



# I-680 Sunol Express Lanes

Annual Report FY 2022-2023

Alameda County Transportation Commission  
Sunol Smart Carpool Lane Joint Powers Authority  
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## Background

The I-680 Sunol Express Lanes spans approximately 14 miles in the southbound direction, from State Route (SR) 84 near Pleasanton to SR 237 in the City of Milpitas, and 9 miles in the northbound direction, from just south of Auto Mall Parkway to SR 84. The I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane originally opened to traffic in September 2010 as a controlled access express lane. Construction began in 2018 on a new northbound express lane and to convert the southbound express lane to a continuous access configuration. Beginning August 10, 2020, the southbound express lane (EL) began operating in HOV-only mode while this construction was taking place and to transition to a new toll system. The new northbound express lane opened to traffic, also in HOV-only mode, on October 29, 2020. Testing of the new toll system was conducted until tolling resumed in the southbound lane, concurrent with tolling commencement on the new northbound lane on March 31, 2023.

The Alameda CTC, acting as the managing agency for the Sunol JPA, operates the I-680 Sunol Express Lanes. An All Electronic Toll (AET) collection method has been employed to collect tolls. Toll rates are calculated based on traffic conditions (speed and density) in the express and general-purpose (GP) lanes. Single occupancy vehicles have the option to pay a toll to travel in the express lanes; registered clean-air vehicles receive a 50% toll discount; and carpools with two or more occupants, motorcycles, and transit vehicles enjoy the benefits of toll-free travel. California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers provide enforcement services, and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) provides roadway maintenance services through reimbursable service agreements.

Two communications efforts were conducted in early 2023 to announce the resumption of tolling operations and to remind drivers about toll tag requirements. Outreach was conducted using various media channels, including radio, print, digital, social media, and in-person events. The first effort lasted from February through May to educate drivers on the toll discount policies and requirements for the I-680 Express Lanes and encourage drivers to obtain a FasTrak Flex® toll tag to use express lanes. Subsequent communication efforts conducted from July through August reminded drivers to set



*The existing I-680 Sunol Southbound Express Lane was converted from restricted to continuous access in October 2020 as part of the capital project construction.*

their switchable toll tags to correctly match the number of occupants in the vehicle and that CHP enforces occupancy requirements or improper toll tag use.

## Dissolution of the Sunol JPA

In an effort to create a more efficient and streamlined governance and administrative structure, save cost, and better utilize public agency resources, actions were taken in January and February of 2024 to dissolve the Sunol JPA and to transfer all responsibilities to Alameda CTC for the administration and operation of the I-680 Sunol Express Lanes. On January 25, 2024, Alameda CTC took action to initiate the dissolution of the Sunol JPA and elected to continue operating the I-680 Express Lanes in Alameda County. The Sunol JPA voted the following month on February 12, 2024 to dissolve the Sunol JPA and to terminate the Joint Powers Agreement entered into between Alameda CTC and VTA. All future reporting of operational and financial information for the I-680 Sunol Express Lanes will be performed by Alameda CTC as the administrative agency going forward.

## Express Lane Performance

Performance of the I-680 Sunol Express Lane from March 31, 2023 through June 30, 2023 is highlighted below. Prior to tolling operations resuming earlier this year, significant traffic congestion has been observed to occur on northbound I-680 over the Sunol grade during the afternoon peak period. This congestion begins at the SR 84 interchange and extends as far back as Auto Mall Parkway, resulting in low traffic speeds that have impacts on express lane operations.



Tolling resumed on March 31, 2023.

### March 31, 2023 – June 30, 2023 Operations

- Motorists made nearly 1.7 million express lane trips during operational hours.
  - Daily express lane trips averaged 27,000 a day.
  - Paid trips totaled 905,000, or 14,000 trips per day.
  - Toll-free trips made up 47% of all trips.
- Solo drivers carrying clean-air vehicle (CAV) tags receive a 50% toll discount.
  - Single-occupant CAVs were 1.6% of total single-occupancy trips taken.
- The average assessed toll for single occupancy vehicle (SOV) motorists was \$2.91 and \$5.04 for southbound and northbound, respectively.
- CHP performed 315 hours of enforcement services and made 469 enforcement contacts.

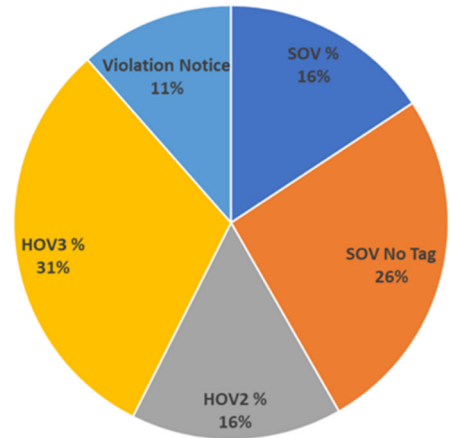


Figure 1 Breakdown of Express Lane Users



Figure 2 CHP Enforcement

### Northbound Speeds

As seen in Figure 3, all lanes in the northbound direction experienced low speeds from SR 84 to Auto Mall Parkway during the afternoon commute. However, northbound peak period (3 PM - 6 PM) express lane speeds averaged 15 mph faster than all lanes.

