Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

I-580 Westbound Improvement Project (EA 3X790)

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 4 is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) consistent with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals of this intent, and request input on the scope and content of the proposed EIR.

Caltrans, in cooperation with the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA), is proposing the Interstate 580 (I-580) Westbound Improvement Project (project) to balance transportation, public access, and safety needs on the upper (westbound) deck of the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge. The project limits are on I-580 from post mile (PM) 6.0 to PM 7.8 in Marin County, and PM 0.0 to PM 3.5 in Contra Costa County. The project limits are shown in Figure 1, below.

Scoping Period for Receipt of Comments

Comments must be received by 5:00 PM on December 4, 2026. Written comments may be submitted at the public scoping meetings (described below), or by email, the project website, or postal mail via the following methods:

- Email: 580RSRBridgeWIP@dot.ca.gov
- Project website: https://us.planengage.com/RSRB-WIP
- Postal mail:

  Caltrans District 4
  Attn: Thomas Rosevear
  P.O. Box 23660, MS 8B
  Oakland, CA 94623-0660

Scoping Meetings

Two in-person scoping meetings will be held at the following locations:

Monday, November 16, 2026, 5:30–6:30 PM
Richmond Memorial Convention Center, Terrace Rooms
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Tuesday, November 17, 2026, 5:30–6:30 PM
Marin Center, Manzanita Room
10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA 94903

Additionally, a virtual scoping meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 18, 2026, from 5:30 to 6:30 PM. The meeting link will be available at: planengage.com/RSRB-WIP.

During the scoping meetings, attendees can ask questions about the project. However, to be considered by Caltrans, all scoping comments must be submitted in writing at the meetings, by email, via the project website, via the public engagement portal, or via postal mail. Attendance at the scoping meetings is not required to submit comments.

Spanish interpretation will be available at each meeting.

Contáctenos a través de uno de los canales de comunicación enumerados anteriormente para obtener una copia traducida de este aviso.

For other language translation, special seating accommodation, or other assistance at the public scoping meetings, please contact the Caltrans Accessibility Helpdesk at (916) 654-2852 at least three days before the meeting.

Please visit https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-4/d4-projects/d4-richmond-san-rafael-bridge/projects for more information.

Project Description

The Richmond–San Rafael Bridge provides a key transportation link between Contra Costa and Marin counties. The upper (westbound) deck contains two general-purpose lanes, which are lanes that are exclusively for motor vehicle use. In November 2019, Caltrans converted the right shoulder along the north side of the upper deck to a 10-foot-wide, bi-directional multi-use path. The multi-use path is separated from the general-purpose lanes by a movable concrete barrier system. The multi-use path is part of a roughly 6-mile section of the San Francisco Bay Trail that extends from Castro Street in Richmond to East Francisco Boulevard in San Rafael.

The multi-use path was created to study the feasibility of full-time bicycle and pedestrian access on the bridge as part of a pilot (temporary) project that began in 2018. This pilot project was originally designed to end in 2024. The pilot project also included the implementation of a peak-period third eastbound lane on the lower deck of the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge. As part of the pilot project, Caltrans collected data about traffic operations and incidents on the upper deck, including information on use of the multi-use path.

In October 2025, based on traffic and usage data, as well as public concerns about the pilot project, the BATA and Caltrans modified the operating days and hours of the multi-use path. The multi-use path is currently open from Thursdays at 2 PM through Sundays at 11 PM. From Sundays at 11 PM until Thursdays at 2 PM, the multi-use path is closed, the movable barrier is shifted to the northern edge of the bridge, and the right shoulder is available for emergency use by automobiles only. A free shuttle service is available to transport cyclists and pedestrians across the bridge when the multi-use path is closed. The modified pilot project was extended to 2029 so that Caltrans could study the potential implementation of the I-580 Westbound Improvement Project, a proposal to provide a part-time high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane as a third lane along with other alternatives to balance transportation, public access, and safety needs on the upper deck of the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge.

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to:

- Relieve westbound congestion on the I-580 Richmond–San Rafael Bridge; and
- Maximize the availability, safety, connectivity, and convenience for multi-modal users across the bridge.

Need

The project is needed to:

- Address the existing heavy congestion at peak morning travel times for westbound commuters;
- Improve emergency access and response; and
- Meet Caltrans, State, and regional goals and policies for public access by providing and encouraging use of multi-modal transportation opportunities across the bridge.

Caltrans has developed eight build alternatives that use different approaches to address traffic operations, emergency access, and multi-modal access. These alternatives, along with the No Build Alternative, will be studied in the EIR and are described further below. The build alternatives are grouped into five general categories:

- Keep Today's Operating Pattern
- Add a Peak-Hour Lane
- Provide a Full-Time Multi-use Path
- Provide a Full-Time Shoulder Without a Multi-Use Path
- Provide a Full-Time Third Lane Without a Multi-Use Path

The project limits shown in Figure 1 apply to each of these alternatives. Illustrations are provided following each alternative description below.

