METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Express Lanes START℠: Evaluation Summary & Next Steps

Bay Area Infrastructure Financing Authority

February 26, 2025

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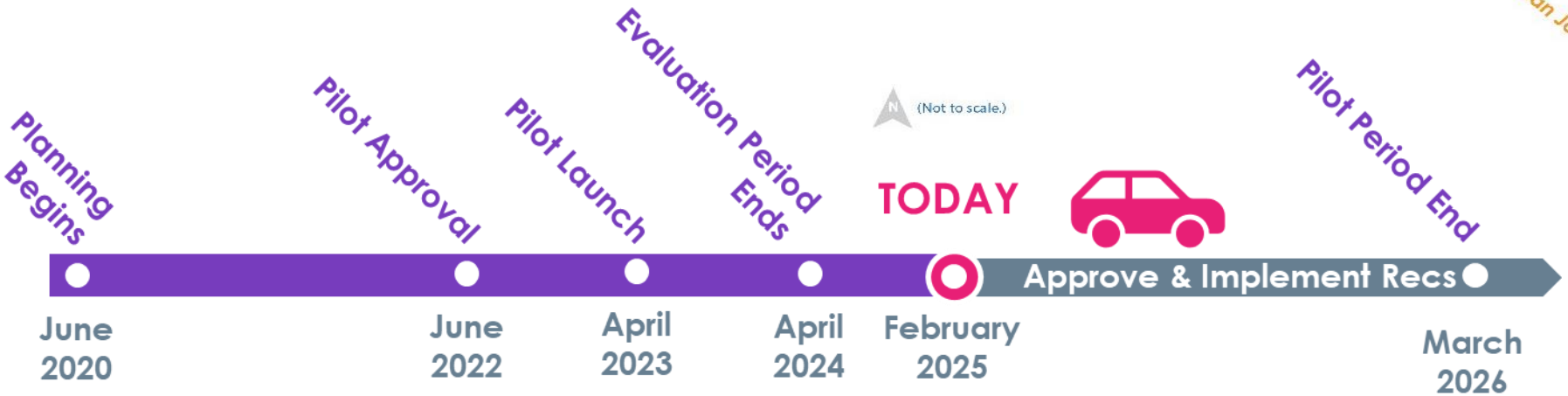
Pilot Scope

- Concept grew out of I-880 outreach & Policy Advisory Council input
- Toll discount of 50% or more in the I-880 Express Lanes
- Eligibility requirements (same as Clipper® START)
  - Proof of household income at or below 200% Federal poverty level
  - Bay Area mailing address
  - Proof of identity
- Toll discount applied to FasTrak® account
- 12-month evaluation period (April 2023 – March 2024)



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Pilot Goals and Target Metrics

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Program Goals

Increase access to the I-880 express lanes (metrics 1-7)

Customers have a **good experience** - registering and using lanes (metrics 8-10)

Maintain **operational integrity** - speed, reliability, and efficiency (metrics 11-12)

Target Metrics	Result
1) 16,000 Applications	×
2) 15,000 Approved Applications	×
3) 13,500 Enrolled Households	×
4) Existing FT customers increase use of express lanes 25%	✓
5) New FT customers make 1 or more express lane trips per month	✓
6) All ELS customers average 1 or more express lane trips per month	✓
7) Applicant race & ethnicity aligns with I-880 corridor residents	✓
8) Customers agree or strongly agree that applying for ELS is easy (rank >4)	✓
9) The # of monthly ELS customer calls to the FasTrak CSC <= 2% of customers	✓
10) 90% of ELS FasTrak customer accounts are in “Good Standing”	✓
11) Pilot operating cost is $500 or less per enrollee	×
12) Express Lane speeds do not fall as a result of the pilot	✓

× = Target not met. ✓ = target met.

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Additional Key Findings

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Potential customers are a smaller group than expected

- Regular I-880 drivers with express lane use-cases (e.g., in a rush)
- Willing to spend money instead of using free adjacent lane
- Willing to get and manage a FasTrak account

FasTrak could be a barrier for the potential customer base

- A third of approved applicants did not take final step to enroll & link FasTrak
- Possible concerns over account management

Preliminary evidence that program may help reduce violation rate

- For participants who had FasTrak before the pilot, 22% fewer incurred I-880 express lane violations in the pilot year than in the prior year

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Have we met the pilot goals?

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INCREASED ACCESS?

- **Yes**, for those who joined
- **Yes**, program design lowers the bar to express lane entry for targeted group
- **No**, for low-income households broadly

GOOD EXPERIENCE?

