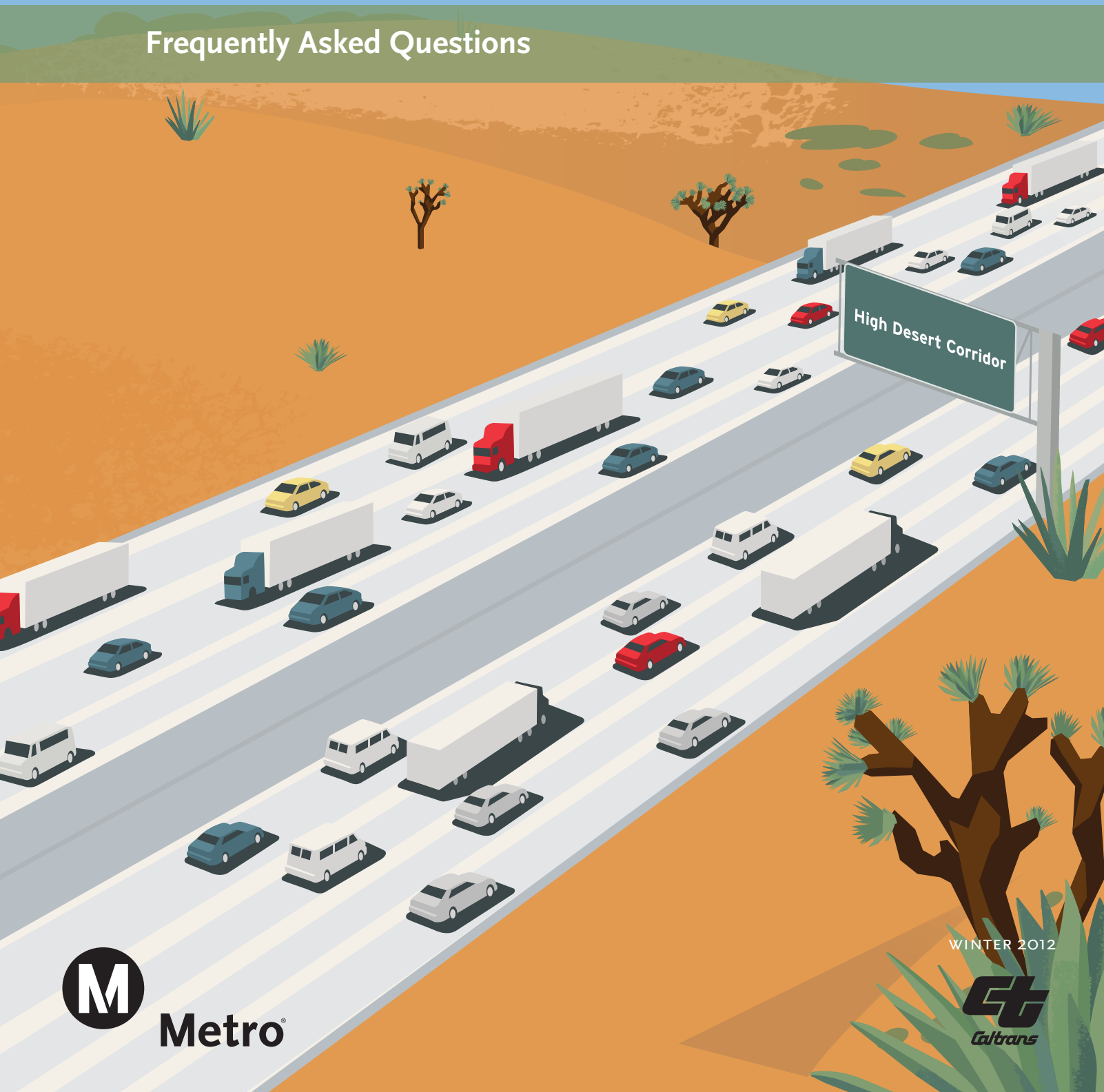


# High Desert Corridor

## Frequently Asked Questions



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WINTER 2012



## High Desert Corridor Project: Frequently Asked Questions

### When will Caltrans select one of the alternatives?

Throughout the course of the environmental study, alternatives will be refined to minimize impacts and maximize their potential benefits. The draft environmental report (Draft EIS/EIR) is scheduled to be completed and released for public review in late 2013. Staff will review public comments and the technical evaluation to recommend a Preferred Alternative (PA) in the final environmental document anticipated late 2014.

