



# **Orange County Transportation Authority**

## **Legislative and Communications Committee Agenda**

### **Thursday, October 16, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.**

Board Room, 550 South Main Street, Orange, California

#### **Committee Members**

Donald P. Wagner, Chair  
Katrina Foley, Vice Chair  
Fred Jung  
Janet Nguyen  
Kathy Tavoularis  
Mark Tettemer

Any person with a disability who requires a modification or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting should contact the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Clerk of the Board's office at (714) 560-5676, no less than two business days prior to this meeting to enable OCTA to make reasonable arrangements to assure accessibility to this meeting.

#### **Agenda Descriptions**

Agenda descriptions are intended to give members of the public a general summary of items of business to be transacted or discussed. The posting of the recommended actions does not indicate what action will be taken. The Committee may take any action which it deems to be appropriate on the agenda item and is not limited in any way by the notice of the recommended action.

#### **Public Availability of Agenda Materials**

All documents relative to the items referenced in this agenda are available for public inspection at [www.octa.net](http://www.octa.net) or through the Clerk of the Board's office at the OCTA Headquarters, 600 South Main Street, Orange, California.

#### **Meeting Access and Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Members of the public can either attend in-person or access live streaming of the Committee meetings by clicking this link: <https://octa.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

#### **In-Person Comment**

Members of the public may attend in-person and address the Board regarding any item within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Orange County Transportation Authority. Please complete a speaker's card and submit it to the Clerk of the Board and notify the Clerk regarding the agenda item number on which you wish to speak. Speakers will be recognized by the Chair at the time of the agenda item is to be considered by the Board. Comments will be limited to three minutes. The Brown Act prohibits the Board from either discussing or taking action on any non-agendized items.

# LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

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## Written Comment

Written public comments may also be submitted by emailing them to ClerkOffice@octa.net, and must be sent by 5:00 p.m. the day prior to the meeting. If you wish to comment on a specific agenda item, please identify the item number in your email. All public comments that are timely received will be part of the public record and distributed to the Board. Public comments will be made available to the public upon request.

## Call to Order

## Pledge of Allegiance

Director Tavoularis

## Closed Session

There are no Closed Session items scheduled.

## Special Calendar

### 1. Conference Call with State Legislative Advocate Moira Topp

Moira Topp/Kristin Jacinto

#### **Overview**

An update of legislative items in Sacramento will be provided.

## Consent Calendar (Item 2)

All items on the Consent Calendar are to be approved in one motion unless a Committee Member or a member of the public requests separate action or discussion on a specific item.

### 2. Approval of Minutes

Clerk of the Board

#### **Recommendation(s)**

Approve the minutes of the September 18, 2025 Legislative and Communications Committee meeting.

#### **Attachments:**

[Minutes](#)

# LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

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## Regular Calendar

### 3. Federal Legislative Status Report

Clara Brotcke/Kristin Jacinto

#### **Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority regularly updates the Legislative and Communications Committee on policy and regulatory issues directly impacting the agency's programs, projects, and operations. This status report includes information on fiscal year 2026 appropriations, a summary of congressional support for OCTA's role in the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games planning, and information on correspondence between United States Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and multiple transit agencies regarding safety and security on large transit systems. Additionally, a summary on the redistribution of federal dollars from the California High Speed Rail project is provided.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

Receive and file as an information item.

#### **Attachments:**

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

[Attachment C](#)

[Attachment D](#)

[Attachment E](#)

[Attachment F](#)

[Attachment G](#)

### 4. Draft Revisions to Orange County Transportation Authority's 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms

Alexis Carter/Kristin Jacinto

#### **Overview**

Halfway through each legislative session, staff conducts a review of the Orange County Transportation Authority's Legislative Platforms to ensure relevant issues that are anticipated to be of discussion for the upcoming year are included and up to date. Initial draft revisions to the Orange County Transportation Authority's 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms have been prepared for consideration by the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors. Before a final draft is considered for adoption, these drafts will be revised as a result of feedback from the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors, as well as further internal staff input.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

Direct staff to integrate the recommended revisions to the 2025-26 Orange County Transportation Authority State and Federal Legislative Platforms and seek further feedback from the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors and internal staff, with subsequent drafts being brought forward for final consideration and adoption

## LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

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later this year.

***Attachments:***

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

[Attachment C](#)

[Attachment D](#)

### **Discussion Items**

5.     **Public Comments**
6.     **Chief Executive Officer's Report**
7.     **Committee Members' Reports**
8.     **Adjournment**

The next regularly scheduled meeting of this Committee will be held:

**9:00 a.m. on Thursday, November 20, 2025**

OCTA Headquarters  
Board Room  
550 South Main Street  
Orange, California



**Committee Members Present**

Donald P. Wagner, Chair  
Katrina Foley, Vice Chair  
Janet Nguyen  
Kathy Tavoularis  
Mark Tettemer

**Staff Present**

Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer  
Jennifer L. Bergener, Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
Sahara Meisenheimer, Clerk of the Board Specialist  
Gina Ramirez, Assistant Clerk of the Board  
James Donich, General Counsel  
OCTA Staff

**Committee Members Absent**

Fred Jung

**Call to Order**

The September 18, 2025, Legislative and Communications Committee meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Wagner at 9:00 a.m.

**Special Calendar**

**1. Conference Call with State Legislative Advocate Moira Topp**

Moira Topp, State Legislative Advocate, provided a report on this item.

No action was taken on this item.

**Consent Calendar (Items 2 and 3)**

**2. Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Committee Vice Chair Foley, seconded by Director Tettemer, and declared passed by those present to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2025, Legislative and Communications Committee meeting.

**3. Agreement for Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue**

A motion was made by Committee Vice Chair Foley, seconded by Director Tettemer, and declared passed by those present to:

- A. Approve the selection of Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc. as the firm to provide public outreach consultant services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim.



- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-5-4104 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc., in the amount of \$499,911, for a three-year initial term with an option term of up to 24 months, to provide public outreach consultant services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim.

## **Regular Calendar**

### **4. State Legislative Status Report**

Kristin Jacinto, Executive Director of Government Relations, provided a report on this item.

No action was taken on this receive and file information item.

### **5. Federal Legislative Status Report**

Alexis Carter, Senior Government Representative, provided a report on this item.

No action was taken on this receive and file information item.

## **Discussion Items**

### **6. Public Outreach Update**

Chris Boucly, Senior Department Manager of Public Outreach, provided a presentation.

Director Nguyen expressed her concerns about the data collected on Slides 9 and 12 and requested the metrics, staffing, and cost related to public outreach activities.

### **7. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

### **8. Chief Executive Officer's Report**

Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, reported on the following:

- Fitch Ratings reaffirmed the 91 Express Lanes' AA- rating with a Stable Outlook
- California Clean Air Day is October 1, 2025
- Wave fare payment system will launch on October 15, 2025



**9. Committee Members' Reports**

Committee Vice Chair Foley invited the Public Outreach team to the Senior Summit on October 10, 2025, at the Aliso Viejo Ranch.

**10. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:54 a.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of this Committee will be held:

**9:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 16, 2025**

OCTA Headquarters

Board Room

550 South Main Street

Orange, California

ATTEST

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Sahara Meisenheimer  
Clerk of the Board Specialist



**October 16, 2025**

**To:** Legislative and Communications Committee

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

**Subject:** Federal Legislative Status Report

**Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority regularly updates the Legislative and Communications Committee on policy and regulatory issues directly impacting the agency's programs, projects, and operations. This status report includes information on fiscal year 2026 appropriations, a summary of congressional support for OCTA's role in the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games planning, and information on correspondence between United States Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and multiple transit agencies regarding safety and security on large transit systems. Additionally, a summary on the redistribution of federal dollars from the California High Speed Rail project is provided.

**Recommendation**

Receive and file as an information item.

**Discussion**

**Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Update**

As of October 1, the federal government has entered a shutdown following the expiration of fiscal year (FY) 2025 funding without agreement on FY 2026 appropriations. The House advanced a continuing resolution (CR) to extend funding into November, but the measure did not secure sufficient support in the Senate. Senate Democrats countered with their own version of a CR that included an extension of expiring healthcare tax credits, but this approach also failed to advance.

The immediate impacts from the shutdown vary by agency. At the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration remain operational because their employees are funded through the Highway Trust Fund and advance appropriations provided under the



2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Formula and discretionary reimbursements for previously executed grants will continue, but no new discretionary grants will be approved during the shutdown. In addition, furloughs at partner agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Labor (DOL) may impact processing of funds. Notably, 13(c) labor certifications for transit grants will not proceed while DOL staff remain furloughed. Within the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), safety inspectors and other essential staff continue to work, and the Office of Railroad Development is operating with IIJA funding. However, the FRA is limited to providing technical assistance and overseeing environmental compliance and cannot process new contracts, issue new funding obligations, or advance pending grant agreements during the shutdown.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has also directed agencies to prepare for reductions in force that could permanently eliminate positions and programs deemed inconsistent with the President's priorities. Agencies have been asked to identify discretionary-funded activities that lapse with the shutdown and to initiate notices to employees in those areas. Even if Congress later enacts appropriations, the OMB's guidance indicates that only the minimum number of employees needed to carry out statutory functions will be retained. As of the writing of this staff report, DOT has not made public any reduction-in-force plan.

As of the writing of this staff report, the path forward remains uncertain. Staff will continue monitoring developments closely to assess both the duration of the shutdown and any lasting changes in federal program administration that may affect OCTA's operations.

#### **Congressional Support for OCTA Participation in the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games Mobility Planning**

On September 12, 2025, Representative Derek Tran (CA-45), whose district includes parts of both Los Angeles and Orange counties, sent a letter to LA28 Chair Casey Wasserman urging that OCTA be formally included in executive-level planning for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Games). The letter is included as Attachment A. Specifically, Representative Tran requested that OCTA be granted a seat on the Games Mobility Executives Team. This request follows OCTA's own formal appeals to be included in the Games Mobility Executives Team, including letters submitted in 2024 and again in July 2025.

The letter highlights Orange County's key role in supporting Games activities, including serving as host for the Honda Center in the City of Anaheim and Trestles State Beach, as well as providing significant hospitality and tourism infrastructure. Representative Tran underscored OCTA's importance as the county's primary transit operator, a shareholder in Metrolink, the managing agency for the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency,

and the operator of the 405 and 91 Express Lanes. He stressed that OCTA's participation is critical to ensuring coordinated investment, efficient service delivery, and an integrated network that supports both Games operations and long-term regional mobility. As of the writing of this staff report, no formal response has been provided by LA28.

#### Department of Transportation Actions on Transit Safety and Accountability

On September 10, 11, and 18, 2025, the DOT issued formal letters to the City of Charlotte, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), requesting detailed information regarding each agency's safety and security practices. These letters are included as Attachments B, C, D, and E, respectively.

Directives from the DOT cite recent violent incidents across all three systems and require the agencies to identify current and planned actions to reduce crime, address fare evasion, and ensure secure, clean operating environments for riders and workers. Each agency has also been directed to provide detailed documentation of FY 2025 and 2026 funding dedicated to safety and security, including federal capital and safety set-asides and other federal resources.

City of Charlotte leaders have responded by outlining expanded security staffing, additional law enforcement partnerships, and new patrol measures, while also noting governance changes that would transition CATS into an independent transit authority with a dedicated transit police department. The response letter from the City of Charlotte to FTA is included as Attachment F. Responses from CTA and MBTA are due to FTA Regional Administrators within the month.

These directives build upon actions taken in March 2025, when DOT issued letters to Washington, D.C. leadership, Amtrak, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority urging enhanced security and compliance with federal standards. Similarly, in June 2025, the DOT issued a letter to Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Chief Executive Officer Stephanie Wiggins and a related letter to Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass regarding safety protocols during public demonstrations and preparing for safety for major international events such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and LA28. These letters were previously reported on at OCTA's Legislative and Communications Committee in July 2025. Together, these letters highlight the current administration's priority for an increased federal oversight approach that prioritizes safety performance, transparency in funding use, and restoration of public confidence in transit systems nationwide.

Staff will continue monitoring federal communications to major urban transit systems to assess potential implications for OCTA's own operations and future funding considerations.

### Federal Redistribution of California High Speed Rail Funds

On September 22, 2025, the FRA withdrew the FY 2024 Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program-National (FSP-National) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), originally published on September 30, 2024, and issued an amended FY 2024-25 NOFO in its place. The reissued notice makes available approximately \$5.07 billion in federal funding for intercity passenger rail projects not located on the Northeast Corridor, compared to about \$1.06 billion under the FY 2024 authorization.

A significant portion of this increase, approximately \$2.4 billion, consists of federal funds that had previously been awarded to the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA). In July 2025, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced the rescission of these funds following a compliance review that found the project was not meeting federal grant requirements. In response, the CHSRA filed suit in federal court, and that litigation remains ongoing. On September 22, 2025, the FRA reallocated these rescinded funds into the FSP-National program as part of the amended NOFO. The reallocation of these funds highlights the federal government's shift away from California's state-led high-speed rail initiative and into a broader competitive framework for intercity passenger rail nationwide.

In addition to the ongoing litigation, the CHSRA project is under heightened federal oversight. In August 2025, the House Oversight Committee requested documents and briefings from the DOT to examine whether the CHSRA relied on accurate ridership and financial assumptions in its federal grant application. Secretary Duffy also directed FRA to conduct a compliance review of the projects use of federal funds to determine whether it continues to meet federal obligation.

The rescission of CHSRA funds and their redistribution into the FSP-National program illustrates the dynamic federal funding environment, where resources are being shifted as federal priorities evolve. OCTA staff will continue to monitor these developments.

