

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### General Project Questions:

Q1. Why are you revising and re-circulating the Environmental Document?

The revised environmental document has a reduced scope of the project due to elimination of a proposed connection to Winchester Boulevard. It also reflects additional traffic, noise and air quality analysis completed to show the effects of the proposed project under existing traffic conditions in response to a December 2010 appellate court decision on a separate project. As the start date of circulation of the original draft environmental document for the I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard Project was prior to the ruling, it did not include an existing plus project analysis scenario. Due to the timing of the court ruling and specific comments received on the draft environmental document citing the ruling as being an avenue for which the I-280/I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard Project environmental document could be challenged, a decision has been made to add this existing plus project analysis scenario to the environmental documentation and to re-circulate the draft document for comment. The revised environmental document is an updated version of the November 2010 Draft EIR/EA for the Improvements at SR-17/I-280/I-880 Interchange, I-280/Winchester Boulevard Interchange, and I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard Interchange Project. This document replaces and supersedes the November 2010 Draft EIR/EA in its entirety.

Q2. Why was the I-280/Winchester Off Ramp component removed from the project?

The removal of the Winchester Boulevard connection as a part of the proposed project is due to lack of acceptance of the two design options in the previously circulated draft environmental document. Based on the comments received on the previously circulated document, the five legged design option for the proposed off-ramp clearly would have resulted in the environmental document being challenged in court if this design was selected as the project design in the final environmental document. The public's primary issue with this design approach was the need to convert Tisch Way to be a one-way roadway to accommodate the five-legged intersection at Winchester Boulevard.

This left the hook ramp design option as really the only possible option for a new northbound I-280 connection to Winchester Boulevard. However, the issue with this design option was Caltrans's inability to approve certain design exceptions to make the hook ramp a feasible design option. Although the project team undertook efforts to minimize the need for design exceptions, there still remained at least one design exception in particular related to the super-elevation transition for the proposed off-ramp that Caltrans would not approve.

Q3. What is the purpose of the project and what is the project going to accomplish?

The purpose of the project is to:

- Improve operations and safety on the freeways and local roadways in the vicinity of the closely-spaced I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard and SR-17/I-280/I-880 interchanges.

- Improve traffic circulation between the I-280/I-880 freeway corridors and the land uses that are located in the vicinity of these interchanges, including residential neighborhoods in the Cities of San Jose and Santa Clara, several major shopping centers and retail corridors, and two hospitals.
- Reduce traffic congestion and delay in the project area.

The proposed highway project includes the following:

- Upgrading the existing I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard interchange (originally constructed in 1959) to meet current interchange design standards. This will reduce traffic congestion and delays currently experienced at the interchange by improving operations and enhancing safety on the freeways and local roadways by eliminating certain weaving and merging movements. The proposed interchange configuration also improves access and enhances safety for bicycle and pedestrian traffic over what exists for these travel modes today.
- Adding a new northbound I-280 to northbound I-880 direct connector ramp to eliminate the existing merging and weaving conflicts between the regional freeway traffic and local traffic that is destined for westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard and eastbound San Carlos Street by separating these movements.

Q4. What are the limits of the project?

The project limits on I-880 extend from Forest Avenue in the north to the I-280 junction in the south and on I-280 from McArthur Avenue in the east to the I-880 junction in the west.

Q5. What is the project schedule?

The current target dates are as follows:

Environmental: Summer 2011

Design: Mid 2012\*

Right of Way: Mid 2012\*

Construction Start: Late 2012\*

\*Schedule tentative. Funding not identified for all phases of the project.

Upcoming Environmental Milestones:

Revised Environmental Document Recirculation: April 18, 2011 to May 18, 2011

Public Hearing – First week of May 2011

Final Environmental Document: Summer 2011

Q6. What is the cost of the project?

The cost of the project is approximately \$ 64.6 million (in 2011 dollars).

Q7. How will the project be funded?

The project is funded by State, federal and local funds. The project cost is \$64.6 million and VTA has approximately \$54.2M available to complete the first phase of the project which includes the northbound I-280 to northbound I-880 direct director connector and the eastern half of I-880/Stevens Creek Interchange. VTA will continue to pursue other funding opportunities for completing the western half of the interchange.

Q8. Will the project then be implemented in phases?