### How is the Preferred Alternative (PA) selected?

The environmental evaluation of the alternatives combined with public input is used to select the PA. Caltrans decision makers will carefully review the potential impacts and benefits of each alternative as well as the cost, funding and public input to make a final decision.

### Who is leading the effort/project study?

Caltrans is the lead agency for the completion of the environmental study and is the owner/operator of all public freeways in California. Metro is a funding partner and is responsible for transportation improvements in Los Angeles County. Together, Caltrans and Metro have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that identifies the roles and responsibilities for the environmental clearance and project approval for the HDC.

### Why is the High Desert Corridor (HDC) needed?

The continued growth of the Antelope and Victor Valley areas together with the pressure to move goods efficiently through Southern California and provide access to regional airports and rail stations has created a need to improve east/west connectivity across the High Desert region. This growth is resulting in inadequate capacity and accessibility along the existing roadways such as the SR-138 and Palmdale Bl. Metro and Caltrans will continue to coordinate with regional and local agencies to ensure the improvements will address both present and future travel demand and mobility needs.

### What are the benefits to the surrounding communities?

For years the communities along the proposed HDC have depended on limited east/west travel corridors such as Palmdale Bl and SR-138. These travel corridors are undersized, plagued by flooding and experience above average accident rates. The HDC project would provide a fully grade-separated facility that is safe and efficient. This project will also serve as an economic catalyst for continued and future job growth.

### How will the HDC be funded?

As with most, if not all, large public infrastructure projects, funding must come from a variety of sources. In the case of the HDC, the environmental clearance of the project is funded by Measure R, the ½ cent sales tax passed by voters in Los Angeles County in 2008, Measure I, the ½ cent sales tax extended in 2004 in San Bernardino County and State funds. Funding for the construction of the HDC has not been identified, but state, federal and Public-Private Partnership (P3) opportunities are being explored to determine how best to finance this project.

### Are Metro and Caltrans looking into the private funding to help offset the cost of this project?

Yes, Metro Board of Directors approved the HDC as one of six projects for further Public Private Partnership opportunities. The HDC staff will develop a Strategic Assessment and Business Case Development Plan to help identify future project funding. San Bernardino Association of Governments (SANBAG) has also designated the HDC as their number one priority project for Public Private Partnership consideration. Private funding could be generated from a combination of sources, including tolls, and possibly the generation/transmission of green energy. As such a Green Energy Corridor study is being conducted to identify the potential economic benefits that wind, solar and natural gas can provide for the operation and maintenance of the HDC.

### Is funding available now? Will it be available once construction is ready to begin?

Funding is only available to complete the environmental phase at this time. Funding for final design and construction of the HDC has not been identified. Policy and decision makers are actively working to identify the appropriate funding needed to complete the project. In addition, in October 2009, the Los Angeles County Metro Board approved the HDC as one of six projects for further Public Private Partnership opportunities and will develop a Strategic Assessment and Business Case Development Plan for future funding of the project. San Bernardino Association of Governments (SANBAG) has also designated the HDC as their number one priority project for Public Private Partnership consideration. Future phases of the project will only begin once the project funding is identified.

### Why does the environmental study include other transportation modes?

State and federal environmental laws require us to evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives that would satisfy the project's purpose and need. One part of the project's purpose is to improve east-west mobility in the High Desert region. Therefore, the project team is evaluating the feasibility of other modes of transportation that will satisfy that purpose.

### **When will construction begin on this project?**

If funding was available, the technical project development process including environmental clearance, engineering and design could prepare the HDC for construction as early as 2016. However, this is the most optimistic timeline based on the required technical requirements with no delays. Typically, funding is what determines the timing of projects not the technical process.

### **Will there be a high-speed rail (HSR) feeder component to this project?**

A HSR feeder service is included in two of the alternatives being evaluated in the environmental document. In March 2012, the Metro Board of Directors recognized the HDC as a Strategic Multipurpose Corridor that can accommodate a highway, an energy production and/or transmission facility and a high speed rail feeder service line. The XpressWest and the California High Speed Rail Authority projects are not part of this study and are currently going through their own project development processes. However, the HDC environmental study will identify feasible alternatives to connect to the Metrolink station in Palmdale and a potential XpressWest station in Victorville.