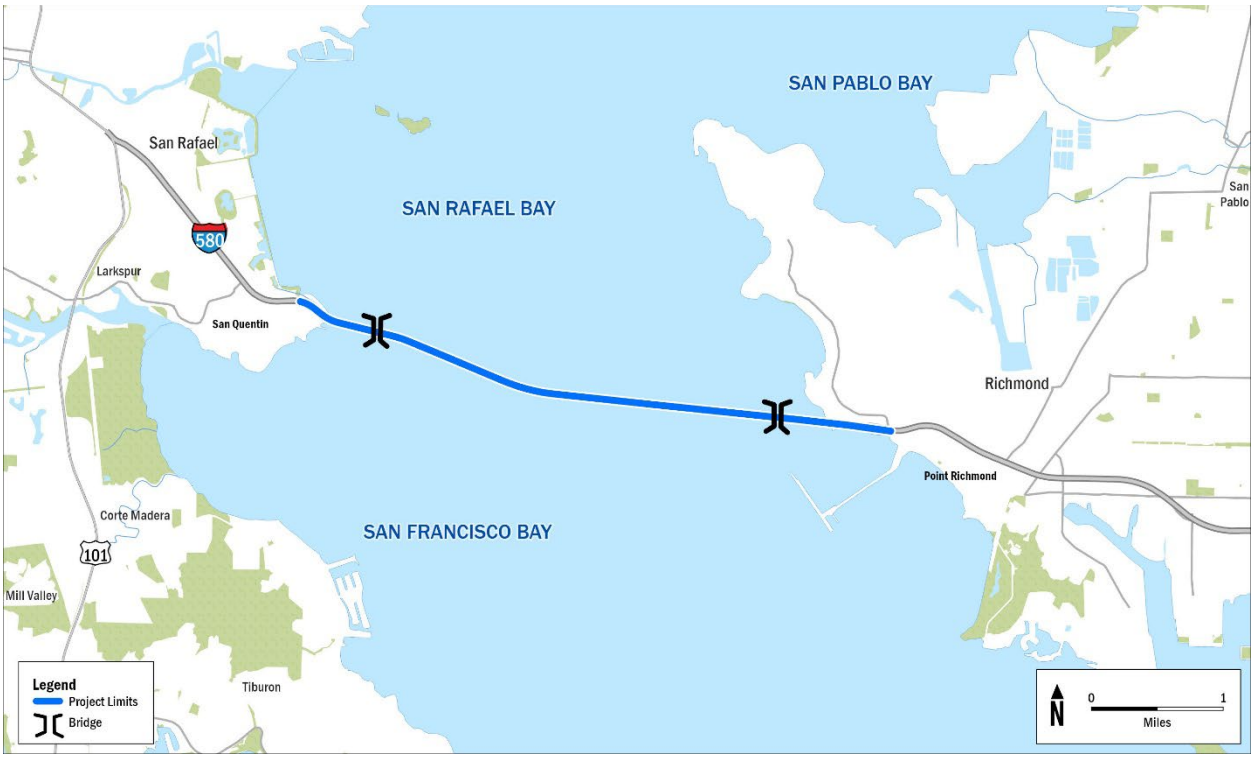

Figure 1. I-580 Westbound Improvement Project Limits

No Build Alternative.

With the No Build Alternative, the pilot project on the upper deck of the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge, as modified in October 2025, would remain in place until June 2029. There would continue to be two 12-foot-wide general-purpose lanes at all times, and the existing 1.5-foot-wide movable barrier would be positioned to provide either a right shoulder or a bi-directional multi-use path, depending on the day and time. From Sunday at 11 PM through Thursday at 2 PM, a 10-foot-wide right shoulder would be provided for emergency use, and a bike shuttle would be provided during designated hours (Figure 2). After 2 PM each Thursday, the movable barrier would be positioned to create a 10-foot-wide multi-use path, which would remain in place until approximately 11 PM each Sunday (Figure 3).

After June 2029, the upper bridge deck would revert back to two full-time general-purpose lanes and a full-time bi-directional multi-use path, under the terms of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) permit for the modified pilot project. This condition would be required unless BCDC approves an alternative long-term public access configuration for the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge. If Caltrans and BATA decide not to move forward with the I-580 Westbound Improvement Project, Caltrans

would be required to request an amendment to the BCDC permit for a long-term public access proposal consistent with the findings of the modified pilot studies.

The No Build Alternative would not address morning traffic congestion.

