

FAST 101 Coalition Sign-On Letter

Dear Chair Aguirre and Board Members,

Growing congestion and longer commutes are serious problems that diminish the quality of life on the Peninsula and urgently need to be dealt with. We, the undersigned organizations, stand together in support of a visionary but practical solution to congestion on Highway 101 that can meet transportation, equity, environmental, and safety objectives.

As studies have clearly shown, widening a highway will invite more cars and traffic. This approach has left a long legacy of social and environmental harm to our communities, including adding more traffic to our local streets, polluting our air, and using eminent domain to take land, all without ever addressing the underlying problem of congestion.

A FAST solution is needed for Highway 101

We believe that if we invest in proven Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) trip-reduction strategies and tap into the innovation of Silicon Valley, we can have a **FAST 101– Fast, Affordable, and Sustainable Transportation on Highway 101**. The signers of this letter wholeheartedly endorse FAST 101, which would convert an existing lane in each direction on Highway 101 in San Mateo County into a FAST express lane - the quickest, most sustainable, and equitable option to provide relief to congestion on the 101 Corridor.

Express lanes, also known as High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes, allow carpools, buses, and other high-occupancy vehicles in for free and give solo drivers the option to pay into the lane with a toll that varies based on demand to ensure the lane flows freely. Express lanes, however, benefit high income over low income commuters and are typically created by expensive and time consuming highway widening, as is being considered on Highway 101 in San Mateo County.

On the other hand, our proposal for FAST express lanes would convert an existing lane on Highway 101 instead of widening. While still allowing toll-paying SOVs, FAST lanes channel revenues from tolls, as well as other funding sources, to space-efficient transportation options — express buses, shuttles, vanpools, carpools, active transportation, and more — and provide incentives to use them. FAST lanes also provide benefits to low-income commuters by improving and expanding affordable transportation options and incorporating at least one equitable tolling provision. Performance measures and close monitoring will ensure FAST express lanes are meeting traffic reduction, environmental, and equity goals and support constant, adaptive improvement.

The FAST 101 alternative includes the following benefits:

Fast and flexible

- **Moves more people faster on 101.** A FAST express lane could move as many people as all the regular lanes combined, by providing additional higher speed transit options for

¹ Caltrans study citation - http://www.dot.ca.gov/research/researchreports/reports/2015/10-12-2015-NCST_Brief_InducedTravel_CS6_v3.pdf

people who would ordinarily drive. A FAST lane will move 6,000 to 8,000 people per hour during the peak hour vs. 2,000 people in the general purpose lanes. This will improve travel times for everyone.

- **Faster to build** than any other solution under consideration — just three years to convert a lane vs. 8-10 years for widening. Investments to improve transportation choices such as express bus services can start immediately, even before the lanes begin operation.
- **Provides flexibility**, transparency, and adaptability by establishing performance standards and ongoing monitoring. This will ensure that strategies that achieve the best results are fully leveraged and that the lanes meet desired outcomes. If the lanes do not meet performance standards over time, other strategies, including widening, can be considered to ensure the needs of the corridor are met.

Affordable

- **Funds affordable transportation options** like express bus service, reduced transit fares, incentives for carpooling and vanpools, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements to move more people and provide greater benefits to commuters of all incomes.
- **At least one equitable tolling strategy will be incorporated**, such as a means based toll or an incentive program that provides toll credits to transit users, to ensure low income motorists gain greater access to the speed and reliability benefits of the lanes.
- **Less expensive to build** than any other solution under consideration, allowing early funding for proven traffic-reduction strategies.

Sustainable Transportation

- **Funds more sustainable transportation options to reduce rates of driving, greenhouse gas emissions, and local and regional air pollution.**
- **Won't create more traffic on our local roads** and interchanges like widening inevitably will.

Steps to a FAST 101

We understand there are limitations to what can be studied and modeled within the constraints of the current Environmental Impact Report. But we can't let that stop innovative and proven solutions to age-old problems.

We strongly recommend that a FAST 101 alternative be developed and we stand ready to support you in those efforts. The alternative would aim to carry at least 6,000 people in the FAST express lane – about the same as the other three lanes combined – and provide broader benefits to all users. To understand the full benefits of the FAST 101 alternative, the model should consider:

- The benefits of an express lane that continues all the way to downtown San Francisco. San Francisco County Transportation Authority is about to study this option, and they see it as a promising traffic reduction strategy.
- The growth of new mobility options, which are certain to have a tremendous impact as they come to scale. These options include carpool apps like Scoop that C/CAG recently supported and new private mini-shuttles like those run by Chariot, among others.
- A higher number of private shuttles, which would certainly operate if express lanes continued all the way from San Jose to downtown San Francisco

- Significant funding of transit alternatives, transportation demand management (TDM) measures to incentivize the shift away from solo driving, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- A conversion-first scenario that also provides for flexibility to add capacity in the future if and when demand outstrips the capacity of the lanes to move enough people. Capacity increasing strategies could include carpool, express, or transit-only lanes.

Furthermore, the FAST 101 alternative, along with the other alternatives currently being studied, should:

1. Be analyzed according to Caltrans' Smart Mobility Framework and key performance measures adopted as part of the recent San Mateo Countywide Transportation Plan.²
2. Account for the full effects of induced demand, i.e. the additional vehicle trips that are ultimately generated from highway widening.
3. Identify the local streets and arterials where the additional car trips created by the widening alternative go after leaving the highway corridor, so residents and cities along the corridor can understand the added traffic impacts to our already-crowded streets.

Finally, one final step to achieving a FAST on 101 strategy is overcoming the existing lack of clarity at the state level in allowing for conversion of a general purpose lane to an express lane. We hope we can count on your support to help advance legislation in the form of a short to mid term pilot project or an exemption to convert a lane on Highway 101 to show proof of concept.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. Please contact us with any questions or concerns, or if you would like help to determine how best to implement these recommendations.

Adrienne Etherton, Executive Director, Sustainable San Mateo County

Bruce Hodge, Carbon Free Palo Alto

Chris Lepe, Senior Community Planner, TransForm

Diane Bailey, Menlo Spark

Montzerrat Garcia Bedolla, Youth Leadership Institute

Nicole Kemeny, President, 350 Silicon Valley

Shiloh Ballard, Executive Director, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition

Stew Plock, Co-Founder, Silicon Valley Climate Action Alliance

Yoriko Kishimoto, Boardmember, Friends of Caltrain

Debbie Mytels, Chair, Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action

² http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/Smart_Mobility_Framework_Factsheet.pdf; <http://ccag.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/5-San-Mateo-CTP-Final-Draft-v2.1.1.pdf>