

Ramp Metering in Marin

Frequently Asked Questions

(updated 11/7/14)

What are the Benefits of Ramp Metering

By utilizing current technology, ramp metering will improve the operational efficiency of our highway by reducing overall travel time, increasing safety and throughput while providing an environmental benefit by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

How will ramp metering improve safety on the Highway?

Without ramp metering traffic commonly enters the highway in “platoons”, or groups of vehicles, due to green lights at the intersecting roadway. These platoons or surges of vehicles can create conflicts and intermittent congestion when traffic is merging on the highway. Ramp metering allows vehicles to enter the highway at uniform and consistent rates.

Will Metering a Ramp Result In Back-Ups On Local Streets?

Caltrans is utilizing metering equipment that will speed up the metering rate if vehicles are detected at the entrance to the ramp. This will allow more cars onto the highway and prevent back-ups onto local streets.

What Will The Typical Wait Time Be?

Based on a preliminary feasibility assessment of ramp metering, the wait time may range from a few seconds to a little over two minutes, depending on the ramp and the time of day. Carpools, vanpools and buses will be able to bypass the meters and access the highway more quickly by using High Occupant Vehicle (HOV) bypass lanes on some on-ramps.

Can Ramp Metering Result In A Worsened Condition?

Ramp metering will not worsen existing congestion. Unfortunately some of our roadways near the highway are already backed-up during commute periods without ramp meters. Ramp metering improves the flow of traffic on the Highway, and provides an overall benefit by smoothing the merging transition from the on-ramp to the highway. Because Highway 101 is used for so many local trips traveling within our neighborhoods improving the flow of traffic on the highway will provide an overall improved travel experience for Marin residents.

Where Is The First Phase Of Ramp Metering Being Implemented?

The initial phase to be activated includes adding metering lights to northbound Highway 101 ramps from the on-ramp at Spencer Avenue to the on-ramp at Sir Francis Drake Blvd.

When Will The Ramp Meters Become Operational?

Caltrans estimates phase-one metering will begin in early 2016. They will only be operated on the weekdays during the peak afternoon commute.

Are The On-Ramps Being Widened To Accommodate Vehicle Storage?

The Bridgeway on-ramp will be restriped to add an additional lane. The East Blithedale on-ramp will be widened from one to two lanes. The Tiburon Blvd on-ramp will be widened from one to three lanes including an HOV bypass lane. The Sir Francis Drake Blvd on-ramp will be widened from 2 to 3 lanes including an HOV bypass lane. The additional lanes will add storage for traffic on the ramps so there is no backup on local streets.

Ramp Metering May Improve The Overall Travel Times, But Will I Actually Be Slowed Down If I Don't Travel The Whole Corridor?

If you travel the metered 6 ½ mile corridor you will decrease your travel time by about 25% or over 4 minutes during the weekday afternoon peak period. However the total time savings would decrease at northern ramps since less time would be spent on the highway to counteract the wait time at the meter.

Will There Be Someone Monitoring The System As Needed So We Can Ensure There Is No Local Traffic Back-Ups?

Caltrans continually monitors highway traffic conditions throughout the Bay Area. The ramp metering system is designed to accommodate existing and projected traffic volumes on a ramp. Pavement sensors continually provide real-time information to the metering equipment during operation to balance highway and ramp traffic flows while avoiding local traffic back-ups.

Do We Have A Choice In Rejecting Ramp Metering?

MTC established a regional policy requiring ramp metering on our Highway System. Counties throughout the Bay Area are successfully implementing ramp metering to enhance travel and improve safety. Installing ramp meters allows operational improvement without adding highway lanes.



For more information, please contact:

Dan Cherrier, P.E., Project Manager
dcherrier@tam.ca.gov
(415) 226-0829

Bill Whitney, P.E., Project Manager
bwhitney@tam.ca.gov
(415) 226-0823