Our FUTURE 101

Moving Ventura County Forward

US 101 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Frequently Asked Questions

1 What is the 101 Improvement Project?

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) recognizes that the 101 is congested and needs to be addressed. The purpose of this project is to:

- Reduce existing congestion
- Improve traffic operations
- Accommodate future traffic volumes forecasted in this area

With this in mind, this project may include some of the following:

- Additional lanes on the 101 freeway designated for high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs), also known as carpools
- Auxiliary lanes between interchanges
- On-ramp or off-ramp improvements
- Ramp intersection improvements

2 Who is leading the project?

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) is the project sponsor. VCTC is working in partnership with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) who will be the Lead Agency for the development of a Combined California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) / National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment (EA).

3 What other agencies are involved, and what are their roles?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has an oversight role because this project proposes to make improvements to a federal route (US 101). The four Ventura County cities (Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Oxnard and Ventura) through which US 101 passes and the County of Ventura are represented on the Project Development Team to guide the preparation of the EIR/EA. Many other state and federal agencies are consulted during the development of this project.

4 Why is the project necessary?

Congestion in the project area is already bad. The population in the region has grown by 45% since 1990 and is projected to continue to grow although at a slower pace. Currently, the 101 operates at Level of Service (LOS) C to LOS F in the morning and evening peak periods, which means that cars are not moving at free flow speeds.

5 How many Alternatives were studied?

The Project Development Team has chosen three Alternatives to move into the next step. These alternatives are:

- **Alternative 1** – No Build
- **Alternative 2** – Add an HOV/Express Bus Lane in each direction
- **Alternative 3** – Add an HOV/Express Bus Lane in each direction, with design variations

In general, the alternatives were structured to gain the greatest improvement in traffic conditions and safety levels relative to the costs involved.

6 Why are HOV lanes being considered?

HOV lanes move more people in fewer cars moving at higher speeds than general purpose lanes. To minimize the impact of the improvements, HOV lanes are being considered. Additionally, HOV lanes do not currently exist in the project area, so the addition of HOV lanes provides a new option for an improved trip. Buses (including inter-city buses) are high-occupancy vehicles and can use the HOV lanes, which removes them from the general purpose lanes. It also provides them with a shorter and more reliable trip time compared to the general purpose lanes, making transit service more attractive to commuters and travelers.

7 Was adding a General Purpose Lane in each direction considered?

While adding a general purpose lane was not one of the alternatives included in the early planning phase, a general purpose lane alternative was evaluated in the alternatives analysis phase. The width of a general purpose lane alternative is similar to the width of Alternatives 2 and 3, and as such, the physical impacts and cost of a general purpose lane alternative are similar to Alternatives 2 and 3, a general purpose lane does not move as many people as quickly or reliably as an HOV lane alternative. For those reasons it was eliminated from further consideration.

8 What is an HOV lane, a general purpose lane, and an auxiliary lane?

- A high-occupancy vehicle lane, or HOV lane, is another name for a carpool lane. Carpool lanes are sometimes known as diamond lanes because there are diamonds painted in them to differentiate them from general purpose lanes.
- General purpose lanes are called that because they are intended for general use with no specific designation for the type of vehicle or the operational characteristics of the lane. Truck lanes are intended for trucks, and HOV lanes are intended for HOVs.
- Auxiliary lanes allow vehicles to enter and exit the flow of traffic between interchanges without impacting the speed in the general purpose lanes. They begin where an on-ramp joins the freeway and end where an off-ramp exits the freeway and are sometimes referred to as acceleration or deceleration lanes.

9 What is the anticipated cost of the project?

Construction cost estimates range from $2.0 billion to $2.3 billion depending on the alternative. These cost estimates will continue to be refined as the project progresses.

10 How is the project being funded?

This current phase of the project is funded through Ventura County's share of federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds, formally known as Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds. Design and initial construction will be funded by Ventura County's share of STBG and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds. Possible future funding sources include Federal and State grants and other local sources.

11 What impacts/criteria will help decide which Alternative will be selected?

The environmental document evaluates benefits and impacts in topics such as, but not limited to:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Community and Neighborhoods
- Construction Impacts
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Environmental Justice
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Growth
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Land Acquisitions, Displacement and Relocation
- Noise and Vibration
- Parks and Recreation Areas
- Public Services
- Transportation/Traffic
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Safety and Security
- Wildfire
- Wildlife

All of these study topics as well as public comments on the draft EIR/EA will contribute to the overall decision on a preferred alternative.

12 Will my property be affected?

All property that will potentially be impacted has been identified during the preparation of the environmental document. Properties that are anticipated to be impacted by the project are identified in Section 2.2.8, Relocations and Real Property Acquisition, in Chapter 2 of the draft EIR/EA. It will not be known for certain which properties will be impacted until an alternative is selected, and the project proceeds to the final design phase.

13 Will the project also improve local interchanges and ramps?

The benefits and impacts of local interchange and ramp improvements were evaluated at locations where the project causes traffic growth or where improvements on the freeway general purpose lanes require realignment of ramps. However local intersections are not being impacted or modified.

14 Will the project be constructed all at once or in phases?

The project will be constructed as funding becomes available. If funding for the entire project is available at one time, it will be constructed as a single project. If funding is provided in amounts less than the full project cost, VCTC will establish which sections can be funded with the money that is available.

