

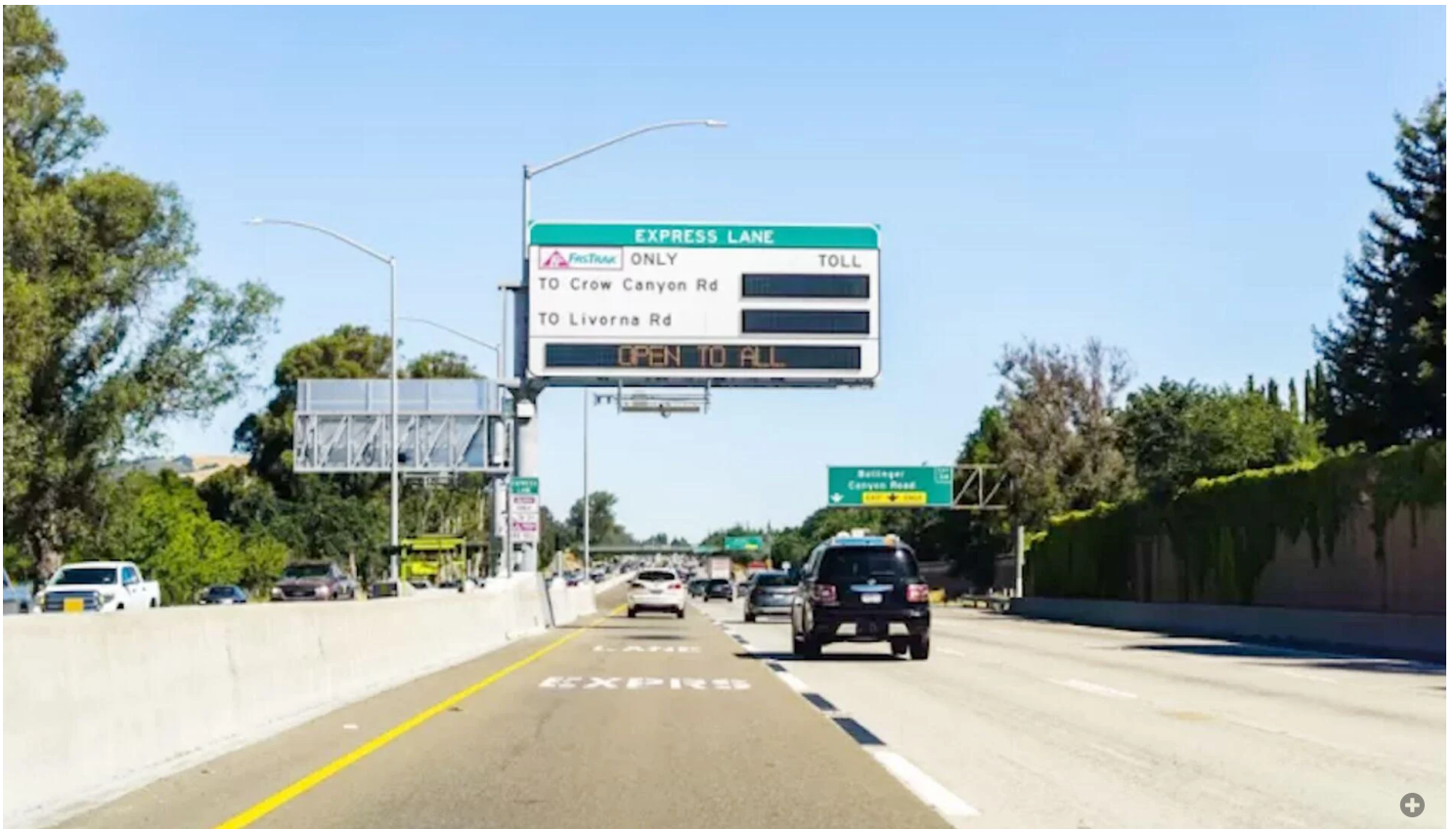
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FEATURED

## Expansion of express lanes north of Interstate 380 moves closer

County Transportation Authority board approves application for Highway 101 project funding

By Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff  
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Efforts to add an express lane north of Interstate 380 are one step closer to securing additional funding, as the San Mateo County Transportation Authority Board approved a resolution on Thursday, Oct. 5, that allows county staff to apply for measures A and W grant funds to complete the current project phase.

The San Mateo 101 Managed Lanes Project North of I-380 is part of a larger initiative that aims to decrease congestion in the county, particularly along Highway 101. Construction on express lanes from the Santa Clara County line to Interstate 380 was finalized in March of this year, and the county is now looking to expand the project up to the San Francisco county line. Express lanes charge drivers a use fee depending on traffic conditions at the time. Carpool users can use the lanes for free with a FasTrak Flex.

The plan consists of three project alternatives, which could construct a brand-new lane, convert an existing lane into an express lane or simply leave all lanes as they currently are.

April Chan, executive director of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, reiterated that the project is still in its nascency, and the grant funding they are seeking will allow them to complete the second phase, which includes an environmental review of all three alternatives. The TA oversees the county's half-cent sales taxes dedicated to transportation projects.

“The action that we are asking the board to take is to approve for staff to be able to submit an application to request funding in order to continue to complete the environmental review process,” Chan said. “We are not asking the board to select a project alternative. That’s something that we will certainly be coming back to as we have more data.”

But some still voiced concern, pushing for the elimination of any option that involves the construction of a new lane.

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“Having more highway capacity is something that encourages driving. It increases air pollution and, even when we have electric cars, we are getting more information that the tires are creating particulate pollution that are causing problems for people who live near the highway and our ecosystem,” public transport advocate Adina Levin said to the San Mateo County TA Board. “We urge you to take that option that increases driving and harms the environment off the table.”

The TA Citizens Advisory Committee also rejected the resolution at the Tuesday, Oct. 3, meeting, citing the divisive nature of the issue.

“I ask the board to take widening of Highway 101 north of 380 off the table. We have an opportunity to ensure we do not waste any more time or money on what may be the most catastrophic environmental decision possible in San Mateo County,” Mike Swire, member of the TA Citizens Advisory Committee, said.

While environmental, health and traffic congestion concerns were front and center for numerous attendees, the board highlighted the importance of assessing potential impact on all project alternatives, especially as neighboring counties’ plans could offer valuable direction. In similar phases of previous managed lane projects, the board hadn’t considered that San Francisco would also build a managed lane, which could have been a pivotal point in the evaluation process, said Emily Beach, TA board member and also a Burlingame councilmember.

“If we had data at the time that imagined San Francisco having a carpool lane there, we might have had a different outcome. We might have had different data, because traffic would have flowed differently,” she said. “It’s important to understand what

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San Francisco is doing, because the results and the congestion is going to impact what we do in the north of San Mateo County.”

The TA board had previously allocated \$8 million for the current phase of the project, but approximately \$2 million in additional funding is now needed to complete it. To finalize the grant application, the TA needs additional approval from their governing body, which includes its Board of Directors and the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County Board of Directors. The latter will vote on the resolution Thursday, Oct. 12.

A draft environmental impact report available for public comment will be released at the end of 2024, according to the presentation.

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