

I-680

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2019-20



I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane
SUNOL SMART CARPOOL LANE JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY



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Chair's Message



September 20, 2020 marked the ten-year anniversary of the first express lane opening in Northern California. Since opening, more than 7.2 million solo drivers have chosen to use the I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane, reaching their destinations faster and with more reliable travel times than the general purpose lanes.

During fiscal year 2019-20, more than 615,000 vehicles that would have used the general purpose lanes paid a toll to use the express lane, reducing congestion within the corridor while maintaining reliability within the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane.

The next step in the evolution of the corridor is the opening of a new northbound express lane parallel to the existing southbound express lane along the Sunol Grade, and conversion of the existing I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane to a continuous access system. Construction of these projects began in early 2018, and tolling operations on the new and improved facilities are expected to begin in 2021.

— **Mayor Lily Mei**
*City of Fremont,
Chair, Sunol Smart Carpool
Lane Joint Powers Authority*

“The I-680 corridor is a crucial link between the South Bay, the Tri-Valley and Central Valley. Through state-of-the-art technology, the express lane provides more reliable travel times, encourages carpooling, reduces congestion, and improves the quality-of-life for those traveling along this corridor.”

— **Tess Lengyel**
*Executive Director,
Alameda County
Transportation Commission*



I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane

Since it opened in September 2010 as Northern California's first express lane facility, more than 7.2 million solo drivers have chosen to get to their destination faster by using the I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane. Located on a 14-mile stretch of southbound Interstate 680 (I-680) from State Route 84 (SR-84) south of Pleasanton to State Route 237 (SR-237) in Milpitas, the express lane was designed to manage growing traffic congestion on I-680 and to provide people

with a new commute choice between the East Bay and Silicon Valley. It is governed by the Sunol Smart Carpool Lane Joint Powers Authority (Sunol JPA).

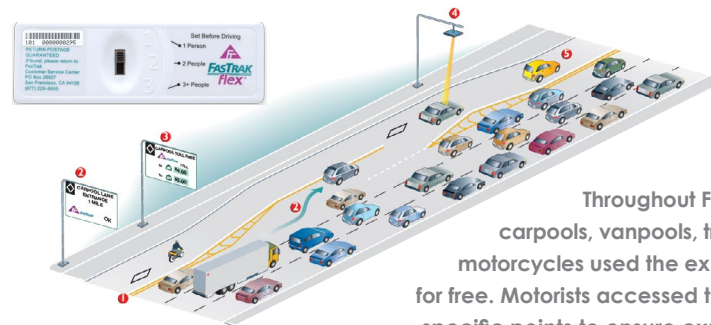
The I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane operates Monday through Friday from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. The operation is fully electronic, with no toll booths, so customers do not need to slow down or stop to pay. Solo drivers who want to use the lane need a FasTrak® toll tag (a standard tag or the Flex tag). Each time drivers use the express lane, the toll amount is deducted from their FasTrak account balance.

During normal tolling operation in fiscal year (FY) 2019-20, carpools, motorcycles, transit vehicles, and clean-air vehicles (CAVs) with HOV-eligible decals used the express lane for free without a toll tag, with a standard FasTrak stored in its mylar bag, or with a FasTrak Flex toll tag set to 2 or 3+. When tolling begins in 2021, the toll tag discount requirements will change. Efforts are underway to transition CAVs from toll-free travel to a 50 percent toll discount in accordance with the new tolling policy adopted in June 2020; these changes will be introduced in 2021 with prior outreach to notify the public of the change.

During FY 2019-20, I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane operations were marked by continued construction in the northbound direction and the COVID-19 pandemic. All Bay Area express lane operators suspended toll operations from March 20-May 31, 2020 in response to Shelter-in-Place (SIP) orders. This action was intended to encourage compliance with mandated social distancing protocols. After the SIP orders were issued in March, traffic volumes in the express lane decreased by approximately 80 percent. Tolling operations resumed on June 1, 2020 with lower toll pricing that reflected the decrease in overall traffic volumes.

