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## **Coastal Rail Stabilization Requires Emergency Action**

*The Orange County Transportation Authority has submitted an Emergency Coastal Develop Permit to the California Coastal Commission to start work that will help ensure uninterrupted rail service*

ORANGE – With ongoing threats to a critical link in Southern California’s rail network, the Orange County Transportation Authority today submitted an Emergency Coastal Development Permit to the California Coastal Commission to expedite work to stabilize four areas most vulnerable to failure above the railroad track through San Clemente.

This effort allows OCTA to take immediate steps to protect a critical link in the state’s rail network. OCTA’s first action was to issue a request for information for contractors to provide dredging and transport options to expedite the sand placement component of the projects. OCTA expects to place approximately 540,000 cubic yards of sand.

Emergency action is necessary to prevent additional disruption of vital rail service. In addition, continued erosion requires quick action to repair and replace existing riprap, and deliver enough sand to help protect the tracks.

A series of landslides near Mariposa Point have occurred over the past year and debris and mud are nearing the top of the 12-foot-high temporary catchment wall constructed a year ago when a slope failure forced rail service to shut down.

OCTA has coordinated closely with the Coastal Commission and the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and other stakeholders since 2021, when an unstable private slope in the Cyprus Shore community of San Clemente forced the first of several closures totaling more than a year along the rail line that has been in place since the 1880s.

OCTA has addressed ongoing emergencies as they have occurred, and through a comprehensive process, four additional areas were identified that require immediate action to prevent loss of property and essential public rail services, as well as for the protection of life and public safety to avoid a catastrophic bluff failure.

“We appreciate the State agencies understanding that OCTA needs to take emergency action to help ensure the ongoing safe operation of the rail line and prevent additional disruptions of service and damage to critical rail infrastructure,” said OCTA Chair Doug Chaffee, also Orange County’s Fourth District Supervisor.

On April 14, the OCTA Board is expected to consider an action that will allow the CEO to enter into emergency contracting agreements to expedite work on the four Coastal Rail Stabilization Priority Projects that were identified in 2024 as most vulnerable.

The board action, if approved, would allow OCTA to:

- Issue an emergency design-build procurement for construction of a catchment wall along Mariposa Point, which is planned to include restoration of San Clemente’s popular pedestrian trail, and to build a revetment, seawall, or functionally equivalent structure south of San Clemente State Beach.
- Direct Metrolink to repair and replace existing riprap, limiting the amount to only what’s necessary to protect the track.

It’s estimated that 5,100 cubic yards of riprap is needed to protect the track near Mariposa Point and nearly 50 times that amount – 240,000 cubic yards – of sand will be placed. At the southern end of the project, near San Clemente State Beach, 1,400 cubic yards of riprap repair, 22,000 cubic yards of engineered revetment, seawall or functionally equivalent structure, and 300,000 cubic yards of sand have been identified as necessary to protect the track.

In total, OCTA estimates 95% of the project will be sand placement and 5% will be riprap placement.



Area	Location (Mile Post)	Challenge	Solution
1	203.83-203.90	Ongoing deterioration of existing protective riprap due to erosion	Riprap repair, placement and sand nourishment
2	204.00-204.40	Ongoing deterioration of existing protective riprap due to erosion	Riprap repair, placement and sand nourishment
3	204.07-204.34	Continuing bluff failures posing imminent threat to rail infrastructure	Catchment wall with trail restoration
4	206.00-206.70	Erosion exposing areas of limited to no riprap protection	Engineered shore protection and sand nourishment

*Modifications to design features may be necessary as project development process progresses and engineering is refined.*



“For decades, South Orange County beaches eroded without adequate renourishment. This inaction caused widespread erosion, threatening our ocean economy, coastal rail corridor, and endangering our national defense and commerce,” said OCTA Director Katrina Foley, also the Fifth District Supervisor. “Last year OCTA secured more than \$300 million to protect the four hot spot areas most vulnerable to catastrophic failure along the corridor. Today, OCTA is releasing our Request for Information (RFI) to all sand renourishment contractors to begin the process of placing up to 540,000 cubic yards along San Clemente’s beaches.”

While all of the activities are necessary to resolve the emergency, they are expected to occur on different timelines based on their complexity and availability of contractors and material. Additionally, the design and amount of materials will be further refined and are subject to

change as design is advanced. Most of the activities will occur within OCTA's rail right-of-way.

Securing this permit does not relieve OCTA of its responsibility for environmental mitigations but it enables OCTA to expedite the design and construction processes. With the emergency process, it's estimated the projects could be delivered one to two years sooner than the standard permit process would allow.

This emergency work is consistent with the \$305 million in state and federal grant funds OCTA received in late 2024 for the effort. This financial commitment underscores the urgency and importance of protecting the region's transportation infrastructure.

The closures since 2021, amounting to more than a year, have severed the only rail connection between San Diego County and the rest of the nation, affecting millions of annual passengers and impacting more than \$1 billion in annual freight movement. Additionally, the LOSSAN corridor plays a crucial role in the nation's Strategic Rail Corridor Network by supporting military logistics, freight movement, and passenger transportation, ensuring connectivity between key military installations and commercial hubs along the West Coast.

"The release of the RFI coupled with our Emergency Coastal Development Permit application to the Coastal Commission shows the urgency we've placed to restore the safety and stability of our beaches and coastal rail corridor," said Director Foley. "I appreciate the Coastal Commission's consideration and willingness to work through an emergency permitting process. Tomorrow, I will be in Sacramento advocating to cut through the red tape and bring the more than 500,000 cubic yards of sand onto San Clemente's beaches."

As this emergency effort advances, OCTA will keep the public informed of progress, construction activities and any impacts to rail service and beach access that may be necessary to ensure public safety.

For the latest information visit: [www.octa.net/RailEmergency](http://www.octa.net/RailEmergency).

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*About OCTA: The Orange County Transportation Authority is the county transportation planning commission, responsible for funding and implementing transit and capital projects for a balanced and sustainable transportation system that reflects the diverse travel needs of the county's 34 cities and 3.2 million residents. With the mission of keeping Orange County moving, this includes freeways and express lanes, bus and rail transit, rideshare, commuter rail and active transportation. To sign up for more OCTA news, visit [octa.net/GetConnected](http://octa.net/GetConnected).*