



September 5, 2019

To: Regional Planning and Highways Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darrell E. Johnson for".

Subject: Regional Planning Update

Overview

Regional planning updates are provided periodically to highlight transportation planning issues impacting the Orange County Transportation Authority and the Southern California region. This update focuses on the development of the Southern California Association of Governments' 2020–2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, federal rulemaking, and Orange County express lane planning and development efforts.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) coordinates regularly with other planning and regulatory agencies within the Southern California region. This kind of regional 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 and policy committees,
- State Route 91 Advisory Committee,
- Regional Chief Executive Officers meetings,
- South Coast Air Quality Management District working groups,
- Interregional planning coordination meetings (OCTA, SCAG, the San Diego Association of Governments, and the California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] districts 7, 11, and 12), and
- SCAG technical working groups.

Staff provided a regional planning update to the OCTA Regional Planning and Highways Committee and Board in March 2019. The current status of these issues and other ongoing regional planning activities is provided in Attachment A, which includes a matrix that identifies lead agencies, a summary of each activity, key dates, OCTA's interests, and current involvement.

Since the March update, new activities have developed concerning SCAG's regional planning efforts and the initiation of an OCTA-led study of express lanes in Orange County. A discussion of these issues is provided below.

Discussion

2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) Development

SCAG, as the federally-designated metropolitan planning organization for the counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura must adopt an RTP/SCS every four years by law. The last RTP/SCS for the SCAG region was adopted in 2016; therefore, an updated plan must be adopted by April 2020. All regionally significant transportation projects must be included to advance through the project delivery process. The RTP/SCS must also meet federal air quality standards, using funding that is reasonably available through 2045.

In addition, SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) requires the RTP/SCS to identify strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from cars and light trucks from 2005 levels. The GHG reduction targets assigned to the SCAG region by the California Air Resources Board are eight percent per capita by 2020 and 19 percent per capita by 2035. If the targets are not met, SCAG must demonstrate how the targets could be met with a financially unconstrained alternative planning strategy.

Project data from County transportation commissions was collected in November 2018, including input from OCTA and consistent with the final 2018 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). SCAG is using this data to conduct travel demand modeling and air quality emissions analysis.

SCAG has also solicited information from cities, counties, and subregions on current land use, anticipated population, housing, employment growth, resource areas, sustainability practices, and local transit-supportive measures to document how the region is growing. This information is being used to identify and evaluate future growth scenarios for Southern California and associated impacts on GHG emissions.

Conceptual growth scenarios were presented in a series of public workshops in May and June of this year to illustrate the impact of distinctive policy and investment choices. Subsequent development of the growth scenarios will also be compared to a “base case” to evaluate the merits of regional decisions for the 2020 RTP/SCS. The base case considers locally planned growth, land use policies, sustainability practices, local transit-supportive plans and policies, and planned transportation improvements through 2045.

In association with the 2020 RTP/SCS, SCAG is also preparing a program environmental impact report (PEIR) to evaluate potential direct and indirect effects, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts resulting from the RTP/SCS program of projects. The PEIR can serve as a resource for subsequent, project-specific environmental review documents. Project-level environmental analyses will be prepared by implementing agencies (such as OCTA) as individual projects proceed through the development process.

Key milestones for the 2020 RTP/SCS are summarized below:

- September 2019: Draft land use strategies, transportation strategies, regional aviation strategies, and energy/environment strategies;
- October 2019: Draft outcomes for mobility, safety, air quality/sustainability, economic benefits, and health outcomes;
Draft SCS scenario, multimodal transportation investments, and transportation financial plan;
- November 2019: Draft 2020 RTP/SCS release for public review;
- December 2019: Draft PEIR release for public review;
- January 2020: Close of public comment period;
- March 2020: Summary of comments, responses, and proposed modification to RTP/SCS and PEIR;
- April 2020: SCAG Regional Council adopts 2020 RTP/SCS and PEIR.