**Summary**

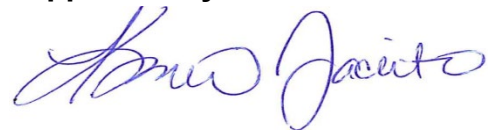
An update is provided on the 2026 annual appropriations process. Summaries are also provided on Department of Transportation transit safety actions taken nationally, the federal redistribution of California High Speed Rail dollars, and a letter demonstrating growing support for the Orange County Transportation Authority's role in the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

**Attachments**

- A. Letter from U.S. Representative Derek Tran to Casey Wasserman, Chairperson, LA28 Board, dated September 12, 2025
- B. Letter from Federal Transit Administration Administrator Marcus J. Molinaro to Vi Lyles, Mayor, City of Charlotte, dated September 10, 2025
- C. Letter from Federal Transit Administration Chief Safety Officer Joe DeLorenzo to Brent Cagle, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Charlotte Area Transit System, dated September 10, 2025
- D. Letter from U.S. Secretary of Transportation Sean P. Duffy to Nora Leerhsen, Acting President, Chicago Transit Authority, dated September 11, 2025
- E. Letter from U.S. Secretary of Transportation Sean P. Duffy to Phillip Eng, General Manager, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, dated September 18, 2025
- F. Letter from City of Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles to Marc Molinaro, Administrator, Federal Transit Administration, dated September 25, 2025
- G. Potomac Partners DC, Monthly Legislative Report – September 2025

**Prepared by:**

Clara Brotcke  
Associate Government Relations  
Representative,  
Government Relations  
(714) 560-5329

**Approved by:**

Kristin Jacinto  
Executive Director,  
Government Relations  
(714) 560-5754

DEREK T. TRAN  
45TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

HOUSE SMALL BUSINESS  
COMMITTEE

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS, AND  
REGULATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONTRACTING  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0545**

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DISTRICT OFFICE  
6803 INTERNATIONAL AVENUE, SUITE 100  
CYPRESS, CA 90630  
(714) 960-6483

September 12, 2025

Mr. Casey Wasserman Chairperson  
LA28 Board  
10960 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1050  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Dear Mr. Wasserman,

As a member of Congress representing communities in both Los Angeles and Orange County and a strong supporter of regional collaboration, I am writing to underscore the importance of formally including the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) in the planning and coordination of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Games) in Los Angeles by granting them a seat on the Games Mobility Executives Team.

The Olympic Games are a unique opportunity to demonstrate not only the athletic excellence of the competitors, but also the logistical and operational excellence of the region hosting them. A world-class Games requires a world-class transportation system that is seamless, sustainable, and integrated across jurisdictions. That is why I respectfully urge you to include OCTA as a member of the Games Mobility Executives team to provide the input and expertise to achieve this integration.

While I recognize and applaud the ongoing efforts of LA28, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro), the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink), and the California Department of Transportation to prepare for this historic event, the transportation systems supporting the Olympic venues will extend beyond Los Angeles. Orange County, in particular, will play a vital role in hosting key venues such as the Anaheim Arena and Trestles State Beach in San Clemente, and offering significant hospitality and tourism infrastructure for athletes, officials, and visitors alike. OCTA's participation in executive-level planning will ensure that the mobility networks serving these venues, and the broader travel patterns of Olympic-goers, are fully integrated and aligned with regional goals.

OCTA is not only a capable transit provider, but it is a critical stakeholder in Southern California's transportation landscape. As the county's primary transit operator, a key Metrolink shareholder, the managing agency for Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner service, and operator of the 405 and 91 Express Lanes, OCTA brings a wealth of resources and a strong track record of delivering

major transportation initiatives. Its involvement in Games-related planning would help ensure coordinated investment, efficient service, and a positive legacy that extends well beyond 2028.

Time is of the essence. Just as Olympic athletes spend years preparing for a single moment of excellence, our transportation systems require focused, long-term planning to perform at the highest level during the Games. That planning must include the partners who will shoulder the responsibility of moving millions of people across our region.

I stand ready to support this effort in any way I can, and I urge LA28 to take this important step toward building a truly inclusive and effective transportation partnership. If you have any questions, please contact Justin Maturo on my staff at [Justin.Maturo@mail.house.gov](mailto:Justin.Maturo@mail.house.gov) or (202) 225-2415.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek T. Tran". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "D" and a distinct "T".

DEREK T. TRAN  
Member of Congress

c: The Honorable Karen Bass, Mayor, City of Los Angeles  
Stephanie Wiggins, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), LA Metro  
Darrell E. Johnson, CEO, OCTA  
Gloria Roberts, District Director, Caltrans District 7  
Darren Kettle, CEO, Metrolink  
Kome Ajise, Executive Director, SCAG  
Potomac Partners



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Transit  
Administration**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

September 10, 2025

The Honorable Vi Lyles  
Mayor of Charlotte  
600 East Fourth Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202

Re: Urgent Demand for Accountability and Reform in Charlotte's Transit System

Dear Mayor Lyles,

The horrific killing of Iryna Zarutska on the Lynx Blue Line has shaken not only Charlotte but also every community that relies on public transportation. As Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, I must speak plainly: This tragedy was preventable, and it reflects systemic failures in leadership and accountability that cannot be ignored.

On August 22, 2025, Ms. Zarutska, a 23-year-old refugee from Ukraine, was brutally stabbed to death at the East/West Boulevard station. The suspect—whose criminal record included armed robbery, breaking and entering, and larceny—should never have had the freedom to board a transit line and prey on innocent riders. Charlotte failed her, and in doing so, failed every rider who depends on the promise of safe and reliable transportation.

The facts make the case undeniable:

- **Transit Violence Rising:** FTA notes that the rate of assault on transit workers at CATS has jumped to five times the national average in 2025 despite being below the national average the prior two years. That is a change from one major assault on a transit system in 2024 to six already in 2025.
- **The rate of crimes against its riders is three times the national average.**
- **Failure of Oversight:** Public safety on transit cannot be left to chance. Riders deserve systems that anticipate danger, deter offenders, and respond decisively. Instead, repeated warnings went unanswered until tragedy struck.

Mayor Lyles, safety is not a talking point. It is the most basic obligation of public service.

As FTA Administrator, I expect immediate answers and action:

1. Transit Security Plan – Your administration must immediately release a transparent, measurable plan to secure Charlotte’s buses, trains, and stations. This plan must detail staffing increases, police coordination, surveillance upgrades, and response protocols.

2. Visible Security Surge – CATS must immediately increase uniformed presence at stations and onboard vehicles, with priority given to evening service and high-risk corridors.

Federal support for transit depends on local leaders upholding their end of the bargain. Citizens should not be asked to fund systems where safety is neglected. The federal government cannot and will not subsidize complacency.

The people of Charlotte — and especially the family of Iryna Zarutska — deserve justice, accountability, and a city government that finally places rider safety at the top of its priorities. I expect your response and transit security plan by September 21, 2025.

Lives depend on leadership that is honest, accountable, and unafraid to act. I urge you to meet this moment with the seriousness it demands.

Respectfully,



Marcus J. Molinaro  
Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration





U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Transit  
Administration**

Headquarters

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

September 10, 2025

Mr. Brent Cagle, Interim Chief Executive Officer  
Charlotte Area Transit System  
300 East Trade Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202

**Subject: Federal Transit Administration Audit concerning Assaults on Transit Workers**

Dear Mr. Cagle:

This letter serves as notice by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding the initiation of an audit of Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) implementation of its Agency Safety Plan (ASP), including requirements related to preventing assaults on transit workers. This audit will be conducted pursuant to FTA's authority under 49 U.S.C. 5329(f)(1) and implementing regulations at 49 CFR part 670.

The audit will address the ongoing risk to CATS operators of being assaulted, and general safety and security of the system. FTA notes the rate of assault on transit workers at CATS has jumped to five times the national average in 2025 after being below the national average the prior two years. This is a change from one major assault on a transit worker in 2024 to six in 2025, with several months yet to go before the end of the year. In addition, the rate of crimes against passengers on the CATS system is three times the national average.

This audit is intended to determine whether conditions exist that endanger transit workers and passengers on the CATS system by assessing CATS's compliance with 49 CFR Part 673, Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans program. The audit will include evaluation of the sufficiency of CATS's responses to FTA's directives implemented to mitigate the safety risks associated with assaults on transit workers.

Based on the Department's ongoing focus on safety and security, and pursuant to its oversight authority, FTA directs CATS to provide information about agency practices and expenditures. See FTA Master Agreement section 3(h)(2)(iii). Of key importance is documentation of actions and funding that ensure effective security for passengers and workers on the CATS system.

For this FTA review of CATS actions, please provide FTA with the following information:

1. CATS actions and plans to reduce crime and fare evasion on the transit system. Please include information about fare evasion trends and previous actions.
2. Identification of funds CATS receives from all sources that are programmed to improve the security of passengers and workers. This should include information about all CATS fiscal year 2025 budgeted and fiscal year 2026 planned funds to reduce crime and fare evasion on the transit system, including a comparison to prior year funding for such expenses. Please also include:
  - a. Security - Expenditures and budgeted funds that meet the Federal transit program security capital projects set aside requirement for Urbanized Area Formula Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5307(c)(1)(J)(i)).
  - b. Safety - Expenditures and budgeted funds that meet the Federal transit program safety set aside requirement for Urbanized Area Formula Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5329(d)(4)(B)).
  - c. Non-FTA funds - Information about funds from other Federal Information about funds from other Federal government agencies directed to the safety and security of CATS passengers and workers. This should include any Department of Homeland Security funds.
3. Additionally, FTA will conduct:
  - a. an assessment of CATS Safety Risk Reduction Program included in the ASP, with a specific focus on transit worker assaults;
  - b. an evaluation of the effectiveness of the mitigations identified and implemented by CATS in response to General Directive 24-1: *Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers*, issued by FTA on September 25, 2024.

Per 49 CFR § 670.11, within 15 days of the issuance of this letter, CATS must provide requested documents to FTA, as identified in Appendix A. This information must be submitted via email to [FTASystemSafety@dot.gov](mailto:FTASystemSafety@dot.gov).

If you have any questions regarding the audit or documentation requested, please contact Jeremy Furrer, Division Chief Office of Safety Policy and Promotion of the Office of Safety Management at [jeremy.furrer@dot.gov](mailto:jeremy.furrer@dot.gov) or me at (202) 366-5080 or via email at

[joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov](mailto:joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe P. DeLorenzo".

Joe DeLorenzo

Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and  
Chief Safety Officer

Enclosure:      Appendix A: CATS Audit Requested Materials List

cc:                Yvette Taylor, PhD, Regional Administrator, FTA Region 4

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## APPENDIX A: CATS AUDIT REQUESTED MATERIALS LIST

For purposes of this audit, CATS is requested to provide the following documentation related to the implementation of its Agency Safety Plan (ASP) requirements addressing assaults on transit workers, as well as information regarding actions taken in response to General Directive 24-1.

#	ASP and Safety Performance Targets
1	CATS's current SSOA-certified Agency Safety Plan.
2	Documentation of CATS's safety performance targets related to assaults on transit workers, including how targets are established and monitored, from 2022-present.
3	Documentation related to the implementation of the Safety Risk Reduction Program related to assaults on transit workers, including any actions taken, any targets established, and any mitigations implemented.
4	Safety risk assessment documentation related to assaults on transit workers, from 2022-present.
5	Documentation of CATS's employee safety reporting process, and all reports related to assaults on transit workers from 2022-present.
6	Documentation related to the development and implementation of the agency's de-escalation training, including employee completion status.
#	Joint Labor-Management Safety Committee Procedures
7	Documentation of safety risk mitigations related to assaults on transit workers identified and recommended by the Safety Committee, from 2022-present.
8	Documentation of CATS's Safety Committee activities and information regarding the Safety Committee's role in monitoring the effectiveness of mitigations related to assaults on transit workers.
#	Implementation of GD 24-1
9	Documentation of CATS's implementation of identified mitigations in response to General Directive 24-1, addressing the risk of assaults on transit workers including status updates, internal monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of mitigations.



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

September 11, 2025

Ms. Nora Leerhsen  
Acting President  
Chicago Transit Authority  
567 W. Lake Street  
Chicago, IL 60661

Dear Ms. Leerhsen:

I am writing regarding the U.S. Department of Transportation's continued focus on ensuring safe travel in Chicago. To protect the safety of passengers and workers, and in turn, promote public confidence in transit, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) must ensure a secure and clean environment, reduce crime and fare evasion, and maintain a safe operating system.

Based on the Department's ongoing focus on safety and security, and pursuant to its oversight authority, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) directs CTA to provide the below information about the agency's practices and expenditures. *See* FTA Master Agreement Section 3(h)(2)(iii). Of key importance is documentation of actions and funding that ensure effective security for passengers and workers on the CTA system.

For this FTA review of CTA actions, please provide FTA with the following information:

1. CTA actions and plans to reduce crime and fare evasion on the transit system. Please include information about fare evasion trends and previous actions.
2. CTA funds from all sources that are programmed to improve the security of passengers and workers. This should include information about all CTA fiscal year 2025 budgeted and fiscal year 2026 planned funds allocated to reduce crime and fare evasion on the transit system, including a comparison to prior year funding for such expenses. Please also include:
  - a. Security - Expenditures and budgeted funds that meet the Federal transit program security capital projects set aside requirement for Urbanized Area Formula Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5307(c)(1)(J)(i)).
  - b. Safety - Expenditures and budgeted funds that meet the Federal transit program safety set aside requirement for Urbanized Area Formula Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5329(d)(4)(B)).

- c. Non-FTA funds - Information about funds from other Federal government agencies directed to the safety and security of CTA passengers and workers. This should include any Department of Homeland Security funds.

Please provide this information to FTA's Region 5 Administrator, Kelley Brookins, no later than September 24, 2025.

In addition, please note that Federal transit law explicitly permits recipients to use capital grants for capital expenses related to crime prevention and security activities. *See* 49 U.S.C. § 5321. CTA should target Federal resources expeditiously and appropriately for these eligible activities.

