



TA Community Advisory Committee
Meeting of April 29, 2025

Correspondence as of April 4, 2025

Subject

1. SF Chronicle - Permanent Traffic (including SM County)
2. SMDJ article on 101/92 Direct Connector project
3. Fwd: C/CAG and SMCTA Creates Deadliest Road in Bay Area
4. Relationship between congestion and emissions

From: [Mike Swire](#)
To: [Board \(@smcta.com\)](#); [cacsecretary \(@smcta.com\)](#)
Subject: SF Chronicle - Permanent Traffic (including SM County)
Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 12:39:42 PM
Attachments: [Rush hour is over in the Bay Area. Welcome to era of permanent traffic.pdf](#)

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Dear TA Board and CAC members,

I thought that you might be interested in [this week's article on "permanent traffic" in the SF Chronicle](#). It discusses how Bay Area roads are full, *even before and after traditional "rush hour" times*. They mention terrible traffic between RWC and SFO after rush hour hours. They don't mention, however, that we recently widened 101 through much of this stretch. This experience aligns with JPA staff's comments at last month's CAC meeting that the recent widening of 101 in this corridor had not improved congestion.

I hope that we will continue to examine existing data on the failure of widening to improve congestion prior to making similar decisions in the future.

Sincerely,

Mike Swire

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BAY AREA

Rush hour is over in the Bay Area. Welcome to the era of permanent traffic

By **Rachel Swan**, Reporter

March 31, 2025

 Gift Article











Rush hour traffic, like on Highway 80 westbound between the University Avenue and Ashby Street exits in Berkeley, used to be common in the morning and evening commute times. But now these conditions are more common throughout the day.

Jessica Christian/The Chronicle



Listen Now: Rush hour is over in the Bay A

1x

6:56

Everlit

David Lovato remembers, in painfully stark detail, the night he hit his misery point with Bay Area traffic.

It was 7:30 p.m. on a Wednesday last October, well after what would traditionally be called “rush hour.” Lovato caught a shuttle

bus from his company in Mountain View, thinking he would zip up Highway 101 to San Francisco.

Instead, the bus spent 90 minutes plodding through gridlock that Lovato found mystifying.

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“We crawled past Palo Alto, Redwood City and San Francisco International Airport,” he said. There was no sign of a car crash, a lane closure or a concert at Shoreline Amphitheatre. Peak commute hours were supposedly over. So where were all these drivers going?

Such questions have perplexed transportation experts in the Bay Area, many of whom observe a similar shift in traffic patterns — on freeways as well as public transportation. Rush hour, it seems, has transformed in an era of hybrid work. Workers who returned to

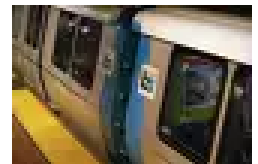
the office three days a week have found they are no longer tethered to their desks from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. As a result, they come late, leave early, drive off to play pickleball during lunch, drive at night to grab a late dinner. Flexible schedules have upended the old paradigm of a morning and evening commute.

More For You

BART traffic remains in a hole. But it's worse at these stations



‘There is a real problem’: Bay Area legislators seek to prevent BART and Muni from unraveling



“Now it’s all day long,” said Adeline Ho of San Jose, who drove to San Francisco at noon for a tech conference last Thursday. Like other motorists, she has noticed the Bay Area becoming more like Los Angeles, where people are habituated to sitting and waiting on choked freeways.

What many commuters now experience is a more compressed “peak” — near bridge toll plazas on weekday mornings, or on a packed Tuesday evening BART train — and traffic interspersed throughout the day. Overall, transit is suffering while driving has rebounded: data from the Metropolitan Transportation

Commission shows that on Wednesdays at 9 a.m., the number of Bay Bridge crossings now exceeds 2019 levels, with a strong recovery at other hours.

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On the roads, it feels like Bay Area traffic has reached a stage of permanent nuisance. It's relentless but unpredictable, swelling at random times. Still, the jams are not bad enough to nudge more people onto mass transit.

“People who commute, we’re Type A — we like to control things,” Donise Lewis of Oakland said as she walked out of a parking garage in downtown San Francisco. Despite the erratic nature of traffic, a driver “can still be in control.”

The new normal has created obvious challenges for public transportation systems like BART, which were built to

accommodate a 6-to-10 a.m. and 3-to-7 p.m. daily rhythm of travel into the city's downtown corridor. Officials at BART have tried, valiantly, to adapt.

