

Meeting of June 8, 2020

OCTA Board Approves \$1.4 Billion Budget

The Orange County Transportation Authority's board of directors approved a \$1.4 billion balanced budget for fiscal year 2020-21.

Despite having to adapt to an uncertain financial future because of the coronavirus pandemic, the budget reflects OCTA's mission to deliver innovative, long-term sustainable transportation solutions for the residents of Orange County.

The budget, which goes into effect July 1, will help fund freeway improvements on I-405, I-5 and SR-55, improve Orange County's roads, advance construction on the OC Streetcar and continue to service Orange County's transit needs, keeping safety as a top priority with guidance from health officials.

Highlights of the budget include:

- Continuation of all current Measure M improvement projects, including \$417 million to help fund freeway improvements and \$31 million for construction of the OC Streetcar. Measure M, also known as OC Go, is Orange County's half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements.
- Approximately \$145 million to improve streets throughout the county.
- Keeping OC Bus fixed-route service at up to pre-pandemic levels, made possible with help of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act.

OCTA Proactively Responding to COVID-19

The OCTA board received an update on how the agency is proactively responding to the coronavirus pandemic to safely provide critical transportation services and deliver capital projects while continuing to ensure the health of employees and the public.

As businesses continue to reopen throughout Orange County, ridership has seen incremental increases across the OC Bus system. Average weekday boardings over the past two weeks have risen to approximately 47,000, a 60 percent decrease from levels prior to the pandemic. On June 14, OCTA will add back some service that was temporarily reduced to keep up with demand and to allow passengers to practice social distancing whenever possible.

Traffic on freeways has also increased, to about 75 percent of the pre-COVID-19 volumes. Because of this, daytime lane closures on the I-405 Improvement Project are no longer occurring, however OCTA continues to work with Caltrans on certain extended overnight closures to allow for more productivity through the end of June. On the OC Streetcar project, OCTA is working with Santa Ana on any short-term impacts that may arise because of the city allowing restaurants to use on-street parking and side streets in the downtown area for outdoor dining.

OCTA is also well underway on developing a plan to return its employees to the workplace. Following guidance from healthcare officials, measures have been taken to ensure that essential employees

required to work at physical locations have the necessary protections in place, including hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes and face coverings, and that they are able to practice social distancing. In addition, OCTA has started checking employees' temperatures before reporting to work.

Board Receives Update on Measure M Progress

The OCTA board received a progress report on Measure M projects and programs between January and March of this year.

Accomplishments include:

- Finalizing the environmental document for I-5 improvements between I-405 and SR-55. Requests for proposals to design the project are expected to be released later this year.
- Completing the environmental phase on the SR-55 project between I-5 and SR-91. Design on the project is expected to begin in early 2022.
- Releasing a request for proposals for the design of SR-91 improvements between Acacia Street and La Palma Avenue. This is one of three segments on the SR-91 project between SR-57 and SR-55. All segments are expected to be in the design phase by the end of the year.
- Accelerating construction on the I-405 Improvement Project, OC Streetcar and Laguna Niguel to San Juan Capistrano Passing Siding Project by taking advantage of decreased freeway and street traffic volumes due to the stay-at-home order.

OCTA is also closely monitoring trends and forecasts to ensure that Measure M remains deliverable as promised to voters despite the uncertainty of the pandemic's impacts to the economy and sales tax revenues. All Measure M projects currently underway are anticipated to continue and OCTA is strategically assessing the timing of future projects and programs.