

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Interstate 580 Scofield Avenue and Western Drive Bridge Deck Replacement Project

I. GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

1. What is the location of the project? The project is located on Interstate 580 (I-580) at the east approach to the Richmond - San Rafael Bridge, in the City of Richmond, in Contra Costa County.

2. What is the scope of the project? The scope of the project is to replace highway bridge decks at the Scofield Avenue Undercrossing and the Western Drive Undercrossing. The Scofield Avenue Undercrossing consists of two bridges: I-580 eastbound traveled way/Western Drive eastbound on ramp and the westbound I-580 traveled way. The Western Drive Undercrossing consists of one bridge: westbound I-580 traveled way. Three bridge decks will be replaced.

3. What is the need for the project? These freeway bridge decks have deteriorated and must be replaced. In March 2010 Caltrans' structural engineers inspected the bridges, and the inspection indicated the bridges were in poor to critical condition. For years, Caltrans Maintenance forces have patched deck holes and spalls, sometimes under emergency conditions, in order to maintain serviceability and public safety.

4. What is the schedule of the project?

Start Construction: Summer 2012

End Construction: Spring 2014

5. What is the cost of the project? The total cost of the project is about \$24 million, and approximately \$18 million is programmed for construction. The funding source is the 2010 State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP).

II. TRAFFIC HANDLING DURING CONSTRUCTION

1. Will there be detours during construction? Yes. I-580 currently has three lanes in each direction within the project limits. In order to provide adequate space during construction to replace the westbound bridge decks, I-580 will be reduced to two lanes in each direction. The four open lanes will be shifted to the south within the space currently occupied by the existing eastbound lanes. A concrete barrier will separate eastbound and westbound traffic. The weekday peak hour volumes for westbound and eastbound I-580 are about 2800 and 3800 vehicles per hour, respectively. The two lanes in each direction are expected to be able to handle these volumes without causing significant additional traffic delays. In order to replace the decks of the I-580 eastbound traveled way/Western Drive eastbound on ramp and also to maintain the four lanes of freeway traffic during the bridge deck replacement work on the other bridges, the eastbound Western Drive on ramp must be closed. This eastbound on ramp enters the freeway in the median area where construction work is to be performed and this is the same area where traffic must be shifted to complete the work, hence the need to close the on ramp.

2. How long will the Western Drive on ramp be closed? Has Caltrans looked at other options to minimize the ramp closure? It is anticipated that the on ramp will be closed for less than one year. In order to minimize the length of the closure, Caltrans staff is examining shifting the staging sequence so that the Western Drive on ramp deck replacement work is completed earlier. Caltrans is also looking into additional incentives/disincentives to be included in the contract documents in order to encourage the contractor to open the on ramp at the earliest possible opportunity. Employing double shifts would save time and, in addition, the use of high early strength accelerated concrete would also minimize the length of time the concrete needs to cure and therefore minimize the closure of the on ramp.

3. How will the businesses/residents be affected? There are approximately six businesses (Chevron Refinery, including Chevron Rod & Gun Club, Dutra Group, East Brother Light Station, Fury Sport Fishing, HALO Group, Inc.) that will be affected by this closure. We have contacted all the businesses to provide them information about the project and to inform them of the ramp closure. Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor has approximately 70 tenants and 33 full-time residents. There are 50 or less full-time residents on Western Drive and surrounding area. We will be working closely with the City to identify and contact those who use the Pt. Molate area for outdoor recreation. In addition, Caltrans will coordinate with the City of Richmond Redevelopment Agency's upcoming construction contract for site improvements at the old Naval shipyard area. These residents, businesses, and area visitors will be informed of the ramp closure and will be invited to an open house informational meeting to be held prior to start of construction.

4. How will the motorists taking the Western Drive on ramp go eastbound? The current proposal is to have eastbound motorists who use the Western Drive on ramp to go across the bridge, exit at the San Quentin interchange, turn left at the end of the off ramp, and turn left at the on ramp to eastbound I-580. The detour across the bridge and back is about 9 miles long and the extra travel time will be about 10 minutes regardless of the time of day. Approximately 560 and 290 vehicles per day will be affected on weekdays and weekends, respectively. Special toll-free arrangements will be made for those who live and work in the Pt. Molate area for detoured travel in the eastbound 580 direction from Western Drive. Detailed information regarding the toll passes will be provided prior to construction.

5. Why can't vehicles drive on the existing bike path that goes under I -580 to go eastbound instead of taking the 9-mile detour? The existing bike path is narrow and does not have enough vertical clearance to permit trucks on it. Caltrans is looking into the possibility of allowing passenger vehicles drive on the bike path during the day, guided by a pilot car. Caltrans is determining the geometrics and safety of the facility and addressing resource agencies permitting and right of way easement issues.

6. What happens if there is a local emergency during the closure of the eastbound 580 on ramp? Caltrans will be working closely with the City and regional emergency services agencies in advance of construction. We will make sure our toll and traffic operations protocols are in place to allow an immediate emergency response.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS

1. Was there a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review? Yes, Caltrans performed a CEQA review and determined that the project qualified for a Categorical Exemption (CE) under Class 1d (restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures or

facilities). A categorical exemption/categorical exclusion (CE/CE) determination was issued on 3-16-2009. Caltrans considered but did not find any unusual circumstances that would create the possibility of the project having a significant effect requiring a higher-level environmental document.