People traveling on the CTA system to reach their jobs, education, healthcare, and other critical services need to feel secure and travel in a safe environment free from crime, and workers who operate the system need to be assured of a safe operating environment to provide transportation services. The transit riders and workers of Chicago deserve nothing less. I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter to avoid further consequences, up to and including redirecting or withholding funding.

If I can provide further information or assistance, please reach out or contact Joe Delorenzo, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer, at (202) 366-5080 or via email at [joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov](mailto:joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov).

Sincerely,



Sean P. Duffy



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

September 18, 2025

Mr. Phillip Eng  
General Manager  
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
10 Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Mr. Eng:

I am writing regarding the U.S. Department of Transportation's continued focus on ensuring safe travel in Boston. To protect the safety of passengers and workers, and, in turn, promote public confidence in transit, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) must ensure a secure and clean environment, reduce crime, vagrancy, and fare evasion, and maintain a safe operating system. While this is true across the MBTA system, particular focus must be on key transportation and intermodal hubs such as South Station to ensure a safe and clean environment for the many passengers and rail workers passing through these locations.

Based on the Department's ongoing focus on safety and security, and pursuant to its oversight authority, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) directs MBTA to provide information about the agency's practices and expenditures. *See* FTA Master Agreement section 3(h)(2)(iii). Of key importance is documentation of actions and funding that ensure effective security for passengers and workers on the MBTA system.

For this FTA review of MBTA actions, please provide FTA with the following information:

1. MBTA actions and plans to reduce crime, vagrancy, and fare evasion on the transit system. Please include information about fare evasion trends and previous actions. In addition, please provide information on current and future actions to ensure the safety of passengers travelling through South Station and other major transit facilities.
2. MBTA's funds from all sources that are programmed to improve the security of passengers and workers. This should include information about all MBTA fiscal year 2025 budgeted and fiscal year 2026 planned funds allocated to reduce crime, the homeless population, and fare evasion on the transit system, including a comparison to prior year funding for such expenses. Please also include the following, noting specific funding allocated for projects at major transit facilities:



- a. Security - Expenditures and budgeted funds that meet the Federal transit program security capital projects set aside requirement for Urbanized Area Formula Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5307(c)(1)(J)(i)).
- b. Safety - Expenditures and budgeted funds that meet the Federal transit program safety set aside requirement for Urbanized Area Formula Grants (49 U.S.C. § 5329(d)(4)(B)).
- c. Non-FTA funds - Information about funds from other Federal government agencies directed to the safety and security of MBTA passengers and workers. This should include any Department of Homeland Security funds.

Please provide this information to FTA's Region 1 Administrator, Peter Butler, no later than October 2, 2025.

In addition, please note that Federal transit law explicitly permits recipients to use capital grants for capital expenses related to crime prevention and security activities. *See* 49 U.S.C. § 5321. MBTA should target Federal resources expeditiously and appropriately for these eligible activities, particularly at South Station, the second-busiest transportation hub in New England. The Federal Government has invested considerable funding over the years to improve and maintain South Station facilities and wants to ensure this Federal interest is protected for the benefit of public transportation passengers and workers.

People traveling on the MBTA system to reach their jobs, education, healthcare, and other critical services need to feel secure and travel in a safe environment free from crime and threatening encounters with drug addicts or the mentally ill, and workers who operate the system need to be assured of a safe operating environment to provide transportation services. The transit riders and workers of Boston deserve nothing less. I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter to avoid further consequences, up to and including redirecting or withholding funding.

If I can provide further information or assistance, please reach out or contact Joe Delorenzo, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer, at (202) 366-5080 or via email at [joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov](mailto:joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov).

Sincerely,



Sean P. Duffy



**OFFICE of the MAYOR**

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600 East Fourth Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202  
charlottenc.gov

September 25, 2025

The Honorable Marc Molinaro  
Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Response to letter dated September 10, 2025

Dear Administrator Molinaro,

The murder of Iryna Zarutska on the evening of August 22, 2025, was a terrible tragedy for her friends and family as well as all of the Charlotte community, and exposed shortcomings in the systems that serve our residents.

The City of Charlotte is focused on safety for our residents by working with our partners, including federal, state, and local leaders, business leaders, members of the judiciary, healthcare providers and others to identify programs to further increase safety in our community, including more law enforcement in key areas of our city, many of which will be near transit facilities. Due to the structures of local governance in North Carolina, the City of Charlotte has no oversight over the courts or mental health facilities, which is why working together is critically important. Just this week, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation, which provided additional prosecutorial staffing resources; something we have been advocating for several years. This murder has also led to the City of Charlotte and the Charlotte Area Transit System (which is a department of the City of Charlotte) to take immediate steps to increase rider and operator safety and security throughout our transit system.

CATS has been actively increasing its security resources, including increasing contracted security funding from \$5.8 million in 2022 to \$18.4 million in the current year; this spending increase has enabled CATS to double the number of dedicated contracted police and security from 110 personnel to 219 in the current contract.

Earlier this week the Charlotte City Council unanimously approved a resolution to allow for CATS professional security forces to expand its enforcement actions at the Charlotte

Transportation Center in Uptown, Rosa Parks Transit Center, Eastland all Transit Center, as well as all sidewalks adjacent to those properties as well as properties adjacent to the Blue Line.

The City of Charlotte including CATS are committed to continuing to increase resources needed to protect public transit users. In its response to the Mr. Joe Delorenzo, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer, CATS has outlined activities taken over the last three years as well as the immediate changes made to CATS' security and the strategies that it will utilize moving forward to protect riders, employees, and vital transit assets (that letter is attached to this response as well).

In your letter to me, you directed the following immediate actions:

1. Transit Security Plan – Your administration must immediately release a transparent, measurable plan to secure Charlotte's buses, trains and stations. This plan must detail staffing increases, police coordination, surveillance upgrades, and response protocols.

This action is complete. CATS have provided the FTA with a copy of a transit security plan as part of this response as well as part of the response to Mr. DeLorenzo.

2. Visible Security Surge – CATS must immediately increase uniformed presence at stations and onboard vehicles, with priority given to evening service and high-risk corridors.

This action is complete and will continue indefinitely. CATS has worked with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) to engage CMPD officers to provide increased policing presence along the Blue Line light rail system. There is a total of 966 hours per week authorized for additional CMPD officer assignments.

The deployment of these hours is as follows:

- Shift 1: 6:30am-11:30am – 30 hours of additional staffing
- Shift 2: 11:30am-4:00pm – 27 hours of additional staffing
- Shift 3: 1:30pm-7:00pm – 12 hours of additional staffing
- Shift 4: 4:00pm-10:00pm – 48 hours of additional staffing
- Shift 5: 10:00pm-1:30am – 21 hours of additional staffing

These shifts are daily, seven days per week (138 hours daily x 7 days = 966 weekly) and will continue indefinitely, as CATS continues to develop and evaluate the total needed staffing levels and the staffing mix between contract security and local law enforcement agency personnel.

Next week, CATS will introduce new bike patrols and new urban terrain vehicle patrols to provide additional security personnel along key transit routes and a significant increase in visibility. The additional investment in these vehicles improves access and response time along the transit system.

In addition, as you may be aware, on November 4, 2025, Mecklenburg County voters will be considering for approval a sales tax referendum to increase available funding for transit and roads in the region. If this referendum passes, CATS will have funding necessary to improve transit services throughout Mecklenburg County, including funding for enhanced security. State law also requires that an independent transit authority (the Mecklenburg Public Transit Authority – MPTA) will be established and CATS will transition away from being a department of the City of Charlotte to an independent transit authority with an independent governing board as required in North Carolina Session Law 2025-39. If this occurs, I expect CATS (under the governance of the MPTA) to recommend to the MPTA Board the establishment of an independent Transit Police Department to serve the passengers and employees who use transit every day and I am in full support of that recommendation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Vi Lyles".

Vi Lyles  
Mayor of Charlotte



## Monthly Legislative Report – September 2025

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### Advocacy Meetings

**Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Subcommittee on Highways and Transit Chair David Rouzer (R-NC)** – In September, we met several times with Chairman Rouzer’s Chief of Staff to follow up on the Chairman’s August visit to Orange County. In these follow-up discussions, we provided additional detail on OCTA’s reauthorization principles, which emphasize restoring local suballocation authority for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) programs; protecting traditional OCTA funding streams; maintaining transit commitments within the Highway Trust Fund (HTF); advancing environmental streamlining reforms; ensuring fairness in discretionary grant distribution; and securing dedicated investment in both the Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor and other mobility projects tied to the 2028 Los Angeles (LA28) Olympic Games.

**House and Senate Appropriations Staff** – Throughout the month of September, we met several times with House and Senate Appropriations staff to track the potential consideration of a “minibus” appropriations package that could include the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) bill as well as the inclusion of potential Community Project Funding (CPF) requests in any minibuss package. We also followed up on the status of the Continuing Resolution (CR) and discussed the potential solutions to ending quickly the federal government shutdown.

**House T&I Committee, Majority Staff** – In September, we met on several occasions with House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee staff to discuss progress on surface transportation reauthorization drafting and the potential timeline for a committee markup. During these discussions, we reiterated OCTA’s priority request to restore local suballocation authority for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) programs.

**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Policy and Government Affairs** – We followed up with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) staff to discuss the timing of the FHWA Administrator’s confirmation and possible movement on the surface transportation reauthorization. In addition, we reviewed OCTA’s reauthorization request submitted through the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) stakeholder portal.

**Office of Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA)** – In a recent phone call with the Congresswoman’s staff we discussed the potential impacts of the federal government shutdown on OCTA, including delays in grant processing, as well as possible next steps for reopening the federal government and restoring agency operations. The conversation allowed us to reinforce OCTA’s federal funding priorities while ensuring continued engagement on both the reauthorization process and appropriations negotiations.

**Office of Congressman Derek Tran (D-CA)** – In September, we followed up on the letter Congressman Tran sent on September 12<sup>th</sup> to LA28 Chair Casey Wasserman, formally requesting OCTA's inclusion on the LA28 Games Mobility Executives Team. The letter highlighted OCTA's critical role as Orange County's primary transit operator, a key Metrolink shareholder, managing agency for the LOSSAN Rail Corridor, and operator of the 405 and 91 Express Lanes. Congressman Tran underscored that Orange County will play a vital role in hosting venues such as the Anaheim Arena and Trestles State Beach, as well as providing hospitality and tourism infrastructure for the Games. His office is continuing to explore additional advocacy steps to ensure OCTA is formally included in Olympic mobility planning.

**Office of Congressman Mike Levin (D-CA)** – Earlier this month we facilitated an update for the Congressman's staff on coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regarding the OCTA Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant. In addition, we continued conversations on OCTA's surface transportation reauthorization principles.

### **FY26 Appropriations Update**

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations process broke down right before the August recess when House disagreements stalled progress on individual spending bills. In September, the House passed the Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2026, a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government funded through November 21 at FY2025 levels, with targeted anomalies also requested by the White House such as enhanced security funding for senior officials, local spending authority for the District of Columbia, and extensions for a wide range of programs linked to Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, agricultural reporting, cybersecurity, and the Defense Production Act.

Despite House passage, the CR stalled in the Senate where 60 votes are required. Negotiations collapsed as Democrats demanded the bill include an extension of expanded health insurance tax credits expiring on December 31<sup>st</sup>, a roll back of other Medicaid cuts under the recent budget reconciliation bill, and additional protections against the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) rescissions of appropriated funds. Republicans opposed linking these policies to this short-term government funding, arguing such issues should be debated later as part of year-end negotiations.

With no compromise reached, the Senate adjourned without passing a funding measure, and a partial government shutdown began on October 1. Most federal employees not deemed essential are now facing furloughs, while others such as air traffic controllers and federal law enforcement officers must continue working without pay. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the shutdown will cost federal agencies \$400 million per day, with approximately 750,000 workers furloughed.

Senate Republicans plan to continue holding votes on the House-passed GOP stopgap in hopes of peeling off more Democratic support, after three Democratic-aligned senators Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Angus King (I-ME), and John Fetterman (D-PA) broke ranks to support the GOP bill. Meanwhile, Democrats maintain that health care cannot wait,

pointing out that insurers are preparing to send rate notices to consumers in October, which could destabilize open enrollment starting November 1<sup>st</sup> if subsidies are not extended.

Federal agencies are now implementing shutdown plans. At the Department of Justice, most core law enforcement functions will continue, but grantmaking and civil rights enforcement activities are largely halted. The Department of Education expects to furlough most employees, pausing grantmaking and investigations, though student aid disbursements will continue. The Interior Department has furloughed large portions of its workforce, including thousands of National Park Service employees. According to USDOT statement released on September 30th the shutdown will affect several smaller agencies, including the Federal Railroad Administration (239 employees), the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (190 employees), the Maritime Administration (192 employees), and the Office of the Inspector General (239 employees). The remainder of DOT's roughly 53,000 employees are partially funded outside the annual appropriations process and will continue working through the shutdown for the near term.

This shutdown underscores the ongoing stalemate between the two parties and leaves no clear path forward. As mentioned earlier, Senate is expected to resume votes on October 1<sup>st</sup> with the hope of passing the House CR and ending the shutdown quickly. The House is currently scheduled to return to session on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **Surface Transportation Reauthorization Update**

In September, senior officials at US Department of Transportation (USDOT) continued working behind closed doors to draft the Administration's reauthorization proposals that they hope to submit to Congress in the coming weeks. Their efforts remain closely coordinated with House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee majority staff on key sections of the bill, including revamping funding programs and streamlining project delivery. Another focus of the ongoing reauthorization work is advancing reforms to environmental permitting to accelerate project timelines and reduce delays.

