

Meeting of Aug. 12, 2024

Board Makes More than \$40 Million Available to Help Ease Congestion in O.C.

The Orange County Transportation Authority's board of directors issued its annual call for projects aimed at improving traffic flow and mobility throughout Orange County.

Approximately \$42 million is available through the Regional Capacity Program, which funds intersection improvements and bike lane projects, and the Regional Traffic Signal Synchronization Program, which provides funding to time traffic lights along long stretches of street that can span multiple cities throughout the county.

Cities and the county can propose projects through both competitive programs, which are funded by Measure M, Orange County's half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements, also known as OC Go.

Project applications are due by Oct. 24 and are expected to be considered by the board in the spring.

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 the preliminary engineering will be complete in 2025.

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 2025. OCTA and Caltrans are committed to working closely with the public and San Clemente during this process.

The preparation of plans, specifications and estimates to widen a portion of Ortega Highway between Calle Entradero and Reata Road it is set to be a \$71.6 million project. Caltrans will lead the final design work which will be completed in 2026 and construction is set to start in 2027.

I-5 South County Improvements Nearing Finish Line

The OCTA board received an update on the ongoing I-5 South County Improvements Project, which is now approximately 93% complete.

The project, which broke ground in 2019 and is expected to be completed in early 2025, is relieving traffic and improving travel times between SR-73 and El Toro Road.

The \$664 million project through San Juan Capistrano, Laguna Niguel, Mission Viejo, Laguna Hills, Lake Forest, and Laguna Woods will add a regular lane in each direction and extend a second carpool lane between Alicia Parkway and El Toro Road. It will also reconstruct the Avery Parkway and La Paz Road interchanges, along with the Los Alisos Boulevard overcrossing and various auxiliary lanes and on- and off-ramps.

Recent project milestones include:

- Construction between SR-73 and Oso Parkway is 93% complete.
- Reconstruction of the Avery Parkway interchange is complete.
- Construction between Oso and Alicia parkways is 97% complete.
- Construction between Alicia Parkway and El Toro Road is 90% complete.
- The temporary striping has been completed along Los Alisos Boulevard and all lanes have been opened.