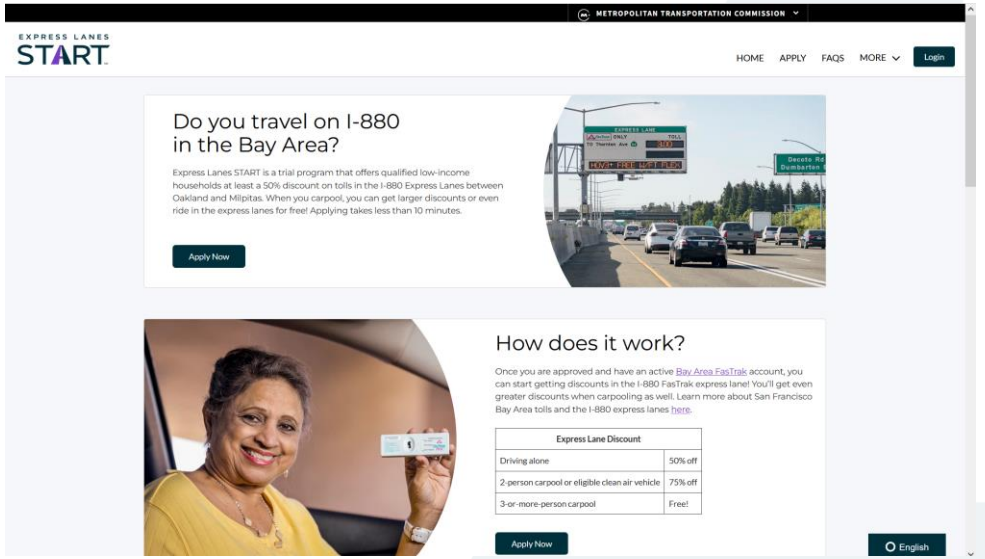
- **Yes**, participants found program valuable and easy to use
- **No**, two-step process & FasTrak account concerns contribute to low enrollment
- **Yes**, program enrollment decreased the rate of customer violations

OPERATIONAL INTEGRITY?

- **Mixed**, operating costs are falling but cost to provide benefit will remain higher than the benefit for the next year and likely beyond
- **Yes**, traffic operations were not negatively affected

Recent & Planned Activities: Marketing & Communications

- Completed in 2024:
  - Website adjustments → better search results, higher website traffic, more applications



- Ahead in 2025:
  - Refine enrollment targets
  - Complete review of past marketing efforts
  - Develop new advertising strategies for 2025
  - Identify and contract with appropriate hubs for in-person outreach
  - Deploy re-targeting ads to attract users from other benefit programs
  - Improve cross-links from other MTC websites (e.g., 511.org)

Recent & Planned Activities: Customer Experience

- Completed in 2024:
  - Conducted data analysis & surveys about FasTrak and violations
- Ahead in 2025:
  - Begin biennial eligibility renewals for existing customers
  - Implement key recommendations from cross-cutting review of eligibility & enrollment
  - Coordinate with efforts to make FasTrak more accessible and attractive to all toll facility users (see next slide)
  - Explore whether to augment verifier support services for applicants

Strategies to Increase Access to FasTrak in 2025

Q1

- Promote through DMV
- Tags at outreach events
- Retailer participation increase

Q2

- Inserts in violations
- Retailer marketing
- Advertising campaign
- Cash payment signage

Q3

- Contracts with CBOs
- Invoice/violation redesign
- Car dealership promotion
- New payment options
- Reduced retail price point

Q4

- Improved online ordering

This material is from an information item presented at the BATA Oversight Committee meeting on February 12, 2025

Recent & Planned Activities: Partnership & Coordination

- Completed in 2024:
  - EL START Advisory Group (Oct. 10th)
  - Policy Advisory Council Equity + Access Subcommittee (Oct. 22nd)
  - Express Lanes Executive Steering Committee (Nov. 7th)
- Ahead in 2025:
  - Work with other express lane operators to compare Bay Area means-based programs to inform future discussions on regional approach
  - Explore other alternatives to discount program (2025 and beyond)

Recommendation to Develop: Extend Pilot Timeframe

- Toll ordinance currently limits pilots to 3 years
- Amend the toll ordinance to extend the time allowed for BAIFA pilots
  - Allows more time to test new ideas and coordinate with partners
  - Change is timely → toll ordinance amendment process begins in March

Recommendations to Develop: Expand to Other BAIFA Corridors

- Expand Pilot to I-80 Solano
  - Tolling, including weekend hours, begins in Fall 2025
  - Pilot eases transition for eligible households
  - Adding corridors makes the program more attractive to users
  - Helps validate whether experience on I-880 is typical
- Collaborate with partner express lane operators on potential future pilot expansions, which could include I-680

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THANK YOU

Please direct comments and feedback to:

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