

Notice of Preparation

Notice of Preparation

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies

From: California Department of Transportation,
District 7, Division of Environmental Planning

100 S Main Street, MS 16 A

Los Angeles, CA 90012

(Address)

(Address)

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study (☐ is ☒ is not) attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 45 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Karl Price, Senior Environmental Scientist at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Project Title: SR-14 North Los Angeles County Safety & Mobility Improvements Project

Project Applicant, if any: The Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)

Date: 10/08/2024

Signature: Karl Price

Digitally signed by Karl Price
Date: 2024.10.08 11:05:33 -07'00'

Title: Senior Environmental Scientist

Telephone: 213-266-3822

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, and 15375.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), in cooperation with the North County Transportation Coalition (NCTC), and with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lead agency, is formally initiating studies to enhance safety and multimodal transportation options along State Route 14 (SR-14). The SR-14 corridor between Interstate 5 (I-5) and Pearblossom Highway experiences collision rates higher than the statewide average resulting in unreliable travel times for this lifeline route in Northern Los Angeles County. In addition, there are limited and underutilized multimodal transportation within the corridor. These existing conditions create the need to provide safety and multimodal enhancements in the area.

Caltrans will prepare an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) for the proposed project which would construct improvements that may include but are not limited to, widening to accommodate a standard lane at existing lane drop locations, bus rapid transit (BRT) dedicated bus lanes, Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) components, removal of lanes at lane drop locations, other safety enhancements, truck climbing and descending lanes, drainage improvements, and wildlife/habitat connectivity enhancements. These improvements and other reasonable alternatives brought forward during the public scoping period will be assessed to determine the Build Alternative(s) to be analyzed in the EIR/EA.

The purpose of the project is to enhance safety consistent with Statewide Vision Zero, enhance multimodal transportation options, reduce diversion onto parallel routes, and provide equitable multimodal components, while minimizing impacts to the community and the environment within the SR-14 corridor.

Caltrans will be the lead agency for the Proposed Project under CEQA and NEPA as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

The project corridor traverses the City of Santa Clarita and unincorporated Los Angeles County. This corridor also provides vital connections to surrounding areas, including the Los Angeles Central Business District to the south, the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster to the northeast, and Kern County and the Mojave Desert to the north.

The project corridor is also considered in three segments (Figure 1). Segment 1 is approximately 6.5 miles within the City of Santa Clarita from Newhall Avenue to Golden Valley Road in the northbound direction and from Via Princessa to Newhall Avenue in the southbound direction. Segment 2 is approximately 8.9 miles in the City of Santa Clarita and unincorporated Los Angeles County from Agua Dulce Canyon Road to Sand Canyon Road in the southbound direction and from Sand Canyon Road to Soledad Canyon Road in the northbound direction. Segment 3 is approximately 21.1 miles in unincorporated Los Angeles County from Pearblossom Highway to Escondido Canyon Road in the southbound direction and from Puritan Mine Road to Pearblossom Highway in the northbound direction.

ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives currently under consideration are described below.

No Build

The No Build Alternative does not include any enhancements to the SR-14 corridor. This alternative would maintain the configuration of the existing freeway, ramps, and local intersections within the project limits.

Build Alternatives

The Build Alternatives may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Lane Gap Closure
 - This alternative would construct an additional general-purpose lane, additional auxiliary lanes, or an additional HOV lane on SR-14 to remove existing lane drops within the corridor. This alternative would also consider enhancements to ramp geometry and new collector-distributor ramps.
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
 - This alternative would improve SR-14 to prioritize commuter bus operations via incorporation of a hard shoulder running or a new inside lane restricted to buses only. Hard shoulder running is a strategy in which buses would be permitted to travel on the shoulders of SR-14 during peak periods. A new inside lane would widen and restripe the entire corridor within the project limits.
- TSM/TDM
 - This alternative would address the limited and underutilized multimodal options within the corridor. TSM/TDM components may include but are not limited to closed circuit televisions, ramp metering systems, electric vehicle charging stations, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity improvements, first/last mile connectivity improvements near Metrolink stations, bus shelter enhancements, and ADA accessibility improvements.
- Removal of a General Purpose Lane
 - This alternative would remove a general-purpose lane or auxiliary lane at existing mainline lane drop locations within the project segments and reduce the lane configuration to two continuous GP lanes. This alternative would reduce the number of mandatory lane changes.
- Safety Enhancements
 - This alternative would address nonstandard design elements at specific locations within the project corridor. Nonstandard design elements within the project corridor include horizontal sight distance, shoulder widths, weaving distances, and location of lane drops. This alternative would identify specific design elements in certain locations that, if improved, would likely reduce the collision rates.
- Truck Climbing/Descending Lanes
 - This alternative would include truck climbing or descending lanes in locations within the corridor that have a grade steeper than 2 percent in order to remove trucks from the general-purpose lanes and allow mainline traffic to continue at free-flow speeds. Truck climbing and decelerating lanes are proposed to some of the discretionary lane changes when traffic passes slower moving trucks.

Other improvements that may be included, in addition to the alternatives listed above, or other alternatives identified during scoping for the project, may include construction of retaining and sound walls, utility improvements, drainage improvements, and wildlife/habitat connectivity enhancements.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Various environmental and community resources are known to exist within the limits of the study area and will be studied in the EIR/EA. Environmental effects anticipated for study include, but are not limited to: Land Use, Growth, Community Impacts, Utilities and Emergency Services, Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), Visual/Aesthetics, Cultural Resources/Tribal Cultural Resources, Farmlands/Timberlands, Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff, Hydrology and Floodplains,

Geology/Soils/Seismicity/Topography, Paleontology, Hazardous Waste/Materials, Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change, Noise, Wildfire, Energy, Biological Environment, Cumulative Impacts and measures to minimize/mitigate any impacts will be identified and evaluated.

