



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: AUGUST 20, 2019**
FROM: COUNCILMEMBER SOUBIROUS **WARD(S): ALL**
COUNCILMEMBER MAC ARTHUR
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION TO SR-91 FREEWAY CAR POOL LANE (HOV) CONVERSION
TO TOLL ROADS

ISSUE:

Recently, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) voted to move forward with a plan to acquire the State Route 91 freeway “Car Pool” lanes (also known as High Occupancy Vehicles or HOV lanes) and convert them to “toll” (pay) lanes. RCTC has plans to extend the Riverside County SR-91 Express Lanes (toll lanes) from its current east terminus along SR-91 near McKinley to a yet-to-be determined location along State Route 60 in Moreno Valley.

The proposed “toll lane” would eliminate the existing two persons or more SR-91 Car Pool lane in each direction and instead require all users to pay a toll. The current toll rules allow for a 50% reduction in toll cost to those with three or more persons in the vehicle. Current two-person HOV users, unwilling to pay the additional fee required for less than three persons, would further add to existing congestion in the regular lanes. That congestion would add an increased social and economic burden to those commuters living in Riverside, Moreno Valley and beyond. This action by RCTC will adversely affect those economically disadvantaged Riverside residents who are forced to commute to support their families.

Toll lanes are already being planned for I-15 in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, I-10 in San Bernardino County and other “freeways” in Southern California. Toll Roads should only be utilized when capacity (additional non-toll lanes) is being increased. Along with this, access points must be maintained for Riverside Residents to access the HOV Lanes.

Combined tolls from the route of McKinley to SR-55 in Orange County cost about \$27.55 during peak westbound travel and \$31.05 for combined peak eastbound travel. That’s one way! How much will it cost to use these tolls into Moreno Valley? How much additional traffic back-ups will toll transition points generate for non-toll lane users? These are important questions to debate. RCTC has also voted to “spend” toll revenues gained on specific toll segments on other non-toll RCTC projects. How big do we want to grow the toll road network and at what cost to our residents?

RECOMMENDATION:

That the members of the City Council discuss the RCTC proposal and approve and adopt a statement (either by Resolution or formal letter) of opposition to the RCTC plan.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Riverside has enjoyed a good working relationship with the RCTC, which through two “Measure A” ballot initiative efforts, collects an additional (combined 50 year) half-cent sales tax on all taxable goods sold in Riverside County and uses these tax monies on various transportation infrastructure upgrades and projects throughout the County including many in the City. The funding of RCTC is supplemental to State collected taxes (purchases and fuel taxes) that return to counties and cities for their road funding projects and other General Fund needs. Explosive growth in Riverside County during the 1980’s and 1990’s, and resulting traffic congestion saw the need for an additional road-funding source.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

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