Usage of the express lane has typically increased each year since opening. However, during FY 2019-20, there were approximately 615,000 toll-paying express lane users, a 35 percent decrease compared to the prior fiscal year. Assessed tolls averaged \$3.11 per trip, a slight decrease over the prior year. An estimated 25 percent of all express lane users this year were toll-paying.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) provides toll enforcement to prevent access and toll violations. CHP toll enforcement efforts were halted while tolling was suspended due to COVID-19, but resumed with the return of tolling in June 2020. In FY 2019-20, CHP issued more than 600 citations for toll evasion violations, a significant decrease from the prior fiscal year.



Throughout FY 2019-20, carpools, vanpools, transit, and motorcycles used the express lane for free. Motorists accessed the lane at specific points to ensure express lane users enjoyed reliable travel times.

Express Lane Performance



Daily express lane solo driver usage decreased compared to the prior fiscal year, and overall express lane traffic volumes also decreased. The decrease in express lane volumes is reflective of both continued construction activities along the median of the corridor and the reduced traffic associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Irrespective of this shift in express lane utilization, the express lane met federal and state performance requirements throughout the fiscal year.

Figures 1-4 (following pages) describe and illustrate how the existing I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane is performing, where corridor users are going, and how much it costs to use the express lane.

The I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane is part of the major commute route connecting the Tri-Valley Area (Dublin, Livermore and Pleasanton) in Alameda County with South Bay cities in Santa Clara County and Silicon Valley businesses.