### **Will there be a HSR station along the alignment?**

It is not considered feasible to have a station in between Palmdale and Victorville due to the relatively short distance and the high train speeds.

### **Will the HDC include a bike route?**

Yes, in an effort to enhance bicycle facilities along the HDC, Metro and Caltrans will include a bike route in the environmental analysis; approximately from 100th St to US-395. Coordination has already started to identify local routes for an ideal bike connection between the City of Palmdale and the Town of Apple Valley.

### **Does the project include toll lanes?**

Some of the project alternatives consider the use of tolls along the HDC. Metro is currently conducting a Strategic Assessment and Business Case Development to determine the feasibility and specific limits of the toll lanes. Information on toll lanes will be presented to the public as soon as it becomes available.

### **Will there be dedicated truck lanes?**

No dedicated truck lanes are being proposed as part of this project. However, the HDC will help improve east-west truck movement across the High Desert.

### **Where will the new overpasses be located?**

The traffic model demand forecast study, part of the environmental clearance work, will help determine the location of overpasses, ramps, number of lanes and other traffic related elements. The traffic study is projected to be completed in June 2013.

### **Can the project team present to my group?**

Yes, Caltrans, Metro and the consultant team are available to make an HDC presentation to your group. If you are interested in having a presentation, call the project helpline at 888.252.7433.

### **What is included in the Scoping Report?**

The Scoping Report documents the outreach activities and public input received at the outset of the environmental process. Scoping meetings were conducted with the public and government agencies to identify public and agency concerns and to define the environmental issues and alternatives to be examined in the EIS/EIR. The report includes a project history, comments submitted by the community and participating agencies, and outlines key issues identified for study in the EIS/EIR.

### **What is an environmental study and how long does it take?**

Federal and state laws require an evaluation of project impacts and identification of mitigation measures. To be eligible to receive both federal and state funds, projects need to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Therefore, a combined Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) will be prepared pursuant to state and federal laws. The HDC environmental study is a lengthy process due to the large project area; it began in late 2010 and the final document is anticipated in late 2014. The public is encouraged to participate in the process throughout the development of the environmental study.



## What should I expect in the Draft EIS/EIR?

The purpose of the environmental studies that are currently being done is to identify the potential impacts of construction and operation of the project alternatives and to evaluate measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate the adverse impacts associated with each alternative. The following areas are being looked at:

- > Operation and construction
- > Traffic and parking
- > Land use and development
- > Displacement and relocations
- > Community and neighborhood impacts
- > Visual and aesthetics
- > Air quality
- > Noise and vibration
- > Ecosystems and biological resources
- > Geotechnical, seismic and hazardous materials
- > Hydrology and water quality
- > Energy
- > Climate change
- > Historic, archaeological and paleontological impacts
- > Parklands
- > Economic and fiscal impacts
- > Safety and security
- > Growth inducing impacts
- > Environmental justice
- > Cost and financial analysis

The Draft EIS/EIR will provide you with an opportunity to review and comment on the results of these studies.

## When will the Draft EIS/EIR be available for review?

The Draft EIS/EIR is expected to be released to the public in late 2013.

## How can I comment on the Draft EIS/EIR?

Once the document is released for community review and response, Caltrans will host a set of public hearings to take verbal and written comments. Additionally, comments can be submitted by email or postal mail. Currently, the Draft EIS/EIR is scheduled to be released in late 2013.


## Will this lead to increased truck traffic on local roads?

The proposed HDC project would provide a safe and efficient highway for trucks to use between SR-14, through I-15 and to SR-18. This should result in less truck traffic on local roads and improve safety. The traffic impacts of the HDC will be analyzed and documented in the Draft EIS/EIR.

## Will private property need to be purchased for this project? If so, when will property owners be notified?

The environmental document (Draft EIS/EIR) will determine what, if any, right-of-way is required for each of the proposed alternatives. Property owners will be notified of the public release of the Draft EIS/EIR and encouraged to review and provide input. If you are a property owner and are interested in following the project you can contact the project helpline 888.252.7433 and provide us with your contact information so we can place you on the project database for all notifications and updates.

## Contact Us

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