

Meeting of Oct. 26, 2020

SR-55 Improvement Project Progresses

Plans to improve SR-55 between I-405 and I-5 progressed as the Orange County Transportation Authority's board released a request for proposals to retain a firm to provide construction management support services for the project.

OCTA, in partnership with Caltrans, is in the early stages of the SR-55 Improvement Project that will add one regular lane and one carpool lane in each direction on the 4-mile stretch of freeway, along with auxiliary lanes between interchanges.

The project's design has been submitted to Caltrans and the construction contract is expected to be advertised in mid-2021.

OCTA Signal Synchronization Program Saves Time, Money, Helps the Environment

The OCTA board received an update on traffic signal synchronization projects throughout Orange County that aim to ensure drivers hit the most green lights during peak traffic hours.

Since 2008, OCTA has provided nearly \$60 million to fund 84 projects that have synchronized traffic signals in nearly 2,900 intersections across 746 miles. The funding is made available through Measure M, Orange County's half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements, also known as OC Go.

The completed projects have helped drivers throughout the county save time and money, as well as benefit the environment. The projects have reduced average travel times by 13% and the average number of stops by 29%, while improving average speed by 14%. Drivers will save approximately \$172 million on fuel costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 886 million pounds over a three-year period by reducing the number of stops, smoothing the flow of traffic and reducing the amount of acceleration and deceleration.

An additional 33 projects are planned or underway that will synchronize traffic signals along another 307 miles.

Measure M Expected to Generate \$11.6 Billion Through 2041

The OCTA board received its updated annual long-term forecast for Measure M, showing that the Orange County voter-approved sales tax is expected to generate \$11.6 billion for transportation improvements through 2041.

The new forecast, which is consistent with the preliminary forecast provided to the board in August, is 13.5% lower than last year's forecast because of the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

MuniServices, which OCTA uses for short-term budgeting purposes, anticipates unemployment and the correlated weak consumer confidence to remain a barrier to strong sales tax performance over the next few years. It anticipates that sales tax will recover to fiscal year 2018-19 levels in 2023-24.

OCTA will continue to monitor the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on sales tax revenues, as well as Measure M projects and programs, to ensure that all promises to voters are kept. The board is expected to receive an update on any potential impacts over the coming months as the Measure M Next 10 Delivery Plan is updated.