



## I-680 Express Lanes from SR 84 to Alcosta Boulevard Virtual Open House Q&A Summary

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in an effort to protect public health, the open house on June 18, 2020, was held virtually. The event began with a [presentation](#) providing an overview of the project and the environmental process, followed by a question and answer session where attendees were able to submit questions via online chat. The questions received during the meeting are listed below, along with a summary of the answers from the project team.*

### **Questions from Virtual Open House Attendees**

**Question 1:** "It wasn't clear what sound impacts were found. Was there a need for new sound walls? Where are the 'replaced' sound walls?"

**Answer 1:** The noise study conducted for the project considered existing and future (year 2045) noise levels for 58 locations (also known as receptors), as well as 19 new and existing sound walls. To find specific noise study results for each location, go to the project website ([www.alamedactc.org/680gapclosure](http://www.alamedactc.org/680gapclosure)), look under the "Public Meeting" tab, and under "Meeting Materials" you'll see an item called "[Noise Receptor Locations and Sound Walls Studied](#)." That exhibit shows all locations where noise was studied along the project corridor, including receptor locations and sound walls. You can look at the figure to find your location and the closest receptor, which is indicated by a yellow square. To see the detailed results for your closest receptor location, see the [Draft Environmental Document](#), Section 2.2.6.4. The results show whether the closest sound wall met the criteria for being reassessed for effectiveness, or if a new sound wall was analyzed. There are three locations where existing sound walls appear to meet the preliminary criteria for replacement: north of Stoneridge Drive and west of I-680 (increase existing wall height from 8 to 10 feet); and north of Amador Valley Boulevard, east and west of I-680 (which may need to be relocated due to freeway widening).

**Question 2:** "We live at Elmwood Circle, Pleasanton. We have lived at this location for 35 years. Our original sound wall height is about 4.5 feet tall (low). Why are sound walls higher everywhere but at Elmwood Circle? Is there any consideration of raising the sound wall adjacent to our neighborhood? Thank you."

**Answer 2:** The wall height may have been determined by the developer at the time the development was built. You can find your location on the project website [noise receptor map](#), and the [Draft Environmental Document](#) Noise Section (Section 2.2.6.4) provides a detailed explanation of the basis for determining which sound walls are eligible for replacement. Additionally, the design is not finalized, and concerned individuals are encouraged to submit comments through email or postal mail, which will receive a written response in the Final Environmental Document.

**Question 3:** “There is a visual impact listed that says lighting? Is that construction lighting?”

**Answer 3:** Lighting would be used during construction, and Caltrans has standard procedures to minimize the impacts of nighttime construction lighting on adjacent residents. Typically, in express lanes projects, some highway lighting is added for safety purposes, especially in areas where people change lanes. For express lanes, there are standard spacings and locations for new highway lighting, and the Variable Toll Message Signs (VTMS) that will be in the median will also have lighting. The final locations of new lighting will be determined during the detailed design phase.

**Question 4:** “My home backs up to 680. Will this project address the current noise pollution and increase in noise pollution at the 680 overpass at Amador Valley Road in Dublin? Something similar to the plexi glass soundwalls on 580 Oakland near exit 30?”

**Answer 4:** Existing and future noise levels with and without the project were studied in the area of Amador Valley Road. Please refer to the [noise receptor map](#) on the project web page, under the Public Meetings tab. You can correlate your location to the discussion of noise findings in the [Draft Environmental Document](#) Noise Section (Section 2.2.6.4), which will show you the findings for the sound wall adjacent to your location. Additionally, you may submit a comment, which will be responded to in the Final Environmental Document. We have not looked at plexiglass sound walls for this project. Typically, Caltrans projects use masonry sound walls, which provide the best noise attenuation.

**Question 5:** “Where can I find Express Lanes information?”

**Answer 5:** The Public Meetings tab on the [project website](#) provides links to past presentations as well as meeting materials. There is a [Frequently Asked Questions document](#) on this page that provides the project email address, how to comment, and other key information. The Fact Sheet tab contains a high-level

overview of the project. The Resources tab provides a link to the Draft Environmental Document, as well as instructions for submitting comments.

**Question 6:** “The first slide that was shown, Amador Valley, is the orange line where the freeway is being widened?” *[Note: The question is in reference to the [Preliminary Design Exhibits](#) on the project web page, Conceptual Layout 4 of 4.]*

**Answer 6:** The orange line shows the Caltrans right-of-way. It does not represent widening. The light blue line represents where the Amador Valley bridge over I-680 is proposed to be widened on the northbound (east) side. Other than that, there is no outside freeway widening in this area; the express lanes will use existing Caltrans right-of-way in the median area along the inside shoulders.

## **Additional Discussion Topics**

**Will the project convert existing lanes into HOV/express lanes?** The project will add a new fourth lane in each direction of I-680 (both the northbound and southbound directions). The new lanes will be the HOV/express lanes. Existing general purpose lanes will remain.

**Will Clean Air Vehicles congest the HOV/express lanes?** Regionally, express lane operators in the Bay Area are moving toward charging a 50% express lane toll on solo drivers of Clean Air Vehicles, which would be the case for this project area.

**Will the express lanes get too crowded?** There is a federal law, Title 23 Section 166 of the United States Code, that requires HOV/express lanes to maintain an average operating speed of 45 miles per hour or greater for 90% of the time over a consecutive 180-day period. If the minimum operating speed is not met, the lane operator has several options to manage lane occupancy. If the lanes become too congested, the tolls will increase to discourage solo drivers from using the lanes. Additionally, the lanes can change to “HOV only” if necessary.

**Will this project require property acquisition?** At this time, it appears that all improvements for the project can be accommodated in the existing Caltrans right-of-way, and the project will not require any additional property acquisition.

## **Status of other projects in the same area:**

- The I-580/I-680 Interchange Project is large enough to require multi-agency/regional collaboration. It is on the list of future projects for the area.

- SR 84 projects in Niles Canyon have a [safety improvements page](#) on the Caltrans website with the status of each project.
- The SR 84 expressway widening project from the I-680 Interchange to south of Ruby Hill Drive is at the end of detailed design and is anticipated to go to construction in Spring 2021.

**How was the noise study conducted?** The noise study is a multi-step process that is dictated by the Federal Highway Administration conventions and requirements, that include taking noise measurements under specific conditions using specific types of instrumentation. The measurements and modeling are used to identify if an area has a noise level above the “noise abatement criteria,” which is based on different factors, including whether the area is residential. If an area exceeds abatement criteria, it is considered for abatement measures. These criteria are detailed further in the [Draft Environmental Document](#) Noise Section (Section 2.2.6.4).

**Why will the project potentially be constructed in phases?** For projects of this size, funding may not be available to construct the entire project at once. There is a traffic basis for the proposed phasing of constructing the southbound HOV/express lane before the northbound HOV/express lane. The primary travel direction on I-680 is southbound in the morning peak and northbound in the afternoon peak. Traffic studies found that southbound I-680 is congested for close to 4 hours each weekday morning due to a bottleneck in the southern project area between Sunol Boulevard and Koopman Road. In the northbound direction, the main source of congestion is a bottleneck approximately 4.5 miles outside of and to the south of the project area, between Washington Boulevard and Mission Boulevard. Therefore, phasing will provide immediate benefits by alleviating the bottleneck between Sunol Boulevard and Koopman Road that affects southbound traffic.