15 What is the schedule for the project to be constructed?

Because of the scale of the project and the amount of money it will take to pay for the construction, VCTC is currently estimating that construction will be complete by 2040. If full funding is available sooner, then construction will start sooner. Initial funding for construction is programmed for Fiscal Year 2031. The actual construction period can only be determined once an alternative has been selected and the construction funding plan is determined.

16 When will the final Alternative be selected?

A decision on the preferred alternative is currently anticipated in 2027 after circulation of the draft EIR/EA.

17 Where are we in the process?

Based on the project development process, the project is currently in the 'Traffic, Engineering, and Environmental Studies' phase. In this phas e, each of the three alternatives have been analyzed based on specific evaluation criteria to help gather information needed to choose one final alternative. A draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Assessment (EA), also referred to herein as "environmental document," has been prepared and will be released for public review and comment. A 60-day public review period is anticipated to begin Fall 2026.

18 How can I make comments on this project, and how will my comments be considered?

VCTC believes public comments are a vital component of the environmental study process and informs decision makers on how Ventura County residents feel about this project and its components. Public input allows for a more holistic project design that better addresses the needs of the public. Public comments can still be submitted via the project website, or mailed to:

Susan Tse
Senior Environmental Planner
California Department of Transportation
Division of Environmental Planning
100 S. Main St. MS 16A
Los Angeles, CA 90012
or via email to: *info@ourfuture101.org*

19 If I have a question about the project, how can I get my question answered?

Feel free to email questions to the project at info@ourfuture101.org.

20 When is the next public outreach/information meeting?

Please visit: *https://www.goventura.org/current-meetings/* for information on upcoming public hearings and engagement opportunities.

21 Are these alternatives the only options that are being studied?

Feedback provided by stakeholders and the general public allowed for the consideration of alternatives beyond those presented in the public scoping meetings. While only the No Build and two Build Alternatives are proceeding for further study, many alternatives were considered and reviewed during the alternatives analysis phase to ensure the two build alternatives best meet the purpose and need of the project.

22 Will this study take into consideration any additional or safer Bike Lanes around or over the 101?

The US 101 Improvement Project considered city plans for bicycle (and pedestrian) facilities on local streets. In locations where construction will occur on local streets, and where planned facilities are consistent with Caltrans standards (sidewalks, required shoulders that could be used as bike lanes) the US 101 Improvement Project will include them for the safety of all users including drivers, pedestrians and bicyclist. In addition, VCTC adopted the 101 Communities Connected Multimodal Corridor Study in 2021, which evaluates existing and future multimodal transportation networks along with recommendations for and phasing of improvements. Projects and strategies from 101 Communities Connected are incorporated into the proposed mitigation program for the 101 Improvement Program.

23 Is the study considering all Environmental Concerns?

The environmental study and documentation process address both impacts to the natural environment, as well as the built environment. The Project team followed the guidelines set forth by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

24 Are VCTC and Caltrans taking Cultural and Historical Resources into account?

As part of the development of the environmental document, the Project team studied potential impacts to both Cultural and Historic Resources located along the Project corridor. The potential for these resources to be impacted is disclosed to the public within the environmental document.

25 There are not a lot of Public Transportation Alternatives available in the region, will this study look at this?

The US 101 Improvement project considers how improvements will benefit or impact all users, including the public transportation system. Additionally, other studies address the overall public transportation availability and need throughout the county. The proposed Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) mitigation program for the 101 Improvement program includes improvements to passenger rail and bus transit. Please see VCTC's transit web page for all local transit options: *https://www.goventura.org/vctc-transit/local-bus/*

26 Why are we only looking at HOV Lanes?

As a part of the initial planning phase, the design team considered alternatives that were presented at the public scoping meetings and resulted from stakeholder and public feedback during the scoping process. The team considered options that include HOV lanes because they address the purpose and need of the project and provide a higher benefit when compared to non-HOV alternatives.

27 With any improvements being done, will the Lighting be improved as well?

Lighting along the freeway has been considered as a part of potential safety improvements. At ramp entrance and exit locations, safety lighting will be replaced where impacted.

28 Will the study take into consideration Public Transit Access?

Public transit access to the improved facility were considered to provide US 101 users additional choices in mode of transportation and minimize impact to existing public transit services. Additionally, buses will utilize the HOV lanes thereby removing them from the general-purpose lanes and increasing efficiency in reaching destinations.

29 What type of Wildlife will be affected by the project?

The project team studied the wildlife in the area and the Project's potential impacts as part of the environmental document process. Studies for all wildlife such as birds, mammals, plants and wildlife movement were conducted. The findings will be presented when the draft EIR/EA is available, anticipated for release in 2026.

30 Will the project impact the wildlife corridor identified in the recent County Ordinance?

The project will comply with all local, state and federal ordinances and guidelines pertaining to wildlife movement, specifically the recently approved Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridor Ordinances. How the project interacts/intersects with the recently adopted wildlife corridor ordinance and the potential for conflicts were analyzed. As detailed in Section 2.4.1, Natural Communities, in Chapter 2 of the draft EIR/EA, the project would not conflict with policies and ordinances protecting biological resources, including wildlife crossings. Regional wildlife movement is a growing concern that has been recognized by Caltrans. As part of the development of the draft EIR/EA, project biologists studied wildlife movement throughout the project corridor. Existing wildlife movement, potential project impacts to movement, as well as avoidance and minimization measures, will be a component of the environmental document.

As a separate project, through a grant from the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant program, VCTC partnered with the National Park Service to study wildlife movement in the Conejo Pass area, also known as the Conejo Grade. A Final Report with recommendations for wildlife crossing improvements in the corridor is anticipated Summer 2026.