

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Programming and Allocations Committee**

January 14, 2026

Agenda Item 3b-26-0096

Regional Measure 3 Express Lanes Category Update

Subject:

Update on the Bay Area Corridor Express Lanes Category within the Regional Measure 3 Program.

Background:

At the December 10, 2025 meeting of the Programming and Allocations Committee, Commissioners requested an update on the Bay Area Corridor Express Lanes program category within Regional Measure 3 (RM3). The Express Lanes funding category builds on MTC's efforts to implement a regional Express Lanes system, a brief history of which is included in Attachment 1. A list of projects in the Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint is included in Attachment 2.

Bay Area voters approved RM3 on June 5, 2018. RM3, as authorized by Senate Bill 595 (Beall, 2017), includes a comprehensive traffic relief program of projects funded by toll increases on the seven state-owned toll bridges in the Bay Area. Bay Area Corridor Express Lanes is one of six RM3 programmatic categories subject to further programming by MTC. RM3 provides a total of \$300 million in toll funds for the Bay Area Express Lane Network, later increased to \$316.7 million through a net-zero change with a separate RM3 project. MTC is to make the funds available based on performance criteria including benefit-cost and project readiness.

In May 2020, MTC approved initial programming for the Express Lanes category by addition of MTC Resolution No. 4411, Attachment B, directing the majority of funds to projects in three corridors and designating a \$60 million reserve with priority for a portion of the reserve as discussed in more detail below. The 2020 programming action was made in conjunction with MTC endorsements for the 2020 Senate Bill 1 (SB1) state competitive funding programs and specifically selected projects that could best leverage RM3 funding. MTC directed funds strategically to ready, high-performing projects to best position the region to secure additional funding through SB1. The Commission, at the time, had strong continuity with the development of the RM3 expenditure plan, in which there was recognition of the different corridors' generation of bridge tolls as well as each county's share of the overall RM3 program. The projects the Commissioners selected for initial programming and remaining reserve are discussed below.

Bay Area Corridor Express Lanes Program Category – Project Discussion

MTC Resolution No. 4411, Attachment B, identifies the following projects deemed to best be able to leverage outside funding while being ready-to-go and having a strong benefit-cost. Collectively, MTC programmed projects to advance express lanes in three multi-county corridors in the regional network: I-80, I-680, and US-101.

I-80 Corridor: Red Top to I-505 (Solano County)

MTC originally committed \$85 million to the I-80 Express Lanes project (which opened to traffic in December 2025). The 2020 MTC action paved the way for the project to secure \$123 million in SB1 funds. Subsequent to MTC's 2020 programming action, the Commission made two amendments to split the project into two components in July 2021 (civil construction and toll systems integration), and to add \$16.7 million through a net-zero exchange with another RM3 project in Solano County in June 2024 – bringing the total RM3 Express Lanes funding for the project to \$101.7 million.

I-680 Corridor: Alcosta Blvd. to SR-84, Southbound (Alameda County)

MTC committed \$80 million to the I-680 project in Alameda County, which is currently under construction. The MTC commitment of RM3 fully funded the project, without requiring any competitive SB1 funding, thus improving the chances of the region's other 2020 SB1 project candidates. With this project, I-680 has continuous southbound express lanes in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties from the Benicia Bridge to Milpitas.

US-101 Corridor: I-380 to Santa Clara County (San Mateo County)

MTC committed \$75 million to the US-101 project in San Mateo County. The 2020 action recognizes the earlier bridge toll commitment made in the 2018 SB1 funding cycle, in which the region was successful in securing \$253 million for a single SB1 express lanes project in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, creating continuous express lanes spanning both counties from I-380 to State Route 237. The US-101 project was specifically highlighted in the SB1 legislation (2017, Beall) as an example of a "Solutions for Congested Corridors" project.

