



TA Board of Directors  
Meeting of April 3, 2025

Correspondence as of March 14, 2025

# Subject

1. SMDJ coverage of 101 Express Lane Project North of 380

**From:** [Mike Swire](#)  
**To:** [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](#); [Board \(@smcta.com\)](#)  
**Subject:** SMDJ coverage of 101 Express Lane Project North of 380  
**Date:** Monday, March 10, 2025 11:30:11 AM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)  
[Concern rises over new express lanes](#) [Local News](#) [smdailyjournal.com.pdf](#)

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Dear SMCTA Board and CAC,

Thank you to the Board for its discussion of the 101 Express Lane Project North of 380 at your March 2025 meeting. I applaud Supervisor Speier for initiating debate on whether this project, including the expensive and likely traffic inducing widening option, is the best use of taxpayer dollars right now, especially as we struggle to fund popular safety improvements such as the grade separations at Broadway in Burlingame, Linden/Scott in SSF, and Ravenswood in Menlo Park. I also appreciate Chair Romero and Supervisor Corzo for suggesting that the TA, as sponsor of the project, consider removal of the widening option and instead proceed with consideration of the conversion option, alone. This is in line with the [vote of the SMCTA Community Advisory Committee](#) in October 2023.

Below and attached is front page coverage of the discussion in the SMDJ.

Sincerely,

Mike Swire  
San Mateo resident

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# Concern rises over new express lanes

Advocates and some elected officials voice apprehension over expansion costs and lack of data on effectiveness

By Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff   Mar 8, 2025   [6](#)

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A FasTrak express lane and sign on Highway 101.

More concerns are popping up during the early stages of a project that would extend the Highway 101 express lanes north of Interstate 380.

The current express lanes, which opened about two years ago, stretches 22 miles on Highway 101 from the Santa Clara County line to Interstate 380. Starting around 2020, the San Mateo County Transportation Authority began conducting research on expanding the project north of the interstate, either by converting an existing lane into an express lane or constructing a brand-new one.

The initiative is in the environmental and preliminary design phase, a multiyear effort that is expected to be completed by the middle or end of 2026.

But the project has been controversial almost since the beginning. Transit advocates and some elected officials have expressed concern that the TA will not have the data to determine whether the current express lanes have improved congestion — one of the primary goals the agency touted for the project. In fact, some have suggested congestion has only increased, particularly for those in the nonexpress lanes.

Jackie Speier, TA board member and San Mateo County supervisor, said she was concerned about the county

spending \$10 million during this early stage before a decision is even solidified.

“With all the needs in this county right now, with all these grade separations that have inadequate funding, to move forward with this is something, I think, we should pause and think about,” she said.

Staff and other board members have pointed out the funding is already allocated for highway-specific projects and that most of the \$10 million has already been spent.

“We want to see the data. I want to see what the potential impacts could be in South San Francisco, in that neighborhood which would be close to the freeway. Would there be an increase in carbon emissions, in [vehicle miles traveled]?” Mark Nagales, TA board member and South San Francisco councilmember, said. “I want to give our staff and the TA the appropriate time to do the necessary background and research and data collection to make a determination.”

Because the express lanes have now been open for officially two years, Dan Lieberman, TA spokesperson, said via email that the agency will start “comparing the lane performance from the prior year” and are in the process of “reviewing available data and scoping a study with additional metrics.”

The agency has said that extending the express lanes north of Interstate 380 could also incentivize carpooling, though it’s unclear whether that’s been realized on the current express lanes. Because drivers self-report how many passengers are in their cars, TA staff have said the number of carpoolers is likely inflated. During a recent Citizens Advisory Committee meeting, Lacy Vong, policy program manager for the San Mateo County Express Lanes Joint Powers Authority, said there is “no data source” that can improve verification and that the number of people who are misdeclaring is likely “pretty high.”

During the meeting, TA Chair Carlos Romero said he’d



like to move forward with the preliminary phase.

“This is, to say the least, somewhat of a controversial project because it is freeway widening,” Romero said.

“The reason I think it makes sense to continue with the analysis is that perhaps the option of doing this is a nonhighway expansion project — that is, converting an existing lane into a toll lane — could indeed make sense given we are about \$7 million into this project.”

Initial estimates on the total construction costs for the express lanes expansion could range from \$250 million to \$350 million.