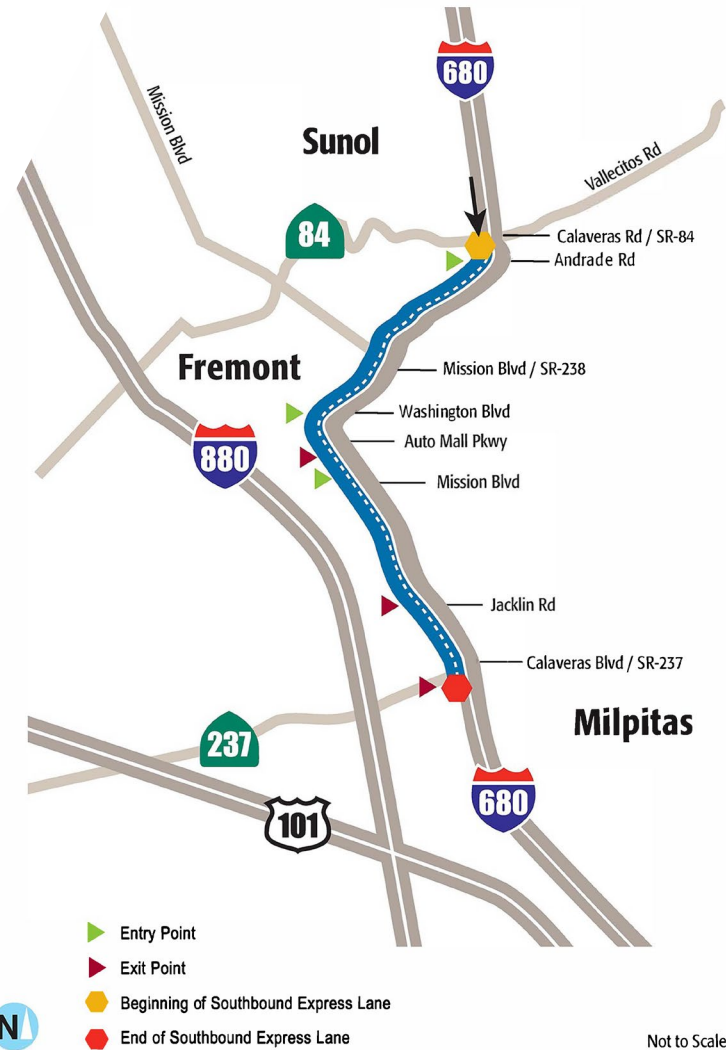


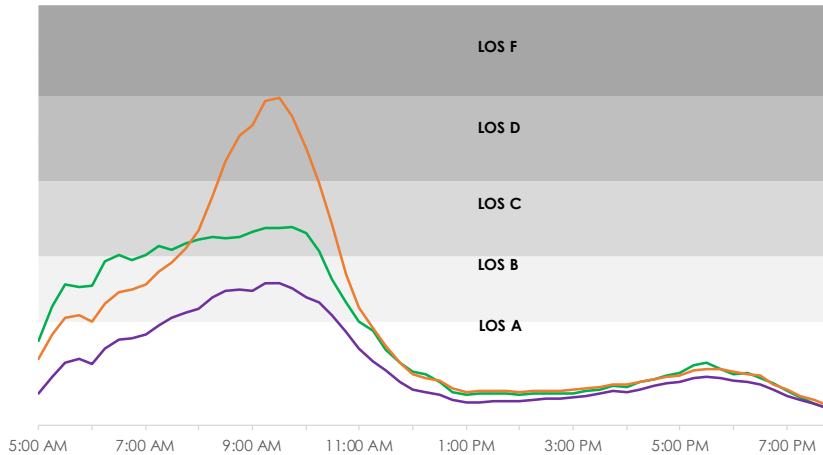
Figure 1

Speed, Volume, and Level of Service Charts – Monitoring the Corridor

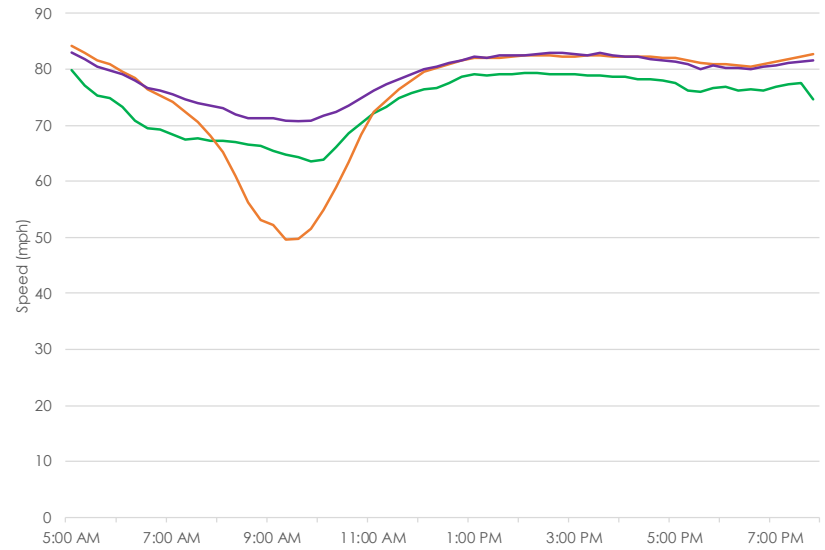
These charts show the average speeds, volumes, and Level of Service (LOS) at the three toll points in the express lane throughout the day in FY 2019-20: just south of Andrade Road, south of Washington Avenue, and just north of Mission Boulevard (SR-262). LOS is a measure of freeway performance based on vehicle maneuverability and driver comfort levels, graded on a scale of A (best) through F (worst). Average speeds at the express lane toll points ranged from 65 to 75 mph during the morning commute hours (5 a.m. to 11 a.m.) with lower speeds occurring in the vicinity of Washington Boulevard; average speeds throughout the rest of the day exceeded 70 mph. The express lane operated at LOS B or better at all times except during the peak period in between Washington Boulevard and Auto Mall Parkway where average LOS C and D were observed. The slower speeds at the Washington toll point are attributed to the sharp curve in the freeway immediately preceding the toll point that causes all users to slow down even in moderately heavy traffic conditions.