Other Considered Projects for Initial Programming in 2020

Staff considered two other projects for initial inclusion in the RM3 Express Lanes category. First, Santa Clara requested funds for the US-101 Express Lanes, Phase 5 project; however, MTC nominated the project for SB1 Solutions for Congested Corridor (SCC) Program funds (in both 2020

for \$72 million, and in 2022 for \$75 million). Since the Santa Clara project, if selected, could be fully funded with SCC funds without additional RM3 funds at the time, staff did not recommend initial RM3 programming. Second, San Francisco requested funds for the I-280 HOV Lane project; however, this phase is not an express lane and, therefore, is ineligible for RM3 Express Lane program funds. Finally, Contra Costa requested funds for the Innovate 680 Express Lane project; however, the project had not completed its environmental review and did not yet have a preferred project alternative in 2020. Additional discussion on this project is in the Program Reserve section below.

Bay Area Corridor Express Lanes – Program Reserve

Funding the projects in Solano, Alameda, and San Mateo Counties (I-80, I-680, and US-101, respectively) leaves a remaining unprogrammed RM3 amount of \$60 million in the Express Lanes category. The reserve was aimed to provide leverage for future SB1 funding or other competitive funding opportunities and in the context of the broader RM3 program. The Commission also prioritized a portion of this reserve for the I-680 Northbound Express Lane (Livorna to Marina Vista) in Contra Costa County, pending completion of environmental phase. Additionally, the reserve may be used to develop a pipeline of high performing express lanes projects consistent with the Bay Area Express Lanes Strategic Plan. Finally, if a committed project was unsuccessful in securing SB1 funds, the RM3 funds would return to the reserve. This option was not used since all projects secured the required funding and are either open or under construction as of the end of 2025.

Given the limited funding, staff does not plan to hold a competitive Call for Projects for the remaining RM3 Express Lanes Reserve. The I-680 project in Contra Costa County has met the conditions in MTC Resolution No 4411 under which the Commission designated it to receive priority for a portion of the reserve: the project completed the environmental phase, has secured over \$166 million in federal discretionary funding, and has a viable funding plan, including up to \$20 million currently approved in BAIFA toll revenue, for construction starting in 2027. Regarding Santa Clara VTA's recent letter requesting RM3 Express Lane funds, staff is scheduled to meet with VTA Executive Director Gonot prior to this Committee meeting for an update, as a follow up to discussions during development of Plan Bay Area 2050+, on the US-101 project and the current project funding outlook.

Beyond RM3 and other grant funds, express lane operators generate toll revenues to operate, maintain, and expand their facilities. State law grants each operator discretion over the use of its toll revenues, provided certain operational and state of good repair conditions are met. For the BAIFA network, that discretion is exercised through BAIFA's annual budget adoption and biennial update of its 10-year financial plan.

Next Steps:

Staff will continue discussions with Express Lanes operators and return to this Committee in Spring 2026 to report on approaches to continue MTC's support for completing express lanes in the US-101 and I-680 corridors, in recognition of MTC Resolution No. 4411, Attachment B. Any additional programming, including of the reserve, will be subject to staff recommendation and Commission approval. Any commitments of BAIFA express lane toll revenue toward the BAIFA network will be subject to BAIFA approval.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

Information. No action required.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Summary of Bay Area Express Lanes Program History.
- Attachment B: Express Lanes Projects in Plan Bay Area 2050+ Blueprint.



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Attachment A: Summary of Bay Area Express Lanes Program History

The Bay Area's long-range transportation plan included a detailed regional express lane network for the first time in 2009. It envisioned an ambitious 800-mile system at a time when no express lanes operated in the region and only a handful existed nationwide. The Plan envisioned a coordinated network that could significantly improve freeway performance by increasing passenger and vehicle throughput and reducing delays—particularly for carpools, vanpools, and transit. The plan also anticipated a rapid build-out using toll revenues to fund construction, operations, maintenance, and transit services within the corridors. MTC sponsored AB 744 that same year to authorize a nine-county network, but the bill stalled amid the Great Recession and after amendments added financial and governance constraints that would have made implementation far more complex.

In 2010, MTC and its partners shifted to building the network under more limited authority, leading to CTC approval in 2011 of the BAIFA network in Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties. VTA and Alameda County continued advancing their two statutorily authorized corridors with the understanding that existing operations could be integrated into the broader network through negotiated agreements among willing partners.