One person who observed the rush-hour evolution early on was John FitzGibbon, BART's manager of scheduling and planning. In September 2023, he devised a plan to reconfigure the rail system's schedule, boosting service on nights and weekends and on the yellow line from Pittsburg/Baypoint — where rush hour crowds were most concentrated.

Since then, BART has seen riders gradually return on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, with a higher share of trips happening in the middle of the day than before the pandemic. That could be people running errands, or heading to the office at unconventional hours, agency spokesperson Alicia Trost suggested.

By last year, officials at BART and other transit agencies had grimly accepted the three-day work week, realizing there was little they could do to restore lost fare revenue on Monday and Friday. Labor contracts and the logistics of balancing a rail fleet prevent BART from more drastically reimagining its schedule, FitzGibbon said.

Even the 2023 service changes haven't lured back Lewis, who used to ride BART and now drives almost exclusively.

"I come to the city less often," she said, adding that she has become strategic, relying on navigation apps to find the secret routes — and small windows of time — with less congestion.

Other commuters struggle to acclimate to Los Angeles-style traffic.

"There's still a rush hour, but the edges have been smeared into other parts of the schedule," said Geoffrey Fowler of Oakland, who rides a motorcycle to work in Hayward. He said many of his co-workers arrive at 5 a.m. and try to leave by 1 p.m. "to make their drives a little more tolerable."

Stanford University economics professor Nicholas Bloom, who has extensively studied the ramifications of the three-day work week, said he's not surprised to see a staggered rush hour.

Companies' return-to-office policies "almost never stipulate" a daily schedule, so many workers arrive and depart at their convenience, Bloom said. Some attend meetings virtually from their kitchens in the morning, head to the office later, leave in time to pick their kids up from school and sign on again at night.

Technology platforms like Zoom and Slack have dissolved the barriers between work and home while enabling a new kind of lifestyle, said Abby Raisz, research director at the Bay Area Council business association.

“There needs to be substantial benefit to bringing people in” to the office, Raisz said. She cited recent surveys the council conducted that explain people’s reluctance to come back five days a week. Consistently, people point to the number of hours they waste commuting.

But a lot of the people who aren’t driving to an office or transit stop at 8 a.m. are still driving throughout the day. On sunny afternoons, Highway 13 in Berkeley snarls with day-trippers, said Eisso Mansvelt Beck, who has biked along that route to Joaquin Miller Park in Oakland.

Because work schedules are more elastic, people mix leisure activities into their day and spend more hours on the computer at night, Bloom said, referring to productivity data from Microsoft. Many workers leave their desks to play golf or hit the gym. Grocery stores that historically teemed with shoppers on Saturday mornings are reporting surges on weekdays as well. Among them is the Safeway on Jackson Street in San Francisco’s Financial

District, which had long lines last Tuesday evening, said Danny Snyder, a worker at the Exploratorium who stopped at the store on his way home.

All of these changes in behavior put more cars on the road at different times of day. Many people have simply adjusted their expectations. Nicolas Capera, who takes calls from home in Berkeley before driving to a job in San Leandro, said he has grown accustomed to the mid-morning slog on Interstate 880. He can't really remember what conditions were like before COVID.

Bloom wonders whether the whole idea of rush hour may become obsolete in 10 years anyway, if everyone has self-driving cars and traffic becomes significantly more efficient.

Not everyone embraces that vision of the future. Lovato, who doesn't own a car, converted to public transit after experiencing that late-evening jam in October. Ever since then, he has taken Caltrain to work, biking to and from stations to get exercise in between. He pities people who default to driving.

Chronicle staff writer Nami Sumida contributed to this report.

Reach Rachel Swan: rswan@sfchronicle.com

March 31, 2025

**Rachel Swan**

REPORTER



Rachel Swan is a breaking news and enterprise reporter. She joined the Chronicle in 2015 after stints at several alt weekly newspapers. Born in Berkeley, she graduated from Cal with a degree in rhetoric and is now raising two daughters in El Cerrito.

More For You



BAY AREA

California Forever plots big shift: A huge shipbuilding operation

California Forever is considering bringing a huge shipbuilding operation to Solano County amid a vow by President Trump to reinvigorate U.S. naval engineering.

