

# I-680

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2020-21



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



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# Chair's Message



Interstate 680 is the first express lane in Northern California, a crucial link between the South Bay, Tri-Valley and Central Valley. Over 7.2 million solo drivers have chosen to use the state-of-the-art I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane, reaching their destinations faster and with more reliable travel times than the general purpose lanes. During fiscal year 2020-21, more than 34,000 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.

On October 29, 2020, the new northbound express lane parallel to the existing southbound express lane along the Sunol Grade opened to HOV traffic, and the existing I-680 Sunol southbound express lane opened to HOV traffic as a continuous access lane. Construction of these projects began in early 2018 and was mostly completed in 2021. Tolling operations on the new and improved facilities are expected to begin in 2022.

— **Supervisor David Haubert**  
*Alameda County, District 1,  
Chair, Sunol Smart Carpool  
Lane Joint Powers Authority*

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

**“The I-680 corridor is a part of the planned 600-mile network of Bay Area Express Lanes. This 14-mile-long Sunol southbound express lane is a forward-thinking, technology-based solution to managing congestion between the East Bay and Silicon Valley that encourages carpooling, reduces congestion and improves the quality-of-life not only for the more than 7.2 million drivers who use the facility, but also for those who live along this corridor.”**



**I-680 Sunol  
Express Lanes Groundbreaking**  
April 19, 2018 / FREMONT, CA

# The 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).

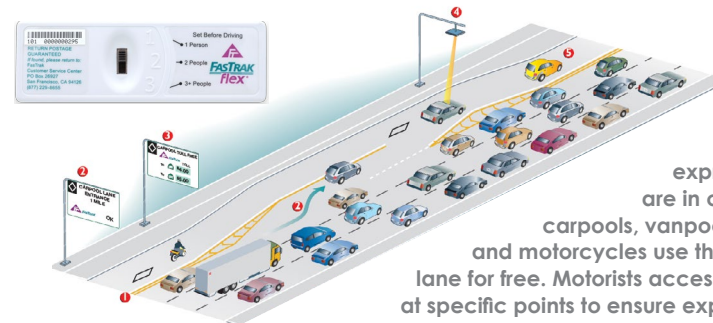
The I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane operates Mondays through Fridays from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. The operation is fully electronic, with no toll booths, so customers do not need to slow down or stop to pay. Solo drivers who want to use the lane need a FasTrak® toll tag (a standard tag or the Flex tag that became available in mid-2015). 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) 2020-21, 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+. Tolling operation was suspended in August 2020 so that construction of the new toll system could be completed. Both the new northbound and converted southbound express lane opened to HOV traffic only in October 2020. When tolling begins in 2022, the toll tag requirements for toll discounts will change. A FasTrak Flex toll tag will be required for carpools, and the CAV discount will change from toll-free to 50 percent toll discount in accordance with the new tolling policy adopted in June 2020. These changes will be introduced in 2022 with prior outreach to notify the public of the change along with outreach on tolling commencement.

During FY 2020-21, I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane Operations were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of construction of the northbound direction leading to lanes and conversion of the southbound lane to a modernized system, toll operations were suspended on August 2020. All Bay Area express lane operators suspended toll operations from March 20, 2020 through May 31, 2020 in response to Shelter-in-Place (SIP) directives. 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. Traffic volumes were still low in the next two months of operation during FY 2020-21.

Usage of the express lane has typically increased each year since opening. However, traffic volumes decreased drastically due to the pandemic. During FY 2020-21, there were approximately 34,000 toll-paying express lane users, or 1,280 average daily toll-paying users, a 58 percent decrease compared to the prior fiscal year. Assessed tolls averaged \$2.34 per trip, a 25 percent decrease over the prior year. An estimated 25 percent of all express lane users were toll-paying.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) provides toll enforcement to prevent access and toll violations. In five weeks of operation during FY 2020-21, CHP issued approximately 20 citations for toll evasion violations.