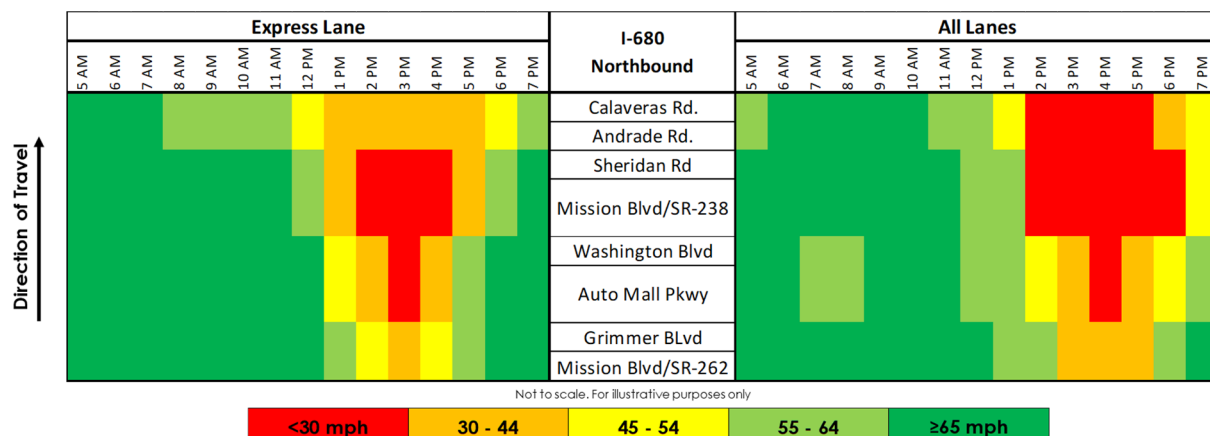


Figure 3 Northbound EL and GP Speeds

### Southbound Speeds

The Southbound direction generally experiences higher average speeds, with minor congestion occurring in the AM peak period. The peak period (7 AM - 10 AM) express lane speeds averaged 7 miles per hour (mph) faster than all lanes, as seen in Figure 4.

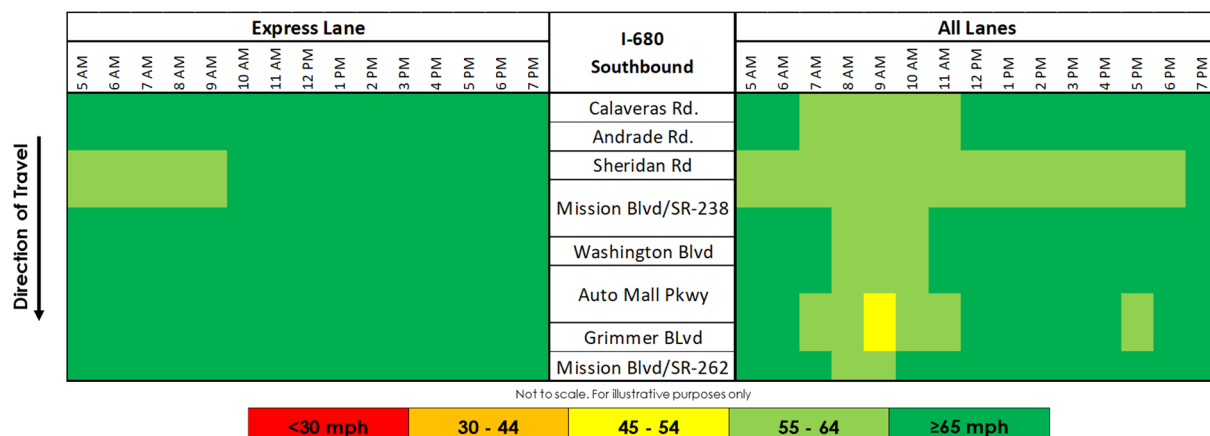


Figure 4 Southbound EL and GP Speeds

On average, express lane users experienced better traffic conditions in both directions compared to all lanes, particularly during peak commute hours.

## Financial Highlights

- Total net position increased by \$22.37 million or 438.0 percent from \$5.11 million to \$27.48 million as of June 30, 2023, compared to June 30, 2022. This increase is mostly due to contributed capital assets received from Alameda County Transportation Commission on March 31, 2023 once tolling was activated following completion of phase one of Alameda CTC's Interstate 680 (I-680) Sunol Northbound Express Lane Project. Capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation, comprised \$21.26 million or 77.4 percent of the total net position at June 30, 2023.
- For the year ended June 30, 2023, cash and cash equivalents increased by \$1.79 million or 35.3 percent from \$5.07 million to \$6.85 million compared to June 30, 2022. This increase is mostly related to the resumption of revenue operations on the I-680 Southbound Express Lane and beginning revenue operations on the northbound lane on March 31, 2023.
- Operating revenue was \$2.95 million during fiscal year 2022-23. There was no operating revenue during fiscal year 2021-22 due to the suspension of revenue operations in August 2020 to allow for improvements to be made to the I-680 Express Lanes. The express lanes reopened for revenue operations just before the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2022-23. A small amount of violation revenue collected since returning to revenue operations is reflected in the operating revenue total for the first time this fiscal year and will continue in future years due to the implementation of an automated toll violation enforcement system.
- The Authority's total operating expenses including depreciation were \$2.31 million during fiscal year 2022-23, an increase of \$1.76 million or 323.1 percent over fiscal year 2021-22. This increase is attributed to the resumption of revenue operations on the southbound express lane and beginning revenue operations on the northbound express lane on March 31, 2023, resulting in a significant increase in operations and maintenance expenses. Operating expenses of \$2.31 million for fiscal year 2022-23 were primarily comprised of operations and maintenance costs.