



## San Gabriel Valley Route 710 Tunnel Makes National List of Highway Boondoggles

### New Report Identifies 12 of the Worst Highway Projects Across the Country

A new study by the United States Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) Education Fund and Frontier Group identifies 12 of the most wasteful highway expansion projects across the country, slated to collectively cost at least \$24 billion. Making the list of national highway boondoggles is the proposed 710 Tunnel Project, which officials estimate would cost \$5.6 billion. The new study details how despite America's massive repair and maintenance backlog, and in defiance of America's changing transportation needs, state governments across the country, including California, continue to spend billions each year on new and wider highways. The study shows how some of these highway projects are outright boondoggles.

**"California is considering prioritizing the most expensive, most polluting, and least effective option for addressing the area's transportation problems, a single or double bore tunnel," said Emily Rusch, Executive Director at the California Public Interest Research Group. "This project would cause more pollution than any of the alternative projects by increasing car and truck traffic in the area – and would actually make congestion worse," she noted.**

The most recent federal data show California has more than 2,500 structurally deficient bridges, nearly 1 in 10. At the same time, other data also show 34 percent of roads are in poor condition.

Meanwhile, the project fails to account for changing transportation trends, especially among Millennials. "America's long-term travel needs are changing, especially among Millennials, who are driving fewer miles, getting driver licenses in fewer numbers, and expressing greater preferences to live in areas where they do not need to use a car often," said Tony Dutzik, Senior Policy Analyst at Frontier Group. "Despite the fact that Millennials are the nation's largest generation, and the unquestioned consumers of tomorrow's transportation system, California is failing to adequately respond to these changing trends." he added.

The study recommends that states:

1. Adopt fix-it-first policies that reorient transportation funding away from highway expansion and toward repair of existing roads and bridges;
2. Invest in transportation solutions that reduce the need for costly and disruptive highway expansion projects by improving and expanding public transit, biking, and walking options;

3. Give priority to funding transportation projects that reduce the number of vehicle-miles people travel each year, thereby also reducing air pollution, carbon emissions, and future road repair and maintenance needs;
4. Include future maintenance costs, a range of potential future housing and transportation trends, and the availability of new transportation options such as car-sharing, bike-sharing, ride-sharing, and transit in transportation project selection decisions;
5. Invest in research and data collection to better track, and more aptly react, to ongoing shifts in how people travel.

**“Given that the proposed tunnel has extraordinarily high costs and would not serve to reduce congestion or improve air quality according to their EIR, Caltrans should immediately drop the 710 tunnel project,” said Rusch.**

Elected officials and community leaders joined CALPIRG in expressing their concerns about the SR 710 tunnel project.

**U.S. Congressman Adam Schiff:** "I do not believe that the 710 freeway tunnel alternatives proposed by Caltrans and Metro make sense for our region or taxpayers. For the same cost as the \$5.6 billion tunnel, we could likely complete all of the alternatives -- light rail, bus, surface street improvements, bike and pedestrian walkways, cargo movement, and other traffic flow solutions -- combined, and use the remainder of the money to repair some of our aging infrastructure. These alternatives are not only more cost effective, but far less disruptive of the affected neighborhoods."

**State Sen. Carol Liu:** "To date, analyses in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impacts Report indicate that the proposed 710 tunnel will not improve air quality or relieve congestion, the intended purposes of the project. These analyses alone have already cost over 40 million dollars and leave many questions unanswered. Clearly, this and future money spent on the tunnel project would be better spent on transportation infrastructure maintenance and upgrades and on alternative transportation modes that will benefit local communities and the region."

**Ara Najarian, Mayor of the City of Glendale:** "The 710 tunnel is an archaic solution to the transportation needs of our modern society. It is too costly, too polluting, too dangerous and too inefficient to solve our transportation challenges. The 710 tunnel will surely exceed the "estimated" cost of \$6 billion, while increasing cancer and other health risks to children, adults and seniors. It is unconscionable for elected officials to pursue this terrible project. Rather, let's support responsible transportation projects aimed at reducing vehicle trip miles, greenhouse gases and toxic emissions."

**Bill Bogaard, Former Mayor of the City of Pasadena from 1999-2015:** "The 710 tunnel freeway proposal, after more than 50 years, exists as a solution in search of a problem, in light of today's priorities and the limits of resources. Its original purpose—to increase north-south drive-through capacity for trucks—has been outmoded by evolving truck mobility patterns and the emerging alternative transportation needs throughout the west San Gabriel Valley. The DEIR/EIS, although grossly inadequate, does demonstrate that the tunnel increases air pollution and local traffic. Meanwhile, for investment much less than the cost of the tunnel, a comprehensive range of traffic and mobility improvements can be achieved, such as light rail, bus, surface street improvements, bike and pedestrian walkways, cargo movement, and other traffic flow solutions. With currently

existing support for such solutions, they could proceed now, creating thousands of jobs, instead of continuing the 710 tunnel stalemate for decades into the future. The 710 project does not offer comprehensive relief, it costs too much, it creates new environmental problems, and it is not going anywhere. The proposal should be dropped!"

**Joe Cano, resident of El Sereno and member of the No 710 Action Committee:** "The residents of El Sereno oppose a transportation project that will endanger the health and wellbeing of our community. We support intelligent, thought-out transportation solutions. The SR710 tunnel is not one of them."

**Jan SooHoo, resident of La Canada Flintridge and member of the No 710 Action Committee:** "After a "trial" that has cost taxpayers more than \$40 million (to date), the verdict is in. The panel of independent jurors (Congressman Adam Schiff, Natural Resources Defense Council, South Coast Air Quality Management District, US Environmental Protection Agency, USC Keck School of Preventive Medicine, and others) have judged the DEIR/EIS and the Cost/Benefit Analysis as "flawed", "inadequate", "analytically inadequate", "deficient", "misleading", "confusing" and "lacking transparency." It is time to end the hemorrhage of taxpayer dollars on this boondoggle and put the remaining money to work funding worthwhile projects that will actually meet the needs of our communities."

The report also looks back at the 11 highway boondoggles identified last year. Since the original report came out, several states have revisited plans to expand and build new highways, realizing that the money could be more wisely spent elsewhere. For example, the Trinity Parkway project in Dallas has been revised from a six-lane road to a more limited 4-lane road, and the original proposal to create a double-decker tunnel for I-94 in Milwaukee has been postponed for the foreseeable future. And in Southern California, in March 2015 the San Diego Water Board voted 6-0 to uphold a previous decision to deny the Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency (TCA) a permit to build a 5.5 mile extension to their existing 241 toll road.

**The report can be read at this link [here](#).**

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