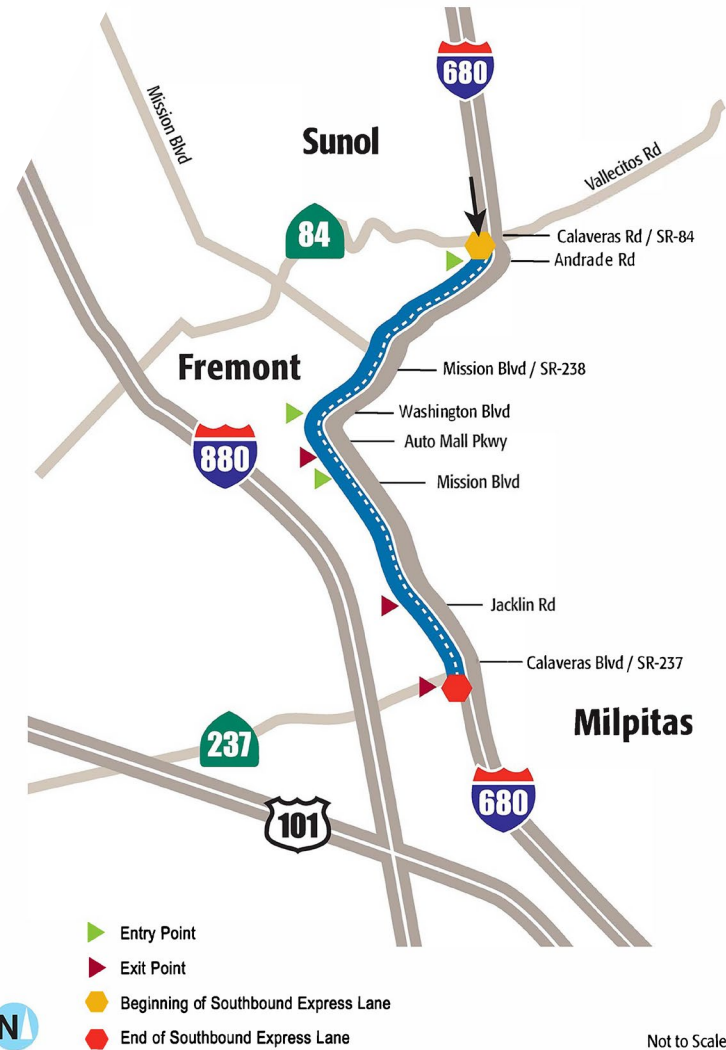
# Express Lane Performance



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 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 while the toll system was in operation.

Figures 1-4 (following pages) describe and illustrate I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane performance, use and costs.