2. Was there any outreach during the CEQA review? Although there was no public meeting and no documents were distributed as a result of the CE process, there was outreach that primarily targeted the bicycle community. Caltrans held a stakeholders meeting with the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) on April 14, 2010. The stakeholders that participated were BCDC, the East Bay Bike Coalition and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). The Marin County Bicycle Coalition and Sonoma County Bike Coalition were also invited but they did not attend the meeting which was held at BCDC's office.

3. Aren't there any impacts related to air quality since vehicles will be detoured across the Richmond - San Rafael Bridge? According to our latest traffic counts collected in March 2011, the total daily traffic volumes on the eastbound Western Drive on ramp are approximately 560 and 290 vehicles per day on weekdays and weekends, respectively. The daily traffic volumes on the eastbound Western Drive on ramp that will be diverted to use the bridge during the ramp closure would be less than 2% of total westbound bridge traffic on weekdays and about 1% on weekend. The ramp closure and detour will add roughly one car per minute to bridge traffic during the morning commute period. Any air quality changes due to a detour are considered to have minimal impact. The project is exempt from the requirement of air quality conformity determination, per 40 CFR 93.126.

4. Aren't there any impacts to cyclists during construction? For safety reasons, bicycle travel is not possible on the freeway shoulders during construction. A bicycle shuttle service will be in place during construction from points east and west of the construction zone. A phone number will be provided to cyclists so that they can call for transport. Additional detailed information on the shuttle service will be provided prior to construction.

IV. OUTREACH

1. Was there any outreach done to date? Caltrans has met with City representatives, local businesses, and residents in an effort to provide project information early.

2. Will there be additional outreach? Yes, although Caltrans began outreach in late 2009, we will continue to work closely with all stakeholders as we approach summer 2012 construction. Our goal is to provide information early on so all stakeholders will be informed. Outreach will include:

- a.** Contacting any other businesses/service agencies in the area that could be affected by the construction of this project.
- b.** Making a presentation to the City of Richmond Redevelopment Agency and any other public meetings, as requested by the City.
- c.** Creating and distributing an informational brochure or flyer, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to the community, City staff and elected officials
- d.** Creating a project website to post information regarding construction activities and lane/ramp closures.
- e.** Holding an open house informational meeting, prior to start of construction, to inform local residents and business operators of the project scope and upcoming construction activities.

- 3. Will there be outreach during construction?** Yes, the following activities will take place during construction:
- a. Updating the project website for construction activities and lane/ramp closures.
 - b. Informing the media prior to, during and after all major elements of the project
 - c. Sending traffic advisories concerning the project construction impacts.
 - d. Using Changeable Message Signs (CMS) and Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) to inform motorists during construction activities, when applicable.

V. BAY TRAIL CONNECTOR

1. Are cyclists permitted to ride on I-580? Yes, cyclists are currently permitted to ride along the outside shoulder of eastbound I-580 between the bike entrance south of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Toll Plaza and the Richmond Parkway/Point Richmond off ramp and on the outside shoulder of westbound I-580 between the Marine Street/Chevron Way bike entrance to the Western Drive/Point Molate off ramp. For safety reasons, cyclists will not be permitted to ride along the outside freeway shoulders during construction. Caltrans will provide an on-call bicycle shuttle service from points east and west of the construction site.

2. Why didn't this project address the Bay Trail connector between Point San Pablo and Point Richmond? This project is for the purpose of rehabilitating aging highway bridge decks and is funded from the 2010 California State Highway Operations and Protection Program, (SHOPP--Bridge Maintenance Program funds). This bridge maintenance project does not modify the highway except to replace bridge decks and related structures. There is no highway widening or other such capacity increasing modification involved. The Bay Trail connector is not part of the project scope, and SHOPP funds cannot be used for the Bay Trail connection project.

3. Will this project impact the construction of the Bay Trail connector? This project will in no way negatively affect the City's planned bike path project. In fact, there is new asphalt paving included in our project that extends to the freeway shoulders—this will create a better riding surface and should enhance the safety of cyclists at those locations.

4. Is the bike community aware that the Bay Trail connector is not included in the scope of this project? Caltrans presented this deck replacement project at the District 4 Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting in October 2010 and the Richmond Bike Path (Bay Trail) was included as a discussion topic. Caltrans also had a meeting with the City's Bike Path project team in November 2009, August 2010, and again in April 2011.

5. Even though the Bay Trail connector is not included in the scope of this project, how can the Bay Trail Project get implemented? The City of Richmond is preparing a Project Initiation Document (PID) to program the bike path connector project in the future. Programming funds need to be secured by the City so that the project can be designed and constructed.

6. Will Caltrans support the implementation of the Bay Trail connector? How? Caltrans does support the Bay Trail Connector project. The City of Richmond started the preparation of a Project Initiation Document (PID) for the Bay Trail Connector Project in November 2009. Caltrans was asked to provide oversight on the Project Initiation Document (PID), but due to the State budget shortfall in 2010, funds for state-provided oversight were eliminated. The law now requires Caltrans to charge local agencies for PID oversight. Local

agencies, including the City of Richmond, were informed of this change and of the opportunity to participate in a PID Reimbursement Pilot Program, for which they had to apply by December 14, 2010 if interested for that fiscal year. The City of Richmond did not apply at that time.

Although the City of Richmond has proceeded with the trail project, Caltrans' review and approval of the PID is pending due to the lack of funding for Caltrans' oversight.

7. Can Caltrans waive the requirement for the city of Richmond to reimburse Caltrans for PID oversight (estimated cost of \$150,000 to \$200,000)?

No. In October 2010 the State Budget Act eliminated the Department's program budget for local program oversight services. Unfortunately, while Caltrans supports the City's trail project, we do not have the reimbursement authority or resources to conduct oversight for the trail project.