While House T&I Committee staff had hoped to move toward a possible markup of draft legislation this fall, that timeline now appears more likely to slip to the end of the year or early next year. In parallel, a separate rail title for the surface transportation reauthorization is also being developed. However, progress on that front has slowed as the Federal Railroad Administration awaits Senate confirmation of a new Administrator, which is expected in October. Despite these delays, we anticipate that draft sections from both the House and Senate proposals will begin to emerge in the coming months.

### **Senate Confirms Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

On September 18<sup>th</sup>, the Senate confirmed Sean McMaster as FHWA Administrator along party lines in a large package of nominees from several federal agencies. McMaster, a former House T&I Committee staff member and USDOT official, most recently worked with HNTB. As Administrator, his stated priorities include improving safety, expediting highway and bridge project delivery, supporting the Administrations goals of streamlining

environmental regulations, and supporting a transparent process for federal transportation funding investments.

Importantly, Secretary Duffy has tasked McMaster with leading USDOT's work and liaison with Congress on the 2026 surface transportation reauthorization.

### **National Railroad Partnership Program Announced**

In September, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced a new \$5+ billion National Railroad Partnership Program aimed at improving safety and reliability across U.S. intercity passenger rail. The program includes \$2.4 billion repurposed from California's high-speed rail project and prioritizes grade crossing safety, capacity improvements, and state-of-good-repair needs. The reissued Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) removes prior Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) requirements and expands eligible uses to include passenger experience enhancements such as family amenities at stations.

Eligible applicants include states, interstate compacts, local public agencies, Amtrak, and tribal governments. Applications are due January 7, 2026. This new program will be a major funding opportunity for regional passenger rail providers and could support safety and capacity priorities across Southern California's rail network.

### **USDOT Emergency Action on Non-Domiciled Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs)**

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced an emergency rule tightening eligibility for non-domiciled CDLs and learner's permits (CLPs). The action follows a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) audit uncovering widespread noncompliance, particularly in California, where over 25% of reviewed licenses were improperly issued to ineligible foreign drivers. The new rule requires stricter verification, including employment-based visas and federal immigration checks, and immediately halts California's issuance of non-domiciled CDLs pending corrective action.

California has 30 days to revoke and reissue noncompliant licenses or risk losing up to \$160 million in federal highway funds in the first year, with penalties doubling in year two. Other states, including Colorado, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington, were also flagged. The nationwide audit continues, with USDOT emphasizing that these steps are part of the Administration's broader push to strengthen roadway safety and truck driver standards.

### **House Advances Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025**

On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee advanced the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025, a bipartisan bill designed to streamline federal disaster response and elevate the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to a cabinet-level agency. The measure passed overwhelmingly, 57–3 and at the time of this report now heads to the full House for consideration. Lawmakers stressed the importance of the legislation in strengthening

FEMA's ability to support communities facing increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters.

At this stage, however, the Senate has not introduced a companion bill or signaled movement on a parallel version. Because the legislation proposes significant reforms including making FEMA a cabinet-level agency, it is likely to face additional hurdles in the Senate. These include negotiating jurisdictional boundaries with the Senate Homeland Security Committee and securing buy-in from key senators before the bill can advance.





**October 16, 2025**

**To:** Legislative and Communications Committee

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

**Subject:** Draft Revisions to the Orange County Transportation Authority's 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms

### **Overview**

Halfway through each legislative session, staff conducts a review of the Orange County Transportation Authority's Legislative Platforms to ensure relevant issues that are anticipated to be of discussion for the upcoming year are included and up to date. Initial draft revisions to the Orange County Transportation Authority's 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms have been prepared for consideration by the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors. Before a final draft is considered for adoption, these drafts will be revised as a result of feedback from the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors, as well as further internal staff input.

### **Recommendation**

Direct staff to integrate the recommended revisions to the 2025-26 Orange County Transportation Authority State and Federal Legislative Platforms and seek further feedback from the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors and internal staff, with subsequent drafts being brought forward for final consideration and adoption later this year.

### **Background**

At the beginning of each legislative session, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) adopts updated State and Federal Legislative Platforms to guide OCTA's advocacy activities for the duration of the upcoming legislative session. With each session covering a two-year period, revisions to the legislative platforms are presented to the Board of Directors (Board) midway through the session to reflect any significant changes since their adoption by the Board in the previous year.

The initial drafts of mid-session revisions to the 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms are presented as Attachments A and C, respectively. The proposed changes are detailed in Attachments B and D, with the recommended revisions to the Board-adopted 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms designated by bold and strikethrough text.

The revisions incorporate initiatives suggested by OCTA staff and issues that are anticipated to be significant in the upcoming session. Prior to bringing final drafts to the Board, OCTA staff will continue to meet internally for additional input. When developing the 2027-28 State and Federal Legislative Platforms next year, a more widespread input solicitation process will occur, with outreach to interested groups, stakeholders, and individuals to allow a more comprehensive update for the next legislative session.

#### 2025-26 OCTA State Legislative Platform

The Draft 2025-26 State Legislative Platform includes several a number of important updates that reflect both evolving state policy dynamics and OCTA's long-standing priorities. Language was also edited, amended, or removed as necessary to ensure grammatical and stylistic integrity.

One of the most significant changes is the addition of a new Cap-and-Invest section. Previously known as Cap-and-Trade, the program has been reauthorized through 2045 and now operates under a tiered funding structure that dedicates \$1 billion annually to the California High-Speed Rail Project and another \$1 billion to legislative discretionary uses before remaining revenues are allocated to transit and other programs. The platform emphasizes the need to protect dedicated funding streams for transportation programs such as the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, which have historically supported OCTA initiatives including Youth Ride Free, the Coastal Rail Resiliency Project, and the OC Streetcar. It also stresses the importance of preserving funding previously committed to transit agencies and ensuring that any discretionary funds are distributed equitably among regions. This section positions OCTA to engage effectively as the Legislature continues to refine revenue distribution policies and builds on the Cap-and-Trade principles the OCTA Board adopted earlier this year.

The platform also addresses ongoing issues related to SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) implementation and the sustainable communities strategy (SCS) process. SB 375 requires metropolitan planning organizations to incorporate an SCS into their Regional Transportation Plans to demonstrate how greenhouse gas reduction targets, set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), will be achieved through coordinated land use, housing, and transportation planning. New language was added to the platform to support

reforms to the SB 375 target setting a review process, while ensuring that any reforms do not inadvertently harm existing funding eligibilities or restrict the ability of transportation agencies to deliver projects and programs. A principle was also added in response to the California State Transportation Agency creation of the Sustainable Communities Task Force, of which OCTA is not a formal member but is closely monitoring, to ensure that any recommendations or reforms to SB 375 implementation preserve flexibility for local agencies and do not undermine the ability to deliver projects or access funding.

Another notable update is the explicit support for reinstating the state sales tax exemption for the purchase of zero-emission buses. The current exemption is set to expire on January 1, 2026. This year, the California Transit Association (CTA) pursued legislation to extend the exemption; however, the measure did not advance due to concerns about the state's ongoing budget deficit and the loss of potential General Fund revenues. Despite that setback, OCTA anticipates that CTA will continue to spearhead the statewide effort to extend this benefit. Given the significant costs associated with transitioning to a zero-emission fleet, the extension of this exemption remains a high priority.

The Rail Programs section also reflects important updates. The prior recommendation to monitor the In-Use Locomotive Regulation was removed after CARB rescinded the rule in response to anticipated federal action. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had indicated it would not grant the waiver necessary for the regulation to take effect. At the same time, the platform now recognizes the forthcoming report required by SB 1098 (Chapter 777, Statutes of 2024), which is expected to be finalized early next year. The report will evaluate the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor's needs and prioritize capital and resiliency improvements, providing the Legislature with recommendations for future policy decisions. This report may serve as a precursor to legislation proposing reforms in rail planning, governance, or operations, and OCTA will remain engaged in this process to ensure that Orange County's interests are represented.

Taken together, these changes ensure that the 2025-26 platform provides clear guidance on the most pressing and relevant state issues while continuing to uphold OCTA's long-term commitment to advancing a comprehensive, multimodal transportation network.

#### **Sponsor Bills**

OCTA often encounters specific legislative issues requiring sponsor legislation, prompting OCTA to take the lead in developing legislative language and securing an author. As noted in the strikethrough version, the sponsor bill section was removed as staff does not anticipate the need to sponsor legislation in those areas next year. Staff is currently exploring the need for any potential sponsor

bills and will bring back any proposals for the OCTA Legislative and Communications Committee and Board's consideration when the final draft platforms are brought for approval in November 2025.

#### 2025-26 OCTA Federal Legislative Platform

The Draft 2025-26 Federal Legislative Platform has been updated to reflect both OCTA's long-standing advocacy priorities and emerging federal issues that are anticipated to be the focus of the 119th Congress. These changes are designed to ensure that OCTA remains well positioned to protect critical funding, advance multimodal mobility, and engage in national policy discussions that affect the agency and Orange County. Language was edited, amended, or removed as necessary to ensure grammatical and stylistic integrity.

Much of next year will be focused on federal surface transportation reauthorization, which expires on September 30, 2026. The OCTA Board has already adopted a set of guiding principles for reauthorization, which are included in the appendix of the draft platform. Beyond that, one of the most significant updates highlights ongoing congressional discussions about new revenue sources for the Highway Trust Fund. OCTA's platform makes clear that any new revenues should continue to flow through the Highway Trust Fund under the traditional 80/20 split between highways and transit. This longstanding balance is essential to maintaining support for both transit capital and operations, ensuring that new funding proposals do not undermine local transit systems or shift costs to agencies such as OCTA.

The platform also proposes to adjust the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) principle to reflect ongoing conversations in Washington about potentially repurposing some of those funds. OCTA emphasizes that any reallocation of IRA resources should prioritize transit and transportation programs.

Consistent with recent state platform revisions, the prior principle regarding the In-Use Locomotive Regulation has been removed. CARB withdrew the regulation from consideration after it became clear that the federal government was unlikely to grant the waiver necessary for implementation. With CARB rescinding the rule, OCTA no longer anticipates the need for active engagement on this issue at the federal level.

Finally, the platform notes that the federal alternative fuel tax incentive, which provided important cost relief for the use of compressed natural gas, hydrogen, and other clean fuels, was not extended after expiring on January 1, 2025. OCTA will continue to advocate for reinstating and expanding this incentive to support the agency's efforts to maintain and grow a sustainable, zero-emission fleet while managing rising operational costs.

Taken together, these updates ensure that the 2025-26 Federal Legislative Platform reflects the most pressing federal issues while advancing OCTA's long-term commitment to building a comprehensive multimodal transportation network.

***Summary***

Upon approval, the mid-session revisions to the 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms will be circulated for additional review and will return to the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors later this year for final consideration and adoption.

***Attachments***

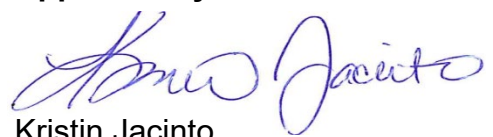
- A. Draft Orange County Transportation Authority 2025-26 State Legislative Platform (Clean Copy)
- B. Draft Orange County Transportation Authority 2025-26 State Legislative Platform (Strikethrough Version)
- C. Draft Orange County Transportation Authority 2025-26 Federal Legislative Platform (Clean Copy)
- D. Draft Orange County Transportation Authority 2025-26 Federal Legislative Platform (Strikethrough Version)

**Prepared by:**



Alexis Carter  
Senior Government Relations Representative,  
Government Relations  
(714) 560-5475

**Approved by:**



Kristin Jacinto  
Executive Director,  
Government Relations  
(714) 560-5754

## **Draft Orange County Transportation Authority 2025-26 State Legislative Platform**

With over three million residents, Orange County is the third most populous county in California and the sixth most populous county in the nation. Orange County is one of the most densely populated areas in the country and is served by one of the nation's busiest transit systems. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) serves as the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in Orange County. OCTA manages a multimodal transportation system, overseeing a range of services including buses, Metrolink commuter rail, paratransit, and freeway improvements, as well as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, ensuring diverse mobility options for residents and visitors.

The 2025-26 State Legislative Platform serves as a framework document to guide OCTA's legislative, regulatory, and administrative activities in the coming legislative session. The Key Policy Issues section offers guidance on the policy issues that will likely be the focus of the upcoming legislative session. The later sections present guiding policy statements for other major issue areas that may arise during the session. Positions on individual items not directly in this document will be brought to the OCTA Board of Directors for formal action.

### **Key Policy Issues in 2025-26**

A number of significant transportation issues are expected to be discussed in the 2025-26 legislative session. OCTA will focus its advocacy efforts on the following principles.

- a) Support transportation funding investments and policy flexibilities that allow OCTA to provide essential, multimodal mobility improvements and services in order to meet the mobility needs of Orange County;
- b) Seek support for adaptation and resiliency efforts related to the environment for critical transportation infrastructure;
- c) Encourage State leadership, in conjunction with local collaboration, in developing long-term studies related to potential track relocation in the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor;
- d) Support efforts to maximize OCTA's share of transportation and transit funding, especially through distribution formulas and more equitable competitive funding processes;
- e) Support workforce development and training policies that allow OCTA to hire and retain personnel ready to implement the next generation of mobility, including training the workforce for zero-emission vehicles, without creating unfunded mandates;
- f) Oppose policies that would circumvent existing transit operator funding eligibility requirements;

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- g) Support efforts to ensure local control is maintained in policy decisions made by local transportation agency boards in delivering, funding, and operating transportation programs and projects;
- h) Inform the State's Transit Transformation Task Force, created pursuant to SB 125 (Chapter 54, Statutes of 2023), in order to seek improvements to the Transportation Development Act and make recommendations related to transit funding, cost drivers, strategies for workforce retention, and ridership;
- i) Seek to ensure OCTA's projects and programs related to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games are eligible for any related funding assistance, incentives, project delivery tools, and/or regulatory relief;
- j) Support efforts to mitigate costs associated with the development, testing, purchase, and operation of zero-emission transit buses, including an alternative electricity rate structure, tax incentives, and other forms of financial assistance;
- k) Monitor progress of the Sustainable Communities Task Force and potential reforms to implementation of SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008).

