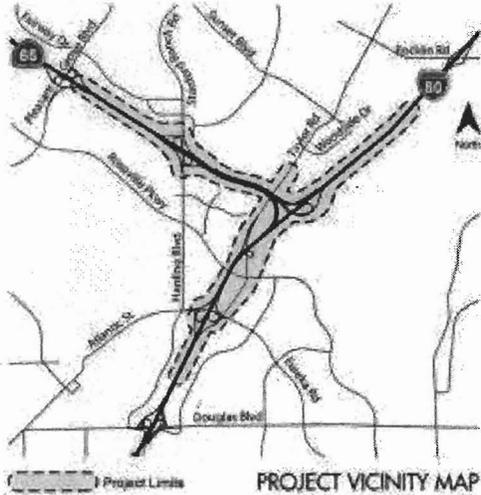


I-80, Hwy. 65 bottlenecks are focus of Placer transportation planners

Options presented to Placer County Transportation Planning Agency

By Gus Thomson, Journal Staff Writer



Courtesy map

The Interstate 80-Highway 65 crossroads are a major focus for transportation planning in Placer County.

AUBURN CA - With the cost rising to unplug new and future bottlenecks in the vicinity of Roseville's busy Galleria shopping center, Placer County Transportation Planning Agency board member Kirk Uhler is suggesting a low-cost solution may be available right now.

Uhler, who represents part of Roseville in his post as Placer County supervisor, said Wednesday that something as simple as a restriping one section of road to add a new lane of traffic for easier merges from Interstate 80 onto Highway 65 may be a cost-effective solution that can be done fairly quickly.

One of the main bottlenecks at the busy crossroads takes place as vehicles slow and then merge from westbound Interstate 80 onto northbound Highway 65.

"Simply working with Caltrans, can't we simply re-stripe and see what happens?" Uhler asked during Wednesday's planning agency meeting in Auburn. "The paint might be cheaper than the study itself."

The transportation planning agency and Caltrans are working together on fine-tuning a plan from several options to improve traffic flows. The options include building new overpasses at the crossroads.

Celia McAdam, the agency's executive director, said that the unofficial "back of the envelope" estimate for the work on a project that would help handle traffic 20 to 30 years into the future is in the \$280-million to \$300 million range. That's up from earlier preliminary cost estimates of between \$230 million and \$280 million.

McAdam said Uhler's suggestion would be "something we could look at." It could also be split off as a separate project from the larger transportation planning program at the intersection, she said.

"It could be a potential cheap, easy project," she said.

But McAdam added that re-striping to add another lane would still have to go through an environmental review process. Uhler said that he'd like to see Placer County staff study whether a less-costly negative declaration might be employed to ease expenditures and the amount of work on an environmental review.

Roseville City Councilman John Allard supported the idea of finding solutions to growing congestion from Interstate 80 onto Highway 65.

"It's now a tremendous problem and the city of Roseville would be happy to help expedite that," Allard said.

Allard added that another bottleneck has developed as traffic leaves westbound I-80 at Douglas Boulevard in Roseville and drivers have to switch lanes before the start of Riverside Drive.

Ron Herndon, Roseville's acting public works director, said that the amount of traffic flowing off I-80 onto Highway 65 is projected to increase considerably over the next 23 years.

"The traffic flow is now a 60-40 split with 40 percent splitting off at 65," Herndon said. "But the numbers are going to be 60 percent going off in 2035."

Herndon, however, said there may be questions about the width of Highway 65 that would preclude a change in striping to create a new lane and ease traffic backups.

"If there is enough room to re-stripe, it's a no-brainer," Herndon said. "But the question is whether it's wide enough."

The project is now in the preliminary stage, with no planned routes approved and no major funding sources identified. During the current phase, issues, constraints and impacts are being studied. Still to come this year are more detailed studies, including traffic analysis, environmental assessments and public outreach will be conducted.

Community workshop scheduled for I-80/65 interchange project

A second community workshop for the I-80/SR 65 Interchange Improvements Project is scheduled for 9 a.m. Wednesday at the Placer County Board of Supervisor chambers (The Domes), located at 175 Fullweiler St. in Auburn.

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency will present a progress report on development of the concept alternatives and get public input during PCTPA's regularly sched-

uled board meeting.

The project proposes interchange improvements to reduce traffic congestion, improve traffic operations and enhance safety.

The project team is currently analyzing seven concepts and the concepts are being compared and refined based on the project's objectives along with other screening factors such as cost and construction phasing.

Representatives from PCT-

PA, Caltrans and the project consultant team will be available to provide an overview of the project, schedule and will answer questions and discuss ideas in an informal format.

Maps, aerial photographs and other displays will be available, along with fact sheets and other project materials.

For more information contact the PCTPA at (530) 823-4030.

~ Staff report