



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS)?**

An EIR/EIS is a document required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It evaluates potential impacts that a proposed project might have on people or the environment and addresses issues such as, air quality, health risk, noise, visual disruption, and construction impacts, among others.

### **Why do an EIR/EIS?**

For a proposed project to move forward to construction, the extent of environmental impacts must first be determined according to State of California and federal law. If potentially significant impacts are anticipated, or if the project is considered controversial, an EIR/EIS is required. The EIR/EIS process simultaneously ensures that the requirements for documenting and reducing environmental impacts of a project are met. Additionally, the process provides for technical analysis as well as public input and participation.

### **How will this project improve air quality and reduce health risk?**

To ensure a thorough examination of air quality and health risk, an Air Quality and Health Risk Assessment will be prepared for the I-710 EIR/EIS. Health risk assessments are used to determine if a particular pollutant or chemical poses a significant risk to human health and, if so, under what circumstances. The results from this study can be utilized to develop strategies for improving air quality and reducing health risk related to the project. This will be the first time such a specific Air Quality and Health Risk Assessment has been included in a major freeway study in California.

### **What is the difference between California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?**

CEQA is a State of California law and requires an EIR for projects that may have a significant impact on one or more environmental resources. NEPA is a federal law, and requires the preparation of an EIS for projects that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Under CEQA, an EIR requires the determination of whether individual impacts to environmental resources are “significant.” If there are significant

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impacts, the lead agency must adopt the mitigation measures outlined in the EIR, or it cannot pursue the project. By contrast, an EIS considers both beneficial and adverse effects when determining the significance of the project impact as a whole. CEQA also focuses on “the physical environment,” while NEPA provisions identify “the human environment,” which appears broader than the CEQA focus.

### **What was the I-710 Major Corridor Study and how is it different from the EIR/EIS?**

The I-710 Major Corridor Study (MCS), completed in 2005, evaluated traffic congestion, safety, and mobility problems along the I-710 travel corridor. The MCS confirmed the need for further public investment in the corridor and developed a “Locally Preferred Strategy” for improving the freeway. It led to the initiation of the current EIR/EIS process.

Findings and recommendations from the MCS are being used as guidance for the EIR/EIS phase of the project. During the EIR/EIS, these findings will be subjected to a more thorough level of technical scrutiny and compared against other alternatives for improving the corridor. The CEQA/NEPA process requires the examination of a range of alternatives, including the “No Project” option. The result of an EIR/EIS is the development of a project alternative that could be approved for final design, engineering and construction.

### **Who is responsible for approving the I-710 EIR/EIS?**

As a project with both federal and state funding, Caltrans is the lead agency on the EIR and has been delegated authority from the federal government to be the lead agency on the EIS. As such, Caltrans, in conjunction with its funding partners, is responsible for approving the preferred alternative in the environmental document.

### **How long does the process normally take?**

EIR/EIS processes vary in length and complexity with the average duration being four to seven years. The I-710 EIR/EIS is expected to take approximately four years to complete.

### **Why does it take so long?**

EIR/EIS studies take a long time because of the need to gather, review, analyze and respond to a significant amount of technical information and community input. Additionally, CEQA and NEPA regulations mandate required public affected agency review periods for project documents.

### **How much will the I-710 EIR/EIS Corridor Project cost?**

The EIR/EIS process is estimated to cost \$30 million. Cost estimates for final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction will be developed during the EIR/EIS.

### **How will the public participate in decision-making on the I-710 EIR/EIS?**

The I-710 EIR/EIS community participation process ensures that public input influences the decision-making process of the project. Project-related information and feedback flows from the community level to the agency level, and back throughout the process. Through the project's advisory committees, the public will have the opportunity to provide recommendations to the policy-makers.

### **When can I provide input?**

There will be many opportunities for you to participate in the study. Well-publicized public scoping meetings will be held in early fall 2008. The purpose of these meetings is to provide an understanding of the project and potential alternatives and to engage the community in providing feedback and input for continued study.

In addition, the community can provide input during a variety of other public forums, such as advisory committee meetings, town hall meetings, and public hearings. You may also visit Metro's website at [www.metro.net/710eir](http://www.metro.net/710eir) to submit comments and learn about upcoming events.

You are also welcome to send comments:

Via e-mail to: [710eir@metro.net](mailto:710eir@metro.net)

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