**I. CAP-AND-INVEST**

Previously known as Cap-and-Trade, Cap-and-Invest has been reauthorized through 2045. The Cap-and-Invest agreement includes a tiered structure to facilitate revenue distribution depending on auction proceeds. The California High-Speed Rail Project would receive \$1 billion off the top and then another funding set aside of \$1 billion has been provided for "Legislature Discretionary." Following those funding commitments, funding is then allocated to traditional ongoing appropriations, which includes important transit programs, such as the Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP). Because these programs are to be allocated set amounts each year rather than a percentage of the proceeds, these programs will no longer grow if revenues are higher than anticipated and will be the first to be reduced if revenues do not meet expectations. Over the next year, it is anticipated that there will be further negotiations to refine the revenue distribution structure. To that end, OCTA will advocate for the following:

- a) Protect transit funding provided under Cap-and-Invest to ensure TIRCP and LCTOP are maintained and funded at levels consistent with prior budget allocations to ensure continued certainty for programs and projects;
- b) Ensure that funding for transit, originally provided through SB 125 and later backfilled through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund in future budget cycles, is fully preserved and allocated in accordance with previous budget appropriations;
- c) Monitor Cap-and-Invest funding for the California High-Speed Rail Project and promote prioritization of bookend projects within allocation decisions;

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- d) Encourage regional parity in distribution of any discretionary funding in Cap-and-Invest.

**II. IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES**

In order to ensure that the State's environmental regulations are implemented in an equitable manner, which will both help to reduce emissions and encourage the development of necessary infrastructure to serve California's growing population, OCTA will:

- a) Support efforts to ensure local flexibility in meeting the State's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, including project mitigation requirements;
- b) Support streamlined environmental review and permitting processes for transportation projects and programs to avoid potentially duplicative and unnecessary analysis, while still maintaining traditional environmental protections;
- c) Work with air agencies and other stakeholders to ensure that air quality determinations and policies do not constrain funding availability or otherwise undermine OCTA's ability to deliver transportation improvements;
- d) Monitor the State's transition to zero-emission vehicle technology to ensure that any corresponding policies adequately address the impact to long-term transportation funding stability;
- e) Oppose lengthening the California Environmental Quality Act process in a manner that would delay mobility improvements;
- f) Oppose efforts to restrict road and highway construction by superseding existing broad-based environmental review and mitigation processes;
- g) Oppose policies that would limit lead agency discretion in the management and oversight of lands set aside for environmental mitigation purposes while promoting advance mitigation planning programs;
- h) Monitor efforts to create a statewide model related to vehicle miles traveled in order to ensure that local modeling is taken into account;
- i) Support efforts related to separate and distinct sand nourishment permits.



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**III. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

OCTA will monitor the status of transportation funding in California, promoting the continued stability of existing programs and efforts to address future funding deficiencies to meet transportation infrastructure needs. Given that the State is anticipated to experience a continued deficit, OCTA will work to protect funding dedicated for transportation purposes, including appropriations made in the fiscal year 2025-26 Budget Act for transit operations and capital projects. Key actions include:

- a) Oppose unfunded mandates for transportation agencies, transit providers, and local governments in providing transportation improvements and services;
- b) Oppose cost shifts or changes in responsibility for projects funded by the State to local transportation entities;
- c) Support efforts to treat the property tax of single-county transit districts the same as multi-county districts and correct other Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund inequities between like agencies;
- d) Support the constitutional protection of all transportation funding resources;
- e) Support protecting or expanding local decision-making in programming transportation funds;
- f) Oppose efforts to reduce local prerogative over regional program funds;
- g) Support efforts to involve county transportation commissions in the development and prioritization of State Highway Operation and Protection Program projects;
- h) Oppose redirecting or reclassifying transportation revenue sources, including earned interest, for anything other than their intended purposes;
- i) Support the implementation of federal transportation programs in an equitable manner that promotes traditional funding levels, programming roles, and local discretion in allocation decisions;
- j) Oppose policies that significantly increase costs, threatening OCTA's ability to deliver projects and provide transit service;
- k) Support removing the barriers for funding transportation projects, including allowing local agencies to advance projects with local funds when state funds are unavailable due to budgetary reasons, and allowing regions to pool federal, state, and local funds in order to limit lengthy amendment processes and streamline project delivery time;

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- l) Support flexibility in the application of “disadvantaged” and “low-income” communities to ensure that transportation funding flows to each region’s most impacted areas, allowing OCTA to best meet the needs of its local communities;
- m) Support dedicated funding for transit operations, preferably through an ongoing formulaic approach;
- n) Support efforts to reform SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) to improve the technical processes underpinning target setting and plan development, while also ensuring the reforms do not impact existing transportation funding distribution or eligibilities, or restrict the ability for transportation agencies to implement their projects or programs;
- o) Protect existing transit operations and capital funding while monitoring the implementation of the accountability provisions associated with the funding and inform clarifying legislation as needed;
- p) Oppose linking, reprioritizing, or aligning local and state transportation funding with policies that could significantly hinder a local agency’s ability to deliver transportation programs and projects;
- q) Support efforts to maintain the promises self-help counties have made to taxpayers in the implementation of local sales tax measures and oppose mandating specific uses of future sales tax revenues;
- r) Oppose policies that change existing formula funding structures to redistribute funds in a way that would inhibit a local agency from delivering critical transportation projects and programs.

**IV. FISCAL REFORMS & ISSUES**

In recent years, the Legislature and Governor have worked collaboratively during the budget process to pass funding bills in a timely manner. Given that the State continues to report lower revenues than projected, uncertainties over future funding levels remain. Therefore, OCTA will:

- a) Monitor the study and development of alternative transportation funding proposals, including the State’s road charge pilot program and ensure that efforts are made to address concerns related to equity, privacy, and public support of such proposals;
- b) Oppose levying new and/or increase in gasoline taxes or user fees, including revenue increases on fuel consumption categorized as charges, fees, revenue enhancements, or similar classifications. Consideration of such efforts shall occur when a direct nexus is determined to exist between revenues and transportation

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projects, and additional revenues are to be controlled by the county transportation commission;

- c) Oppose efforts to decrease the voter threshold requirement for local tax measures for transportation purposes;
- d) Oppose increases to administrative fees charged by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration on the collection of local sales tax measures;
- e) Support policies that ensure all users of the State's transportation system pay their "fair share" to maintain and improve the system;
- f) Support efforts to restore equitable generation and disbursement of sales tax revenues that support the Local Transportation Fund;
- g) Support the retention of existing and future local revenue sources;
- h) Support reinstating the state sales tax exemption for the purchase of zero-emission buses.

**V. STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), substantially amended by SB 45 (Chapter 622, Statutes of 1997), is a programming document that establishes the funding priorities and project commitments for transportation capital improvements in California. SB 45 placed decision-making authority with the regions by providing project selection for 75 percent of the funding in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). This funding is distributed to counties based on an allocation formula. The remaining 25 percent of the funds are programmed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP). OCTA will seek to ensure that the regional focus of the program is preserved. Key provisions to be sought by OCTA include:

- a) Support maintaining the current STIP formula, which provides 75 percent of STIP funding to the locally-nominated RTIP and 25 percent to the ITIP;
- b) Support equitable allocations of transportation funding, such as the north/south formula distribution of county shares and ITIP allocations;
- c) Support efforts to allow a mode-neutral STIP;
- d) Support increased flexibility for the use of STIP funds to support alternative projects, including, but not limited to, transit and goods movement improvement projects.

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### **VI. TRANSIT PROGRAMS**

OCTA will continue with its focus on providing safe, reliable, and efficient transit services in Orange County. Although transit has received significant funding infusions over the past decade, uncertainty remains regarding the long-term sustainability of funding availability and eligibility. OCTA will make every effort to minimize additional state obligations to transit operations which lack a sufficient and secure revenue source. To that end, OCTA will focus on the following:

- a) Advocate for a continued strong state role in providing funding for transit operations rather than shifting responsibility to local transportation entities. No additional requirements should be created for operation levels beyond existing capacity, unless agreed to by that entity or otherwise appropriately funded;
- b) Seek additional funding for paratransit operations and transit accessibility capital improvements that support persons with disabilities and senior citizens;
- c) Support efforts to encourage and incentivize the interoperability of transit and rail systems within California;
- d) Support limiting the liability of transit districts for the location of bus stops (*Bonanno v. Central Contra Costa Transit Authority*);
- e) Support incentives for transit-oriented development projects (i.e., authorize extra credit toward housing element requirements for these developments), including incentives for development;
- f) Support funding and incentives to develop free- or reduced-fare transit programs without impacting existing programs or creating unfunded mandates;
- g) Encourage policies and guidance that incentivize public transit ridership.

### **VII. RAIL PROGRAMS**

Metrolink is Southern California's commuter rail system that links residential communities to employment and activity centers. Orange County is served by three Metrolink lines: the Orange County Line, the Inland Empire-Orange County Line, and the 91/Perris Valley Line. In support of these routes, OCTA owns 48 miles of rail right-of-way in Orange County on which Metrolink operates. OCTA serves as the primary construction lead for major capital improvements on this right-of-way, supported by OCTA's rail capital budget.

In addition, the state-supported Pacific Surfliner intercity passenger rail service, operated by Amtrak and managed by the LOSSAN Agency, provides passenger rail service between San Luis Obispo and San Diego. OCTA has served as the managing agency for the LOSSAN Agency since 2013, providing administrative and management support.

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OCTA is also advancing the OC Streetcar Project, the county's first modern streetcar line. Running between the cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove, it will serve as a vital new connection to regional rail and bus services and is scheduled to begin revenue service in 2026.

While the status and future of these programs is uncertain, OCTA will be watchful to ensure that funding for these rail systems does not impact other transportation funding sources. Key advocacy efforts will emphasize the following:

- a) Support policies that encourage commercial, commuter-based development around passenger rail corridors that includes permanent job creation;
- b) Monitor and evaluate plans and progress of high-speed rail;
- c) Support efforts to provide resources for safety improvements on the rail network in Southern California, including for the implementation, operation, and maintenance of Positive Train Control safety technology;
- d) Support studying the policies, funding options, and need for rail/highway grade separations, including any impact on existing state highway and transit funding sources;
- e) Support policies that facilitate the development and construction of needed infrastructure projects that support modernization, connectivity, and general system-wide improvements to California's rail network;
- f) Monitor and inform efforts seeking to make reforms to rail planning, governance structure, or operations;
- g) Seek funding and other administrative solutions, such as permit streamlining, to support adaptation and resiliency efforts throughout the rail corridor;
- h) Seek support, funding, and streamlining to manage and address sea level rise, beach erosion, landslides, and other environmental impacts along the rail corridor.

### **VIII. ROADS & HIGHWAYS**

OCTA's commitment to continuously improve mobility in Orange County is reflected through a dynamic involvement in such innovative highway endeavors as the ownership of the 91 Express Lanes and the use of design-build authority on the State Route 22 project and Interstate 405 Improvement Project. OCTA will continue to seek new and innovative ways to deliver road and highway projects to the residents of Orange County and, to that end, OCTA will focus on the following:

- a) Support new and existing alternative project delivery methods, such as design-build, public-private partnership authority, construction manager/general

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contractor authority, and progressive design build, through expanding mode and funding eligibility while also allowing the appropriate balance of partnership between the State and local agencies;

- b) Support authorizing local agencies to advertise, award, and administer contracts for state highway projects;
- c) Oppose duplicative reporting mandates and efforts to impose additional requirements, beyond what is required in statute, on lead agencies awarding contracts using alternative project delivery mechanisms;
- d) Support streamlining of the Caltrans review process for projects without compromising environmental safeguards;
- e) Support policies that improve signal synchronization programs in order to facilitate street signal coordination, prioritization, and preemption, as well as encouraging the use of intelligent transportation system measures;
- f) Support management and integration of express lanes to promote consistent and seamless user experience;
- g) Support studying the development and safe operation of autonomous vehicles and related technologies;
- h) Support preserving local discretion and flexibility in the development of the congestion management program.

**IX. TOLLED & MANAGED LANES**

OCTA's commitment to continuously improve mobility in Orange County is reflected through a dynamic involvement in such innovative highway endeavors, including both the ownership of the 91 Express Lanes, a ten-mile toll facility on State Route 91, extending from State Route 55 to the Orange/Riverside County Line, and the 405 Express Lanes, which operates two lanes in each direction from State Route 73 to the Interstate 605.

Because many agencies are discussing the increased use of managed lane facilities, there remains a need to advocate for local flexibility and input. To ensure the continued success of the 91 Express Lanes, the 405 Express lanes, and for toll policy moving forward, OCTA will:

- a) Oppose efforts to divert revenues from toll facilities for purposes not directed by the responsible governing board;
- b) Support policies that allow OCTA, and its partners, to efficiently operate and maintain the 91 Express Lanes and the 405 Express Lanes;

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- c) Support efforts to preserve local flexibility in the administration of toll lanes and encourage the State to work with OCTA on operating policies to ensure seamless system operation;
- d) Oppose the construction or operation of toll facilities that are inconsistent with local long range transportation plans;
- e) Oppose the construction or operation of toll facilities that fail to respect existing local transportation projects and funding programs;
- f) Support customer privacy rights while maintaining OCTA's ability to effectively communicate with customers and operate the 91 and 405 Express Lanes;
- g) Support the use of innovative means to enhance toll agency enforcement efforts;
- h) Support collaborative solutions to high-occupancy vehicle lane degradation that protect local funding, have regional transportation agency support, and avoid transportation funding diversion;
- i) Support efforts to improve the interoperability of the different toll systems across the State in order to ensure fair and efficient toll operations while affirming user privacy protections;
- j) Inform discussions related to revising toll evasion penalties, toll exemptions, and other changes to enforcement strategies and mechanisms in order to maintain local control, opposing efforts that will hinder the ability to meet congestion management and financing requirements;
- k) Support policies that protect the process prescribed in AB 194 (Chapter 687, Statutes of 2015), which authorizes regional transportation agencies to develop and operate toll facilities, and ensure it is maintained in its application on future toll facilities.