**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.**



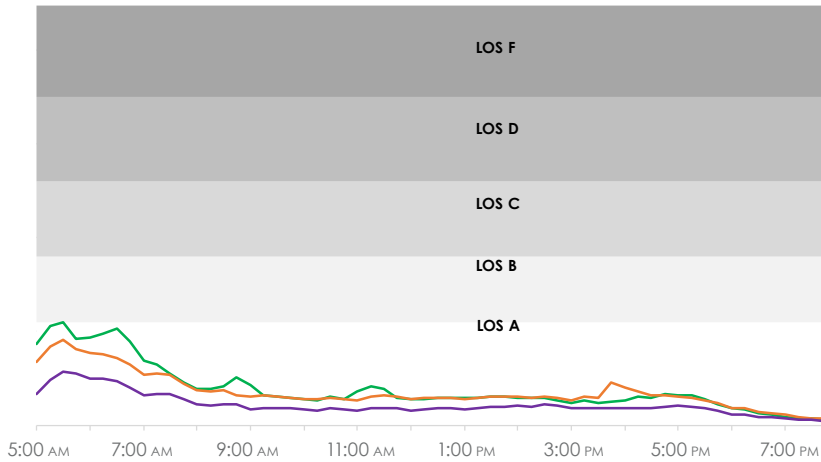
**Figure 1**

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

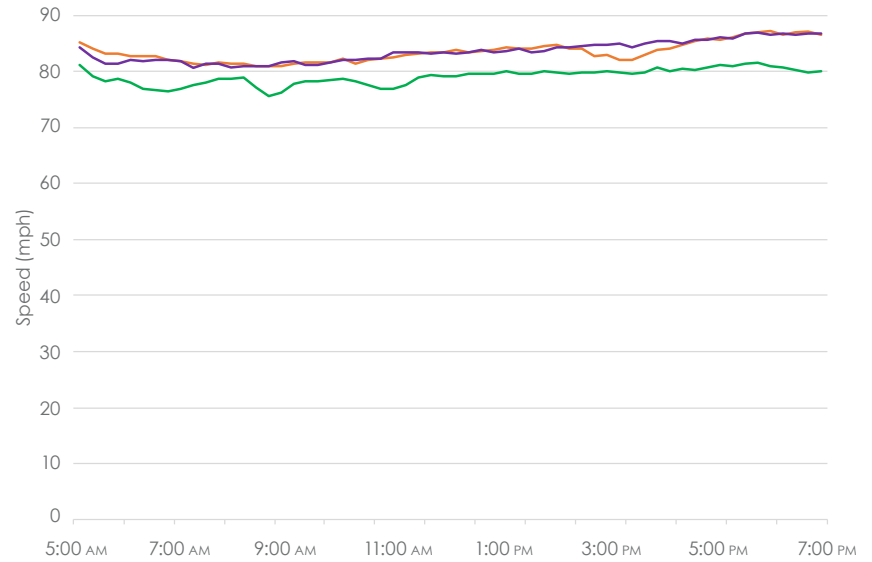
These charts show the average speeds, volumes and Level of Service (LOS) at the three toll points in the express lane throughout the day in FY 2020-21: just south of Andrade Road, south of Washington Avenue and just north of Mission Boulevard (SR-262). LOS is a measure of freeway performance based on vehicle maneuverability and driver comfort levels, graded on a scale of A (best) through F (worst). Average speeds at the express lane toll points exceeded 65 mph throughout the day. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, morning commute congestion in the express lane was typically observed near Washington Boulevard. However, the express lane operated at LOS A at all times due to reduced traffic volumes amid the pandemic.



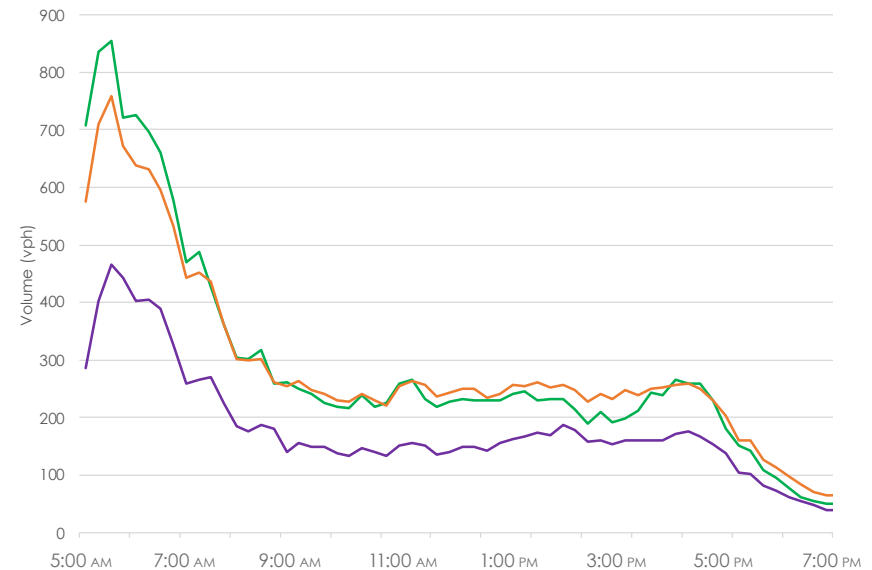
**AVERAGE WEEKDAY EXPRESS LANE LEVEL OF SERVICE**



