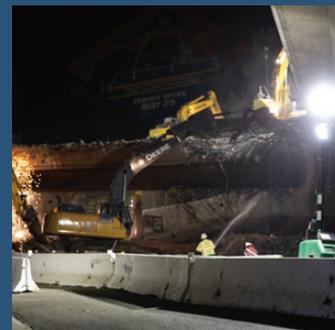


2020



ORANGE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

# A PROGRESS REPORT ON OCTA ACCOMPLISHMENTS





## INTRODUCTION

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is Orange County's multi-modal transportation planning agency, responsible for funding and implementing transit and capital projects for a balanced and sustainable transportation system that reflects the diverse travel needs of the county's 34 cities and more than 3.2 million residents.

In 2020, the OCTA Board of Directors established five strategic initiatives to continue to deliver on OCTA's mission of keeping Orange County moving. These initiatives were instrumental in guiding OCTA throughout the year to address the unprecedented challenges that arose from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic while helping OCTA to ensure the safety and health of employees and the public.

This report is framed around these five initiatives and highlights several of the projects and programs completed by OCTA throughout the year to improve Orange County's transportation system which includes freeways and express lanes, bus and rail transit, ridesharing, commuter rail and active transportation.



## INITIATIVE 1: COMPREHENSIVE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

### Continue advancing and delivering freeway projects

- Completed the I-5 Central County Improvements Project four months ahead of schedule, which added a second carpool lane in each direction along a busy stretch of the I-5 through Orange, Santa Ana and Tustin.
- Opened the McFadden Avenue and Bushard Street bridges, as well as the first halves of the Magnolia Street, Bolsa Chica Road and Goldenwest Street overcrossings, which are among the 18 bridges to be rebuilt as part of the design-build I-405 Improvement Project.
  - Completed design for the I-405 Improvement Project and construction is nearing the halfway point.

### Move forward with zero-emission efforts

- Debuted the largest transit-operated hydrogen fueling station in the nation and added 10 hydrogen fuel-cell electric buses to the OC Bus fleet.
- Approved purchasing 10 plug-in battery-electric buses for a pilot program.



## INITIATIVE 1: COMPREHENSIVE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

- Both zero-emission bus technologies are being tested for compatibility with OC Bus service and are part of the Board-approved plan to convert the OC Bus fleet to 100 percent zero-emission technology by 2040.
- Replaced 55 support vehicles that run on compressed natural gas (CNG) with an equal number of zero-emission all-electric alternatives.
- Introduced a Tesla Model X – the first all-electric vehicle – to the OC Vanpool fleet.

### Fund environmental and local initiatives

- Allocated more than \$35 million in OC Go (Measure M) funding to local cities for street improvements and synchronizing traffic lights to help ease traffic congestion.
- Distributed \$9.2 million in OC Go funding to nine cities to develop and implement community transit services that complement regional bus and rail service in areas not adequately served by regional transit.



## INITIATIVE 1: COMPREHENSIVE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

- Awarded nearly \$3 million in OC Go funding for projects that improve water quality by removing litter and debris from roads before it reaches waterways and the ocean.

### Develop planning studies

- Completed the Beach Boulevard Corridor Study, in partnership with Caltrans, to assess existing road conditions, forecast growth projections, and develop solutions for cities to implement.
- Partnered with Caltrans to launch a Freeway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Concept Study for two potential BRT routes along the I-5 and the SR-55.
- Completed a Rail Infrastructure Study – Defense Against Climate Change Plan, along with Caltrans, to identify how climate change may affect a 25-mile section of rail corridor from Jeffrey Road in Irvine to the Orange/San Diego county border.



## INITIATIVE 1: COMPREHENSIVE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

### Promote and advance alternative transit programs

- Moved forward with the OC Streetcar Project including construction of in-street and underground utilities.
  - Launched the Eat Shop Play program to support local businesses during construction.
  - Kept vehicle production on track despite temporary pandemic-related manufacturing closures.
- Extended the app-based, on-demand OC Flex microtransit pilot following a successful year of operation.
  - Continued the Aliso Viejo, Laguna Niguel and Mission Viejo zone while temporarily suspending the Huntington Beach and Westminster zone due to COVID-19 and significantly lower ridership.
- Expanded OCTA's College Pass Program to Saddleback College allowing those students to ride OC Bus for free joining Santa Ana College, Santiago Canyon College, Golden West College and Fullerton College.



## INITIATIVE 2: REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

- Provided consistent, up-to-date, multilingual messaging about OCTA's COVID-19 safety measures which included rear-door bus boarding, limiting the number of bus passengers for social distancing, implementing face covering requirements, and installing hand sanitizer and face covering dispensers on all OC Buses.
  - Outfitted the entire OC Bus fleet with driver shields which allowed a gradual return to front-door boarding.
  - Recorded nearly 60,000 pageviews on OCTA's multilingual COVID-19 webpages.
  - Created more than 300 social media posts with more than 6,000 engagements.
  - Delivered 37 email blasts received by 2.1 million key stakeholders.
- In response to unprecedented economic uncertainty, OCTA temporarily amended Measure M to help ensure cities can meet their eligibility requirements to receive funds for street improvements.