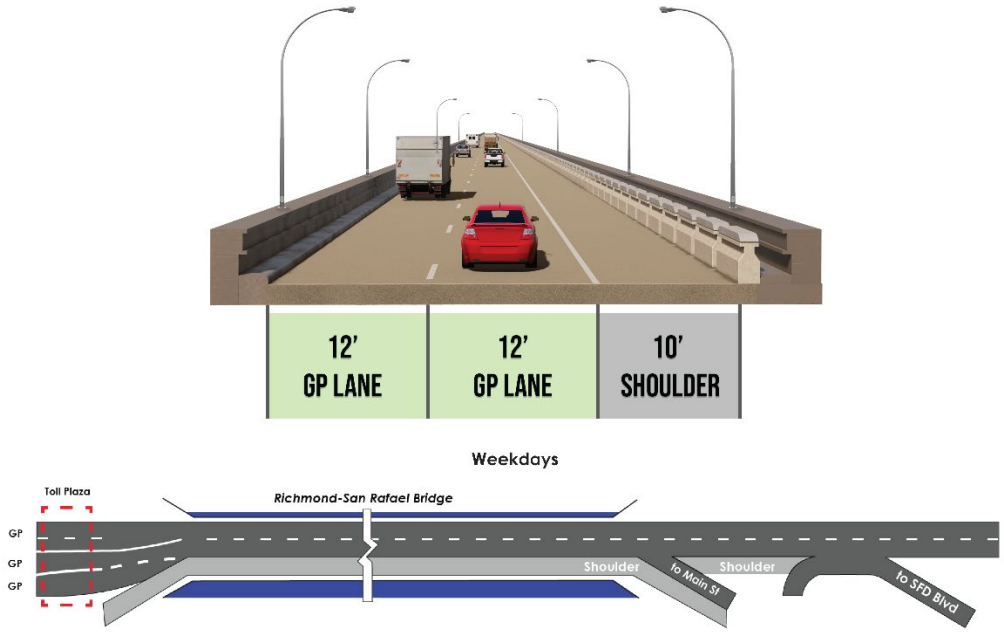

Figure 2. No Build Alternative: Weekdays

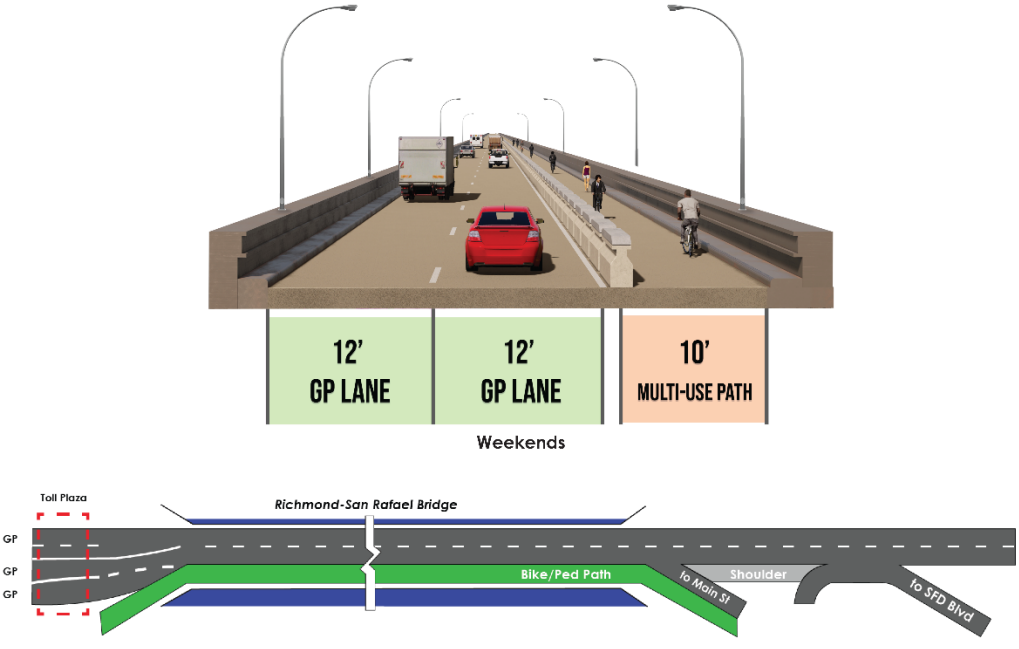

Figure 3. No Build Alternative: Weekends

Keep Today's Operating Pattern

Build Alternative 6: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time shoulder/part-time multi-use path.

Alternative 6 would provide permanent implementation of the existing upper Richmond–San Rafael Bridge deck configuration. This alternative would consist of two 12-foot-wide general-purpose lanes at all times, and the existing 1.5-foot-wide movable barrier would be positioned to provide either a right shoulder or a bi-directional multi-use path, depending on the day and time. From Sunday at 11 PM through Thursday at 2 PM, a 10-foot-wide right shoulder would be provided for emergency use, and a bike shuttle would be provided during designated hours (Figure 4). After 2 PM each Thursday, the movable barrier would be positioned to create a 10-foot-wide multi-use path, which would remain in place until approximately 11 PM each Sunday (Figure 5).

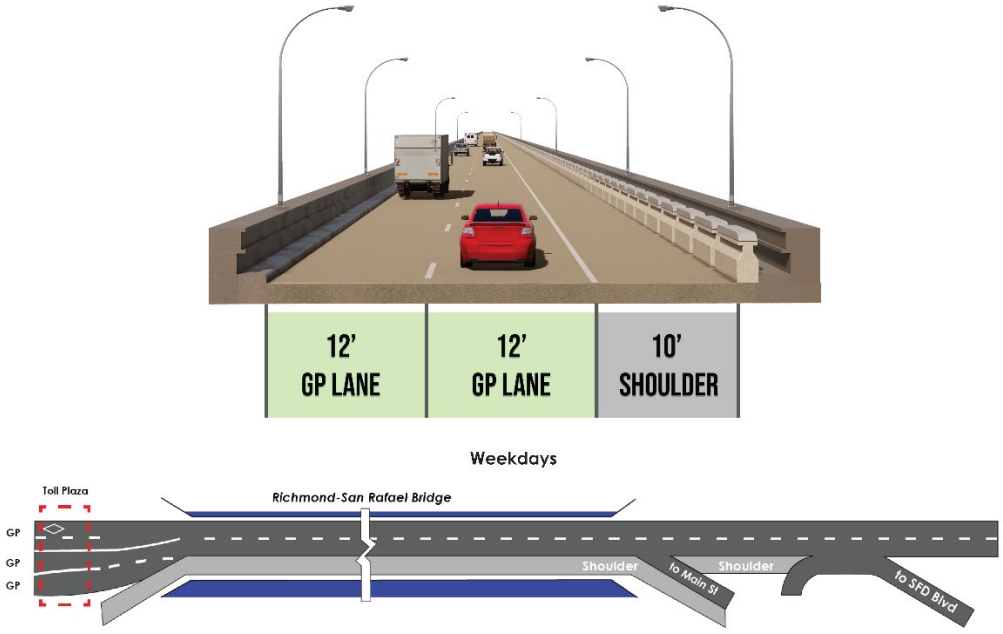

Figure 4. Alternative 6: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time shoulder/part-time multi-use path, weekdays