That same year, 2010, the region's first express lane opened on I-680 southbound through the Sunol Grade, followed by the SR-237/I-880 connector in Santa Clara County in 2012. Over the next decade, MTC, county transportation authorities, and Caltrans expanded express lanes through a series of HOV conversions and selective widenings, advancing projects where local sponsorship, funding, and readiness aligned.

The existing legislation offered more limited financing tools than AB 744, and progress has depended on a mix of state funds (SB1 and RTIP), BATA toll revenue, including RM 3, relatively modest federal support (until the recent Mega grant award) and bank loans. Given the constraints, the region has made remarkable progress, with 240 miles in operation today spanning multiple corridors. However, the network has been developed as a patchwork in which the four operators have voluntarily aligned policy and individually prioritized projects, leaving persistent corridor gaps, even as the lanes are increasingly branded and experienced by drivers as a regional network.

By 2019, Plan Bay Area 2050's Project Performance Assessment identified opportunities to improve cost effectiveness, equity outcomes, and greenhouse gas performance, prompting a shift from ad hoc delivery toward a more coordinated regional strategy. This led to development of the Bay Area Express Lanes Strategic Plan, adopted in April 2021, which defined a financially constrained regional program of 34 projects with an estimated \$4 billion build-out cost. The Strategic Plan represented a turning point in framing express lanes not just as individual congestion-pricing projects, but as a regionwide mobility platform supporting express bus service, equity programs, and corridor-level performance management, while still operating

within a federated governance structure. Plan Bay Area 2050, adopted in October 2021, elevated this strategic framing by incorporating the express lanes program as a major regional investment supporting an integrated express lanes and express bus network.

However, post-pandemic conditions leading to tighter fiscal constraints, unmet climate policy targets and increased delivery risk led to the refined vision adopted in the subsequent Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint, which narrowed the express lanes program to a smaller set of continuous, high-performing corridors. Six projects and associated Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT)-mitigation strategies, totaling an estimated \$2 billion, were retained in the fiscally constrained network, with remaining projects deferred to a programmatic category.

This evolution underscores both the challenges inherent in a federated governance model and the potential benefits of a more fully articulated regional network approach.

Attachment B: Express Lanes Projects in Plan Bay Area 2050+ Blueprint

| PBA2050+ RTP ID | Project | County | Type | Directional Miles | Year of Expenditure Cost (Millions) | Estimated Start of Construction | Current Phase |
|-----------------|--|--------------|--|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| 25-T06-065 | SR-85: Between SR-87 and US 101 ("Phase 4") | Santa Clara | HOV-Lane Conversion | 12.5 | \$68 | 2025 | Construction |
| 25-T07-070 | Express Lanes Network Project Development* | Regional | | | \$100 | | Project Development |
| 25-T07-071 | Express Lane Network Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation** | Regional | | | \$500 | | |
| 25-T07-074 | I-680 (NB): Between SR-84 and Alcosta Blvd | Alameda | New Lane | 9 | \$230 | 2028 | Cleared |
| 25-T07-075 | I-680 (NB): Between Livorna Rd and Arthur Rd | Contra Costa | New Lane and HOV-Lane Conversion | 13.1 | \$387 | 2026 | Cleared by 2025 |
| 25-T07-077 | US-101: Between I-380 and the San Francisco County Line | San Mateo | New Lane | 13.8 | \$460 | 2027 | Cleared by 2026 |
| 25-T07-078 | US-101: Between SR-237 and South of I-880 ("Phase 5") | Santa Clara | Dual Lane: New Lane plus HOV-Lane Conversion | 15.2 | \$254 | 2026 | Cleared |
| 25-T07-079 | US-101: Between I-880 and SR-85 ("Phase 6") | Santa Clara | Dual Lane: New Lane plus HOV-Lane Conversion | 23.8 | \$372 | 2027 | Cleared |
| | | | | | Total: \$2,371 | | |

* This program includes funding to support regional and local planning efforts to advance express lane expansion projects in the planning and environmental review phases.

** This program includes funding for induced VMT mitigation impacts for express lane expansion projects.