**AVERAGE WEEKDAY EXPRESS LANE SPEED**



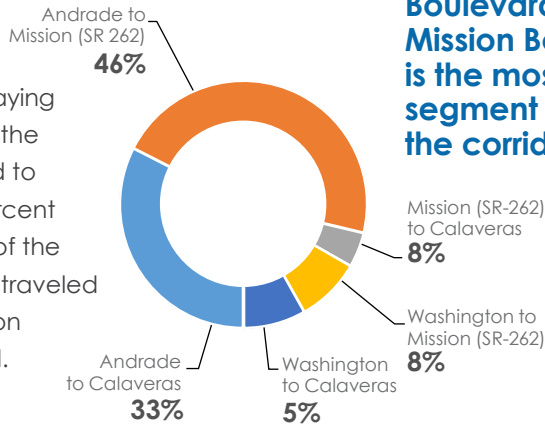
**AVERAGE WEEKDAY EXPRESS LANE VOLUME**



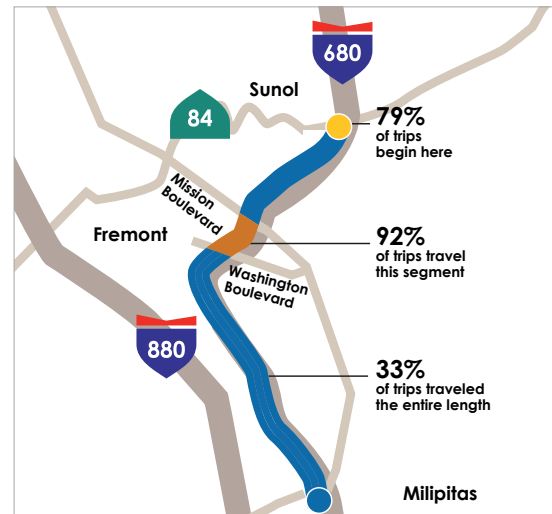
**Figure 2**

**DESTINATION CHARTS – EXPRESS LANE USAGE**

In FY 2020-21, 33 percent of toll-paying users within the corridor traveled the entire length from Andrade Road to Calaveras Boulevard, and 79 percent of all trips originated at the start of the express lane. In total, 92 percent traveled the segment between Washington Boulevard and Mission Boulevard.



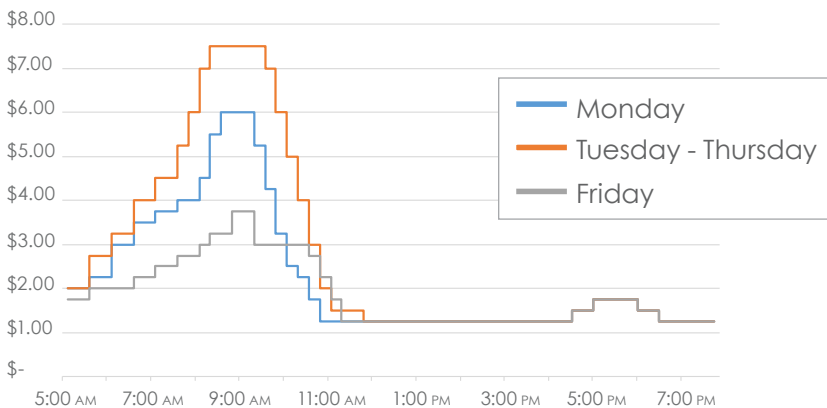
**Between Washington Boulevard and Mission Boulevard is the most utilized segment within the corridor.**



**Figure 3**

**TIME-OF-DAY PRICING**

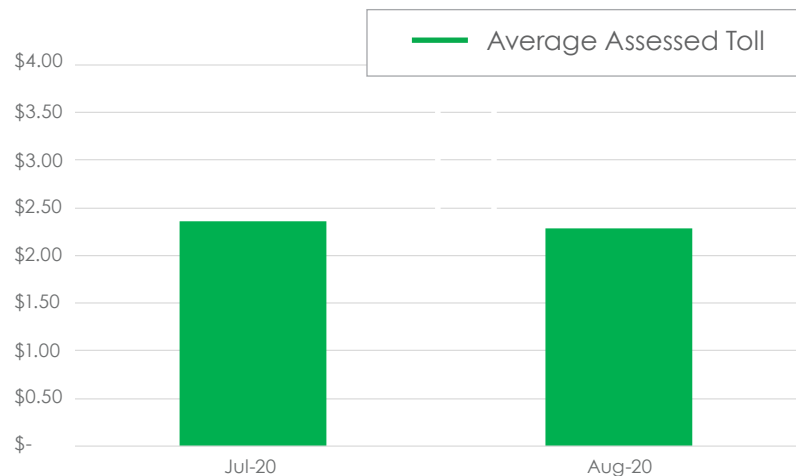
While the I-680 Northbound Express Lane was under construction, the existing I-680 Southbound lane remained in operation from the start of FY 2020-21 through August 7, 2020, when the lane reverted to HOV Only operation while construction completed. The existing southbound express lane deployed time-of-day pricing, and the scheduled toll rates to travel the entire length of the express lane up to August 7 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 2020-21 was \$7.50, which was reduced from \$9.50 in response to reduced traffic during the pandemic.



**Figure 4**

**TOLL RATES – KEEPING EXPRESS LANES FLOWING**

During FY 2020-21, the average peak-period (5 a.m. to 11 a.m.) posted toll rate to travel the entire corridor was \$4.30, and to travel just the central segment from Washington Boulevard to Mission Boulevard (SR-262) was \$2.37. The average assessed toll for all tolled was \$2.34.