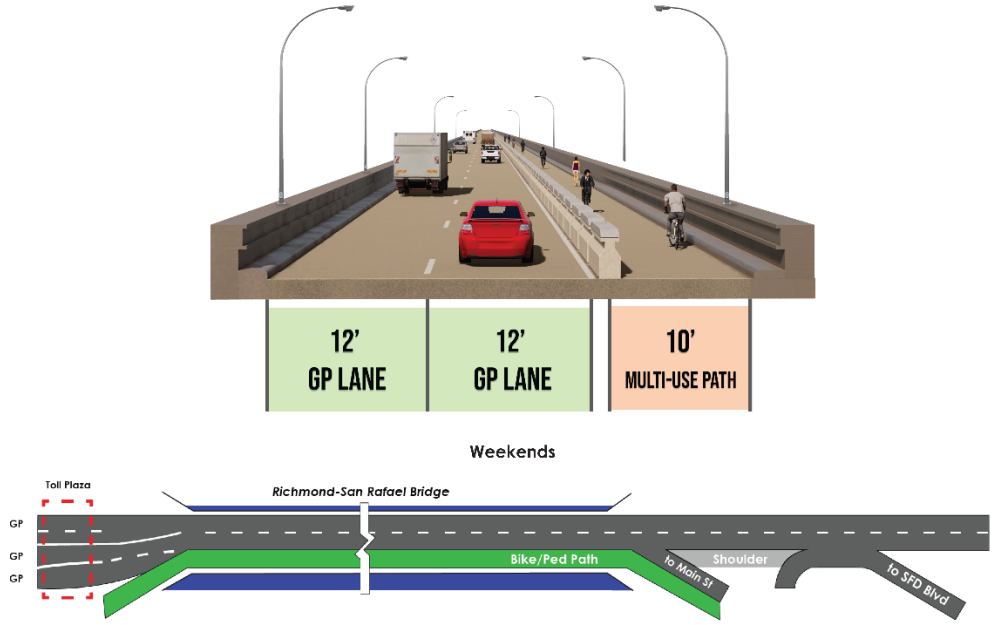

Figure 5. Alternative 6: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time shoulder/part-time multi-use path, weekends

Add a Peak-Hour Lane

Build Alternative 3: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time HOV lane/part-time multi-use path.

Alternative 3 would provide a three-lane configuration along westbound I-580 during weekdays and a two-lane configuration with a multi-use path on weekends. The movable barrier would be adjusted weekly, the pavement would be restriped, and lane use signs would be placed along the bridge to communicate lane control.

Each Monday through Friday, the movable barrier would be shifted to the right edge of the bridge to accommodate two general-purpose lanes and a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane. Each lane would be 11 to 12.5 feet wide (Figure 6). The HOV lane would operate during weekday AM and PM peak periods (5 AM–10 AM and 3 PM–7 PM, or as determined by Caltrans and BATA). Occupancy requirements are anticipated to be two or more (2+). The HOV lane would end approximately 0.5 mile before the west end of the bridge, where the lane would transition into a GP lane and the two rightmost general-purpose lanes would merge into a single lane.

Outside of weekday HOV hours of operation, two 11-foot-wide general-purpose lanes and a 12.5-foot-wide right shoulder would be provided. The shoulder would only be accessible to emergency vehicles (Figure 7).

On weekends, the movable barrier would be shifted to create a 10-foot-wide multi-use path in place of the shoulder. Two general-purpose lanes of 11 feet in width and a 2.5-foot-wide shoulder would be provided (Figure 8).

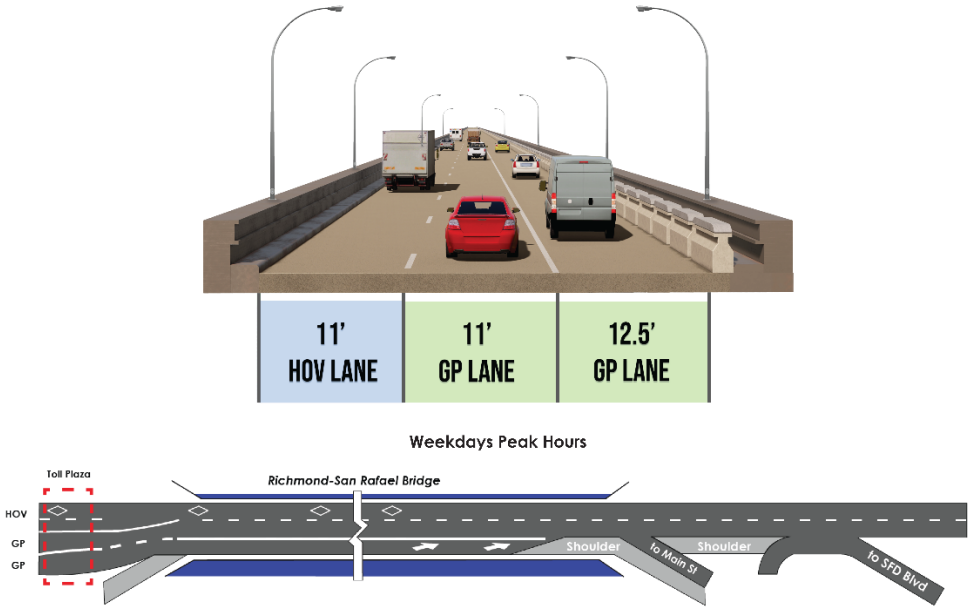

Figure 6. Alternative 3: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time HOV lane/part-time multi-use path, weekday peak hours

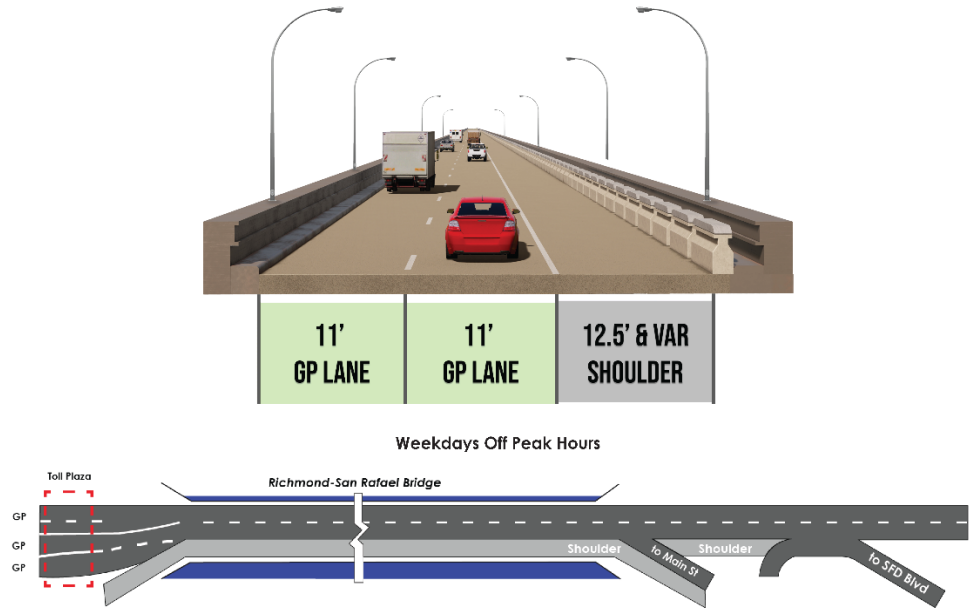

Figure 7. Alternative 3: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time HOV lane/part-time multi-use path, weekday off-peak hours

