
Plan Bay Area 2040 Amendment Update

Subject: Update on a requested amendment to Plan Bay Area 2040, the current long-range plan adopted in 2017, to integrate an Interstate 680 Express Lanes project in Alameda County.

Background: An amendment is a major revision to the adopted Plan, including adding or deleting a project, or major changes in project costs and scope (e.g., changing project locations or the number of through traffic lanes). As stipulated in MTC's Public Participation Plan (2018), a Plan amendment requires public review and comment and must meet several statutory requirements.

On June 19, 2019, MTC received correspondence from the Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) requesting an amendment to the current Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), Plan Bay Area 2040 (PBA 2040), to add express lanes in the northbound and southbound directions of Interstate 680 between State Route 85 and Alcosta Boulevard (herein referred to as "I-680 Gap Closure Project"). The project has been included in prior regional plans but was not prioritized for inclusion in PBA 2040 (adopted in 2017). The project has become a near-term priority for ACTC due to an opportunity to coordinate project delivery with Caltrans, who is scheduled to deliver a State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP) project on the same segment of I-680 beginning in 2020. The amendment would allow ACTC to explore and secure a funding plan to accelerate project delivery of the I-680 Gap Closure Project in coordination with the Caltrans SHOPP project.

Statutory Requirements

The amended Plan must conform to federal and state statutory requirements. The first statutory requirement is the demonstration of fiscal constraint—meaning the costs of the added or modified project may not exceed the adopted plan's revenue forecast. Secondly, the amended plan must meet the Bay Area's SB 375 GHG emissions reduction targets—seven percent in 2020 and fifteen percent in 2035.

Other statutory requirements are related to the disclosure of potential environmental impacts as a result of the amended plan. Prior to adopting a plan amendment, two companion environmental assessments are prepared and presented to the Commission. These two documents, detailed below, disclose the potential environmental impacts of the proposed amendment.

- *Transportation-Air Quality Conformity*
This analysis addresses whether the proposed amendment conforms to the State Implementation Plan (SIP). This is carried out through the preparation of the conformity analysis/determination. MTC must implement the interagency consultation process before making a transportation conformity determination. These consultations are conducted through the Air Quality Conformity Task Force.

- Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

This analysis addresses whether the proposed amendment results in new significant impacts or changes the severity of previously identified significant impacts to the environment. This is carried out by disclosing potential environmental impacts through the preparation or update of an EIR in accordance to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Schedule and Timeline


MTC staff has begun procedures to amend PBA 2040 to add the I-680 Gap Closure Project. Staff will continue to coordinate with ACTC and Caltrans staff over the next several months to prepare the Plan amendment and the statutory environmental documents. In addition, staff will monitor the implementation of new federal fuel economy and emission standards, detailed below, and its effect on the approval of the proposed Plan amendment.

Issues:

On September 18, 2019, the Trump Administration announced that it will enact the Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient (SAFE) Vehicle Rule. When finalized, the rule will revoke California's authority to implement the Advanced Clean Cars (I and II) and zero emission vehicles (ZEV) mandates. Consequently, it also invalidates California's tool to estimate mobile source emissions—commonly known as “EMFAC”—which assumes the clean car mandates are implemented. Planning agencies across California use EMFAC to estimate mobile source emissions to demonstrate their respective plans conform to the SIP and meet federal clean air standards. As a result, the SAFE Vehicle Rule, if implemented, precludes MTC's ability to demonstrate that the I-680 Gap Closure Project conforms to federal clean air standards, a necessary step for the project to move forward. While staff may proceed with the proposed amendment, there is not a certain path or timeline for the necessary federal approval(s) at this time.

Recommendation: None

Attachments: None


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