# Financial Information

When the Sunol JPA was formed in 2010, policies were advanced 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 Sunol Express Lane, and then to fund additional transit and transportation projects in the corridor.

- Total net position decreased by \$1.1 million or 16.6 percent from \$6.83 million to \$5.70 million as of June 30, 2021, compared to June 30, 2020. This decrease is mostly due to a decrease in cash and investments related to the suspension of revenue operations in August 2020 to allow for the transition to a new toll system and other construction activities on I-680 Sunol Express Lane. Capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation, comprised \$0.25 million or 4.4 percent of the total net position as of June 30, 2021.
- For the year ended June 30, 2021, cash and cash equivalents decreased by \$0.90 million or 13.7 percent from \$6.57 million to \$5.67 million compared to June 30, 2020. This decrease is mostly related to the suspension of revenue operations to allow for construction activities.

- Operating revenue was \$0.09 million during FY 2020-21, a decrease of \$1.78 million or 95.4 percent from FY 2019-20 attributed to the suspension of revenue operations in August 2020 to allow for construction work on the I-680 Sunol Express Lane.
- The Authority's total operating expenses including depreciation were \$0.80 million during FY 2020-21, a decrease of \$1.08 million or 57.3 percent over FY 2019-20. This decrease is attributed to the suspension of revenue operations which resulted in a significant reduction in operations and maintenance expense. Operating expenses of \$0.80 million for FY 2020-21 were primarily comprised of ongoing program operation and maintenance costs.

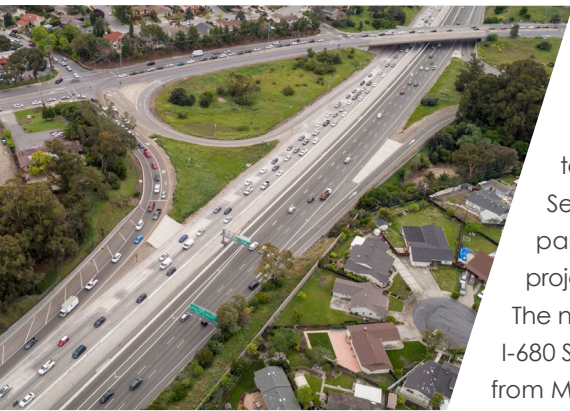
**Toll revenues are used to first pay for operating and maintaining the I-680 Sunol Express Lane, and then to fund additional transit and transportation projects in the corridor.**





# I-680 Sunol Northbound Express Lane

The I-680 Sunol Express Lanes are part of the growing Bay Area Express Lanes Network. When completed, 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 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 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 will begin in 2022.

The next project to improve the I-680 corridor is the I-680/SR-84 Interchange project, which began construction in 2021. The project will conform SR-84 to four lanes, improve the interchange and extend the Southbound I-680 Express Lane to the north by two miles. Following this project will be the I-680 Express Lanes from

SR-84 to Alcosta Boulevard, which was awarded funding in late 2021 and is anticipated to begin construction in 2022. This project will close the gap between the existing southbound express lanes in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties.



The upcoming projects will close the gap between the existing southbound express lanes in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties.

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

Visit [www.bayareaexpresslanes.org](http://www.bayareaexpresslanes.org) for more information about the envisioned express lane network.

## Sunol Smart Carpool Lane Joint Powers Authority

The Sunol Smart Carpool Lane Joint Powers Authority (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](http://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:** **David Haubert**, Alameda County Supervisor, District 1, Alameda CTC Commissioner

**Vice Chair:** **Melissa Hernandez**, City of Dublin Mayor, Alameda CTC Commissioner

**Members:** **Karla Brown**, City of Pleasanton Mayor, Alameda CTC Commissioner

**Glenn Hendricks**, City of Sunnyvale Councilmember, VTA Board Member

**Lily Mei**, City of Fremont Mayor, Alameda CTC Commissioner

**Staff Liaisons:** **Tess Lengyel**, Alameda CTC Executive Director

**Gary Huisingsh**, Alameda CTC Deputy Executive Director of Projects

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[www.AlamedaCTC.org/ExpressLanesOps](http://www.AlamedaCTC.org/ExpressLanesOps)

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