

Could 4,400 Trucks Be Coming to I-580?

Caltrans has released its findings on the potential impact of lifting the truck ban on Highway I-580. Overall, the Study shows no advantages to East or West Oakland residents that would result in a healthier environment but significant advantages to the freight industry by providing faster travel times and more routing options.

Here is a high level summary of findings in five key areas: truck volumes, speed, air quality, noise, and structural capacity.

Truck Volumes.

The Study estimates **if the truck ban were lifted today, we would see some 4,400 trucks per day on I-580**. Over a 16-hour day (6am-6pm is when most truck travel occurs), that amounts to one truck every 13 seconds.

State Route 13 would see 500 more heavy duty trucks.

Tunnel Road would expect some 270 heavy trucks per day; Hesperian, Hegenberger and 150th would each see 400 trucks each day. Other arterials such as High St, Park, 14th Avenue and Fruitvale saw 'insignificant' increases but, as the Study team acknowledged, is based on levels the model uses to assess impacts which may be different than street-level reality. (Author's note: even a small number of additional trucks on some of these streets may have outsized impacts.)

Ashby Avenue could expect 190 trucks and Grand Ave about 140 trucks each day between Harrison and MacArthur Blvd.

Speed.

Lifting the truck ban on I-580 would result in higher travel speeds for heavy duty trucks on all freeways in the network. Some 67% of trucks could travel at speeds of over 60mph (only 49% can do so with the ban). (Author's Note: the commercial speed limit on California highways is 55mph.) The Study noted that truck drivers would need to 'be more careful' when navigating the tighter turns on 580's entrances, exits and on I-580. The Study flagged this safety concern: "Increasing the number of trucks traveling at speeds greater than 55mph...could increase the severity of truck-involved collisions... further study may be needed." It also acknowledged speeds on local streets could increase, which presents a challenge to 'determine how changes in truck speeds could impact collision severity.'

Unsafe lane changes and speeding were the top two causes of collisions on the highways in the Study; improper turns and speed are the top two on local roads.

Air Quality.

The Study's fundamental premise was to evaluate potential improvements in air quality in East and West Oakland, with a focus on improved health outcomes.

The finding that lifting the ban on I-580 will not result in improved health outcomes for these communities is particularly relevant. Exposure to Particulate Matter 2.5 as a measure of air quality shows that West Oakland, Emeryville, Piedmont and central parts of Oakland all share the same levels; most of East Oakland, San Leandro and the hills have lower levels of exposure to PM2.5.

This finding is underscored by the 2025 WOCAP Report which evaluated tons of Particulate Matter 2.5 in West Oakland from various sources. **Heavy and medium duty trucks on I-880 contribute the least amount of PM 2.5's.** Local streets and industrial sites account for the lion's share of pollution, as does road dust. Ironically, enabling faster speeds for trucks on the highways associated with lifting the ban, will increase road dust and its associated pollution exponentially. (Author's Note: Whether trucks use 880 or both 580 and 880 to reach these communities will also not change these 'local' conditions.)

Emissions from heavy and medium duty trucks will continue to improve as fleets replace older vehicles with new, cleaner ones.

Noise.

The Study measured noise only from a 'very high level' which looked at very few segments of I-580 (not specified). It did not measure nearby streets, on or off ramps, vehicle counts or how sound travels. The 580 corridor is already rated at the highest noise levels with the truck ban in place. Sound walls have only been constructed on a small portion of this corridor due to geographic, topographic factors and lack of right-of-way which preclude this as a measure to mitigate noise. Many existing sound walls are ineffective and in need of repair/replacement.

Structural Capacity.

The Study's assessment that I-580 is structurally capable of handling heavy duty trucks was based on the fact that its overhead clearances are of sufficient height and its daily use by buses at the present time. (Author's note: Buses that use I-580 daily weigh 45- 54 tons depending on if they are fully occupied or not, and number in the hundreds. This is a far cry from thousands of trucks with weights of up to 80,000 tons.)

Caltrans admitted the Study's scope did not include roadway degradation and maintenance assessments, roadway barriers and other critical infrastructure differences between Highway I-880 and I-580.

A Brief History of the Two Highways.

Highway 880, formerly known as the Nimitz, was built in the late 1950's specifically as the region's freight corridor. It is strategically proximate to the Port of Oakland, Oakland Airport, and Oakland-San Leandro-Hayward area industrial hubs, which evolved in tandem with this resource for goods movement. Highway 880 has been maintained with 'state of the art' freight corridor measures.

Highway 580, was built just a few years later, but planning for it to 1) replace the segment of MacArthur Blvd that previously served as Highway 50, and 2) to be designated as a 'Scenic Highway' and as such, resemble a parkway as much as possible, occurred during the same timeframes. One of the agreements at the time was to honor the 1951 ban of trucks from MacArthur Blvd between Grand Ave and San Leandro.