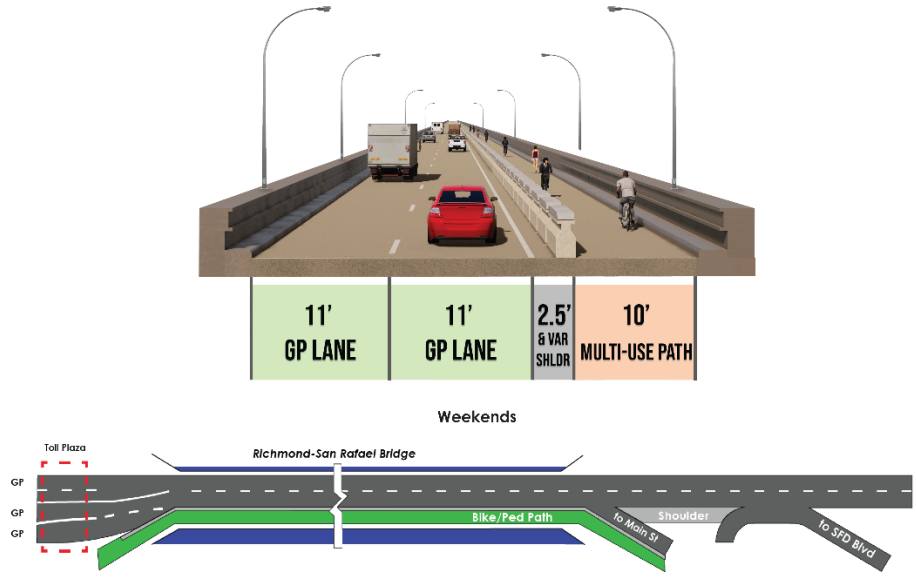

Figure 8. Alternative 3: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time HOV lane/part-time multi-use path, weekends

Build Alternative 7: Two general-purpose lanes, and a third part-time general-purpose lane/part-time shoulder.

Alternative 7 would provide two full-time, 11-foot-wide general-purpose lanes and a third 12-foot-wide general-purpose lane with a 2-foot-wide shoulder during weekday peak hours (5:00 AM–10 AM and 3 PM–7 PM, or as determined by Caltrans and BATA) (Figure 9). The third lane would operate as a 14-foot-wide shoulder at all other times (Figure 10). Lane use signs would be installed to show when the third lane is in operation. With this alternative, the upper (westbound) bridge deck operations would match those of the lower (eastbound) bridge deck. No multi-use path would be provided.

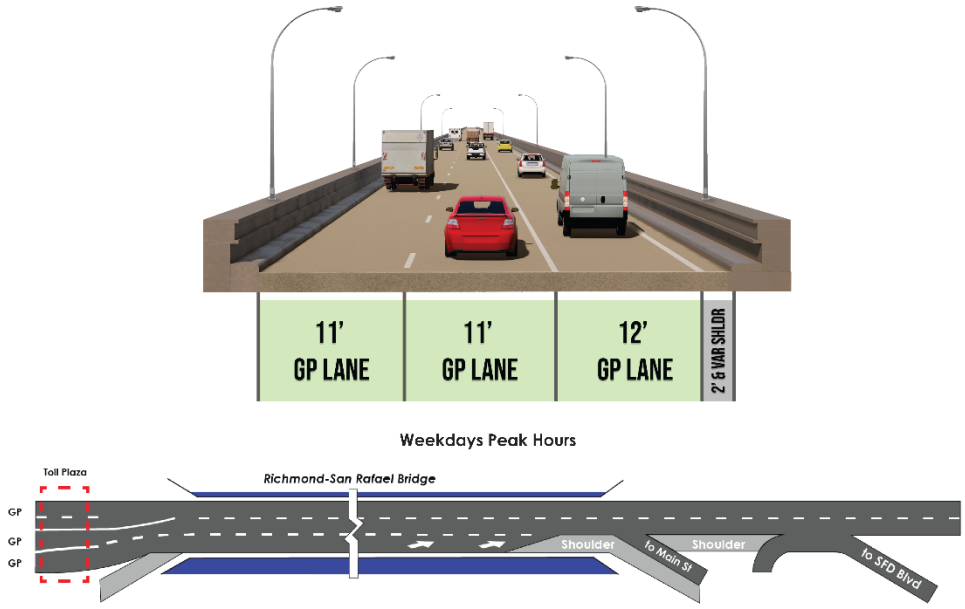

Figure 9. Alternative 7: Two general-purpose lanes, and a third part-time general-purpose lane/part-time shoulder, weekday peak hours

