

Meeting of Sept. 28, 2015

Board recognizes Employees of the Month

The Orange County Transportation Authority's board recognized two employees of the month for September.

Resolutions of appreciation were presented to:

- Toan Hoang from maintenance
- Fatima Adassi, senior office specialist of Community Transportation Services

Motorist services provides update

The board received a motorist services update. OCTA's motorist services programs include the call box system, Freeway Service Patrol, the Southern California 511 travelers' information system, the Service Authority for Abandoned Vehicles and the Orange County Taxi Administration Program.

Highlights of the motorist services' major activities during fiscal year 2014-15 include:

- Working to reduce and upgrade the 621 call boxes on Orange County freeways, highways and toll roads. Motorist aid calls through the 511 program increased 30 percent over fiscal year 2013-14, with 3,741 calls made.
- Freeway Service Patrol operators provided 69,045 services for motorists with disabled vehicles, with 99.5 percent of customers satisfied with the service.
- The Orange County Taxi Administration Program oversaw 28 taxicab companies, 949 taxicab vehicles and 1,156 taxicab drivers, down significantly from fiscal year 2013-14. The decline may be caused by operators moving to Transportation Network Companies like Uber and Lyft.

The motorist services programs assist motorists, mitigate congestion and provide the public with highway, transit and other traveler information, among other services.

Freeway call box reduction plan approved

The board approved a plan to reduce 33 percent of call boxes alongside freeways, toll roads and highways, as motorists are relying more heavily on their cellphones.

At the call box program's peak, 1,200 call boxes were spaced at half-mile intervals on Orange County freeways. An average of 135 people used them each day. Currently, there are 621 callboxes spaced at a maximum of 1 ¼-mile intervals. Less than six people now use the call boxes each day, with nearly half of callers saying they don't have a working cellphone in their possession.

Because of the decline in use of call boxes, the board approved to reduce the overall number of call boxes by 33 percent by increasing their spacing to a maximum of 2-mile to 2 ½-mile intervals on Orange County freeways. This will leave 421 call boxes in the county.

This reduction comes at a time where changes in cellular radio technology make it necessary to upgrade call boxes to a newer platform. The board also approved to upgrade the call boxes from a 2G to a 3G cellular system.

Board approves incentive program for I-405 right-of-way acquisition

The board approved an incentive payment program to acquire necessary property for the I-405 improvement project.

The project will improve traffic conditions by adding one general-purpose lane in each direction from Euclid Street to the I-605 and adding an additional high-occupancy vehicle lane from the SR-73 to the I-605. The project's final environmental impact report was recently completed and approved by Caltrans. The program will provide an incentive, 20 percent above the appraised value, to all property owners that execute an agreement within 60 days of the first written offer.

This program intends to speed up the right-of-way acquisition process, resulting in more planning flexibility for the contractor and better pricing for construction.