

710 NORTH FREEWAY EXTENSION

Quick Facts

1947

South Pasadena passed the first resolution against extending the Freeway

1958

Master Plan of Freeways was adopted showing the plan for Route 7, now the I-710 and SR-710

1960s

Caltrans bought houses in El Sereno, South Pasadena, Pasadena and Alhambra to build the surface route

1964

Section from Long Beach to El Sereno (Los Angeles) opened

1973 - 1998

Injunction granted to prevent Caltrans from buying additional properties and proceeding with the project

1999

Second injunction granted (still in place)

2002 - 2003

Bored tunnel proposed and presented as an option

2003 - 2004

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) rescinded their approval for the surface project. Following the FHWA, the State of California also rescinded their approval.

2006

First Route 710 Feasibility Assessment. Determined that more effective study was needed.

2007 - 2009

Second Route 710 Feasibility Assessment conducted. The SR-710 Tunnel Technical Study (Geotechnical Report) examined ONLY whether a bored tunnel was feasible within five zones. \$7 million spent.

2010

Final Geotechnical Report presented in March. Conclusion: All zones are viable options for tunneling. No zones eliminated. Surface route not eliminated. MTA Board voted \$11.5 million contract to InfraConsult to pursue Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) for 6 projects, including the SR-710 Extension. MTA Board voted to include the SR-710 "Gap Closure" in the Mayor's 30/10 Initiative (America Fast Forward), 12 fast-tracked projects to be completed in 10 years. MTA Board voted to move to the next steps of the project, to include Scoping (evaluation), Alternative Analysis and environmental studies. InfraConsult completes Public-Private Partnership report, outlining concept to bundle three highway projects together to attract investors - I-710 Freight Corridor, SR-710 North Tunnel, and the High Desert Corridor.

2011

Scoping process begins. Metro holds a series of community outreach sessions. Study area defined. Work begins on Purpose & Needs statement that does not include port or goods movement considerations. Gloria Molina reveals in a Metro Board meeting the plan to use the original Meridian route in Zone 3 in spite of the supposed "route neutral" geotechnical study that was conducted. In March, Metro sends out Press Release and Executive Director of Highway Programs, Doug Failing, does interview for "Everything Long Beach" where the 710 North "Gap Closure" is described as necessary to complete the natural goods corridor that was begun several decades ago. Stakeholders submit comments and Scoping closes April 14. Study area expanded to include La Cañada Flintridge and Glendale. Metro Board Chair, Ara Najarian, points out the vast discrepancies in cost estimates. Requests a full cost-benefit analysis. Meetings begin with No 710 Action Committee representatives, Metro and InfraConsult to discuss a base-case tunnel scenario. CH2MHill awarded \$37,300,000 contract for EIR/EIS.

2012

Metro and InfraConsult disclose that their tunnel cost estimates are based solely on per linear foot bid for Seattle's Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Tunnel, not a completed project such as Boston's Big Dig that had cost overruns of over \$12 billion (\$22 billion if you consider full final costs.) It is also revealed that a cost over \$8 billion would be too high for most investors. SCAG adopts Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in April that names the SR-710 as a tunnel in the amount of \$5.636 billion with tolls included in revenue projections. Stakeholder cities ask to have the language revised and the project moved out of the constrained plan. Project enters Alternatives Analysis phase. Metro creates three types of committees for outreach purposes—Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Stakeholders Outreach Advisory Committee (SOAC), and Community Liaison Councils (CLC). TAC presented in April with chart of 42 alternatives and the 11 selected choices at one session, prior to any CLC or SOAC meetings being held. Stakeholders are very unhappy about the process. Metro holds a series of Open Houses in May with Technical Team from CH2M Hill and Aecom and the Outreach Team from Metro and MBI. It is demonstrated that a tunnel is being designed along the Meridian route from north of Valley in El Sereno, despite the City of LA Resolution against it and to Del Mar Blvd in Pasadena. The tunnel could also have a grade of up to 4% despite Metro's claim that it wouldn't exceed the standard of 2-2.5%. InfraConsult's PPP report is received and filed by the Metro Board in July. In August, an audit report by the State of California revealed that Caltrans wasted millions in the mismanagement of Caltrans-owned homes in the 710 corridor. Glendale City Councilmember, Ara Najarian dismissed from Metrolink Board by new MTA Chair Michael Antonovich. Further TAC and SOAC meetings show a renewed consideration for a route in Zone 2 near Glassell Park and brand new routes in the northwest corner of Zone 3. Resident groups in West Pasadena, Garvanza, Highland Park, and Eagle Rock bring new energy to the cause by showing up to the CLC meetings in high numbers, placing posters around town, writing letters, signing petitions and connecting with each other through social media. InfraConsult/HDR Engineering Executive, Michael Schneider and Metro's Executive Director of Highway Programs, Doug Failing solicit investor interest by making presentations to transportation groups. The SR-710 is shown in the slides as a bored tunnel, not a potential light rail or bus rapid transit system which may reveal a bias in the Alternatives Analysis selection process and premature marketing. Duarte City Council and City Selection Committee member, John Fasana, along with then-Mayor of Alhambra Barbara Messina, asks member representatives to vote against Ara Najarian for his re-confirmation to the MTA Board, based on his outspoken views on the 710. Never before has the City Selection Committee failed to ratify the appointment of a candidate who had unanimous support from his/her zone.

