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## I-580 may get some relief

### First project on the list is high-occupancy lane

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More than \$1 billion could be pumped into the Interstate 580 corridor if funding can be found for improvement projects the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency deems necessary to aid smoother traffic flow.

The Livermore Valley corridor, beleaguered by commuters and truck drivers heading from Oakland and other Bay Area destinations to the Central Valley and vice versa, consistently ranks among the most congested segments on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's list in both east and westbound direction.

To reduce the daily delay, the congestion management agency is in the midst of executing a long-range plan that includes multi-pronged efforts.

The first project on the agency's list is to construct an eastbound high-occupancy vehicle lane from the Hacienda Drive interchange in Pleasanton to east of the Greenville Road exit in Livermore.

Stefan Garcia, the agency's manager of capital projects, said the HOV lane should reduce users' commutes from 34 minutes to 10 minutes and non-HOV drivers' commute from 34 minutes to 26 minutes along the stretch.

"While there may still be some crunch at the peak period, hopefully the peak period will be smaller," he said. "And the off-peak times, which are currently pretty severe out there, will be greatly alleviated. So there should be substantial benefit from this project."

Late last month, the agency's board approved hiring a consultant to study the feasibility of turning the HOV lane into a toll lane, which could generate revenue for the corridor in addition to relieving congestion.

But before the lane is constructed — beginning late 2007 — the agency will implement a \$9 million traffic management plan that includes posting signs, adding highway advisory radio and installing microwave sensors and closed-circuit television around the Valley to send information to a dedicated I-580 Web site.

The Web site is expected to go live later this year to enable members of the public to view real-time traffic information.

A significant element of the traffic management plan is to install ramp meters in locations where local jurisdictions and the California Department of Transportation will not be installing them to complete the corridor's network, Garcia said.

HOV bypass lanes will not be included at the ramps, however.

While the eastbound HOV lane is being built — a process expected to take two years — the agency will begin plans to acquire right-of-way for future public transit, such as BART.

Although the HOV lane will be built in the existing 26-foot median, Garcia said the lane is intended to have a 20-year life span; it will not preclude the agency from working with Caltrans to expand the freeway outward to accommodate a transit system.

A westbound HOV lane is anticipated once the agency determines how to proceed with alleviating the back-up that occurs along westbound I-580 at the I-680 intersection.

Fixing the interchange requires finding solutions around several amenities, such as the BART tracks, a wastewater treatment plant, the Dublin Sports Grounds and other nearby structures.

"It's a very site-constrained area for development," Garcia said.

A study identifying and examining potential solutions — which are expected to come with a hefty price tag based on the amount of work required — is slated to be completed around April 2007.

Currently, the agency has identified about one-fourth of the funding for the corridor's total estimated project costs, Garcia said.

Additional funding could be pursued if the transportation bond on the November ballot passes.

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