



May 1, 2023

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Regional Planning Update

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Overview

Regular updates on regional planning matters are provided to highlight current transportation planning issues impacting the Orange County Transportation Authority and the Southern California region. This update focuses on the California Department of Transportation, District 12 Interstate 5 Managed Lanes Project and the Southern California Association of Governments' 2024-2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) regularly coordinates with other planning and regulatory agencies within the Southern California region. This coordination is conducted at many levels, involving the OCTA Board of Directors (Board), executives, and technical staff. Some examples of the regional planning forums in which OCTA participates include:

- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council, policy committees, and technical working groups,
- State Route 91 Advisory Committee,
- Regional Chief Executive Officers meetings,
- South Coast Air Quality Management District working groups, and
- Interregional planning coordination meetings (OCTA, SCAG, the San Diego Association of Governments, and the California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] districts 7, 11, and 12).

Staff last provided a regional planning update to the Board in November 2022. Items previously presented and other ongoing regional planning activities are

summarized in Attachment A showing lead agencies, a summary of each activity, key dates, OCTA's interests, and current involvement.

Since the November 2022 update, new activities have emerged, including:

- Caltrans District 12 (Caltrans D12) update on the Interstate 5 (I-5) Managed Lanes Project from State Route 55 (SR-55) to Orange County/Los Angeles County Line (Project), and
- SCAG continued development of the 2024-2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS).

A discussion of each of these new activities is provided below.

Discussion

Caltrans I-5 Managed Lanes Project Update

In December 2019, Caltrans D12 provided the first of several managed lanes updates to the Regional Transportation Planning Committee and Board. The presentation covered proposed high-occupancy toll lanes (HOV) in north Orange County, HOV degradation, express lanes on a national scale, express lane benefits, and Caltrans D12 express lanes implementation priorities for Orange County. The update also provided an overview of prior managed lane studies that Caltrans had completed dating back to 2011. This included the completion of the I-5 Managed Lanes Project Study Report from State Route 91 (SR-91) to SR-55. The focus of the presentation was to inform the Board of Caltrans' intent to proceed with the Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) for the Project.

Following the December 2019 presentation, the Board requested that Caltrans include a non-tolled HOV 3+ alternative in the study. Additionally, OCTA staff requested that Caltrans explore options to avoid conflicts with Measure M2 (M2), Project A by adjusting the project limits to account for its recent completion in 2021. Project A added a second carpool lane in each direction of the I-5 between SR-55 and State Route 57 (SR-57). To formally address these issues and encourage further discussion regarding the project, OCTA submitted a letter to Caltrans D12 (Attachment B) in January 2020. In response, Caltrans D12 included an additional study alternative to evaluate HOV 3+ lanes as well as delayed the start of the PA&ED phase of the study to allow for further alternative analysis.

Caltrans D12 began the PA&ED in May 2022 to study alternatives to provide additional managed lane capacity and potentially convert HOV lanes to tolled express lanes.

In June 2022, OCTA staff provided a comment letter (Attachment C) for Caltrans' D12 Notice of Preparation for a Draft Environmental Impact Report. OCTA staff reiterated that Caltrans D12 should consider alternatives that limit the proposed project's southern terminus to the I-5/SR-57 interchange to avoid conflicts with M2 Project A. OCTA staff also requested consideration of HOV 2+ and HOV 3+ alternatives between SR-57 and SR-91 to avoid potential operational deficiencies and that Caltrans D12 hold monthly project development team meetings for adequate input from stakeholders.

At the April 2023, Regional Transportation Planning Committee and Board meetings, Caltrans D12 staff presented an update on the PA&ED for the proposed Project. The report showed the Project spans 15 miles, crossing through the cities of Anaheim, Buena Park, Fullerton, Orange, Santa Ana, and Tustin.

Caltrans D12 is planning to release the draft PA&ED in summer 2023. OCTA staff is recommending that Caltrans D12 expand stakeholder engagement opportunities, assess project alternatives that do not conflict with committed and/or planned efforts, as well as avoid potential operational deficiencies. Staff will coordinate more closely with Caltrans D12 in the coming months as information from technical studies becomes available. This will ensure that this proposed Project reflects OCTA's input when the draft PA&ED is released for public circulation.

Caltrans D12 is targeting fall/winter 2023 for the final PA&ED. Construction could be complete as early as 2029, based on Caltrans D12's current schedule:

- Begin plans, specifications, and estimates – winter 2023;
- Begin construction – 2025;
- End construction – 2029.

Caltrans D12 has requested that OCTA include the Project in planning and programming documents so Caltrans D12 can complete their environmental analyses and move to the next phase of work. OCTA can move forward with this request as more information becomes available through the environmental process, and as Caltrans D12 identifies a preferred alternative. In addition, as Caltrans D12 moves forward with further project development, OCTA will work with Caltrans D12 to ensure that construction issues, freeway operations at the transition points, local access, operations and tolling policy, funding and financing, distribution of revenues, and other policy issues are fully vetted with the Board for input and direction.

