

Meeting of Sept. 28, 2020

SCAG Sheds Light on Pandemic's Impact to Regional Travel

The Orange County Transportation Authority's board of directors received an update from the Southern California Association of Governments on how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted regional travel.

Findings included:

- Vehicle miles traveled on the region's roads and freeways declined by nearly 80% in early April compared to January
- Bus ridership throughout the region dropped by more than 71% in April compared to last year, with Orange County experiencing a decline of 77%
- Metrolink passenger rail experienced a 90% decline in ridership in April and May, compared to last year

Board Receives Update on Hydrogen Fuel-Cell Bus Performance

The OCTA board also received a six-month update on the agency's fleet of 10 hydrogen fuel-cell electric buses, showing that they are performing consistently with other types of new vehicles, and are expected to improve with time.

The hydrogen buses are part of OCTA's commitment to convert its entire OC Bus fleet to 100% zero-emission technology by 2040, an important step toward a balanced and sustainable transportation future for Orange County. In addition to the 10 hydrogen buses, OCTA is procuring 10 plug-in battery-electric buses to help determine which technology – or the best mix of technologies – to pursue moving forward.

Early this year, the fleet of hydrogen buses began operating on routes that run through disadvantaged communities in Orange County. The buses' performance is compared to OCTA's compressed natural gas-powered buses and is measured by bus availability, miles between road calls, fuel economy and cost per mile.

I-405 Improvement Project Construction 40% Complete

The OCTA board also heard an update on the I-405 Improvement Project, which is approaching 40% completion and a couple major milestones.

Construction on the project began in 2018 and includes widening I-405 between SR-73 and I-605. In addition, 18 bridges will be built, widened or replaced as part of the project, which aims to speed up travel times on I-405 between Costa Mesa and the Los Angeles County line.

Next month, the McFadden Avenue and Bushard Street bridges are expected to open to traffic, and the Talbert Avenue bridge is expected to open early next year. The Edwards Street overcrossing was also recently demolished and is under construction.

Significant bridge construction also continues at Fairview Road, Magnolia Street, Bolsa Avenue, Goldenwest Street, Westminster Boulevard and Bolsa Chica Road. These bridges are being rebuilt one half at a time so they can remain open to traffic.

The first halves of the new Magnolia Street, Goldenwest Street and Bolsa Chica Road overcrossings opened earlier this year, and the first halves of the new Fairview Road, Bolsa Avenue and Westminster Boulevard overcrossings are anticipated to open in the next six months.

Construction on the project is anticipated to be completed in 2023.

For more information about the I-405 Improvement Project, visit octa.net/405improvement.