



August 7, 2023

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darrell Johnson", is written over the "From:" line of the memo.

Subject: 2023 Orange County Complete Streets Program Call for Projects

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority is responsible for prioritizing projects for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program and Surface Transportation Block Grant program funds for Orange County. Staff has developed the 2023 Orange County Complete Streets Program Call for Projects consistent with new guidance for project selection from the Southern California Association of Governments, and is requesting approval of the program guidelines, and to release the call for projects.

Recommendations

- A. Approve the 2023 Orange County Complete Streets Program guidelines and authorize staff to release the call for projects.
- B. Direct staff to return to the Board of Directors with the 2023 Orange County Complete Streets Program project priority and standby project list.

Background

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program funding and the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funding is made available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, signed into law on November 15, 2021. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) has previously funded the Bicycle Corridor Improvement Program (BCIP) calls for projects with federal funds. The purpose of the BCIP was to fund projects that provide bicycle transportation connections throughout Orange County. Over the years, OCTA has provided grants to 61 BCIP projects providing \$62.4 million to these local projects¹. Recently, local

¹ Of the Board-approved projects and BCIP funding, 13 projects approved for \$11.6 million have been cancelled, leaving a remaining 48 projects approved for \$50.8 million that are either active or completed.

agencies (cities and the County of Orange) have requested that OCTA consider funding active transportation pedestrian components and complete streets improvements to encourage walking, bicycling, and the use of transit.

In August 2022, the Federal Highways Administration required the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to implement a new project selection process to comply with the latest interpretation of federal regulations for the administration of CMAQ and STBG. In December 2022, in advance of the implementation of the new project selection process, the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) authorized \$55 million in STBG and CMAQ funds for a 2023 Orange County Complete Streets Program call for projects (call [2023 OCCSP Call]). OCTA staff has developed a call with a complete street focus, consistent with Board direction, and accounting for the new process which allows SCAG to make the final project selection for CMAQ and STBG funds.

Discussion

Following the Board's action in December 2022 to set aside funds for a complete streets call, staff solicited letters of interest from local agencies requesting potential project information that would inform decisions on timing and parameters for a future call. OCTA also notified local transit providers to work through the local agencies to submit projects of interest. Staff developed the program eligibilities with consideration to priority complete streets projects and plans identified by local agencies through this process.

OCTA received input from 19 local agencies who submitted 54 possible projects. The project types that were submitted generally consisted of plans/studies, new and upgraded bicycle and pedestrian facilities, street reconfigurations, and safety improvements.

The recommended 2023 OCCSP call expands eligible activities from the BCIP call, which was limited to bicycle improvements, to include other complete streets projects or project components, and improve streets to enable safe access for all, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

Projects will be required to meet applicable federal funding provisions including but not limited to federal procurement requirements, federal environmental assessment requirements through the National Environmental Policy Act, and Build America Buy America requirements. Program criteria for OCTA prioritization focuses on the proposed projects alignment with local planning efforts, safety improvements, access or connection to community destinations, transit, and schools, and public or community participation and engagement.

Criteria for SCAG's selection of the projects will be based on (1) OCTA's prioritization, (2) alignment with SCAG's regional plans, goals, strategies, and performance indicators, (3) air quality benefit and cost benefit analysis (for CMAQ projects), (4) benefits to disadvantaged communities and (5) community outreach and engagement.

Staff presented updates on the development of the 2023 OCCSP Call and the program structure to the following groups:

- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Bicycle and Pedestrian Active Transportation Subcommittee on March 21, 2023
- CAC on April 18, 2023, and July 18, 2023
- OCTA Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on April 26, 2023, and June 28, 2023.

No changes to the program structure or guidelines were requested by the CAC or TAC. The program guidelines for the 2023 OCCSP Call are included as Attachment A.

Next Steps

With Board approval, OCTA will issue the 2023 OCCSP Call and notify local agencies. Staff will immediately schedule program information sessions and office hours with eligible agencies. Agencies will submit project nominations and OCTA staff will prioritize projects based on the criteria outlined in the guidelines. Staff will return to the Board with a prioritized project list and project standby list before providing to SCAG for project selection. The project standby list would allow SCAG to program any available funding from project savings or cancellations to eligible projects.

Key milestones for the 2023 OCCSP Call are as follows:

Milestone	Date
Board Consideration of 2023 OCCSP Call guidelines and issuance of call	August 14, 2023
Eligible applicant agencies office hours with OCTA staff	August 21-25, 2023
Applications due by 5:00 PM	Thursday, October 5, 2023
OCTA project screening and eligibility reviews	October/November 2023
Project priority and standby project list to the Board	December 2023
Project priority and standby project list submittal to SCAG	December 2023

Summary

OCTA is requesting Board approval of the 2023 OCCSP Call guidelines and to release the 2023 OCCSP Call. Staff will return to the Board with the list of priority projects and a standby list.

Attachment

- A. 2023 OC Complete Streets Program Call for Projects, Program Guidelines

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