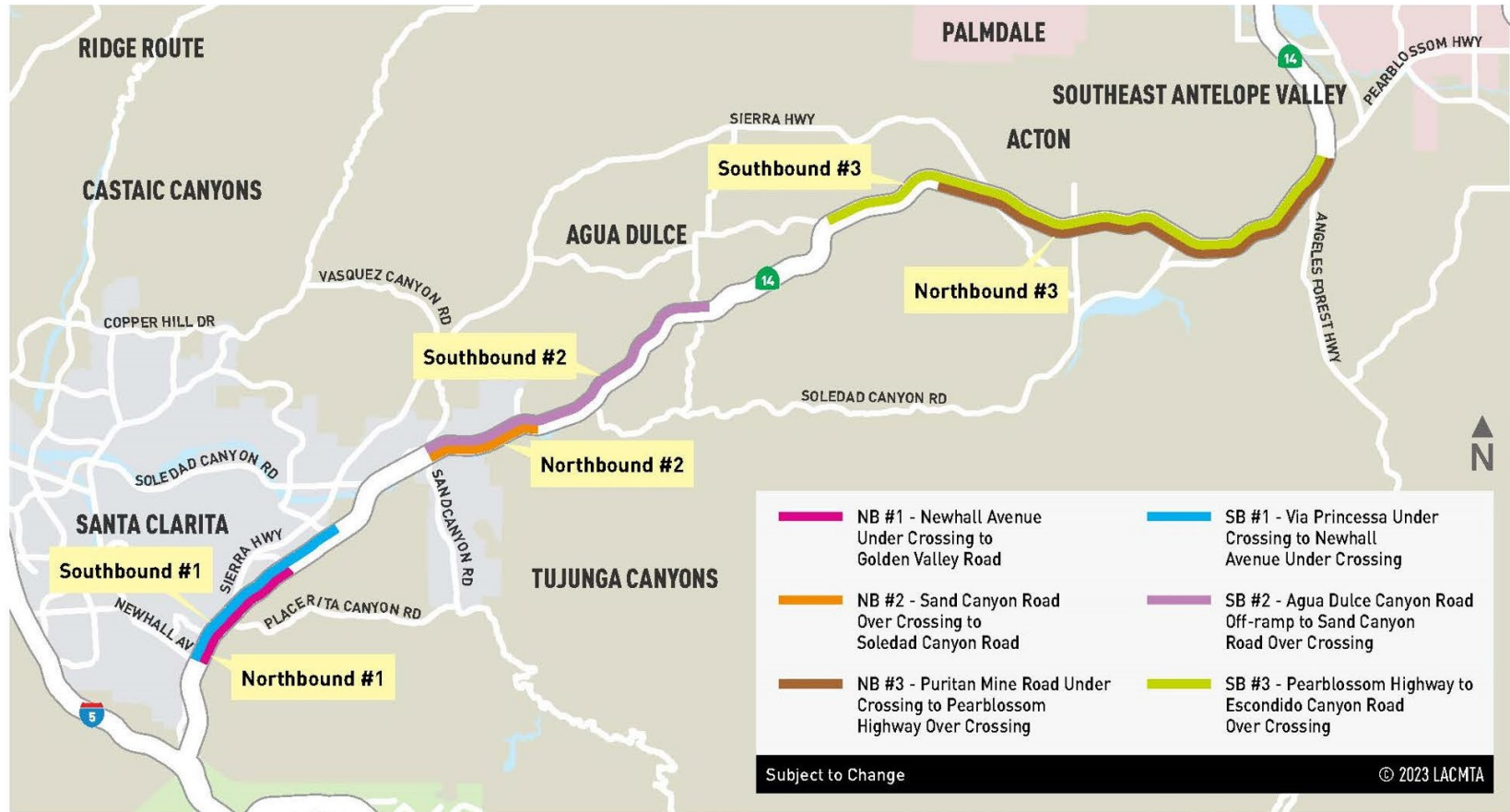
PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS:

The formal scoping period will begin on October 21, 2024 and will close on December 4, 2024. Metro and Caltrans will be holding public scoping meetings to provide an overview of the project, summary of the environmental process and issues addressed, and receive input regarding environmental issues and the suggested scope and content of the EIR/EA. The in-person scoping meetings will be held on:

- Public Scoping Meeting #1 – November 14, 2024, 6-8pm
Location: Lancaster City Hall – City Council Chambers 44933 Fern Avenue, Lancaster, CA 93534
- Public Scoping Meeting #2 – November 16, 2024, 10am-12pm
Location: The Center on Centre Point Pkwy – Cedar Hall 20880 Centre Pointe Pkwy, Santa Clarita, CA 91350
- Public Scoping Meeting #3 – November 19, 2024, 6-8pm
Location: Palmdale Oasis Park Recreation Center 3850 East Ave S, Palmdale, CA 93550

The link to a recording of one of the public scoping meetings, as well as further information, can be found on the project website at: [Metro.net/SR14improvements](https://metro.net/SR14improvements). Scoping comments can be submitted via email, online via comment form, by phone, or regular mail. Email comments to SR14@metro.net. Submit comments online at [Metro.net/SR14improvements](https://metro.net/SR14improvements). Submit comments via phone at 213-922-4222. Mail comments to: Karl Price, Senior Environmental Scientist, Caltrans District 7, Division of Environmental Planning, 100 S. Main St., MS 16A, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Scoping comments must be submitted by December 4, 2024.

Figure 1. Project Study Area



Note: The segments shown are as identified in the PSR-PDS (EA 37240K) and represent the approximate limits of improvements for some alternatives. Other alternatives are not divided into segments and encompass the entire project limits from Newhall Avenue to Pearblossom Highway.