angeles and the City of Commerce, is currently underway and will be incorporated into the LPS following community review and subsequent approval by the OPC and the MTA Board. The mini-study is being conducted in cooperation with the I-5 Joint Powers Authority which oversees I-5 planning at the I-710 junction.

The environmental and project development phase of the project may proceed following: (i) approval of the mini-study (ii) approval project management agreement (iii) a funding plan for this phase and (iv) identification of air quality improvement strategies for the corridor.

You may keep informed through I-710 Major Corridor Study page of the Gateway Cities COG website: www.gatewaycog.org