The Study Ignores or Downplays Some Critical Facts.

Geography and Natural Disasters

A significant stretch of I-580 and SR13 run along or near the Hayward Fault. Conducting a seismic risk is 'outside the study's scope' and was not addressed. The same holds true for access to and evacuation from other environmental disasters such as wildfires and landslides. The Hayward Fault is among the most dangerous in the country, and I-580 is the only freeway built along such a critical geographic hazard in the region.

Emergency Services, Schools and Care Facilities

There are 72 sensitive receptors (schools, hospitals and other critical facilities) along the I-580/13 corridor; there are 41 along I-880/238. No outreach was undertaken for these important resources.

Truck Industry Projections

The Study's assertions of the number of trucks on both highways with and without the ban, today and in 2035 use a traffic model that doesn't recognize the current state of the freight industry. It also ignores disincentives that providing new capacity promulgates. For example:

- The Port's freight tonnage today is 15-20% lower than it was in 2016, but the number of heavy duty trucks serving the Port has increased 5-10%.
- The trucking industry structurally adapts to increased capacity and businesses optimize with smaller, more frequent deliveries which rapidly fills new lanes. The fundamentals of road congestion law and economics tells us industry scales operations to absorb new capacity

- Carriers that currently move goods at night will shift to daytime hours
- More road capacity disadvantages cleaner rail and other cleaner strategies, economically

Improving Health Outcomes is Complex

Implying that lifting the truck ban on I-580 will significantly improve overall health in the heavily-burdened communities of East and West Oakland is an inaccurate and incomplete assertion. As long as the I-880 is an industrial corridor, proximate communities will be disproportionately affected by industrial sources of pollution.

Overall outdoor air quality in East and West Oakland has improved significantly in recent years and will continue if polluting sources such as the Port, other local industries continue to clean up their operations, vehicles become less polluting, pavements upgraded and maintained and how traffic flows through communities is regulated to minimize negative impacts. Insisting that the Port and other permitted businesses do more to regulate both access to and from and their internal operations is a key component.

However, indoor air quality presents a much larger and more complex issue. Because most people spend 90% of their time indoors, the quality of indoor quality is essential to improving health outcomes. There are many strategies that can be implemented that can meaningfully impact health outcomes in a positive direction. For example, a recent project in East Oakland that provided 65 households with air quality monitors AND air filters resulted in fewer visits to the ER for chronic respiratory conditions. It also empowered those households to see when indoor air quality was poor and to take action.

Making sure that schools, senior centers, day care centers and other such facilities have advanced air monitoring and filtration systems has multiple benefits.

Planting vegetation strategically to ‘capture’ and absorb harmful pollutants is another strategy.

Providing older housing stock with upgraded windows and other ‘weatherizing’ features can minimize outdoor pollution from migrating indoors. Making sure homes have good ventilation assures indoor pollutants don’t build up to harmful levels.

Educating people about activities that produce pollution such as burning incense, using certain cleaning and personal care products, and plastic packaging are also important.

Making sure disproportionately burdened communities have access to free or affordable health care is also essential.

These are just a few strategies that would be far more effective in improving health outcomes and the quality of life for all residents of Oakland than lifting the truck ban on I-580.

As the Study acknowledges, lifting the truck ban on I-580 will not meaningfully change the amount of heavy duty trucks through the area nor change the most congested parts of the highway system. Conditions will worsen for 580 and 880 will see only minor improvements. Other than offering the freight industry maximum choices, there seems to be no other advantages to either the 880 or 580 community to lifting the ban.

What's Next?

Caltrans' community Outreach is going on now. The community engagement effort consists of four 'office hours' at local libraries and four tabling events.

As of this writing, several have taken place. All have been sparsely attended.

Just one person was at the 81st Ave Library event; five were seen at the San Lorenzo Library and less than a dozen at the Fruitvale Farmers Market. Bayfair Farmers Market, West Oakland and South Berkeley markets are coming up, as are two more office hours at Dimond and the West Oakland branch libraries.

Several elected officials have taken a stand against lifting the ban. State Senator Jesse Arreguin has stated, "I do not support lifting the semi-truck restriction on I-580 and I will not author legislation in the State Senate to repeal it."

A few Oakland City Council members have also taken a stand: Zac Unger, Charlene Wang, and Noel Gallo.

The "No Big Rigs" grassroots organization which has collected over 6,000 signatures against lifting the ban, hopes to get all the area State senators and assembly representatives to take the same stand that Senator Arreguin has. At the same time, getting the Mayors and Councils from San Leandro, Oakland, Emeryville, Alameda, Piedmont, and Berkeley to do the same will help further this effort.

For more information: www.nobigrigs580.org has information about the Caltrans Study technical findings, a list of elected officials to contact with your feedback, and an array of other background information and data.

Caltrans also has a survey. Here's the link to let them know how you feel about it:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/i580TAS-Survey>

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