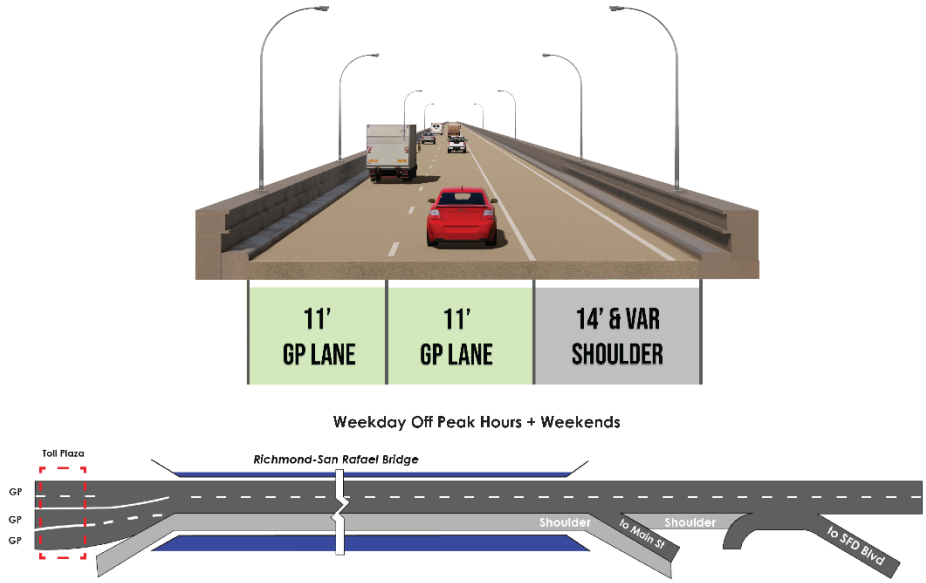

Figure 10. Alternative 7: Two general-purpose lanes, and a third part-time general-purpose lane/part-time shoulder, weekday off-peak hours and weekends

Build Alternative 8: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time HOV lane/part-time shoulder.

Alternative 8 would provide two full-time, 11-to-12-foot-wide general-purpose lanes and a part-time 11-foot-wide HOV lane (Figure 11). As with Alternative 3, the HOV lane would operate during weekday AM and PM peak periods (5 AM–10 AM and 3 PM–7 PM, or as determined by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission [MTC] and BATA). The HOV occupancy requirements are anticipated to be two or more (2+) to match the planned HOV lane between Regatta Boulevard in Richmond and the existing Richmond toll plaza. The HOV lane would end approximately 0.5 mile before the west end of the bridge, where the HOV lane would transition into a general-purpose lane and the two rightmost general-purpose lanes would merge into a single lane.

Outside of weekday HOV hours of operation, two general-purpose lanes and a right shoulder of approximately 14 feet would be provided (Figure 12). The shoulder would only be accessible to emergency vehicles. No multi-use path would be provided.

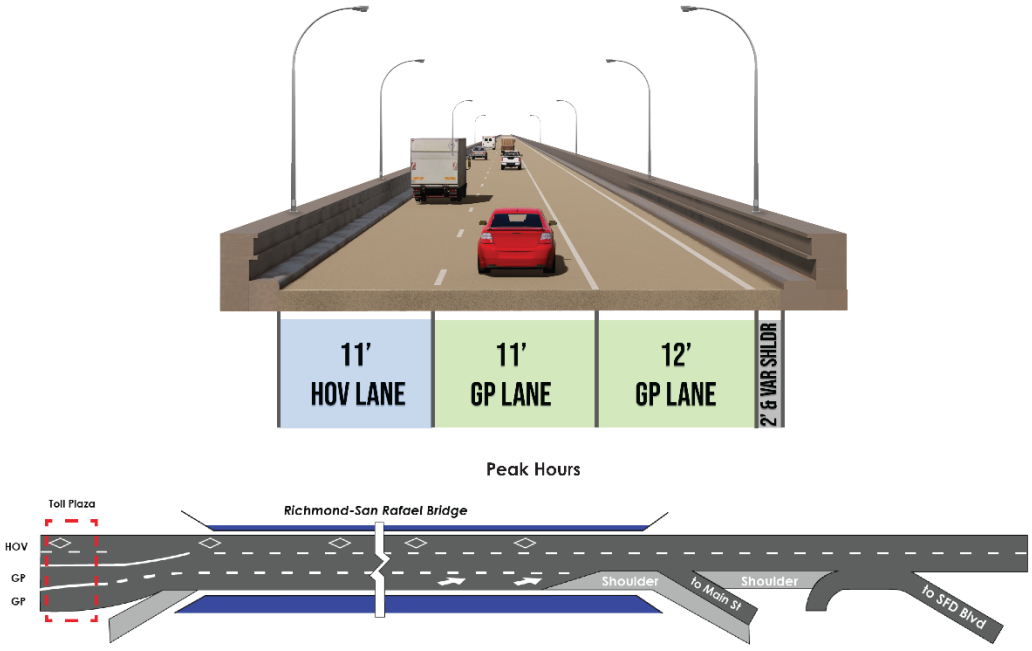

Figure 11. Alternative 8: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time HOV lane/part-time shoulder, weekday peak hours

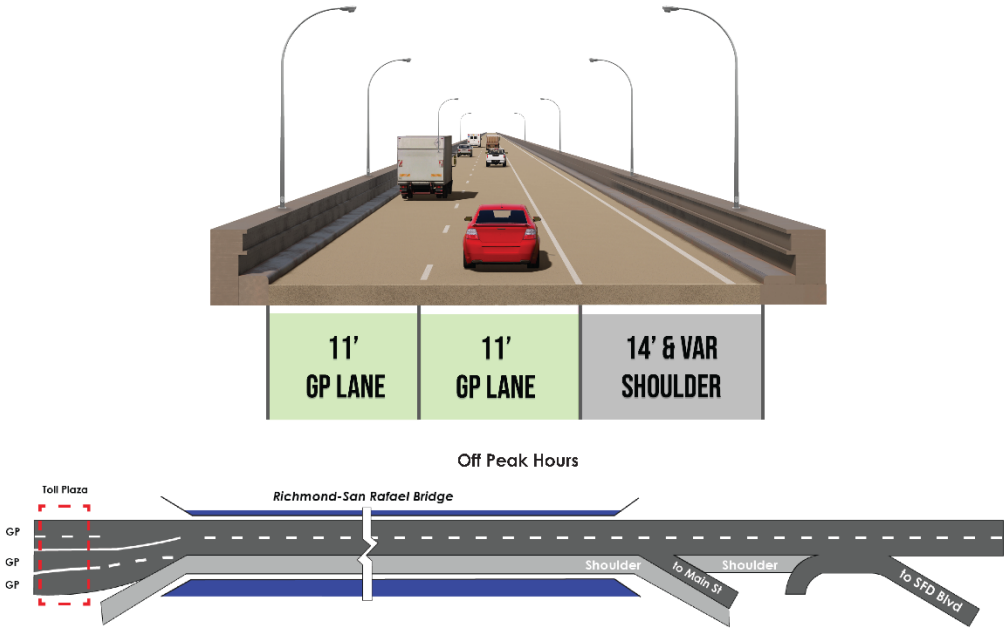

Figure 12. Alternative 8: Two general-purpose lanes, part-time HOV lane/part-time shoulder, weekday off-peak hours and weekends

Provide a Full-Time Multi-Use Path

Build Alternative 3X: Two general-purpose lanes, full-time multi-use path and shoulder.