AVERAGE WEEKDAY EXPRESS LANE LEVEL OF SERVICE



AVERAGE WEEKDAY EXPRESS LANE SPEED



AVERAGE WEEKDAY EXPRESS LANE VOLUME

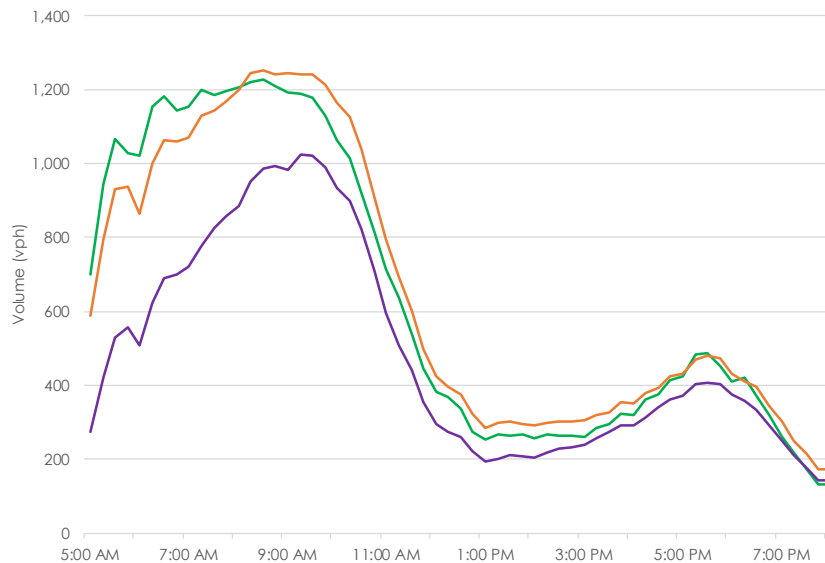
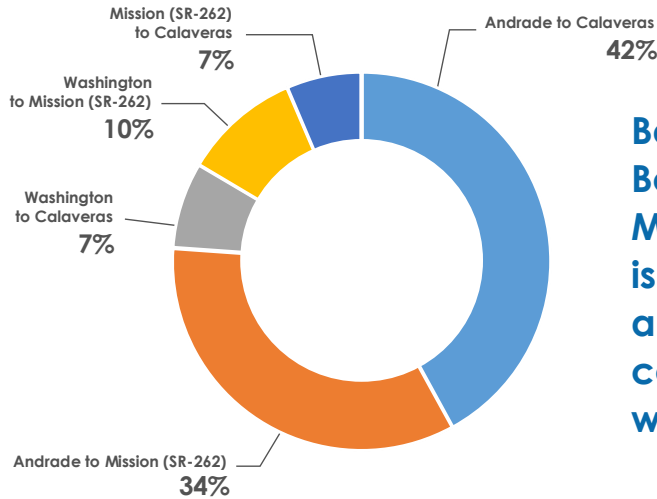


Figure 2

DESTINATION CHART – EVALUATING EXPRESS LANE USAGE

In FY 2019-20, 42 percent of toll-paying users within the corridor traveled the entire length from Andrade Road to Calaveras Boulevard, and 76 percent of all trips originated at the start of the express lane. In total, 93 percent traveled the segment between Washington Boulevard and Mission Boulevard, making it the most utilized, and generally most congested, segment within the corridor.



Between Washington Boulevard and Mission Boulevard is the most utilized, and generally most congested, segment within the corridor.

Figure 3

STATIC TIME-OF-DAY PRICING

While the I-680 Northbound Express Lane is under construction, the existing I-680 Southbound lane remained in operation in FY 2019-20, except during regional suspension of tolling from March 20 through May 31, 2020. The existing southbound express lane deployed time-of-day pricing, and the scheduled toll rates to travel the entire length of the express lane up to March 20 are shown in the step-chart in Figure 3. Lower tolls were posted for shorter trips. The maximum toll rate to travel the entire length of the corridor in FY 2019-20 was \$9.50. However, the maximum toll was reduced from \$9.50 to \$7.50 in June 2020 in response to reduced traffic during the pandemic.

