

By Brianna Boyd

Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce
Advocacy Council Meeting
January 14, 2020

Solano Transportation Authority Update

If you live, work, or travel through Solano County regularly, you're familiar with the congestion on Interstate 80.

The route through Fairfield in particular can be quite tedious. Interstate 80 often slows to less than 30 mph between 2 pm and 6 pm – or later –weekdays. With the county's population expected to increase 24 percent by 2040, and no major widening projects on the interstate since 1973, the Solano Transportation Authority is leading the way to see changes implemented.

After all, STA Director Darryl Halls pointed out Jan. 14 during a meeting to the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber's Advocacy Council, Solano County – and Northern California – will not be able to thrive the way it should be able to with such a clogged major artery.

STA hopes to break through the bottleneck with the construction of 'managed lanes' by 2021. Managed lanes are already in other parts of the Bay Area. When a managed lane is available, buses and carpools can travel in the lane for free and single-rider vehicles can be in the lane for a designated fee, paid for using FastTrack. These lanes replace the traditional HOV, or carpool lanes.

The Solano Managed Lanes are planned to connect to the Bay Area Express Lanes network on I-80 and I-680. Caltrans in Sacramento is also planning managed lanes from Sacramento to Davis and a long-term goal is to eventually have a continuous managed lane on I-80 from Sacramento through all of Solano County.

The Solano project, estimated to cost \$278 million, will include the construction of 10 miles of managed lanes between I-80/Air Base Parkway in Fairfield to just east of I-80/I-505. The project would also convert eight miles of existing HOV lanes, from Red Top Road to Air Base Parkway, to managed lanes.

Once the lanes are in operation, Halls said its estimated travelers in the managed lanes could save 17 minutes of commute time while traveling Solano County in peak hours.

The \$228 million construction cost will create over a billion dollars in local economic impacts, according to the STA. Reduced time spent in traffic means more time in the office as well as increased production and distribution for companies. The business revenues alone from this project is projected at \$247 million.

Over \$30 million has already been devoted to the project. Both the environmental reports and design are complete. The 18-mile project, Halls said, is shovel ready. The next step is to request grant funding through SB1 Congested Corridors and Trade Corridor Enhancement 2020. Some funding will also be supplied by Bridge Tolls.