Alternative 3X would provide two westbound, 11-foot-wide general-purpose lanes and a full-time multi-use path and shoulder (Figure 13). The movable barrier would be placed into a permanently fixed position to provide a 4.5-foot shoulder between the general-purpose lanes and the barrier, and an 8-foot multi-use path.

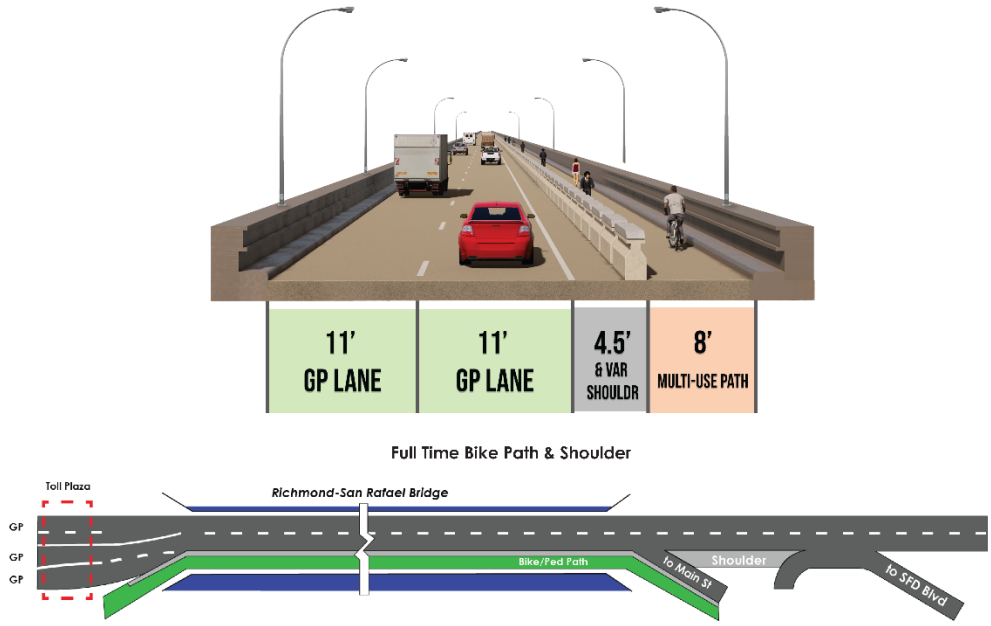

Figure 13. Alternative 3X: Two general-purpose lanes, full-time multi-use path and shoulder

Build Alternative 5: Two general-purpose lanes, full-time multi-use path.
Alternative 5 would provide two westbound, 11-foot-wide general-purpose lanes and a full-time multi-use path. The movable barrier would be placed into a permanently fixed position to provide a 10-foot-wide multi-use path that would remain open at all times (Figure 14). A shoulder of approximately 2 feet would be provided between the general-purpose lanes and the barrier. This alternative would have a narrower shoulder and a wider multi-use path than Alternative 3X. This alternative would have the same upper deck configuration that was in place from November 2019 to October 2025.

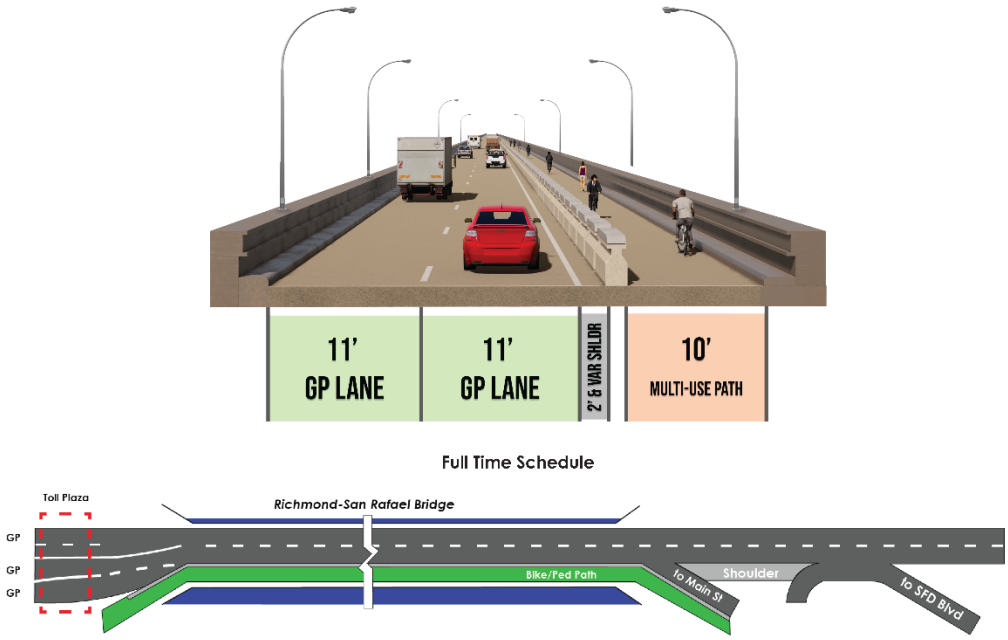

Figure 14. Alternative 5: Two general-purpose lanes, full-time multi-use path

Provide a Full-Time Shoulder Without a Multi-Use Path

Build Alternative 10: Two general-purpose lanes, full-time shoulder.
Alternative 10 would provide two westbound, 11-foot-wide general-purpose lanes and a full-time right shoulder of approximately 14 feet in width, depending on location (Figure 16). No multi-use path would be provided. This configuration would be the same as the upper deck before implementation of the original pilot project in November 2019.