Progress Toward the Development of SCAG's 2024-2050 RTP/SCS

The RTP/SCS documents significant transportation investments in the SCAG region over a 20-year horizon and is required to be updated every four years under state and federal law. The RTP/SCS is a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic and environmental goals. Additionally, the RTP/SCS will identify a combination of transportation and land-use strategies that help the SCAG region achieve state greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and federal Clean Air Act requirements, preserve open space areas, improve public health and roadway safety, and support goods movement. In preparation for the 2024-2050 RTP/SCS, OCTA has been coordinating with SCAG to provide an initial list of projects consistent with the OCTA Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). This initial submittal provides project data to allow SCAG to begin its technical analysis. Coordination will continue throughout the development of the RTP/SCS to make necessary refinements to the Orange County project listing.

The framework for the 2024-2050 RTP/SCS is centered on maintaining and better managing the transportation network. This includes moving people and goods while expanding mobility choices by locating housing, jobs, and transit closer together and increasing investment in transit and complete streets. In alignment with this objective, SCAG initiated the development of three special Regional Council subcommittees designed to explore key issue areas which will be highlighted in the upcoming 2024 RTP/SCS: Racial Equity and Regional Planning, Resilience and Conservation, and Next Generation Infrastructure. The subcommittees met four to five times between September 2022 and February 2023. Each developed respective white papers which outlined subcommittee goals, key findings, and a series of recommendations to guide the ongoing development and policy discussions related to 2024 Connect SoCal. Subcommittee goals and key recommendations are further described below.

Racial Equity and Regional Planning (Attachment D)

Goal: Identify opportunities to advance racial equity through the policies and strategies in Connect SoCal 2024 and to guide how planning and investments over the next 30 years can address and rectify the effects of racially discriminatory policies in the SCAG region.

Key recommendations: Utilize Connect SoCal 2024 as a vehicle to promote racial equity to address historic impacts of systemic racism and coordinate equity centered activities across the region. Incorporate equity centered best practices in data collection and incorporate community perspective in data-informed decision making.

Resilience and Conservation (Attachment E)

Goal: Advance the direction set in the SCAG Regional Council resolution on climate change action. Consider opportunities for enhanced conservation and how Connect SoCal 2024 can support communities to adapt to changing conditions or mitigate risks to become more resilient.

Key recommendations: Define resilience. Prioritize vulnerable populations and communities subject to climate hazards. Build partnerships across multiple sectors, scales, and stakeholders to ensure access of natural and built systems.

Next Generation Infrastructure (Attachment F)

Goal: Provide guidance on the priorities and strategies for Connect SoCal 2024 to reflect rapidly evolving developments across the region specific to future mobility and public policy implications.

Key recommendations: Ensure that deployment of new technologies support the public's needs and larger goals such as advancing equitable access and increasing safety. Prioritize use of public right-of-way for users, especially focusing on the needs of non-single-occupant vehicle users. Continue to invest in system preservation and efficiency, "fix it first." Expand and enhance mobility options by focusing on meeting the needs of existing transit riders, supporting services across transit, active transportation, micromobility, and automobile options.

The respective white papers and associated recommendations were presented to SCAG's Joint Policy Committee for further discussion on March 2, 2023. The intent of these findings is to incorporate the recommendations in the Connect SoCal 2024 planning process across topic areas and further engage with SCAG policy committees and the public.

The development process for the 2024-2050 RTP/SCS is divided into four phases, which include:

- Foundation and framework,
- Data collection and policy development,
- Outreach and analysis, and
- Draft plan creation/adoption.

SCAG is currently in the outreach and analysis phase, anticipated to be complete in summer 2023. OCTA staff will continue to monitor these efforts to ensure the alignment of the LRTP is consistent with SCAG's requirements.

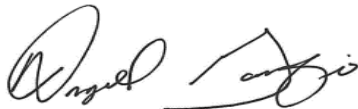
Summary

OCTA is engaged in ongoing regional planning activities in Orange County and Southern California. As drafts of these planning documents are released, staff will review and provide comments as needed to protect the interests of OCTA. Staff will continue to keep the Board informed of the status of these ongoing activities.

Attachments

- A: Regional Planning Activities, May 2023
- B: Letter from Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Orange County Transportation Authority, to Ryan Chamberlain, District Director, California Department of Transportation, District 12, dated January 31, 2020, re: Proposed High-Occupancy Toll Lanes in North Orange County
- C: Letter from Dan Phu, Sustainability Planning Manager, Orange County Transportation Authority, to Jayna Harris, Associate/Senior Environmental Planner, LSA Associates, dated June 2, 2022; re: Interstate 5 Managed Lanes Project (State Route 55 to Orange County/Los Angeles County Line) Notice of Preparation.
- D: SCAG Connect SoCal 2024 Subcommittee Draft White Paper, Racial Equity and Regional Planning
- E: SCAG Connect SoCal 2024 Subcommittee Draft White Paper, Resilience and Conservation
- F: SCAG Connect SoCal 2024 Subcommittee Draft White Paper, Next Generation Infrastructure

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