

Meeting of March 23, 2020

Board Receives COVID-19 Update

The Orange County Transportation Authority's board of directors received an update on how the agency is responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

OCTA has temporarily reduced bus service to the Sunday service levels until further notice in response to lower ridership and to minimize risk to the drivers and public. OC ACCESS paratransit service continues to operate as usual for those who require the service. OCTA continues cleaning all buses every night with anti-viral disinfectant and with an enhanced focus on cleaning surfaces that are touched most frequently.

Construction on the I-405 Improvement Project, OC Streetcar and I-5 improvements continue because highway and rail infrastructure projects have been designated a critical service. Efforts are being made to expedite work during this time because of low traffic.

OCTA employees who are able to work from home have been since last week, and an internal COVID-19 Action Task Force has been meeting daily to share updates and make decisions. The agency has also been involved in the County's Emergency Operations Center and is assisting in decisions pertaining to transportation.

OCTA to Purchase 299 Replacement Buses

The OCTA board released a request for proposals to purchase up to 299 40-foot compressed natural gas-powered buses to replace ones nearing the end of their useful life.

OCTA operates a fleet of 462 near-zero emission CNG buses, which are operated for a minimum of 14 years to up to 18 years. Nearly 300 of those buses were purchased in 2007 and 2008.

State law requires transit agencies to begin purchasing zero-emission buses in 2023, with the goal of transitioning to a full zero-emission bus fleet by 2040, meaning this is likely OCTA's last CNG bus purchase. OCTA currently has 10 hydrogen fuel-cell electric buses and is expected to begin purchasing 10 battery-electric buses later this year.

Bids for the new CNG buses are due in mid-May and the board is expected to award the contract in August. The buses would be delivered to OCTA between 2021 and 2026.

OC Streetcar Construction Progressing

The OCTA board also received an update on construction of the OC Streetcar, the county's first modern electric streetcar.

The streetcar, anticipated to begin operating in mid-2022, will run about 4 miles between the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center and Garden Grove. The planned route serves Santa Ana's thriving

downtown and dense employment areas, including county and local government offices and courthouses in the Civic Center area.

Work has been ongoing throughout the alignment, including at the bridges over Westminster Avenue and the Santa Ana River and at the maintenance and storage facility. Utility relocations between Raitt and Bristol streets are complete, and relocation of sewer, water and storm drains is progressing. Third-party relocation of electric, communications and gas utilities are almost complete.

OCTA is also working closely with the community to keep businesses and the public aware of ongoing construction, with a targeted focus on the downtown Santa Ana area. The outreach team provides regular construction updates through email, multilingual doorhangers at nearby residences and businesses, as well as information on the project website, mobile app and social media channels.

OCTA has also worked with the city of Santa Ana to install signage throughout downtown directing visitors to free parking options and has been working to offer free marketing assistance to local businesses in the area.