

Meeting of May 10, 2021

OCTA Awards \$28.7 Million to Improve Orange County Streets

The Orange County Transportation Authority has awarded cities throughout the county more than \$28 million to improve streets and synchronize the timing of traffic signals.

The funding is made available through Measure M's Comprehensive Transportation Funding Program, which makes funding available on a competitive basis for projects that will improve congested streets and synchronize traffic lights. Measure M is the county's half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements, also known as OC Go.

The OCTA board awarded \$20.2 million to nine projects in the County of Orange, Santa Ana, Orange, Garden Grove, Irvine and Yorba Linda to improve and widen busy streets and intersections.

In addition, \$8.5 million has been awarded to three projects in Lake Forest, Irvine and Santa Ana to synchronize traffic signals to make sure drivers hit more green lights during peak traffic hours. These projects will allow drivers to save time, save on fuel costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information, please visit octa.net/News/Measure/OCTA-Awards-28-7-Million-to-Improve-Orange-County-Streets/.

Board Receives Update on South County Improvements

The OCTA board received an update on efforts underway to improve the way people move throughout south Orange County as the area continues to grow and travel patterns and needs evolve.

The update focused on a near-term strategy agreed upon by OCTA, the Transportation Corridor Agencies and Caltrans aimed at improving traffic in South County. That strategy includes extending Los Patrones Parkway as a non-tolled county street, extending the I-5 carpool lanes south from Avenida Pico to the county line, and widening a 1.1-mile section of Ortega Highway.

Preliminary engineering for the **Los Patrones Parkway** extension will be funded by Measure M. This phase of the project will be led by the County of Orange and will begin as early as this fall.

The environmental process is underway to extend the **I-5 carpool lanes** from Avenida Pico to the border of San Diego County and is expected to be completed by early 2024. OCTA and Caltrans are committed to working closely with the public and San Clemente during this process.

Also, during the meeting, the OCTA board awarded \$5.25 million in Measure M funding to San Juan Capistrano for the preparation of plans, specifications and estimates to widen a portion of

Ortega Highway between Calle Entradero and Reata Road. Caltrans will lead the final design work, which is set to start in the fall.

The board also received an update on an ongoing study to address south Orange County's transportation needs. The **South Orange County Multimodal Transportation Study** is looking at a wide range of transportation needs and solutions over the next 25 years, including improvements to streets, bus and other transit options, highways and bikeways. The final phase of the study is expected to begin this summer.

Workshop Held to Discuss Proposed FY 2021-22 Budget

The OCTA board held a workshop to discuss the agency's proposed \$1.26 billion balanced budget for fiscal year 2021-22.

While the budget assumes continued economic recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, some uncertainty remains. Therefore, the proposed budget is 18.5% less than the current budget.

Measure M sales tax revenues are anticipated to begin recovering from the impacts of COVID-19, allowing OCTA to continue improving freeways and streets throughout Orange County, as well as funding transit programs.

Overall, 47% percent of the budget is allocated toward funding transit services, including OC Bus and Metrolink, 28% toward improving freeways, 12% toward improving streets throughout the county, and the remainder funding other programs, including the Express Lanes.

With the help of federal supplemental funding due to COVID-19, OC Bus service will have the flexibility to increase by more than 20% from the current service levels based on demand and public health considerations. In addition, paratransit service trips are expected to increase as ridership returns following the pandemic.

Supplemental federal funding will also allow Metrolink service levels to remain the same, with 41 weekday and 16 weekend trips within Orange County.

Traffic volumes on the 91 Express Lanes are also anticipated to increase by more than 28% when compared to the current budget, due to the recovery from COVID-19 traffic declines.

The proposed budget will return to the board on June 14 for a public hearing and for consideration.