2013

Caltrans releases the final SR-710 Alternatives Analysis Report to the public on January 18, five days before the scheduled Open House meetings. The stakeholders are outraged that there is so little time to review the report prior to the public meetings. The organization listed as the lead agency on the report is Metro, not Caltrans, which sparks discussion about who the lead agency truly is. Ara Najarian asks for clarification from the Metro Board on the MOU between the two agencies and is told that revealing this information would violate attorney-client privilege. The No 710 Action Committee marches in the South Pasadena—Festival of Balloons parade, July 4th. The City of Alhambra hosts a "710 Day" on July 10th which is attended mostly by Alhambra City employees. Ara Najarian remains on the MTA Board and is reinstated on the MetroLink Board by new Chair, Diane Dubois. In October, MTA Board votes to add the SR-710 to the list of "Accelerated Funding" projects.

2014

Alhambra City Council members actively pursue support for the tunnel alternative by meeting with various city leaders. Renewed interest in the project by cities along the I-210 results in many taking a position in support or opposition. Measure R funds used by San Marino, Rosemead, Monterey Park, San Gabriel and Alhambra to pay for 710 Coalition campaign. Metro Board member, Gloria Molina and SCAG Executive Director Hasan Ikhata state publicly that the tunnel is the only solution before any alternative has been chosen, revealing bias. Alhambra residents form new group, Responsible Alhambrians Against the 710. In May, Metro Press Release states that the draft EIR/EIS release will be delayed until February 2015. The public will have 90 days to comment and only two public hearings. Pasadena, La Cañada Flintridge, Glendale, Sierra Madre and South Pasadena form 5-Cities Alliance to share resources in their reviews of the Draft EIR during the comment period. California Transportation Commission reprimands Caltrans District 7 Director, Carrie Bowen and Metro Executive Director, Doug Failing for proceeding with the environmental study without having a cost-benefit analysis. The Directors state that the analysis would be included in the

Project Report, to be released concurrently with the Draft EIR. City of Alhambra steps up marketing efforts by hiring public relations firm Englander, Knabe and Allen which results in a new pro-710 tunnel website, push polls and installation of pro-tunnel banners on Fremont Avenue. Caltrans devised an Affordable Sales Program in order to sell some of the unneeded properties in the 710 Corridor. There is widespread community disagreement to the proposed regulations as outlined in the plan. This program continues to be discussed.

Cost, Tolls, Length, Safety

Over the last two decades, public officials and government sources have quoted project costs ranging from \$1 to \$14 billion. The current figure being used by the MTA is \$5.425 billion and SCAG is \$5.636 billion. The \$780 million in Measure R funds may be allocated for the environmental process but the project is being planned as a public-private partnership with tolls. Measure J on the ballot in November 2012 would have extended the half-cent sales tax from 2039 to 2069 and could have been used to accelerate the project. It did not pass and transportation leaders are discussing changing the percent needed by voters from two-thirds to 55% for transportation projects.

Based on project cost, congestion-based tolls are estimated to be \$5 to \$15 one-way, and would be collected by a private company through transponders. Metro projects 180,000 vehicles per day will use the tunnel, a four-fold increase from the current number of 44,000 with a 35% diversion rate of 63,000 for those who will exit the freeway to avoid the toll.

The total project will be 6.3 miles long with the full tunnel portion measuring 4.9 miles. If completed, it will be the longest road tunnel ever built in the United States. Road tunnels have a history of danger from fire, flood, earthquake, collapse and terror attack. Threat from these dangers cannot be truly mitigated.