

TRANSFORM ClimatePlan



August 23, 2024
The Honorable Mike McGuire
President Pro Tempore
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Oppose Backdoor Streamlining of Route 37 Interim Project

Dear President Pro Tempore McGuire:

As organizations committed to environmental sustainability and equitable transportation, we oppose amending SB 147 or any other legislation to streamline the development of the interim State Route 37 project. Our organizations have serious concerns about the fundamental purpose and need for the interim project and the potential for the interim project to delay and undermine the long-term sustainable solution for travel across the North Bay.

Streamlining the interim project by allowing for the take of fully protected species (FPS) during construction limits the environmental analysis and the public input opportunity into a project that will have major impacts to the climate by significantly increasing driving in the corridor, as well as cause further damage to a critical natural habitat. The interim project will: harm the state's efforts to accelerate a long-term, climate resilient approach to transportation solutions along the corridor; waste taxpayer dollars during a time where we need to carefully prioritize our spending; and undermine the state and region's clean transportation goals. Exempting this specific project also sets a dangerous precedent that invites other road widening projects to seek exemption from California's bedrock environmental protections.

The interim SR 37 project's goals could be accomplished more quickly, cost-effectively and in alignment with state and regional priorities by implementing tolling on the existing lanes without widening. By applying an equitable tolling structure to existing travel lanes, traffic flow could be free-flowing, additional revenue generated to support additional transit service and future capital investment, and that revenue collection could be designed to minimize financial impacts on low-income households. The project's up-front price tag would also substantially decline.

We are committed to advancing a long-term solution that addresses the growing travel, congestion and climate resilience needs of the corridor. A long-term climate-resilient vision for the SR37 corridor will allow all stakeholders to unite around a transparent process that impartially weighs the trade offs of lane expansion with the potential for expanded rail transit alternatives along the corridor and in adjacent communities in the North Bay. However, most recent estimates indicate that the interim project will cost over \$500M and will be under water caused by sea level rise within fifteen years of completion. Continuing the interim project in its current form further delays, rather than advances, the long-term vision for the corridor.

We appreciate your strong leadership on promoting climate resilience and transportation solutions. We look forward to working with you to advance the long-term, sustainable vision for the corridor that meets the Bay Area and California's transportation and climate goals.

Sincerely,
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Policy Director, TransForm

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Acting Director, Sierra Club California

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