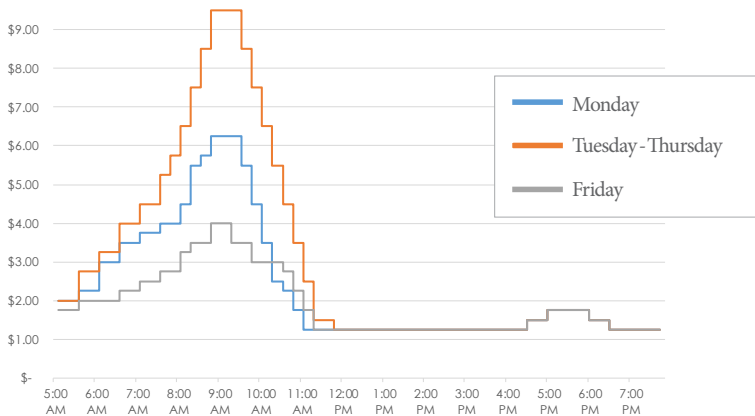
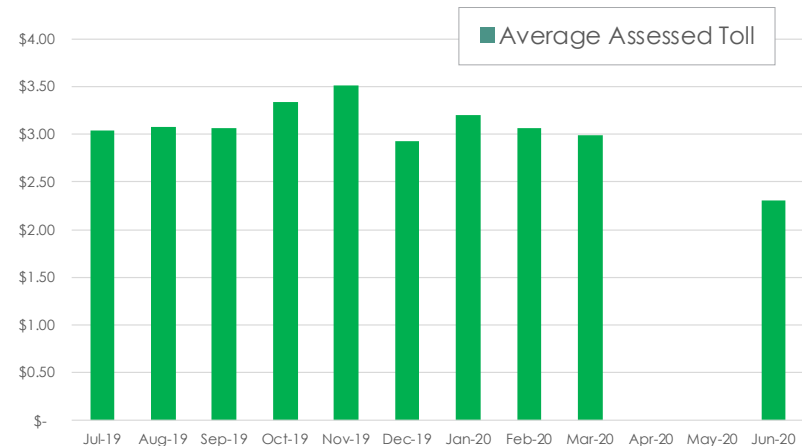


Figure 4

TOLL RATES – KEEPING EXPRESS LANES FLOWING

During FY 2019-20, the average peak-period (5 a.m. to 11 a.m.) posted toll rate to travel the entire corridor was \$4.56, and to travel just the central segment from Washington Boulevard to Mission Boulevard (SR-262) was \$2.45. The average assessed toll for all tolled trips ranged from \$2.31 to \$3.51, depending on the month.



Financial Information

When the Sunol JPA was formed in 2010, it agreed to reinvest the net revenues derived from the express lanes directly back into the project corridor. Toll revenues are used to first pay for operating and maintaining the I-680 Sunal Express Lane, and then to fund additional transit and transportation projects in the corridor.

- Total net position increased by \$0.11 million or 1.6 percent from \$6.72 million to \$6.83 million as of June 30, 2020, compared to June 30, 2019. This slight increase is due to toll revenues outpacing operations and maintenance expenses. Capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation, comprised \$0.73 million or 10.7 percent of the total net position at June 30, 2020.
- For the year that ended June 30, 2020, cash and cash equivalents increased by \$0.33 million or 5.3 percent from \$6.24 million to \$6.57 million compared to June 30, 2019. This increase is mostly related to toll revenue collections, which were slightly more than operations and maintenance expenses paid during the fiscal year, and investment income.

- Operating revenue was \$1.87 million during FY 2019-20, a decrease of \$0.98 million or 34.3 percent from FY 2018-19 mainly attributed to the suspension of revenue collections on the express lane from March 20-May 31, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic SIP order and resulting reduction in traffic.
- The Sunol JPA's total operating expenses including depreciation were \$1.88 million during FY 2019-20, an increase of \$0.19 million or 11.2 percent over FY 2018-19. This increase is attributed to slight increases in various items that constitute operations and maintenance expense. Operating expenses of \$1.88 million for FY 2019-20 were primarily comprised of program operations and maintenance costs.

