

Meeting of April 11, 2022

OCTA Board Calls for Bids for SR-55 Improvements

The Orange County Transportation Authority's board of directors released an invitation for bids for work related to the SR-55 Improvement Project between I-5 and I-405.

The SR-55 Improvement Project will add a regular lane and a carpool lane in each direction between I-5 near Santa Ana and Tustin and I-405 near Irvine and Costa Mesa. It will also add auxiliary lanes to help traffic smoothly enter and exit the freeway.

The freeway widening will impact existing overhead utility lines that will be relocated to the east near an office building on Warner Avenue in Tustin. The invitation for bids is to find a consultant to remove and reconstruct a portion of the building to provide sufficient clearance for the new power lines.

OCTA's estimate for this work is \$1.4 million. The contract will be awarded to the lowest, responsive and responsible bidder in accordance with state law.

Construction on the overall SR-55 Improvement Project is scheduled to begin this summer.

OCTA Continues to Mitigate Impacts from OC Streetcar Construction

OCTA will continue working with the City of Santa Ana and the County of Orange to help mitigate impacts from the OC Streetcar construction to surrounding businesses by providing indirect assistance, including storefront signage, security and marketing and outreach efforts, in coordination with Downtown Santa Ana merchants and other community stakeholders.

The OC Streetcar will be Orange County's first modern electric streetcar, running along a 4-mile route between the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center and Harbor Boulevard in Garden Grove. The project will provide an additional affordable and convenient transit option, connecting with the busiest OC Bus routes and Metrolink commuter rail, in one of the nation's most densely populated areas, while producing zero emissions.

OCTA has been working to address downtown businesses' concerns related to security, signage, parking and the pace of construction since the project's track installation work began in February on Fourth Street between French and Ross streets.

OCTA has recently enhanced marketing and outreach efforts, buying Spanish and English radio and newspaper advertisements promoting business on Fourth Street throughout the region, and using geofencing to target potential customers on social media.

In all, OCTA allocated \$400,000 to associations representing Downtown businesses, to promote their businesses and to increase awareness of the OC Streetcar project.

OCTA also continues to work with the city of Santa Ana to address issues of concern to business owners. In addition to the \$400,000 provided by OCTA to the two business associations, the city recently approved \$1.5 million of Business Interruption Funds to provide financial relief to Downtown businesses, as defined by the city's program requirements. At the board's direction, OCTA will seek

clarity from the state's Attorney General as to whether any direct financial support could be offered from OCTA.

In addition, OCTA continues to offer its Eat, Shop, Play program, which is a separate marketing effort to help remind potential customers through social media of the wide variety of shops and restaurants Downtown and encourage them to discover those businesses and continue shopping and eating there. To date, nearly 70 businesses have signed up for the program for additional advertising, at no cost to them.

OCTA is committed to completing the track work in Downtown Santa Ana as efficiently as possible, while ensuring a quality transit investment that will serve Santa Ana and the region for years to come. Fourth Street is expected to reopen to traffic in the westbound direction in this four-block stretch of downtown Santa Ana in mid-May and both sides will reopen to traffic in November, when track work in this area is complete. Periodic street closures and detours throughout this stretch, as well as the whole project area, can be expected until construction is expected to be completed in 2024. For the latest construction information, visit www.ocstreetcar.com.