## INITIATIVE 2: REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

- Approved temporary exceptions to OCTA's Senior Mobility Program guidelines to allow agencies to use OC Go funds to provide meal delivery to seniors.
- Collaborated with the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) to update the SR-91 Implementation Plan which includes \$1.3 billion of planned improvements for projects along the SR-91 corridor in Orange and Riverside counties to benefit drivers.
- Partnered with the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) and Caltrans, along with south Orange County cities and stakeholders, to successfully resolve the effort to extend the 241 Toll Road and developed community-supported improvements that include a non-tolled extension of Los Patrones Parkway, extending high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in each direction of the I-5 between Avenida Pico and the San Diego County Line, and widening one mile of Ortega Highway from San Juan Capistrano to the county line.



## INITIATIVE 3: RESILIENCY, SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

### Establish remote-work capabilities

- All OCTA Board and Committee meetings were transitioned to a virtual format in March.
- Transitioned more than 500 administrative employees to working remotely at the start of the pandemic due in large part to extensive crisis planning, a remote-work pilot program, and a years-long effort toward cloud computing.
- OCTA's CEO conducted 15 virtual townhall discussions with employees to keep them updated and informed.
- Hosted 30 virtual public outreach meetings with more than 4,700 participants to keep local communities informed about the status of planning efforts, and rail and freeway improvement projects.
- Utilized Microsoft Teams software to continue internal networking and collaboration – averaging more than 7,000 monthly Teams meetings compared to fewer than 100 pre-pandemic.



## INITIATIVE 3: RESILIENCY, SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

### Advance environmental mitigation efforts

- Partnered with the Orange County Fire Authority and state and federal Wildlife Agencies to draft OCTA's Preserve Fire Management Plans – expected to be finalized in 2021.
- Completed OCTA's third and largest 84-acre Bee Flat Canyon restoration project.
- Obtained approvals and began restoration activities on OCTA's Pacific Horizon Preserve to help protect sensitive habitat.



## INITIATIVE 4: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- Obtained a \$160.4 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help continue providing safe and reliable public transit service during the pandemic.
- As a result of the pandemic, OCTA reduced its \$1.4 billion budget for FY 2020-21 by more than \$98 million compared to the previous year, while continuing to deliver innovative, long-term sustainable transportation solutions for the residents of Orange County.
- Continued to monitor the impacts of the pandemic on the financial landscape and the resulting decrease in forecasted OC Go (Measure M) sales tax revenue from \$13.4 billion last year to \$11.6 billion through 2041, a decrease of \$1.8 billion.



## INITIATIVE 5: ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Promoted Jennifer L. Bergener, a veteran of OCTA and the transportation industry, to the position of Deputy Chief Executive Officer, in addition to her role as Chief Operating Officer overseeing all transit operations.
- Implemented Crisis Communications exercises throughout the year, ensuring OCTA is prepared to respond to emergencies.
- Created a cross-divisional COVID-19 Task Force to develop plans and make recommendations concerning the timely implementation of necessary actions to mitigate organizational, employee and customer risk.
- Established a Return to the Workplace Team focused on creating a plan, that is consistent with local, state, and federal guidelines, to safely bring employees back into the workplace.
- Developed a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan, required by the FTA, which includes the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems (SMS) and safety performance targets.
- Launched Unconscious Bias training that will be rolled out for all OCTA employees in 2021.



## INITIATIVE 5: ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Pivoted to virtual delivery of OCTA's Leadership Development, Early Career and Intern Development Academies in order to continue providing professional development to employees at the various stages of their careers.
- Utilized OCTA's cross-divisional Transitional Work Program Team – established to facilitate the recovery process for eligible industrially-injured employees by providing temporary, meaningful and medically appropriate duties in the workplace – to support additional COVID-19 functions such as temperature testing at OCTA facilities.
- Implemented mandatory employee computer training, up-to-date patching, and artificial intelligence and machine-learning tools to ensure cybersecurity protections remain in place.
- Moved OCTA's data center to a secure colocation site.
- Converted all essential manual workflows involving paper processes into digital formats.





OCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



In July, Orange County lost a tireless champion for accessible and sustainable transportation, and the OCTA family lost a dear friend. Gregory T. Winterbottom represented the public for 27 years on the Board of Directors and his legacy of service will endure for generations.



IN MEMORY OF

***DIRECTOR  
GREGORY T.  
WINTERBOTTOM***

1947 - 2020