**X. GOODS MOVEMENT**

The twin Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are considered two of the nation's busiest ports, vital to California's economy and the surrounding region because goods are shipped to and through the surrounding counties. While the State's goods movement system is the most robust in the nation, it is continually challenged by competing goods movement systems in other states. In order to continue to compete and engage in the global marketplace, California must continue to enhance its goods movement system, while at the same time be cognizant of taking the necessary actions to mitigate any negative impacts to local communities. Key positions include:

- a) Support improvements to facilitate the movement of intrastate, interstate, and international trade beneficial to the State and Orange County's economy;

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- b) Support policies that will aid in the development, approval, and construction of projects to expand goods movement capacity and reduce congestion;
- c) Ensure that control of goods movement infrastructure projects and funding is retained at the local level;
- d) Seek mitigation for the impacts of goods movement on local communities;
- e) Pursue ongoing, stable sources of funding for goods movement infrastructure;
- f) Support additional funding and policy reforms to aid in expediting transportation projects to address supply chain concerns;
- g) Ensure any effort to establish a container fee program dedicates funding to projects that mitigate the impact port activity may have on local communities, informed by input from local and regional agencies.

### **XI. ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Active transportation projects and programs, which encourage greater mobility through walking and bicycling, have grown in popularity due to the environmental, health, and cost savings benefits. OCTA continues to study, plan, and fund active transportation projects and programs as part of its mission to provide Orange County with an efficient and multi-modal transportation system. Key positions include:

- a) Support policies to increase the visibility and safety of users engaged in active transportation;
- b) Support creative use of paths, roads, flood channels, and abandoned rail lines using existing established rights-of-way to promote bicycles trails and pedestrian paths, in coordination with any local agency with jurisdiction over those properties;
- c) Support funding and programs or policies that encourage the safe operation of an integrated multimodal system, which includes the interaction between roadways, rail lines, bikeways, and pedestrian ways, and the users of those facilities;
- d) Support streamlined active transportation funding programs;
- e) Seek funding and support policies and projects to increase safety requirements related to the utilization of electric bicycles.

### **XII. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

In recent years, there have been many efforts to reorganize or restructure transportation programs and local agency responsibilities. OCTA will continue to monitor policies that would significantly affect the way in which it operates, with a focus on maintaining local control and continued partnerships in order to advocate for the following principles:



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- a) Support preserving the role of county transportation commissions, as consistent with existing law, in the administration of transportation programs;
- b) Oppose proposals that reduce the rights and responsibilities of county transportation commissions in planning, funding, and delivering transportation programs;
- c) Oppose policies that unnecessarily subject projects to additional reviews and project selection approvals that could adversely affect delivery timelines and processes;
- d) Support partnerships with alternative mobility providers that allow for adequate information sharing while also respecting the planning efforts of local agencies;
- e) Support efforts to increase the flexibility of funds used for motorist service programs.

**XIII. EMPLOYMENT ISSUES**

As a public agency and one of the largest employers in Orange County, OCTA balances its responsibility to the community and the taxpayers to provide safe, reliable, cost-effective service with its responsibility of being a reasonable, responsive employer. Key advocacy positions include:

- a) Oppose efforts to impose state labor laws on currently exempt public agencies;
- b) Oppose policies that circumvent the collective bargaining process;
- c) Oppose policies adversely affecting OCTA's ability to efficiently and effectively deal with labor relations, employee rights, benefits, including pension benefits, the California Family Rights Act, and working conditions, including health, safety, and ergonomic standards for the workplace;
- d) Support efforts to reform and resolve inconsistencies in the workers' compensation and unemployment insurance systems, and labor law requirements that maintain protection for employees and allow businesses to operate efficiently;
- e) Support workforce development policies that facilitate a more efficient talent acquisition process;
- f) Support policies that encourage ridesharing, teleworking, vanpool, and related congestion relief programs for Orange County commuters.

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**XIV. TRANSPORTATION SECURITY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

As natural and man-made disasters continue to threaten transportation systems around the world, significant improvements have been, and continue to be, carried out to enhance the safety, security, and resilience of transportation infrastructure in the United States. As Orange County's bus provider and a Metrolink partner, OCTA understands the importance of ensuring the safety and security of our transportation network and protecting our customers. OCTA maintains a partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Department to provide OCTA Transit Police Services for the bus and train systems in Orange County and continues to be actively involved in a variety of state and regional preparedness exercises in support of first responders. The development of a new Transit Security and Operations Center is also underway to enhance security efforts and further the resiliency of the Orange County transit system.

Additional safety and security measures require additional financial resources. Consequently, OCTA's advocacy positions will highlight:

- a) Support state homeland security and emergency preparedness funding and grant programs to local transportation agencies to alleviate financial burden placed on local entities;
- b) Support policies that balance retention mandates of video surveillance records to reflect current reasonable technological and fiscal capabilities;
- c) Support technological advances in order to increase the safety of public transportation passengers and operators;
- d) Support policies that aim to enhance transit services and the overall safety and security of transit riders, public transit employees, and on-road vehicles while avoiding undue burden on transportation agencies to implement unfunded safety measures.

**XV. ADMINISTRATION/GENERAL**

General administrative issues arise every session that could impact OCTA's ability to operate efficiently. Key positions include:

- a) Oppose policies adversely affecting OCTA's ability to efficiently and effectively contract for goods and services, conduct business of the agency, and limit or transfer the risk of liability;
- b) Support efforts to provide greater protection of OCTA's computer and information security systems;

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- c) Support establishing reasonable liability for non-economic damages in any action for personal injury, property damage, or wrongful death brought against a public entity based on principles of comparative fault;
- d) Support consistent campaign contribution limits as applied to both elected and appointed bodies;
- e) Monitor proposed changes related to the Ralph M. Brown Act, and other statutes governing public meetings, including the expanded use of technology;
- f) Support equitable policies to ensure that the inclusive public engagement, planning, and delivery of mobility improvements best serve all residents of Orange County;
- g) Oppose policies that create undue burden on transportation procurement practices or restrict ability to maintain local governing board award authority;
- h) Oppose efforts that create duplicative reporting requirements.

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With over three million residents, Orange County is the third most populous county in California and the sixth most populous county in the nation. Orange County is one of the most densely populated areas in the country and is served by one of the nation's busiest transit systems. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) serves as the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in Orange County. OCTA manages a multimodal transportation system, overseeing a range of services including buses, Metrolink commuter rail, paratransit, and freeway improvements, as well as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, ensuring diverse mobility options for residents and visitors.

The 2025-26 State Legislative Platform serves as a framework document to guide OCTA's legislative, regulatory, and administrative activities in the coming legislative session. The Key Policy Issues section offers guidance on the policy issues that will likely be the focus of the upcoming legislative session. The later sections present guiding policy statements for other major issue areas that may arise during the session. Positions on individual items not directly in this document will be brought to the OCTA Board of Directors for formal action.

### **Key Policy Issues in 2025-26**

A number of significant transportation issues are expected to be discussed in the 2025-26 legislative session. OCTA will focus its advocacy efforts on the following principles.

- a) Support transportation funding investments and policy flexibilities that allow OCTA to provide essential, multimodal mobility improvements and services in order to meet the mobility needs of Orange County;
- b) Seek support for adaptation and resiliency efforts related to the environment for critical transportation infrastructure;
- c) ~~Seek funding and other administrative solutions, such as permit streamlining, to support adaptation and resiliency efforts throughout the rail corridor;~~ **(Moved to Rail Programs Section)**
- d) ~~Seek support, funding, and streamlining to manage and address sea level rise, beach erosion, landslides, and other environmental impacts along the rail corridor;~~ **(Moved to Rail Programs Section)**
- c) Encourage State leadership, in conjunction with local collaboration, in developing long-term studies related to potential track relocation in the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor;
- d) Support efforts to maximize OCTA's share of transportation and transit funding, especially through distribution formulas and more equitable competitive funding processes;

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- ~~e) Oppose linking, reprioritizing, or aligning local and state transportation funding with policies that could significantly hinder a local agency's ability to deliver transportation programs and projects; **(Moved to Transportation Funding Section)**~~
- ~~f) Support efforts to maintain the promises self-help counties have made to taxpayers in the implementation of local sales tax measures and oppose mandating specific uses of future sales tax revenues; **(Moved to Transportation Funding Section)**~~
- e) Support workforce development and training policies that allow OCTA to hire and retain personnel ready to implement the next generation of mobility, including training the workforce for zero-emission vehicles, **without creating unfunded mandates;**
- f) Oppose policies that would circumvent existing transit operator funding eligibility requirements;
- g) Support efforts to ensure local control is maintained in policy decisions made by local transportation agency boards in delivering, funding, and operating transportation programs and projects;
- h) Inform the State's Transit Transformation Task Force, created pursuant to SB 125 (Chapter 54, Statutes of 2023), in order to seek improvements to the Transportation Development Act and make recommendations related to transit funding, cost drivers, strategies for workforce retention, and ridership;
- ~~k) Protect existing transit operations and capital funding while monitoring the implementation of the accountability provisions associated with the funding and inform clarifying legislation as needed; **(Moved to Transportation Funding Section)**~~
- ~~l) Oppose policies that change existing formula funding structures to redistribute funds in a way that would inhibit a local agency from delivering critical transportation projects and programs; **(Moved to Transportation Funding Section)**~~
- i) Seek to ensure OCTA's projects and programs related to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games are eligible for any related funding assistance, incentives, project delivery tools, and/or regulatory relief;
- ~~n) Monitor efforts related to extending the State's cap-and-trade program while ensuring that funding for regional transportation projects and programs are maintained;~~

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- j) Support efforts to mitigate costs associated with the development, testing, purchase, and operation of zero-emission transit buses, including an alternative electricity rate structure, tax incentives, and other forms of financial assistance;
- k) **Monitor progress of the Sustainable Communities Task Force and potential reforms to implementation of SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008).**

**SPONSORED LEGISLATION**

~~Each year, OCTA may consider sponsoring legislation to clarify or address various transportation policy topics that require additional attention. This year, the following major policies may be areas in need of sponsor legislation:~~

- ~~a) Expedited permitting and project delivery for critical public transportation projects located within the coastal zone;~~
- ~~b) Study solutions to mitigate increased costs and supply chain challenges related to implementing the Innovative Clean Transit regulation.~~

**I. CAP-AND-INVEST**

Previously known as Cap-and-Trade, Cap-and-Invest has been reauthorized through 2045. The Cap-and-Invest agreement includes a tiered structure to facilitate revenue distribution depending on auction proceeds. The California High-Speed Rail Project would receive \$1 billion off the top and then another funding set aside of \$1 billion has been provided for “Legislature Discretionary.” Following those funding commitments, funding is then allocated to traditional ongoing appropriations, which includes important transit programs, such as the Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP). Because these programs are to be allocated set amounts each year rather than a percentage of the proceeds, these programs will no longer grow if revenues are higher than anticipated and will be the first to be reduced if revenues do not meet expectations. Over the next year, it is anticipated that there will be further negotiations to refine the revenue distribution structure. To that end, OCTA will advocate for the following:

- a) **Protect transit funding provided under Cap-and-Invest to ensure TIRCP and LCTOP are maintained and funded at levels consistent with prior budget allocations to ensure continued certainty for programs and projects;**
- b) **Ensure that funding for transit, originally provided through SB 125 and later backfilled through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund in future budget**

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**cycles, is fully preserved and allocated in accordance with previous budget appropriations;**

- c) Monitor Cap-and-Invest funding for the California High-Speed Rail Project and promote prioritization of bookend projects within allocation decisions;**
- d) Encourage regional parity in distribution of any discretionary funding in Cap-and-Invest.**

**II. IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES**

In order to ensure that the State's environmental regulations ~~and cap-and-trade program~~ are implemented in an equitable manner, which will both help to reduce emissions and encourage the development of necessary infrastructure to serve California's growing population, OCTA will:

- a) Support efforts to ensure local flexibility in meeting the State's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, including project mitigation requirements;
- b) Support streamlined environmental review and permitting processes for transportation projects and programs to avoid potentially duplicative and unnecessary analysis, while still maintaining traditional environmental protections;
- c) Work with air agencies and other stakeholders to ensure that air quality determinations and policies do not constrain funding availability or otherwise undermine OCTA's ability to deliver transportation improvements;
- d) Monitor the State's transition to zero-emission vehicle technology to ensure that any corresponding policies adequately address the impact to long-term transportation funding stability;
- e) Oppose lengthening the California Environmental Quality Act process in a manner that would delay mobility improvements;
- f) Oppose efforts to restrict road and highway construction by superseding existing broad-based environmental review and mitigation processes;
- g) Oppose policies that would limit lead agency discretion in the management and oversight of lands set aside for environmental mitigation purposes while promoting advance mitigation planning programs;
- h) Monitor efforts to create a statewide model related to vehicle miles traveled in order to ensure that local modeling is taken into account;
- i) Support efforts related to separate and distinct sand nourishment permits.

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**III. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

OCTA will monitor the status of transportation funding in California, promoting the continued stability of existing programs and efforts to address future funding deficiencies to meet transportation infrastructure needs. Given that the State is anticipated to experience a continued deficit, OCTA will work to protect funding dedicated for transportation purposes, including appropriations made in the fiscal year 2024~~5~~-25~~6~~ Budget Act for transit operations and capital projects.