Yes, that is correct. This project is partially funded. The first phase of the project, which is funded, will focus on construction of the direct connector from northbound I-280 to northbound I-880, as well as the eastern half of the I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard Interchange. Project partners continue to seek additional funding for the remaining portion of the project, which includes the western half of I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard Interchange including the Monroe Loop off-ramp from southbound I-880.

Q9. Will Valley Fair and Santana Row contribute any funds to the project?

Working through the City of San Jose development process, Santana Row has contributed funds for the initial study of the I-880/Stevens Creek interchange improvements. As a condition of development, Valley Fair is to design and construct improvements in the vicinity of Monroe and Stevens Creek to add right turn capacity and stakeholders continue to coordinate with Valley Fair on the funding approach to the interchange improvements.

Valley Fair and Santana Row are major economic generators for Santa Clara County. Approximately \$8 to \$10 million in sales tax is generated annually by Valley Fair and Santana Row, a portion of which is applied to transportation programs in the County.

Q10. Can you address the existing traffic issues for northbound I-280 traffic at the Leland Avenue, Leigh Avenue and Parkmoor Avenue on-ramps, for southbound I-280 traffic at the Moorpark Avenue on-ramp and at the I-280/Saratoga Avenue interchange?

Although the locations noted have existing traffic issues, they are outside the project limits. These traffic issues would need to be addressed through a future project.

Q11. How will you address possible environmental impacts to air quality, noise, visual resources, etc. resulting from the project?

As part of the state and federally defined environmental processes, technical studies (Air quality, Biology, Cultural Resources (archaeological and historical), Geology, Hazardous Materials, Noise, Water Quality and Visual) have been completed to assess and document environmental impacts resulting from the project. These studies are part of the project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR), whose purpose is to disclose the impacts created by the project as well as to document proposed mitigation measures.

Q12. When will we be able to see the results from these studies?

The Revised Draft EIR was released for public review on April 18, 2011, a copy of which can be found at VTA's project website:

[http://www.vta.org/projects/280\\_880\\_stevens\\_creek\\_blvd\\_improvements/index.html](http://www.vta.org/projects/280_880_stevens_creek_blvd_improvements/index.html)

Q13. Can I still submit comments on this project?

Yes. Comments on the Revised Draft EIR will be accepted through May 18, 2011.

Written comments can be mailed to California Department of Transportation, Attn: Sheryl M. Garcia, 111 Grand Avenue, Mail Station 8-B, Oakland, CA 94612; faxed to 510-286-5600, or emailed to [880\\_280\\_StevenCreek\\_EIR\\_EA\\_Comments@dot.ca.gov](mailto:880_280_StevenCreek_EIR_EA_Comments@dot.ca.gov). Written and verbal comments may also be submitted at the December 8, 2010 Open House/Public Hearing.

Individuals who require documents in alternative formats are requested to contact the District 4 Public Affairs Office at 510-286-5705 or use the California Relay Service TTY number 1-800-734-2929.

Q14. What will be the impacts to general traffic, emergency access and noise, for example, during construction of the project and how will these impacts be addressed?

No long-term lane/ramp closures are anticipated. Emergency access will be provided at all times during construction. The project will comply with local noise ordinances and regulations to limit construction noise. A comprehensive public outreach program will be in place for the duration of construction to keep neighborhoods informed of all upcoming construction activities, construction related changes to traffic patterns or detours and/or alternate routes.

Q15. How will pedestrian and bicycle needs be addressed in the project?

The design will include a multi-modal approach and consider pedestrian and bicycle needs for local street improvements. For example, the reconfiguration of the I-880/Stevens Creek interchange is to include "squared-up" signalized ramps to better accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Additionally, a bike lane will be provided on Stevens Creek Boulevard for the length of the project.

#### I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard Interchange Questions:

Q16. What are the differences between the proposed signalized ramp design and the existing full cloverleaf interchange design?

