



**August 29, 2024**

**To:** Regional Transportation Planning Committee

**From:** Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

**Subject:** Acceptance of Grant Awards from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Transportation

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "DE Johnson", is written over the "From:" line. The signature is written in a cursive style. To the right of the signature, the word "For" is written in blue ink.

**Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority has been awarded a \$1 million federal Brownfields Multipurpose Grant for the OC Connect Garden Grove – Santa Ana rails-to-trails project and a \$200,000 state Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program for the zero-emission bus transition plan. Board of Directors' approval is necessary to accept these grants.

**Recommendations**

- A. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer, or designee, to accept the award of \$1,000,000 in Brownfields Multipurpose Grant funding for the OC Connect Garden Grove – Santa Ana rails-to-trails project. Funds will be used for environmental assessment, investigation, planning, and site cleanup activities.
- B. Adopt Orange County Transportation Authority Resolution No. 2024-076 and authorize the Chief Executive Officer, or designee, to accept the \$200,000 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program award for the Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan, and to confirm the required \$200,000 local match.
- C. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer, or designee, to execute grant-related agreements and documents with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Transportation.
- D. Authorize staff to make all necessary amendments to the Federal Transportation Improvement Program, as well as execute any necessary agreements to facilitate the recommendations above.

### ***Background***

#### **Brownfields Multipurpose Grant**

On September 21, 2023, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) released a notice of funding opportunity for the Brownfields Multipurpose Grant Program, which made approximately \$20 million available to conduct environmental assessment, investigation, and cleanup.

On November 13, 2023, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) submitted an application to the U.S. EPA requesting \$1,000,000 in grant funds for the OC Connect Garden Grove-Santa Ana rails-to-trails project (OC Connect). The grant will support a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, planning, and site cleanup activities along the former Pacific Electric corridor from Euclid Street in the City of Garden Grove to Raitt Street in the City of Santa Ana. This work is necessary to support the reclamation of the corridor for an active transportation trail and to ensure that any impacts from the prior use are addressed. These funds will be utilized in concert with the \$350,000 Equitable Community Revitalization Grant from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control awarded earlier this year. The Phase II Environmental Site Assessment will commence in 2025.

#### **Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant**

In December 2023, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) released a notice of funding opportunity for the Sustainable Communities Competitive Grant as part of the Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program, which made available \$20.5 million to support and implement Regional Transportation Plan Sustainable Communities Strategies/Alternative Planning Strategies (where applicable) and to ultimately achieve the state's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets.

On January 18, 2024, OCTA submitted an application to Caltrans requesting \$200,000 for a study to transition to a zero-emission bus fleet. The goal of the project is to ensure OCTA is compliant with the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) Innovation Clean Transit requirement of 100 percent zero-emission fleet by 2040 which supports the state's overall GHG reduction targets.

***Discussion***

**Brownfields Multipurpose Grant**

On May 23, 2024, the U.S. EPA notified OCTA that OC Connect was selected for Brownfields Multipurpose Grant funding. This grant will fund environmental assessment, planning, and cleanup activities for repurposing the OCTA-owned Pacific Electric Right-of-Way (PEROW) in the cities of Garden Grove and Santa Ana. OC Connect will close the gap in the active transportation system between downtown Santa Ana and downtown Garden Grove and will add at least three miles of bicycle and pedestrian multi-use trail with safety crossing features at several intersections. An overview of the project is included in Attachment A. In addition, the trail will connect several disadvantaged neighborhoods to the 66-mile OC Loop Class I bikeway via the 24-mile Santa Ana River Trail, which provides travel to beaches from the inland cities of Anaheim, Orange, Placentia, Yorba Linda and has connections into Riverside County.

The \$1,000,000 award will support assessment planning and soil cleanup activities along the former PEROW from Euclid Street in the City of Garden Grove to Raitt Street in the City of Santa Ana. These funds will be utilized in conjunction with the previously awarded and Board-accepted \$350,000 Equitable Community Revitalization Grant. Board of Directors' (Board) approval to accept the Brownfields Multipurpose Grant funds is recommended to facilitate the delivery of the project.

**Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant**

On July 9, 2024, Caltrans notified OCTA that the Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan was selected for Sustainable Communities Competitive funding. This grant will fund an update to OCTA's Board-approved Zero-Emission Bus Rollout Plan, which was developed to meet CARB's Innovation Clean Transit 2020 regulation. This effort will assess the progress of zero-emission bus technology, consider the optimal combination of technologies, appropriate for OCTA's operations, and the feasibility of installing supporting infrastructure into OCTA bus facilities. An overview of the project is included in Attachment B.

The award of \$200,000 for the Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan Update will guide OCTA to implement the necessary improvements, including system operations, equipment, and infrastructure to achieve 100 percent zero-emissions compliance with CARB's Innovation Clean Transit requirement of 100 percent zero-emission fleet by 2040. The local match source will be State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Planning, Programming and Monitoring (PPM)

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funding as approved by the Board through the approval of the 2024 STIP and included in the fiscal year 2024-25 budget. Attachment C is the required resolution providing grant authorization and confirming the local match commitment.

Board approval to accept the awarded grant funds is necessary to facilitate the delivery of the project.

**Next Steps**

Following the execution of the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant and the U.S. EPA Brownfields Multipurpose Grant, staff will follow OCTA's procurement process to award contracts in 2025.

***Summary***

Staff is recommending Board approval to accept and enter into two grant agreements. These grants include an agreement with the U.S. EPA for a Brownfields Multipurpose Grant award for \$1,000,000 to support environmental cleanup activities for OC Connect in the cities of Garden Grove and Santa Ana, and a grant agreement with Caltrans for a Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant award for \$200,000 for the countywide Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan.

***Attachments***

- A. OC Connect Garden Grove - Santa Ana Rails to Trails Fact Sheet
- B. Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan Fact Sheet
- C. Resolution No. 2024-076 of the Orange County Transportation Authority, 2024-2025 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Award Authorization

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