~~Furthermore, executive orders continue to impact OCTA's programs and services. Staff closely monitors these efforts to ensure that transportation funds are used for their intended purposes. For example, Executive Order N-19-19 directed the California State Transportation Agency to review requirements for discretionary transportation investments to ensure consistency with state emission reduction goals. As a result, the State developed the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) which detailed recommendations for administering state funds related to transportation in a way that helps the State reach its goals related to climate change. It is anticipated that CAPTI recommendations will be updated in the coming year. Key actions to continue to inform the State's goals include:~~

- a) Oppose unfunded mandates for transportation agencies, transit providers, and local governments in providing transportation improvements and services;
- b) Oppose cost shifts or changes in responsibility for projects funded by the State to local transportation entities;
- c) Support efforts to treat the property tax of single-county transit districts the same as multi-county districts and correct other Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund inequities between like agencies;
- d) Support the constitutional protection of all transportation funding resources;
- e) Support protecting or expanding local decision-making in programming transportation funds;
- f) Oppose efforts to reduce local prerogative over regional program funds;
- g) Support efforts to involve county transportation commissions in the development and prioritization of State Highway Operation and Protection Program projects;
- h) Oppose redirecting or reclassifying transportation revenue sources, including earned interest, for anything other than their intended purposes;
- i) Support the implementation of federal transportation programs in an equitable manner that promotes traditional funding levels, programming roles, and local discretion in allocation decisions;



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- j) Oppose policies that significantly increase costs, threatening OCTA's ability to deliver projects and provide transit service;
- k) Support removing the barriers for funding transportation projects, including allowing local agencies to advance projects with local funds when state funds are unavailable due to budgetary reasons, and allowing regions to pool federal, state, and local funds in order to limit lengthy amendment processes and streamline project delivery time;
- l) Support flexibility in the application of "disadvantaged" and "low-income" communities to ensure that transportation funding flows to each region's most impacted areas, allowing OCTA to best meet the needs of its local communities;
- m) Support dedicated funding for transit operations, preferably through an ongoing formulaic approach;
- n) Support efforts **to reform SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) to improve the technical processes underpinning target setting and plan development, while also ensuring the reforms do not impact existing transportation funding distribution or eligibilities, or restrict the ability for transportation agencies to implement their projects or programs** ~~(Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) to be are eligible for transportation funding.~~;
- o) Protect existing transit operations and capital funding while monitoring the implementation of the accountability provisions associated with the funding and inform clarifying legislation as needed; (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**
- p) Oppose linking, reprioritizing, or aligning local and state transportation funding with policies that could significantly hinder a local agency's ability to deliver transportation programs and projects; (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**
- q) Support efforts to maintain the promises self-help counties have made to taxpayers in the implementation of local sales tax measures and oppose mandating specific uses of future sales tax revenues; (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**
- r) Oppose policies that change existing formula funding structures to redistribute funds in a way that would inhibit a local agency from delivering critical transportation projects and programs. (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**

**IV. FISCAL REFORMS & ISSUES**

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In recent years, the Legislature and Governor have worked collaboratively during the budget process to pass funding bills in a timely manner. Given that the State continues to report lower revenues than projected, uncertainties over future funding levels remain. Therefore, OCTA will:

- a) Monitor the study and development of alternative transportation funding proposals, including the State's road charge pilot program and ensure that efforts are made to address concerns related to equity, privacy, and public support of such proposals;
- b) Oppose levying new and/or increase in gasoline taxes or user fees, including revenue increases on fuel consumption categorized as charges, fees, revenue enhancements, or similar classifications. Consideration of such efforts shall occur when a direct nexus is determined to exist between revenues and transportation projects, and additional revenues are to be controlled by the county transportation commission;
- c) Oppose efforts to decrease the voter threshold requirement for local tax measures for transportation purposes;
- d) Oppose increases to administrative fees charged by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration on the collection of local sales tax measures;
- e) Support policies that ensure all users of the State's transportation system pay their "fair share" to maintain and improve the system;
- f) Support efforts to restore equitable generation and disbursement of sales tax revenues that support the Local Transportation Fund;
- g) Support the retention of existing and future local revenue sources;
- h) Support ~~an extension of~~ **reinstating** the state sales tax exemption for the purchase of zero-emission buses.

### **V. STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), substantially amended by SB 45 (Chapter 622, Statutes of 1997), is a programming document that establishes the funding priorities and project commitments for transportation capital improvements in California. SB 45 placed decision-making authority with the regions by providing project selection for 75 percent of the funding in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). This funding is distributed to counties based on an allocation formula. The remaining 25 percent of the funds are programmed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP). OCTA will

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seek to ensure that the regional focus of the program is preserved. Key provisions to be sought by OCTA include:

- a) Support maintaining the current STIP formula, which provides 75 percent of STIP funding to the locally-nominated RTIP and 25 percent to the ITIP;
- b) Support equitable allocations of transportation funding, such as the north/south formula distribution of county shares and ITIP allocations;
- ~~c) Support efforts to clarify that programming of current period county shares has priority over advancement of future county shares;~~
- ~~d) Support a formula-based guaranteed disbursement of the ITIP;~~
- c) Support efforts to allow a mode-neutral STIP;
- d) Support increased flexibility for the use of STIP funds to support alternative projects, including, but not limited to, transit and goods movement improvement projects.

### VI. TRANSIT PROGRAMS

OCTA will continue with its focus on providing safe, reliable, and efficient transit services in Orange County. **Although transit has received significant funding infusions over the past decade, uncertainty remains regarding the long-term sustainability of funding availability and eligibility.** ~~While state transit funding has recently become more stable, future demand increases due to environmental regulations and increased capital and operations costs will put further strain on existing resources.~~ OCTA will make every effort to minimize additional state obligations to transit operations which lack a sufficient and secure revenue source. To that end, OCTA will focus on the following:

- a) Advocate for a continued strong state role in providing funding for transit operations rather than shifting responsibility to local transportation entities. No additional requirements should be created for operation levels beyond existing capacity, unless agreed to by that entity or otherwise appropriately funded;
- b) Seek additional funding for paratransit operations and transit accessibility capital improvements that support persons with disabilities and senior citizens;
- c) Support efforts to encourage and incentivize the interoperability of transit and rail systems within California;
- d) Support limiting the liability of transit districts for the location of bus stops (*Bonanno v. Central Contra Costa Transit Authority*);

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- e) Support incentives for transit-oriented development projects (i.e., authorize extra credit toward housing element requirements for these developments), including incentives for development;
- f) Support funding and incentives to develop free- or reduced-fare transit programs without impacting existing programs or creating unfunded mandates;
- ~~g) Monitor and inform the creation of the Zero Emission Roadmap, which will work to identify actions needed to meet California's zero-emission transit goals with minimal displacement of existing workers;~~
- g) Encourage policies and guidance that incentivize public transit ridership.

### VII. RAIL PROGRAMS

Metrolink is Southern California's commuter rail system that links residential communities to employment and activity centers. Orange County is served by three Metrolink lines: the Orange County Line, the Inland Empire-Orange County Line, and the 91/Perris Valley Line. In support of these routes, OCTA owns 48 miles of rail right-of-way in Orange County on which Metrolink operates. ~~OCTA's rail capital budget supports improvements to the regional commuter rail system in Orange County, and under existing policy, OCTA is the primary construction lead on major capital improvements to the regional commuter rail system on its right-of-way.~~ **OCTA serves as the primary construction lead for major capital improvements on this right-of-way, supported by OCTA's rail capital budget.**

~~In addition to Metrolink services, Orange County is also served by the state-supported Pacific Surfliner intercity passenger rail service, traveling between San Luis Obispo and San Diego. The Pacific Surfliner is operated by Amtrak and managed by the LOSSAN Agency,~~ **provides passenger rail service between San Luis Obispo and San Diego.** OCTA has served as the managing agency for the LOSSAN Agency since 2013, providing administrative and management support.

**OCTA is also advancing the OC Streetcar project, the county's first modern streetcar line. Running between cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove, it will serve as a vital new connection to regional rail and bus services and is scheduled to begin revenue service in 2026.**

~~Other rail systems could also travel through Orange County at some point in the future, including additional intercity rail service. While the status and future of these programs is uncertain, OCTA will be watchful to ensure that funding for these rail systems does not impact other transportation funding sources. Key advocacy efforts will emphasize the following:~~

- a) Support policies that encourage commercial, commuter-based development around passenger rail corridors that includes permanent job creation;

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- b) Monitor and evaluate plans and progress of high-speed rail ~~and its funding~~;
- c) Support efforts to provide resources for safety improvements on the rail network in Southern California, including for the implementation, operation, and maintenance of Positive Train Control safety technology;
- d) Support studying the policies, funding options, and need for rail/highway grade separations, including any impact on existing state highway and transit funding sources;
- e) Support policies that facilitate the development and construction of needed infrastructure projects that support modernization, connectivity, and general system-wide improvements to California's rail network;
- ~~f) Monitor the implementation of the In-Use Locomotive Regulation to ensure the transition to zero-emission locomotives is technically feasible and provides adequate funding;~~
- f) Monitor and inform efforts seeking to make reforms to rail planning, governance structure, or operations** ~~Participate and engage in the working group created through SB 1098 (Chapter 777, Statutes of 2024).;~~
- g) Seek funding and other administrative solutions, such as permit streamlining, to support adaptation and resiliency efforts throughout the rail corridor; (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**
- h) Seek support, funding, and streamlining to manage and address sea level rise, beach erosion, landslides, and other environmental impacts along the rail corridor. (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**

**VIII. ROADS & HIGHWAYS**

OCTA's commitment to continuously improve mobility in Orange County is reflected through a dynamic involvement in such innovative highway endeavors as the ownership of the 91 Express Lanes and the use of design-build authority on the State Route 22 project and Interstate 405 Improvement Project. OCTA will continue to seek new and innovative ways to deliver road and highway projects to the residents of Orange County and, to that end, OCTA will focus on the following:

- a) Support new and existing alternative project delivery methods, such as design-build, public-private partnership authority, construction manager/general contractor authority, and progressive design build, through expanding mode and funding eligibility while also allowing the appropriate balance of partnership between the State and local agencies;

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- b) Support authorizing local agencies to advertise, award, and administer contracts for state highway projects;
- c) Oppose duplicative reporting mandates and efforts to impose additional requirements, beyond what is required in statute, on lead agencies awarding contracts using alternative project delivery mechanisms;
- d) Support streamlining of the Caltrans review process for projects without compromising environmental safeguards;
- e) Support policies that improve signal synchronization programs in order to facilitate street signal coordination, prioritization, and preemption, as well as encouraging the use of intelligent transportation system measures;
- f) Support management and integration of express lanes to promote consistent and seamless user experience;
- ~~g) Support the equitable enforcement of regulations governing transportation network companies;~~
- g) Support studying the development and safe operation of autonomous vehicles and related technologies;
- h) Support preserving local discretion and flexibility in the development of the congestion management program.

**IX. TOLLED & MANAGED LANES**

OCTA's commitment to continuously improve mobility in Orange County is reflected through a dynamic involvement in such innovative highway endeavors, including both the ownership of the 91 Express Lanes, a ten-mile toll facility on State Route 91, extending from State Route 55 to the Orange/Riverside County Line, and the 405 Express Lanes, which operates two lanes in each direction from State Route 73 to the Interstate 605.

Because many agencies are discussing the increased use of managed lane facilities, there remains a need to advocate for local flexibility and input. To ensure the continued success of the 91 Express Lanes, the 405 Express lanes, and for toll policy moving forward, OCTA will:

- a) Oppose efforts to divert revenues from toll facilities for purposes not directed by the responsible governing board;
- b) Support policies that allow OCTA, and its partners, to efficiently operate and maintain the 91 Express Lanes and the 405 Express Lanes;

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- c) Support efforts to preserve local flexibility in the administration of toll lanes and encourage the State to work with OCTA on operating policies to ensure seamless system operation;
- d) Oppose the construction or operation of toll facilities that are inconsistent with local long range transportation plans;
- e) Oppose the construction or operation of toll facilities that fail to respect existing local transportation projects and funding programs;
- f) Support customer privacy rights while maintaining OCTA's ability to effectively communicate with customers and operate the 91 and 405 Express Lanes;
- g) Support the use of innovative means to enhance toll agency enforcement efforts, ~~including ways to address toll violations due to protected plates;~~
- h) Support collaborative solutions **to high-occupancy vehicle lane degradation that protect local funding, have regional transportation agency support, and avoid transportation funding diversion;** ~~to address the degradation of HOV lanes that respect local transportation funding sources and programs, have the support of the relevant regional transportation planning agency, do not redirect existing local transportation funding sources, and analyze the effect of single-occupant, low-emission vehicles, including associated federal requirements triggered by their access allowance;~~
- i) Support efforts to improve the interoperability of the different toll systems across the State in order to ensure fair and efficient toll operations while affirming user privacy protections;
- j) Inform discussions related to revising toll evasion penalties, toll exemptions, and other changes to enforcement strategies and mechanisms in order to maintain local control, opposing efforts that will hinder the ability to meet congestion management and financing requirements;
- k) Support policies that protect the process prescribed in AB 194 (Chapter 687, Statutes of 2015), which authorizes regional transportation agencies to develop and operate toll facilities, and ensure it is maintained in its application on future toll facilities.