The proposed partial cloverleaf configuration would improve operations and enhance safety for motorists, as well as for pedestrians and bicyclists by eliminating the weaving movements between the on- and off-ramps both on the collector-distributor roadways and on Stevens Creek Boulevard. The traditional full cloverleaf design, so named because it resembles a four-leaf clover, was patented in 1916 and first constructed in 1929. This design that allows vehicles to freely enter and exit a freeway, works well with low traffic volumes. However, the full cloverleaf design experiences a significant reduction in operational efficiencies when traffic volumes are high, as is the situation at the I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard Interchange. Congestion occurs when high volumes of traffic exist for both the freeway loop on-ramps and

the freeway loop off-ramps. This causes backups not only on the ramps but also on the freeway and collector/distributor road as well. In addition, there is a high rate of traffic accidents due to the increase in congestion. The related merging and weaving maneuvers associated with these two movements also pose a challenge for pedestrians and bicyclists passing through the interchange across the various ramps, particularly since there is no mechanism to control or interrupt the traffic flow to cross the roadway, for example. The new ramp configurations with added traffic signals will reduce vehicle speeds where there are conflicts between pedestrians/bicyclist and motorists thereby enhancing the safety. Due to these operational challenges, many full cloverleaf interchanges in urbanized areas of the United States have been reconfigured to alternate designs such as the proposed signalized ramp design.

At the I-880/Stevens Creek Boulevard interchange, traffic signals would be installed at the two new ramp intersections. Multiple left turn lanes are proposed at the ramp intersections (two lanes on the southbound ramp; three lanes on the northbound ramp), which would improve the distribution of traffic across the lanes on Stevens Creek Boulevard while the current full cloverleaf design leads to more traffic on the rightmost lanes. This right lane overload on the local roadway often lead to congestion on the collector-distributor roadway that connects the local roadway to the freeway.

Both the elimination of the vehicle merging and weaving associated with the existing collector-distributor roadways and the control of traffic with traffic signals would provide improved operations and enhanced safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Q17. How would the new traffic signal at the northbound I-880 off-ramp and Stevens Creek Boulevard improve the traffic operations in this area?

The new traffic signal would provide improved access for travel through the interchange for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian movements. The relocation of the freeway traffic destined for westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard from the existing loop ramp to the diagonal ramp at a signal would provide better access for the freeway traffic to use all lanes on westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard. The existing loop ramp provides for direct access for freeway traffic to the right lane on westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard, but requires this traffic to weave with westbound through traffic to move to the other lanes on westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard. The added traffic signal control for the freeway traffic also reduces the need for bicycle and pedestrian traffic to find gaps in the freeway-related traffic to travel along Stevens Creek Boulevard.

In addition, the improved traffic operations at this intersection would eliminate the traffic that currently goes eastbound on Stevens Creek Boulevard and makes a u-turn at Di Salvo Avenue or Bellerose Drive to go back on westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard.

Q18. How will noise impacts to the adjacent residential neighborhood (i.e., along South Daniel Way) from the proposed improvements be addressed?

A soundwall is proposed to be constructed along the right-of-way between I-880 and South Daniel Way. It would extend from south of Stevens Creek Boulevard to the existing soundwall located near I-280. The length of the soundwall would be approximately 1,200 feet and its height would be 14 feet.

The soundwall would reduce traffic-generated noise levels at the adjacent residences by 7 to 12 decibels.

NB I-280/NB I-880 Direct Connector Questions:

- Q19. How will noise impacts to the adjacent residential neighborhood from the new direct connector ramp be addressed?

The project is proposing to construct a combination of two soundwalls along the easterly edge of I-880 extending between I-280 on the south and Stevens Creek Boulevard on the north. The first soundwall would be roughly 1,100 feet in length and would be located adjacent to and along the elevated direct connector ramp from northbound I-280 to northbound I-880 to provide shielding of traffic that would otherwise be visible above ground-level noise barriers. It would begin along the Parkmoor Avenue right-of-way near MacArthur Avenue at a recommended height of 12 feet. The 12-foot barrier would transition to the edge of the northbound I-280 to northbound I-880 elevated direct connector ramp. From this point the 12-foot barrier would gradually transition in height to a minimum of 6-feet above the pavement and would maintain this height to its northerly terminus.

The second soundwall would shield receivers from ramp and mainline traffic noise as well as ramp traffic noise where the ramps begin to conform back to mainline elevations. The total length of the second soundwall would be approximately 2,070 feet. It would begin along Parkmoor Avenue and would follow the proposed right-of-way. It would continue north along the Hodges Street right-of-way and extend northward along the off-ramp ending near Stevens Creek Boulevard. Its height would range from 6 to 14 feet.

