



**May 4, 2020**

**To:** Regional Planning and Highways Committee  
**From:** Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer  
**Subject:** Update on State Route 55 Improvement Project from Interstate 405 to Interstate 5

### **Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority is currently underway with the implementation of the State Route 55 improvement project from Interstate 405 to Interstate 5. This report provides a project update.

### **Recommendation**

Direct staff to continue the implementation of the State Route 55 improvement project from Interstate 405 to Interstate 5 through construction as included in the Next 10 Delivery Plan.

### **Background**

The State Route 55 (SR-55) improvement project from Interstate 405 (I-405) to Interstate 5 (I-5) (Project) is part of Project F in the Measure M2 (M2) freeway program. The updated Next 10 Delivery Plan, adopted by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Board of Directors (Board) in November 2019, identified the Project as one of the M2 freeway projects to be completed by 2026. The Project will add one general purpose lane and one high-occupancy vehicle lane in each direction between I-405 and I-5, and auxiliary lanes between interchanges. This segment of SR-55 is one of the most highly-congested corridors in Orange County. The condition will worsen as population and traffic growth are projected to increase.

The corridor cities of Irvine, Santa Ana, and Tustin have been very supportive of the Project. The cities have been actively involved from the planning phase through the current design phase to move the Project forward. To date, 33 Board actions have been taken to advance the Project through multiple phases, including providing direction to accelerate the Project. The Project design was initiated in June 2017, when the Board approved the design cooperative

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agreement with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and acquisition of right-of-way (ROW) and relocation of utilities were authorized by the Board in September 2017. Construction is anticipated to begin mid-2021.

### ***Discussion***

A number of activities are ongoing as the final design, ROW acquisition, utility relocation coordination, and public outreach activities continue to advance. The following provides a more detailed status of Project activities.

#### **Design**

The design is 100 percent complete and was submitted to Caltrans at the end of April 2020.

#### **ROW Acquisition**

The Project will impact 33 properties, including 24 commercial properties, three residential properties, and six publicly-owned properties. There are 31 properties identified as partial acquisitions and two properties identified as full acquisitions. The real property requirements include fee acquisitions, temporary construction easements (TCE), utility easements, and permanent maintenance easements. The full-fee acquisitions, partial-fee acquisitions, and permanent maintenance easements are required for access control rights needed for construction of the roadway, bridges, retaining walls, drainage systems, and electrical systems. Utility easements are required to relocate above-ground and underground electrical systems, sewer, and water facilities. TCEs are needed to provide a sufficient area for the contractor to perform the work.

Of the 33 total properties impacted, the following summarizes the status of the ROW acquisition:

- Appraisals were initiated in early 2019 and are targeted to be complete in the second quarter of 2020.
- First written offers commenced in December 2019 which included payments in accordance with the Board-approved Incentive Payment Program. To date, nine offers have been presented with three of the owners accepting. Negotiations will continue as the Project advances.

Currently, the clearing of all constraints to advertise the Project for construction, including ROW certification, is targeted for the fourth quarter of 2020. The Project team continues to work toward this goal, but there are potential external risks that may arise during acquisition and any necessary legal proceedings that could impact ROW delivery and meeting this schedule. Staff will continue to

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monitor and manage these risks, including any impacts related to COVID-19, and will plan to provide an update next quarter.

### **Utility Relocations**

Thirteen utility companies are impacted and require relocation as part of the Project. Since the coordination and relocation design for utilities can be a long process, staff initiated the coordination in early 2018 and have resolved all utility design issues. Staff has been successful in executing 14 of 27 utility agreements to date, with a goal to execute all agreements by summer 2020.

### **Project Cost**

The overall Project cost remains \$411 million, with construction estimated at \$205 million. With current rising costs in property values, construction materials, and labor, staff will continue to assess the Project cost and update the Board if an increase is projected.

### **Public Outreach**

OCTA has a comprehensive community outreach program. Leading into the anticipated mid-2021 construction start, staff will be laying a solid foundation to raise awareness about the Project. Briefings will be conducted with key stakeholders, including city councils, school districts, and emergency services. Presentations will be made to homeowner associations, Chambers of Commerce, and other community organizations. Starting in mid-2020, staff will mail postcards to all addresses in the corridor cities of Irvine, Santa Ana, and Tustin. This initial effort will inform the public about the Project and encourage the community to sign up for Project alerts. OCTA's goal is to reach as many people as possible before the start of construction, and these efforts will continue throughout construction.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will continue to work closely with Caltrans and the corridor cities as the design and ROW acquisition advance. Work continues to complete the final design, finalize appraisals, present all offers, and execute remaining utility agreements. The target is to clear all constraints to advertise the Project for construction, including ROW certification, in the fourth quarter of 2020. Advertisement for construction bids is planned for early 2021, with a construction start to follow in mid-2021.

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***Summary***

Staff requests Board of Directors' direction to continue the implementation of the State Route 55 improvement project from Interstate 405 to Interstate 5 through construction as included in the Next 10 Delivery Plan.

***Attachment***

None.

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