Toll revenues are used to first pay for operating and maintaining the I-680 Sunol Express Lane, and then to fund additional transit and transportation projects in the corridor.



Coming Soon: I-680 Sunol Northbound Express Lane

The I-680 Sunol Express Lanes is part of the growing Bay Area Express Lanes Network. On completion, the Bay Area will have over 750 miles of express lanes operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC). These agencies, as well as the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, the Solano Transportation Authority, the San Mateo County Express Lanes Joint Powers Authority, and the San Francisco County Transportation Authority are working together to close gaps in the express lane network.

The next project to improve the I-680 corridor is the I-680 / SR-84 Interchange and SR-84 Widening project, which has just completed the design phase. The project will complete the widening of SR-84 to four lanes, improve the interchange, and extend the Southbound I-680 Sunol Express Lane to the north by two miles. Following this project will be the I-680 Sunol Express Lanes from SR-84 to Alcosta Boulevard, which is currently in the environmental phase. This project will close the gap between the existing express lanes in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties.



The Sunol JPA's northbound I-680 Sunol Express Lane from Mission Boulevard (SR-262) to Vallecitos Road (SR-84) opened to traffic in October 2020. The new northbound lane and continuous access southbound lane operate as HOV lanes until tolling begins in 2021.

The existing I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane was converted from restricted to continuous access in September 2020 as part of the capital project construction. The new northbound I-680 Sunol Express Lane, from Mission Boulevard (SR-262) to Vallecitos Road (SR-84), was opened to traffic in October 2020. Both southbound and northbound express lanes are currently open only to HOV-eligible users during operating hours of Monday to Friday, 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., and open to all users at all other times; tolling is expected to begin in 2021 as a single I-680 Sunol Express Lanes toll system with enhanced enforcement technology.



For more information about the I-680 Sunol Express Lanes and future express lane projects, visit www.alamedactc.org/ExpressLanes.

Visit www.bayarea.expresslanes.org for more information about the envisioned regionwide express lane network.

Sunol Smart Carpool Lane Joint Powers Authority

The Sunol JPA is an independent joint powers authority created to operate the I-680 Sunol Express Lanes. Its board of directors consists of five elected officials, four voting members from Alameda County and one voting member from Santa Clara County. Voting rights were determined based on each county's share of road miles within the corridor when the JPA was first established.

The Sunol JPA meetings are open to the public. Meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the Alameda CTC website at www.alamedactc.org/all-meetings.

Partnerships

The Alameda County Transportation Commission, the California Department of Transportation and the California Highway Patrol provide services to the Sunol JPA contractually. For toll collection, the Sunol JPA has an agreement with the Bay Area Toll Authority to use its FasTrak® electronic toll-collection system.

Sunol JPA Members

- Chair:** **Lily Mei**, *City of Fremont Mayor, Alameda CTC Commissioner*
- Vice Chair:** **David Haubert**, *City of Dublin Mayor, Alameda CTC Commissioner*
- Members:** **Rich Tran**, *City of Milpitas Mayor, VTA Board Member*
- Glenn Hendricks**, *City of Sunnyvale Councilmember, VTA Board Member*
- Scott Haggerty**, *Alameda County Supervisor, District 1, Alameda CTC Commissioner*
- Jerry Thorne**, *City of Pleasanton Mayor, Alameda CTC Commissioner*
- Staff Liaisons:** **Tess Lengyel**, *Alameda CTC Executive Director*
- Gary Huisingsh**, *Alameda CTC Deputy Executive Director of Projects*
- Liz Rutman**, *Alameda CTC Director of Express Lane Implementation and Operations*



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www.BayAreaExpressLanes.org

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