

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: Truck freeway a regional focus San Gabriel Valley pain

SCAG estimates route adjacent to Highway 60 would take 65-85 percent of heavy truck traffic off the freeway

BY DUG BEGLEY

STAFF WRITER

[dbegley@pe.com](mailto:dbegley@pe.com)

Published: 17 January 2012 04:06

PM

A deluge of freight forecast to clog Southern California freeways has regional transportation planners pursue plan for a truck-only east-west freeway between two major interstates. But it's running into stiff opposition on the way.

As part of a sweeping regional 30-year transportation plan under review, officials are considering a cargo highway between Interstate 710 in Commerce and Interstate 15 in Ontario, adjacent to Highway 60. The route would be open to trucks and in the future might cater only to zero-emission trucks that run on fuels other than diesel gasoline.

In the Inland area, some officials believe the truck route could be a boost for local trucking and shipping businesses and a way to ease traffic for area drivers. Trucking industry observers also said truck freeways make economic sense both for drivers and for companies eager to get goods moving as quickly as possible.

Today's Poll

[What's this?](#)

How do you feel about a truck-only lane?

- ☐ How wonderful. Such a lane would be a boon for both truckers and commuters
- ☐ It may be a good idea, but building such a lane could be costly
- ☐ A horrible idea. Such lanes would burden certain cities with an onslaught of trucks
- ☐ Not sure

Vote

The exact route and specifics are not finalized, but planners have a tentative proposal for a four-lane causeway — an elevated freeway — starting at I-710 and traveling east along a railroad right-of-way and then the San Gabriel Flood Control Channel before running alongside Highway 60 in Diamond Bar. The road would serve as a direct route for trucks to and from the San Pedro Bay ports.

Funneling those trucks out of the area requires getting them from the ports to Interstate 15 in most cases. The road would also cater to the trucks needed to bring items to stores and construction sites in Southern California.

“Sixty percent of the truck traffic is local distribution,” said Hasan Ikhara, executive director of the Southern California Association of Governments. The agency is preparing the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan.

The truck freeway, estimated to cost about \$15 billion, is part of the regional plan’s efforts to improve goods movement in the area. The plan, updated every four years, guides transportation spending in the six-county SCAG region, including Riverside and San Bernardino counties. To be eligible for federal funds, a project must be included in the \$524.7 billion plan.

Officials note that 40 percent of the goods coming into the country arrive at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and that contributes mightily to the 13,000 trucks that on average cross from Los Angeles County to San Bernardino County along the 60 each day. The number of trucks is predicted to nearly double by 2030.

Creating the truck-only freeway would relieve truck traffic on the 60 by as much as 85 percent, according to estimates prepared by SCAG. Overall delay for commuters would decrease by 4.3 percent, analysts found, which could shave a few minutes off commutes and trips into Los Angeles County for inland drivers.

“To me, this is as important to the passenger as it is to the trucks,” Ikhara said.

## CAUSE FOR CONCERN

But the project has faced stiff opposition from communities in the San Gabriel Valley for more than a decade, and it increased significantly in price in the meantime.

In 2001 when officials first included the truck lane proposal in regional transportation plans, the cost of the elevated freeway was \$4.3 billion for the portion between I-710 and I-15. In the 2012 transportation plan, the price tag for all three phases comes to \$15.3 billion.

Use of the flood control channel and concentrating on a route near Highway 60 has drawn ire from cities the freeway would cross. Diamond Bar has led opposition to the freeway plan, and said more study is needed before SCAG settles on a route along the 60. Montebello, Pico Rivera, South El Monte, Walnut, West Covina and Chino Hills have joined in encouraging SCAG to reconsider some of the plans, which they fear will open more trucks to their cities.

In October, Chino Hills Councilwoman Gwen Norton-Perry said regional officials should consider alternatives that take some of those trucks off inland area roads.

Some officials in eastern Los Angeles County have said more study is needed before alternatives along Interstate 10, Highway 91 and Highway 210 are abandoned.

"You are putting all the regional burden on this one corridor," said David Liu, public works director for Diamond Bar.

Officials in Diamond Bar want SCAG to either re-examine all the routes, or give them more specificity regarding why the San Gabriel Valley cities should be chosen to carry most of the truck traffic.

Ikhata disagreed, noting that three studies have found the most efficient path is closest to the 60.

"Another study is not going to change these conclusions," he said, adding that many more analyses will be needed to find a specific route that meets engineering and environmental criteria.

## INLAND BENEFIT

Transportation and elected officials in San Bernardino County believe the proposed causeway could be a benefit for area businesses, especially those tied to warehousing and logistics.

"I see all kinds of opportunities for economic development," Ontario Councilman Alan Wapner said in November. "It is a comprehensive system that helps the area in a lot of ways."

Trucks will be able to travel to warehouses along the corridor faster, potentially leading to more businesses choosing Inland sites for distribution centers, Wapner and others said.

Trucking industry officials also said giving them more reliable routes to ship items and pass through Southern California will benefit buyers and businesses. Dedicated lanes and user fees would be supported, provided they make financial sense, said Joel Anderson, president of the International Warehouse and Logistics Association.

"If we can get more productivity and less time, reduce the cost to the payroll and the cost of shipping, then there will be money available for user fees," Anderson said.