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April 6, 2011

Dear Transportation Policymaker:

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is pleased to provide you with the attached Final Report on Accelerating Federal Program and Project Delivery. This report, compiled and prepared by Cambridge Systematics, under the guidance and direction of Susan Binder, is the cornerstone document of OCTA's Breaking Down Barriers initiative. The Breaking Down Barriers initiative was conceived by OCTA Director Peter Buffa, and has been endorsed by the entire OCTA Board, as a way to create jobs in this difficult economic environment by expediting the delivery of federal transportation infrastructure projects.

The desire to expedite the long and tortuous road from project conception to project completion has been a good government goal of many for several years. It is indisputable that the time it takes to build a major public transportation infrastructure project is far too long—up to as much as 14 years. This fact has been recognized by many, including the Federal Highway Administrator, the Chair of United States House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and most recently, by the President. Each of these leaders has initiated some type of reform to expedite the present project delivery system.

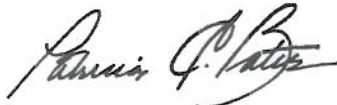
But at no time has this need been more pressing than during the current economic downturn, which has brought record-high unemployment to the nation. The Breaking Down Barriers initiative is intended to work in concert with other current initiatives, to accelerate the creation of jobs by expediting the processes of planning, funding and constructing federally assisted projects. Appendix C to the report establishes in economic terms, the positive employment impact of accelerating project delivery.

The heart of the report is a compilation of interviews with many of the most vested and experienced stakeholders in successful project completion from federal, state, and local governments and transportation industry associations. A partial listing of these contributors can be found in Appendix A, and we are deeply grateful to all who contributed for their thoughtful candor and cooperation.

From these interviews, the report provides more than two dozen recommendations to expedite the delivery of federally funded transportation projects. Some of these recommendations are as simple as adopting the best practices described in specific case studies, detailed in Appendix B. Others will require a change in federal transportation law, regulations or policy. Appendix D provides a synopsis of key options and the type of future federal action required. All of the recommendations will require a change in the working relationship between federal, state and local government, away from micromanaging and risk aversion to partnership and the sharing of project responsibility. Delay and document length can no longer be the yardsticks to measure the quality and diligence of federally assisted project delivery.

Although the recommendations of this report span the entire project delivery process, there are several recommendations designed to expedite the environmental review process. Many people wrongly believe that the entire delay in project delivery can be attributed to environmental requirements and that the elimination of those requirements is the only way to expedite project delivery. This report does not support that conclusion and none of the report's recommendations are intended to remove any substantive environmental review requirements. OCTA has shared the preliminary conclusions of this report with representatives from the environmental community and has reached an understanding with them that the intent of this report is to improve certainty and reduce unnecessary delay in the environmental review process---not to dilute it.

The Breaking Down Barriers initiative is just beginning. OCTA intends to advocate for the recommendations contained in this report at the federal, state and local level. We invite you to join with us in this effort. If you are interested in advocating for the recommendations in this report, or have additional recommendations of a similar nature, please contact either of us, or our Federal Relations Manager, Rick Bacigalupo, who can be reached at (714) 560-5901, or at rbacigalupo@octa.net.



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