TOTAL SF

The BART speedrun covers 50 stations and 131.2 miles of the Bay Area

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From: [Mike Swire](#)
To: [Board \(@smcta.com\)](#); [cacsecretary \(@smcta.com\)](#)
Subject: SMDJ article on 101/92 Direct Connector project
Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 12:47:56 PM
Attachments: [101 92 Direct Connect.pdf](#)

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Dear SMCTA Board and CAC,

In anticipation of this week's update on the 101/92 Direct Connector initiative, I wanted to provide [the attached SMDJ article](#) on public sentiment in San Mateo regarding the project.

Sincerely,

Mike Swire

https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/local/san-mateans-raise-concern-over-101-92-project/article_943d1d52-4317-11ef-b73d-5f2e965d34a6.html

FEATURED

From the Daily Journal archives

San Mateans raise concern over 101/92 project

People say plan's goal of reducing congestion is dubious

By Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff
Jul 16, 2024



Efforts to add a connecting lane between Highway 101 express lanes and State Route 92 was met with resistance from potentially impacted San Mateans, as the San Mateo County Transportation Authority discussed the project's status on

Thursday, July 11.

The highly-trafficked intersection largely comprises commuters heading to or from the San Mateo-Hayward Bridge. But State Route 92, primarily a one- to two-lane highway in each direction — at least on the Peninsula — is a congestion hot spot, and efforts on how to quell traffic at the interchange have been discussed on and off for about 10 years.

But the initiative would also involve acquiring over 30 parcels of private property via eminent domain, which stipulates that owners may have to sell their land under certain circumstances, provided it will be used for public use.

One of the impacted houses belongs to Karen Cutler, whose family has lived on the property for over 70 years. She said the project itself is short-sighted in that, without modifications to the San Mateo-Hayward Bridge itself, congestion leading up to the bridge would still abound, even with a connector lane.

“The disruption of lives of the 33 families that would be affected by Caltrans forcing them to sell their homes for a project that won’t help solve our traffic congestion should not be allowed,” Cutler said.

San Mateo Councilmember Rich Hedges and Danielle Cwirko-Godycki, San Mateo resident and City Council candidate, said they were concerned with the lack of transparency and property impacts this would have on many San Mateans.

“What I’d ask from you guys is more transparency and finding mechanisms to reach out to the community because I’ve walked around the area and some people know and some people don’t,” Cwirko-Godycki said during public comment. “These are

family homes that people inherit. These are people that are low-income, hard-working blue-collar folk that are barely making it so it's a really big deal, the idea that we might lose our property for a freeway."

According to the July 11 staff presentation, the connector lane could be constructed to quell morning commute congestion by connecting the westbound portion of State Route 92 to both directions of the Highway 101 express lanes. Conversely, the lane could mitigate evening traffic by connecting the eastbound side to Highway 101's express lanes. A reversible lane is also a possibility, which would serve both east and westbound traffic, depending on the time of day.

Board Chair Carlos Romero surfaced some concerns held not only by nearby property owners but also transit advocates who have repeatedly argued that adding more lanes to freeways inevitably encourages more individual driving, rather than taking public transportation. Dedicating significant investment in such a project should be focused on "reducing the number of vehicles and miles traveled by having more people in a car," he said.

In response to public concern, he also added that there are examples of similar efforts, such as the Willow Road and Highway 101 interchange, where property-taking in East Palo Alto was raised as an option in the early stages but ultimately did not occur.

"There is opportunity to address many of the questions that are here. I can understand very clearly how people feel about takings in their property," Romero said. "We certainly tried to address that in East Palo Alto when we were looking at the Willow Road widening, which has now worked and we are all pretty much satisfied with the way it worked out."

The environmental review phase is estimated for completion around 2026, with construction occurring no sooner than 2029, according to staff.

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MORE INFORMATION



92/101 connector lane effort resumes

Plans proceeding for 101/92 interchange congestion remedy

Don't ignore local traffic safety needs

Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff

Daily Journal staff

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From: [Malcolm Robinson](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](mailto:cacsecretary [@smcta.com])
Cc: [Malcolm Robinson](#)
Subject: Fwd: C/CAG and SMCTA Creates Deadliest Road in Bay Area
Date: Thursday, April 3, 2025 10:50:22 AM

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Begin forwarded message:

From: Malcolm Robinson <calmotomal@gmail.com>
Date: April 2, 2025 at 12:27:38 PM HST
To: publiccomments@smcta.com
Subject: C/CAG and SMCTA Creates Deadliest Road in Bay Area

In America #1 is what people excel towards, usually. C/CAG and the SMC TA have combined to create El Camino Real, the Deadliest Road in the Bay Area according to Bay Area News Group's analysis of local safety data between 2002-2022. What can we do about making it safer on our main thoroughfares?