Express Lanes

Use of express lanes has become a prominent strategy for many transportation agencies throughout the nation. Currently, the state and the SCAG region are looking to express lanes to address mobility and system performance needs.

Express lanes have emerged as a primary approach for addressing high-occupancy lane degradation (i.e. the lane fails to maintain at least 45 miles per hour 90 percent of the time over a consecutive 180-day period during morning or evening weekday peak hour periods).

In fact, Caltrans District 12 is finalizing a project initiation document and plans to soon begin the environmental phase for conversion of carpool lanes to express lanes on Interstate 5, north of State Route 55 to the County line.

As noted in the 2018 LRTP Short-Term Action Plan activities, it is important for OCTA to be engaged in ongoing and future planning efforts in order to monitor how these strategies evolve, and to ensure that OCTA, as the County Transportation Commission, Congestion Management Agency, and administrator of the Measure M Program has a voice in the process as congestion management pricing strategies, such as express lanes, move toward implementation.

Therefore, in May 2019, OCTA staff initiated a study of express lanes in Orange County to identify considerations and priorities important to OCTA, with the intent of developing a preferred phasing strategy. Quantitative and qualitative factors will guide development of the strategy consistent with the draft goals and objectives in the table below.

Goal	Objective
Identify opportunity corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify high-demand commute sheds b. Identify available capacity c. Leverage existing and planned express lanes d. Consider useful life of local tax measure projects
Improve corridor operations and reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reduce corridor daily delay from congestion b. Improve mainline peak period speeds c. Maintain free-flow speeds in express lanes d. Identify benefits to adjacent facilities
Ensure financial feasibility and corridor maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Demonstrate revenues cover annual debt payments, financing requirements, and operations and maintenance costs b. Identify potential for excess revenues (subsequent studies to determine strategies for reinvestment in the transportation system)
Support local and regional goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support community and economic development goals b. Address social equity/environmental justice c. Improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

The study process will ultimately identify three phases that prioritize implementation generally by 2030, 2045, and beyond 2045. The strategy also supports potential mainline improvements that could accompany express lane implementation, but specific locations and improvement types would be identified in subsequent studies. Staff will provide updates at key milestones throughout the study process.

Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule for Model Year 2021-2026 Passenger Cars and Light Trucks

The SAFE Vehicles Rule proposes to hold the national fuel efficiency standard for automakers at 2020 levels. The rule also proposes a “50 state solution” that repeals California's ability to have higher fuel efficiency standards, which was originally allowed to address California's unique air quality challenges. If finalized as proposed, the rule would revoke California's authority to implement the Advanced Clean Cars (I and II) and zero-emission vehicle mandates. Revoking these mandates will negatively impact the state's ability to meet its GHG and criteria pollutant emissions reductions goals.

The rule may also impede California transportation agencies' ability to demonstrate that their projects conform to federal Clean Air Act requirements. This means that transportation agencies may be unable to make new transportation conformity determinations for their regional transportation plans, transportation improvement programs, and amendments for projects not exempt from federal Clean Air Act requirements, as applicable.

The rule was submitted to the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in August 2019. OMB review is one of the last steps in the federal rule making process. A final rule is anticipated in September 2019.

Express Lanes Connector

OCTA, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the Transportation Corridor Agencies, and Caltrans have engaged in joint meetings to address implementation efforts for a direct connector linking the northbound State Route 241 (SR-241) toll road to eastbound 91 Express Lanes and westbound 91 Express Lanes to southbound SR-241 toll road. Discussions have focused on determining agency responsibilities, agreements, timing of improvements, and ongoing activities. A more detailed update to the Board is anticipated in a subsequent item.

Summary

Staff is engaged in ongoing activities regarding transportation planning 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 on the status of these ongoing activities.

Attachment


- A. September 2019, Regional Planning Activities

Prepared by:



Warren Whiteaker
Senior Transportation Analyst
(714) 560-5748

Approved by:



Kia Mortazavi
Executive Director, Planning
(714) 560-5741