

Historical Overview of the 710 Project

In the 1930s, the Department of Highways (DOH, later known as the California Department of Transportation or Caltrans) designated the route (of what is now SR-710 extension, sometimes referred to as “the gap”) as LRN 167, from Long Beach to Monterey Park. The route was extended to South Pasadena in 1949. In 1959 the *Master Plan of Freeways and Expressways* extended the route to I-210. The Department of Highways began location studies in 1960, changed LRN 167 to “Route 7” in 1963, and issued its *Project Report* identifying seven alignments in 1964. Following a couple of public hearings in Pasadena, the California Highway Commission (CHC) adopted the “Meridian Route” (Huntington Drive to I-210) in November 1964. South Pasadena requested a reconsideration, which was denied. Second and third requests for reconsideration in 1966 and 1967 were also denied.

The Long Beach Freeway opened between Route 10 and Valley Blvd. in February 1965. The City of Los Angeles signed the Freeway Agreement in April 1965. Alhambra and Pasadena followed suit in May 1966 and March 1967, respectively. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved the state-adopted route in June 1967. In November 1969, the CHC directed the DOH to study the Westerly Route proposed by South Pasadena.

In the 1950s until 1978, Caltrans began purchasing more than 500 private houses and lots in Los Angeles, Alhambra, South Pasadena, and Pasadena with a plan to demolish them and build a surface freeway connecting the SR-710 in Alhambra to the I-210 in Pasadena.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was signed into law in January 1970, and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was signed into law in November 1970.

DOH issued its *Adopted Line Report* in February 1972. Pasadena accepted the “Adopted Line” in March 1972. South Pasadena resolved to recommend the “Westerly Route” for the SR-7 extension in April 1972. CHC reaffirmed its adopted alignment the same month and concluded that the Westerly Route was not feasible in November 1972.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) was formed in January 1973 and released the EIR (I-10 to Huntington Drive) the same month. South Pasadena, et.al. sued to stop construction, also the same month, pending compliance with NEPA & CEQA. An injunction prohibited Caltrans from constructing the extension project until an EIR was properly completed. Caltrans submitted an EIR four times between 1973 and 1992 and was rejected by the FHWA each time.

South Pasadena amended its General Plan to show parks across the adopted route in March 1973. U.S. District Judge E. Avery Cravy arbitrated the settlement. An EIS was stipulated that month. The state sued to prohibit a park on the adopted route in May 1973. In July 1973 Judge David A. Thomas ruled in favor of the state on the parks issue. Judge Thomas directed South Pasadena to place the adopted route on its General Plan in September 1973.

Caltrans released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in March 1975. Pasadena, South Pasadena, and Alhambra jointly agreed to the "Plan C" alignment (which was a modified Westerly Alignment) in July 1975.

The state legislature passed AB 1716 (Arroyo Seco Park Preservation Act) to prevent the route from encroaching on parks in August 1975. Caltrans tentatively approved the Plan C alignment in September 1975.

"Wishbone" (a one-way couplet; Pasadena Ave. & St. John Ave.) construction was nearly completed in March 1976. LA County Supervisors supported completing the project to Huntington Drive in August 1976.

Caltrans released its Supplemental DEIS (SDEIS) in September 1976. Community workshops and public hearing were held on the SDEIS from October to December 1976. Los Angeles joined Pasadena in suit to complete portions of the "Gap Closure" in December 1976. Caltrans submitted its FEIS to the FHWA recommending a freeway between Routes 10 and 210 in June 1977, but the FHWA rejected the FEIS on the basis of route segmentation and lack of local support in August 1977.

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) was established in January 1978.

Senate Bill 86 (the "Roberti Bill") imposed conditions on state agencies disposing of residential properties in January 1979.

The Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) held public hearings on project location in May 1980. LACTC reaffirmed support for the completion of the project in July 1980.

Opposition and lawsuits in the 1980s and 90s from residents in the so-called "710 Corridor," many from South Pasadena and surrounding communities, forced Caltrans in the early 2000s to abandon plans to build a surface route.

The federal injunction from 1973 was not lifted until 1998, when FHWA accepted Caltrans' supplemental EIR and issued the Record of Decision (ROD) – the agreement that committed the federal government to fund a large portion of the project. South Pasadena filed a federal lawsuit citing failure to protect clean air, the environment, and historic properties.

In 1999 U.S. District Court Judge Pregerson issued a preliminary injunction prohibiting Caltrans from proceeding with the 710 Freeway Project. Judge Pregerson's lengthy opinion identified numerous, substantial violations of federal law that would have to be remedied prior to completing the project, including violations of the Clean Air Act, Environmental Protection Act, and Historic Preservation Act. No attempt has been made by the defendants to satisfy the violations found by Judge Pregerson. FHWA rescinded their ROD IN 2003. In 2004 the CTC withdrew its Notice of Determination (NOD).

In 2002, with plans to build a surface road connecting the two freeways shelved, Caltrans decided to move forward with a tunnel alternative. In 2004, the Metropolitan Transportation

Authority selected a team of consultants, led by the engineering firm Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade & Douglas to conduct a feasibility study for the tunnel. The narrow scope of the study focused on connecting the freeway stubs in Alhambra and Pasadena, and failed to analyze the needs of the surrounding region. Metro issued its Route 710 Tunnel Technical Feasibility Assessment Report in 2006.

In 2010, Metro's board decided to move forward with the environmental review of the SR-710. The contract was awarded to CH2M Hill in 2011, with the public outreach contract going to Consensus, Inc. Metro's State Route 710 Study: Alternatives Analysis Report was released in 2012, and included a recommendation for the following alternatives to be evaluated further: No build; Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management; Bus Rapid Transit; Light Rail Transit; Freeway Tunnel.

Metro and Caltrans released the Draft EIR (totaling 26,625 pages) on March 6, 2015. The cities of Los Angeles, La Cañada-Flintridge, Sierra Madre, Glendale, South Pasadena, and Pasadena all have passed formal resolutions opposing the proposed tunnel(s) alternative, but cities like San Marino, Monterey Park, and Alhambra continue to support Caltrans' proposal. In addition to voting against the tunnel alternative, the Pasadena City Council adopted the Pasadena Preferred Alternative report by the SR-710 Alternatives Working Group, which recommended a multimodal alternative with the following elements: light rail transit; expanded bus service; local street network improvements; and bicycle transit. Regional cities, organizations, and individuals also came together in 2015 to form Beyond the 710, a group looking for the best ways to relieve traffic, connect communities, promote smart growth, and help people get to their jobs, schools, shopping, and recreation. The group is opposed to the tunnel alternative and has drafted a multimodal alternative.