[https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/local/concern-rises-over-new-express-lanes/article\\_c88c39fa-fbd4-11ef-827b-6b38e9593405.html](https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/local/concern-rises-over-new-express-lanes/article_c88c39fa-fbd4-11ef-827b-6b38e9593405.html)

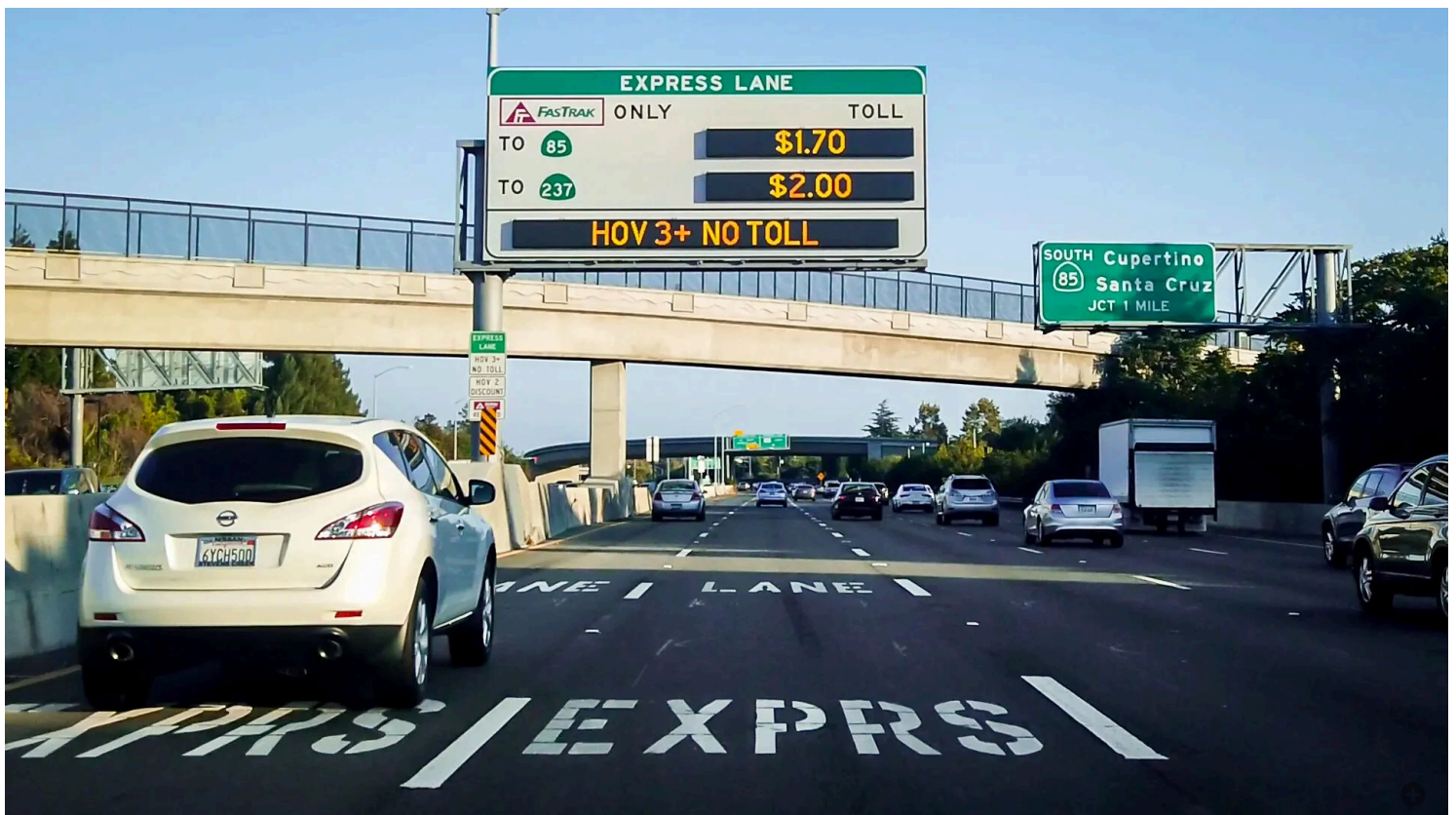
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## Concern rises over new express lanes

Advocates and some elected officials voice apprehension over expansion costs and lack of data on effectiveness

By Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff

Mar 8, 2025



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#### MORE INFORMATION



Questions over express lane congestion impact

**Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff**

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