These two soundwalls would reduce traffic-generated noise levels at the adjacent residences by 6 to 16 decibels.

- Q20. How high is the proposed northbound I-280 to northbound I-880 direct connector ramp?

At its highest point, the new ramp would be approximately 20 feet above the ground level of the adjacent residences.

Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos St Questions:

- Q21. Will the public transportation on the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos St corridor be improved?

The VTA Board adopted the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Strategic Plan at its May 2009 meeting. The Strategic Plan identifies three projects for near-term development and the Stevens Creek Boulevard Corridor is one of them. The Stevens Creek Boulevard corridor BRT improvements will include dedicated lanes, rail-like stations and specialized vehicles. Service will be at 10-minute frequencies all day and the Stevens Creek Line will extend from De Anza College on the western end of the corridor through Downtown San Jose and eastward to Eastridge Transit

Center. In the vicinity of the 880 interchange, the BRT project will feature a dedicated lane starting from east of I-880 and extending to Winchester Boulevard with a station at Santana Row/Baywood. The Stevens Creek BRT project is scheduled to be in operation by 2017.

Q22. How will the project address the traffic congestion on the Stevens Creek Boulevard and West San Carlos St corridor?

The project does not directly address traffic congestion on Stevens Creek Boulevard and West San Carlos Street in areas that are outside of the direct vicinity of the interchange and the project location. However, the new interchange configuration will provide overall improved traffic operation in the project vicinity and adjacent areas. In particular, the improvements at the Stevens Creek Boulevard/Monroe Street intersection would alleviate an identified point of congestion at this location for westbound travel on Stevens Creek Boulevard.

Additionally, the City of San Jose has a future signal coordination project on Stevens Creek Boulevard that would lead to improved traffic operations on Stevens Creek Boulevard.

Right-of-Way Questions

Q23. Will the construction of the project require additional right-of-way from any privately-owned properties?

Yes. The following table identifies those properties from which right-of-way will likely be required.

<b>PRELIMINARY RIGHT-OF-WAY REQUIREMENTS</b>				
<b>Assessor's Parcel Number</b>	<b>Property Address</b>	<b>Existing Use</b>	<b>Right-of-Way Needed</b>	
			<b>Build Alternative</b>	<b>No Build Alternative</b>
274-43-031	2801 Stevens Creek Blvd.	Surface parking	Approx. 3,600 ft <sup>2</sup> needed; no parking to be lost	No acquisition
277-32-038	501 Parkmoor Avenue	Single-family residence	Full-acquisition	No acquisition
277-32-039	517 Parkmoor Avenue	Single-family residence	Full-acquisition	No acquisition
277-32-040	537 Parkmoor Avenue	Single-family residence	Full-acquisition	No acquisition

r/w = right-of-way

In addition to the above permanent r/w requirements, construction of the project will likely require temporary construction easements from properties located adjacent to the proposed improvements.

Information in this table is preliminary and is subject to revision during final design.

Q24. Has VTA conducted any outreach on this project?

In 2009, there was an environmental scoping meeting in January 2009. Over 12,000 mailers (in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese) were mailed to tenants/owners within a quarter mile of the project to inform them of the scoping meeting. Over 150 residents/owners/interested parties attended this meeting. Other outreach methods about the scoping meeting included newspaper advertisements (in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese), newspaper and television coverage, and City of San Jose City council members' newsletters/web sites. Following the January 2009 scoping meeting, VTA staff met with neighborhood/business groups including the Eden Neighborhood Association, Burbank Community Association, Winchester Neighborhood Action Coalition (NAC), and the Tisch/Dudley group. VTA created and maintained a web page for this project.

To inform the public about the December 8, 2010 environmental public hearing, VTA mailed over 14,000 mailers (in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese) in early November 2010 to tenants/owners within a quarter mile of the project. VTA staff also emailed the mailer to the above neighborhood/business groups as well as members of the Cory NAC, Lynhaven NAC, and any other interested parties. VTA and the City of San Jose staff met with the Tisch/Dudley group. Other outreach methods included newspaper advertisements (in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese), newspaper coverage, and City of San Jose City Council members' and a Supervisor's newsletters/web sites. In addition, Caltrans and VTA staff have responded to email inquiries directly. Information was also posted on VTA's Facebook and Twitter sites. Members of the public who signed up for the VTA automated email service also received information about updates about the project.