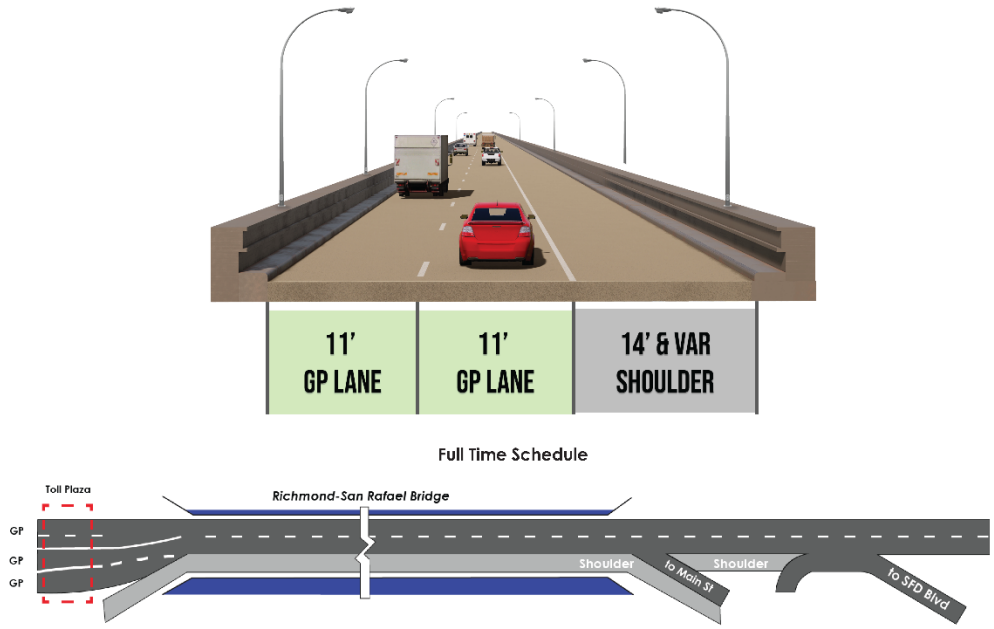

Figure 15. Alternative 10: Two Full-Time General-Purpose Lanes and Shoulder, No Multi-Use Path

Provide a Full-Time Third Lane Without a Multi-Use Path

Build Alternative 9: Three general-purpose lanes.

Alternative 9 would provide three full-time, 11-foot-wide general-purpose lanes and a 3-foot-wide right shoulder (Figure 15). No multi-use path would be provided. This alternative would be evaluated to allow Caltrans to consider a range of scenarios including emergency evacuation situations. A comprehensive study of the potential traffic impacts of providing three full-time lanes compared to alternatives that do not provide a third full-time general-purpose lane would also be included.

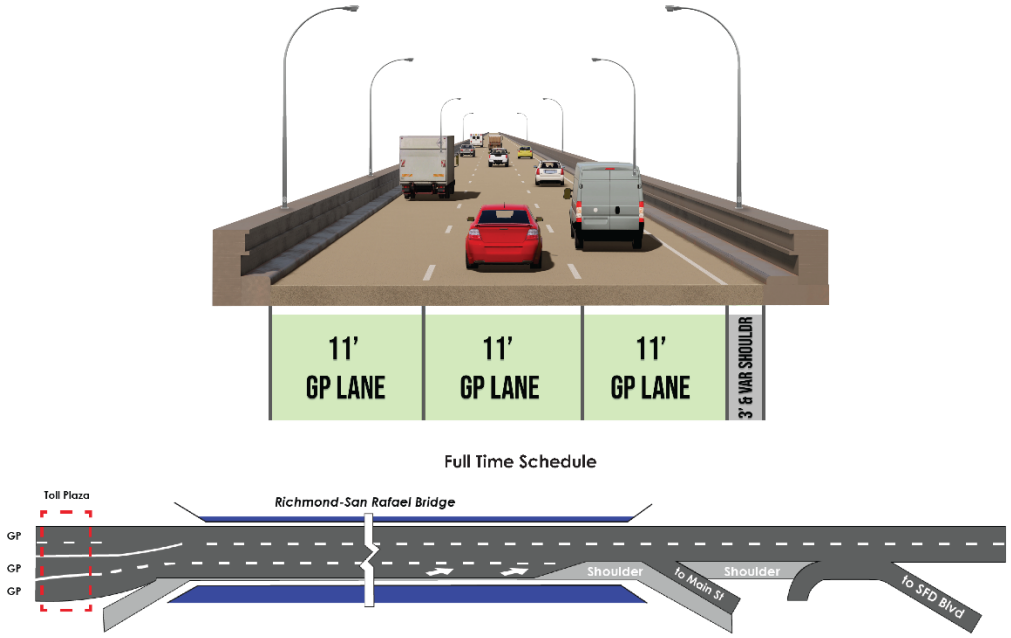

Figure 16. Alternative 9: Three Full-Time General-Purpose Lanes, No Multi-Use Path

Potential Environmental Effects/Topics to Be Studied

Environmental and community resources are present in the project area, and the potential effects to these resources will be studied in the EIR. Based on preliminary information, Caltrans identified the following CEQA subject areas for analysis in the EIR. The scope of environmental analysis could be modified based on input from this NOP and project scoping.

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Population and Housing

- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation

What Comes Next

Comments received the public scoping period will help inform the scope of the environmental analysis and development of the Draft EIR.

Additional public meetings and opportunities to participate will take place when the Draft EIR is circulated for public review, anticipated in early 2028.

A preferred alternative will be identified after Draft EIR circulation and consideration of public and agency comments.