Vision Zero, created in Scandinavia to bring pedestrian and bicycle safety to the forefront of infrastructure planning has been working, in other places. SMC TA instead first gave us Plan 2050, a.k.a. NOT in my lifetime will it be safe on our streets. This plan morphed into Local Road Safety Plan. Zero Deaths was too much of a stretch?

This week's SMC TA agenda has more freeway building, a few more hundreds of millions of our tax dollars on faster automobile transport. Just like last month's agenda, just a different freeway project. Folks, you're killing us. Please make it safer on our streets, all over San Mateo County. After all, Equity should be more than a campaign slogan.

PS Thanks for the new Pedestrian Safety sign at northbound CA-1 Grey Whale Cove state park. I guess the crosswalk SMC TA budgeted for could not work. The sign is a help.

Please continue to make pubic transport effective, efficient, and safe. Thanks in advance for your assistance.

Rgds,

Malcolm Robinson

Sent from my iPad

From: [Mike Swire](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com \]](#); [Board \(@smcta.com \)](#)
Subject: Relationship between congestion and emissions
Date: Thursday, April 3, 2025 11:23:52 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[image.png](#)
[image.png](#)

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Hi all,

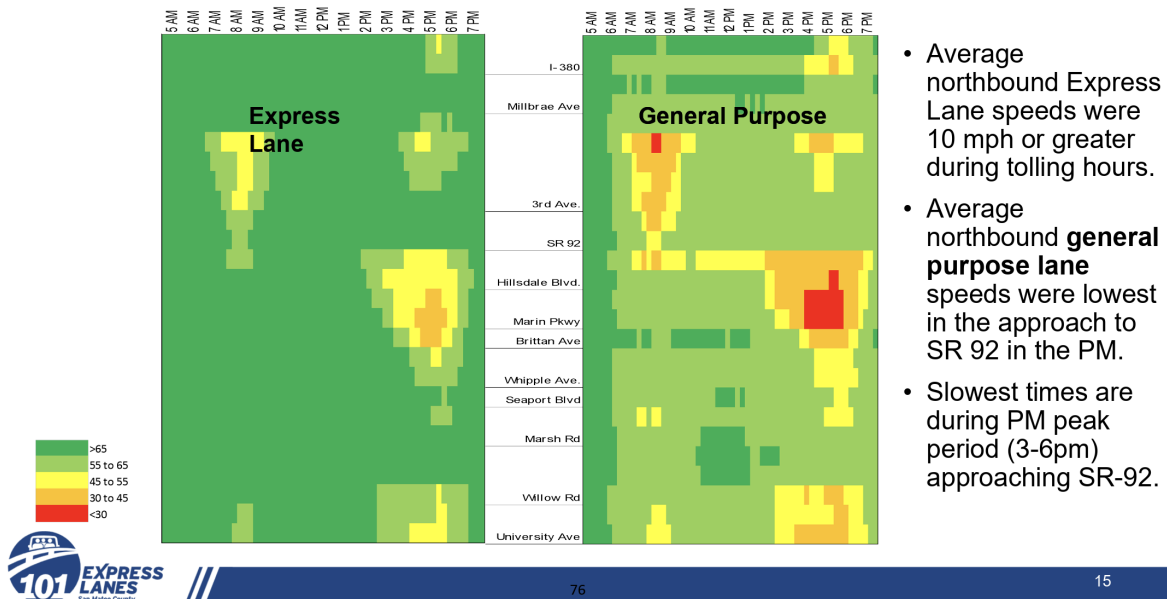
In yesterday's CAC meeting, someone raised the point that increasing highway capacity can reduce emissions by increasing average vehicle speeds (including reducing idling in traffic). I do not believe that this is accurate as it ignores the impact of capacity expansion on induced demand.

