



HACIENDA HEIGHTS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Streets and Highways Committee By Jeffrey Lin

July 2022

An on-/off-ramp project in Hacienda Heights meant to preface future widening of the 60 and 605 Freeways has been postponed by Metro since the early pandemic. Metro deemed the Hacienda Heights SR-60/7th Avenue project beneficial to drivers and not overly adversely impacting adjacent residents, but if and when the project and the freeway widening are set in motion again, construction could come very close to homes.

The 60 Freeway/7th Avenue project is part of Metro's 605 Freeway "hot spots" improvements that prepare for Metro's \$5+ billion [605 Corridor Improvement Project \(605CIP\)](#). Metro is funding and executing dozens of "hot spot" widenings of freeways, freeway on-/off-ramps, surface streets leading to the 605, and freeways it connects to.

These "hot spot" widenings set the stage for the overall 605CIP, which is planned to widen about fifteen miles of the main stem of the 605, plus "improve" (mostly widen) nearby portions of the 5, 10, 60, and 105 Freeways. The 605CIP would touch on nine cities – Baldwin Park, Downey, City of Industry, El Monte, Norwalk, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, and Whittier, as well as several unincorporated county areas such as Hacienda Heights.

Many smaller hot spot widenings are proceeding (that is: projects for tens of millions of dollars, not hundred-plus millions),

One hot spot project not moving forward is Metro's planned revamp of the 60 Freeway on-/off-ramps at 7th Avenue in Hacienda Heights.

In 2015, Metro and Caltrans completed early studies (see [Project Study Report](#) and [appendices including maps](#)) to determining how to widen the 605 and 60 Freeways through much of the San Gabriel Valley. The PSR includes four alternative configurations for the 605, but all the alternatives show essentially the same configuration for the 60 Freeway through Hacienda Heights.

After completing the larger 605/60 study, Metro looked to identify small early projects to prepare for widening the 605. These projects (including Valley Boulevard and Whittier Boulevard projects listed above) could proceed ahead of the larger project if they provided an

independent benefit (generally meaning that they would increase car capacity) and the costs (fiscally, and in terms of demolishing adjacent homes/businesses/etc.) were not too onerous. The 60/7th Avenue project fit those criteria.

A further [2017 Metro study of the 60/7th project](#) reiterates that “improvements [to the 60/7th Avenue on- and off-ramps] are being made in order to accommodate SR-60 mainline widening required to improve the I-605 / SR-60 Interchange.” For this Hacienda Heights project, Metro is retooling the north side (westbound) ramps essentially to push them a little further north, in order to make space for later adding one more westbound lane to the 60.

In 2018, the Metro board approved a two-year \$2 million contract ([staff report](#)) with Advantec Consulting Engineers to design/engineer the project.

In August 2020, Caltrans approved the 60/7th Avenue project’s environmental documentation, stating that it was “categorically exempt” from the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) despite increasing car capacity somewhat by “increasing storage on WB [westbound] SR-60 on-ramp by lengthening and widening the ramp.” Widening a short stretch of roadway – apparently less than around a mile – will induce more driving, but falls below the agreed-upon threshold for impacting the environment. (The Metro Highway Program has several early phase freeway projects that are just under a mile long – including [Metro’s 91 Freeway widening from Atlantic to Cherry](#) in Long Beach – which appear to have been parsed into these small chunks to minimize environmental review processes.)

Through Hacienda Heights, the 60 Freeway runs in close proximity to homes, apartments, schools, a church, and a few commercial developments. Its sound walls run along hundreds of backyards.

Despite this close proximity, Metro plans to add one more lane to the 60 without taking out any homes. (Note: that just means no home demolitions *in Hacienda Heights*. [Metro’s 2015 PSR appendix](#) shows seven to nine home demolitions on El Monte’s Linnard Street as part of the planned future 60 Freeway widening. Outside of Hacienda Heights, along the 60 there are also a number of commercial/industrial parcels slated for partial or full demolition.

At this time, there is no indication when the project will proceed ahead.