It is certainly true that an internal combustion car that moves very slowly emits more than one traveling at optimal speeds of 40 mph or so. This has become less troublesome in recent years, however, as [stop-start systems](#) are now standard on nearly all new cars. These systems deactivate engines when the car is idle. Plus, hybrid cars recapture more energy in stop start traffic. (I am ignoring the impact on electric cars as they don't emit emissions while driving.).

In addition, it is important to remember while congestion can be frequent (during peak periods primarily), average vehicle speeds seldom drop below 30 mph:

Northbound Speeds by Location & Time - FY25 Q2

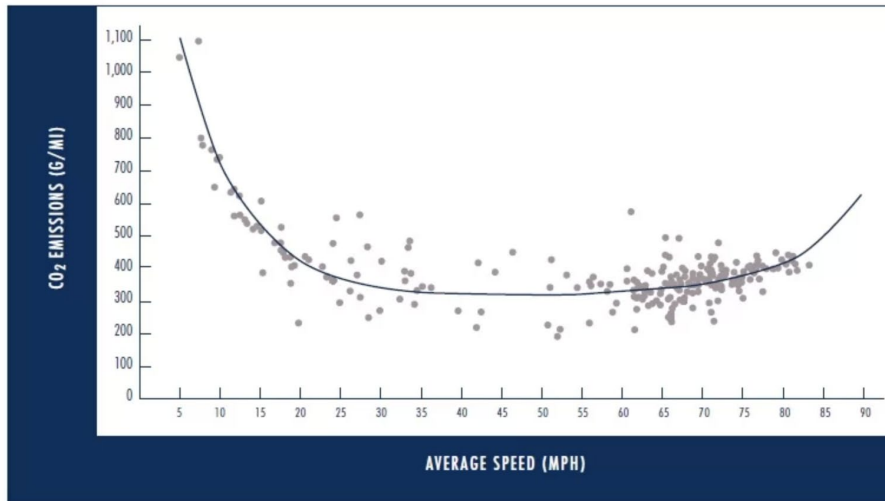
Item #11.b.
4/7/2025



At 25 mph, which is much more common than stopped traffic/idling, emissions are only slightly higher than at 40 mph/optimal speeds:

FIGURE 5

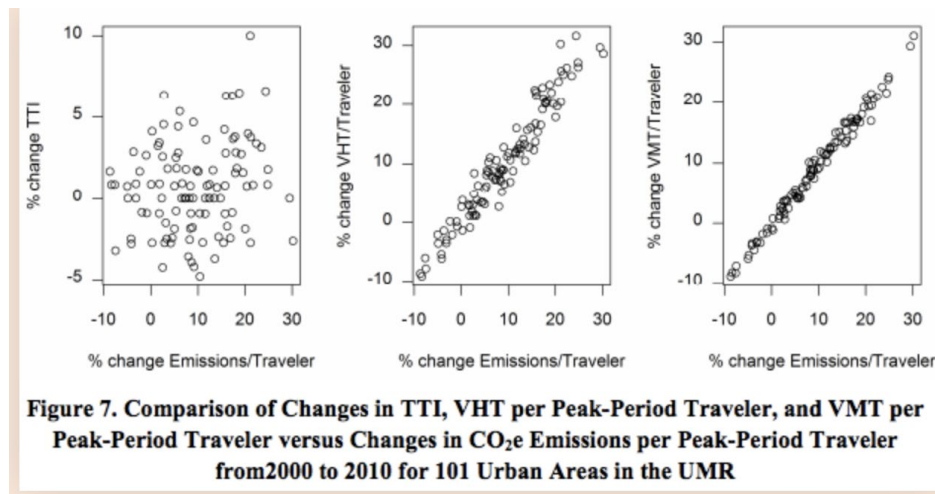
Emission-speed plot of individual trips or trip segments



Also, note that when speeds increase beyond 40 mph, emissions begin to increase again. If we increase speeds during non-rush hours, emissions will increase.

Most importantly, however, [when we increase highway capacity, we increase VMT](#) due to more cars on the road and longer trips. [This engineering study](#) suggests that when we increase highway capacity, net emissions increase. The increase in emissions due to induced demand offsets any (temporary) reduction in emissions due to increases in average vehicle speeds.

[This article](#) summarizes the findings and includes the following graphs that shows that there is no correlation between congestion (TTI) and emissions (graph 1) but that VMT and emissions are positively correlated (graph 3).



Let me know what you think. This would be a great discussion for the group as we try to increase our technical expertise.

Mike Swire