**X. GOODS MOVEMENT**

The twin Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are considered two of the nation's busiest ports, vital to California's economy and the surrounding region because goods are shipped to and through the surrounding counties. While the State's goods movement system is the most robust in the nation, it is continually challenged by competing goods movement systems in other states. In order to continue to compete and engage in the global marketplace, California must continue to enhance its goods movement system,

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while at the same time be cognizant of taking the necessary actions to mitigate any negative impacts to local communities. Key positions include:

- a) Support improvements to facilitate the movement of intrastate, interstate, and international trade beneficial to the State and Orange County's economy;
- b) Support policies that will aid in the development, approval, and construction of projects to expand goods movement capacity and reduce congestion;
- c) Ensure that control of goods movement infrastructure projects and funding is retained at the local level;
- d) Seek mitigation for the impacts of goods movement on local communities;
- e) Pursue ongoing, stable sources of funding for goods movement infrastructure;
- f) Support additional funding and policy reforms to aid in expediting transportation projects to address supply chain concerns;
- g) Ensure any effort to establish a container fee program dedicates funding to projects that mitigate the impact port activity may have on local communities, informed by input from local and regional agencies.

**XI. ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Active transportation projects and programs, which encourage greater mobility through walking and bicycling, have grown in popularity due to the environmental, health, and cost savings benefits. OCTA continues to study, plan, and fund active transportation projects and programs as part of its mission to provide Orange County with an efficient and multi-modal transportation system. Key positions include:

- a) Support policies to increase the visibility and safety of users engaged in active transportation;
- b) Support creative use of paths, roads, flood channels, and abandoned rail lines using existing established rights-of-way to promote bicycles trails and pedestrian paths, in coordination with any local agency with jurisdiction over those properties;
- c) Support funding and programs or policies that encourage the safe operation of an integrated multimodal system, which includes the interaction between roadways, rail lines, bikeways, and pedestrian ways, and the users of those facilities;
- d) Support streamlined active transportation funding programs;
- e) Seek funding and support policies and projects to increase safety requirements related to the utilization of electric bicycles.



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**XII. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

In recent years, there have been many efforts to reorganize or restructure transportation programs and local agency responsibilities. OCTA will continue to monitor policies that would significantly affect the way in which it operates, with a focus on maintaining local control and continued partnerships in order to advocate for the following principles:

- a) Support preserving the role of county transportation commissions, as consistent with existing law, in the administration of transportation programs;
- b) Oppose proposals that reduce the rights and responsibilities of county transportation commissions in planning, funding, and delivering transportation programs;
- c) Oppose policies that unnecessarily subject projects to additional reviews and project selection approvals that could adversely affect delivery timelines and processes;
- d) Support partnerships with alternative mobility providers that allow for adequate information sharing while also respecting the planning efforts of local agencies;
- e) Support efforts to increase the flexibility of funds used for motorist service programs.

**XIII. EMPLOYMENT ISSUES**

As a public agency and one of the largest employers in Orange County, OCTA balances its responsibility to the community and the taxpayers to provide safe, reliable, cost-effective service with its responsibility of being a reasonable, responsive employer. Key advocacy positions include:

- a) Oppose efforts to impose state labor laws on currently exempt public agencies;
- b) Oppose policies that circumvent the collective bargaining process;
- c) Oppose policies adversely affecting OCTA's ability to efficiently and effectively deal with labor relations, employee rights, benefits, including pension benefits, the California Family Rights Act, and working conditions, including health, safety, and ergonomic standards for the workplace;
- d) Support efforts to reform and resolve inconsistencies in the workers' compensation and unemployment insurance systems, and labor law requirements that maintain protection for employees and allow businesses to operate efficiently;
- e) Support workforce development policies that facilitate a more efficient talent acquisition process;

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- f) Support policies that encourage ridesharing, teleworking, vanpool, and related congestion relief programs for Orange County commuters.

**XIV. TRANSPORTATION SECURITY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

As natural and man-made disasters continue to threaten transportation systems around the world, significant improvements have been, and continue to be, carried out to enhance the safety, security, and resilience of transportation infrastructure in the United States. As Orange County's bus provider and a Metrolink partner, OCTA understands the importance of ensuring the safety and security of our transportation network and protecting our customers. OCTA maintains a partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Department to provide OCTA Transit Police Services for the bus and train systems in Orange County and continues to be actively involved in a variety of state and regional preparedness exercises in support of first responders. The development of a new Transit Security and Operations Center is also underway to enhance security efforts and further the resiliency of the Orange County transit system.

Additional safety and security measures require additional financial resources. Consequently, OCTA's advocacy positions will highlight:

- a) Support state homeland security and emergency preparedness funding and grant programs to local transportation agencies to alleviate financial burden placed on local entities;
- b) Support policies that balance retention mandates of video surveillance records to reflect current reasonable technological and fiscal capabilities;
- c) Support technological advances in order to increase the safety of public transportation passengers and operators;
- d) Support policies that aim to enhance transit services and the overall safety and security of transit riders, public transit employees, and on-road vehicles while avoiding undue burden on transportation agencies to implement unfunded safety measures.

**XV. ADMINISTRATION/GENERAL**

General administrative issues arise every session that could impact OCTA's ability to operate efficiently. Key positions include:

- a) Oppose policies adversely affecting OCTA's ability to efficiently and effectively contract for goods and services, conduct business of the agency, and limit or transfer the risk of liability;
- b) Support efforts to provide greater protection of OCTA's computer and information security systems;

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- c) Support establishing reasonable liability for non-economic damages in any action for personal injury, property damage, or wrongful death brought against a public entity based on principles of comparative fault;
- d) Support consistent campaign contribution limits as applied to both elected and appointed bodies;
- e) Monitor proposed changes related to the Ralph M. Brown Act, and other statutes governing public meetings, including the expanded use of technology;
- f) Support equitable policies to ensure that the inclusive public engagement, planning, and delivery of mobility improvements best serve all residents of Orange County;
- g) Oppose policies that create undue burden on transportation procurement practices or restrict ability to maintain local governing board award authority;
- h) Oppose efforts that create duplicative reporting requirements.

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With over three million residents, Orange County is the third most populous county in California and the sixth most populous county in the nation. Orange County is one of the most densely populated areas in the country and is served by one of the nation's busiest transit systems. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) serves as the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in Orange County. OCTA manages a multimodal transportation system, overseeing a range of services including buses, Metrolink commuter rail, paratransit, and freeway improvements, as well as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, ensuring diverse mobility options for residents and visitors.

The 2025-26 Federal Legislative Platform serves as a framework document to guide OCTA's statutory, regulatory, and administrative goals and objectives in Washington, D.C. The Key Policy Issues section offers guidance on the policy issues that will likely be the focus of the 119th Congress, and the later sections present guiding policy statements for the other major issues that may arise. Positions on individual items not directly addressed in this document will be brought to the OCTA Board of Directors for formal action.

**Key Policy Issues in the 119th Congress**

A number of significant transportation issues will be discussed in the 119th Congress. OCTA will focus its advocacy efforts on the following principles:

- a) Support transportation funding investments and policy flexibilities that allow OCTA to provide essential, multimodal mobility improvements, and services in order to meet the mobility needs of Orange County;
- b) Request annual appropriations at least consistent with authorized funding levels and advanced appropriations provided in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) are maintained in order to meet our county's critical infrastructure needs;
- c) Oppose efforts to redirect, reduce, or eliminate existing transportation funding programs, ensuring funding OCTA receives from IIJA is maintained;
- d) Oppose rescissions or other arbitrary funding cuts to transportation programs;
- e) Ensure that Highway Trust Fund (HTF) revenues continue to be used for transit expenditures for capital and operations, including any new revenue;
- f) Ensure that air quality determinations and policies do not constrain funding availability or otherwise undermine OCTA's ability to deliver transportation improvements;
- g) Ensure that Orange County is eligible for funding provided to meet air quality standards for the South Coast Air Basin and oppose efforts that would impact the use of transportation funding;

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- h) Seek support for adaptation and resiliency efforts related to the environment for critical transportation infrastructure;
- i) Encourage federal leadership, in conjunction with state and local collaboration, in developing long-term studies related to potential track relocation in the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor;
- j) Support the authority to secure direct funding for Orange County projects;
- k) Support efforts to preserve local flexibility in the administration of toll lanes and use of toll revenues;
- l) Support efforts to ensure local control is maintained in policy decisions made by local transportation agency boards in delivering, funding, and operating transportation programs and projects;
- m) Seek to ensure OCTA's projects and programs related to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles are eligible for any related funding assistance or incentives, project delivery tools, and/or regulatory relief.

**I. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

Current federal law does not require the appropriation of authorized HTF dollars. Therefore, the annual appropriations process will continue to play an important role in funding OCTA's programs and projects. OCTA will continue to advocate for the largest possible amount and share of appropriations funding to ensure adequate resources to meet the infrastructure needs of Orange County.

OCTA will continue to aggressively pursue discretionary funding for transportation projects within the statutory and regulatory requirements of funding programs and the current funding status of OCTA's capital program. Other funding priorities for OCTA include:

- a) Support sustainable transportation funding levels that allow OCTA to continue to improve mobility in and around Orange County;
- b) Support funding for the Capital Investment Grants program to allow for an expansion of bus and rail transit projects;
- c) Ensure that federal funding is available for capital purposes to the extent not needed for direct operating costs;
- d) Support funding, with increased flexibility, for safety and security grant programs in order to protect Orange County's transportation system, including

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highways, transit operations and facilities, rail lines, and related software systems;

- e) Support funding for commuter and intercity passenger rail corridors in Orange County;
- f) Support funding to develop training information programs to instruct on the use of new technology and address workforce needs at transit and transportation agencies;
- g) Advocate for Inflation Reduction Act funding to support transit and transportation programs;
- h) Seek responsible revenue solutions to fund future transportation projects without adversely affecting an agency's ability to provide services;
- i) Advocate for full funding of transportation programs without placing new limitations or conditions on the distribution of funds that would impede the delivery of infrastructure projects.

**II. SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION**

The IIJA (Pub. L. No. 1147-58) authorized over \$567 billion over five years for programs. With the IIJA as law, OCTA has focused much of its advocacy efforts on implementation efforts that allow state and local government agencies to move forward with a federal partner on critical transportation projects. Now with the IIJA set to expire on September 30, 2026, OCTA will dually prioritize implementation while also advocating for its priorities related to enacting long-term reauthorization legislation. In 2025, the OCTA Board approved a set of guiding principles to inform reauthorization discussions, which are included in the appendix. Those notwithstanding, OCTA will advocate for the following policies:

- a) Support the greatest possible share of funding for California and OCTA, focusing on increasing formula funds;
- b) Support increased flexibility in transportation funding programs to promote greater local decision-making in the planning process;
- c) Ensure a long-term partnership with the federal government that helps OCTA address transit capital and operating revenue needs;
- d) Oppose unfunded federal mandates that further reduce the resources of state and local transportation agencies;
- e) Oppose policies that undermine or limit local control over land use decisions;

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- f) Ensure fair suballocations of funding to account for additional costs, increased administrative responsibilities, and the potential for increased liabilities to which the agency may be subject;
- g) Oppose limitations or other arbitrary conditions on discretionary transportation grant programs that prevent an equitable distribution of transportation resources;
- h) Support policies that encourage ridesharing, teleworking, vanpool and related congestion relief programs for Orange County commuters;
- i) Oppose any effort to further reduce transportation funding for OCTA or California, advocating for a fair and equitable share;
- k) Support efforts to reinstate the state suballocation process regarding the distribution of federal formula funding;
- l) Support funding to address the current vulnerabilities on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor to prevent future service disruptions;

**III. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING**

In the 119th Congress, OCTA will continue to support the implementation of the IIJA while finding ways to complement the programs and provisions authorized under federal law. During this time, OCTA will advocate for the following issues:

- a) Pursue continued eligibility of Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program funding for operating expenses associated with any fixed-guideway or eligible bus projects;
- b) Support expanded use of alternative delivery methods for federally-funded transportation projects;
- c) Support expedited review and payments to local agencies and their contractors for project development, right-of-way acquisition, and construction activities;
- d) Support efforts to authorize, fund, and streamline the delivery of bicycle and pedestrian projects in Orange County;
- e) Advocate for policies to encourage, when possible, a complete streets approach to multimodal project planning in order to expedite project delivery;
- f) Support flexibility and increased local decision-making authority regarding the operation of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in order to reduce or eliminate the unintended consequences resulting from Section 166 of the Federal Highway Act or any similar policy regulating degradation of HOV lanes;

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- g) Encourage cooperation between local, state, and federal partners to mitigate or eliminate any policy that places burdensome requirements on operators related to degradation of facilities and performance;
- h) Support streamlining and greater flexibility of Federal Buy America requirements including increased clarification on market availability and technical feasibility of the Build America, Buy America Act requirements created in the IIJA to prevent any unintended disruption to projects and programs;
- i) Support efforts to clarify roles and responsibilities related to toll enforcement policies to allow for interoperability between toll facilities while affirming user privacy;
- j) Encourage policies on the planning, delivery, and operation of tolling projects that are aligned with the flexibility provided in California State law;
- k) Support inclusive public engagement, planning, and delivery of mobility improvements that best serve all the residents of Orange County;
- l) Support a collaborative approach to understanding the capital infrastructure and operational needs of local and state transportation agencies, as well as private sector partners, in the testing, development, demonstration, deployment, and operation of autonomous and connected vehicle technologies, while encouraging policies that ensure their safe implementation.

**IV. FISCAL REFORMS & ISSUES**

Transportation infrastructure projects are critical drivers in job creation and business development. Legislative and regulatory proposals can impact the ability of transportation agencies to deliver these infrastructure projects. Expediting project delivery serves as a key tool for driving economic growth and stimulating activity. Regarding these developments, OCTA will:

- a) Oppose policies that would divert revenues generated by locally-approved sales taxes to programs and projects that are not included in the sales tax ordinance;
- b) Support removing barriers to the release of transportation funding, including allowing local agencies to advance projects with local funds in order to limit lengthy processes that delay project delivery;
- c) Support expansion, streamlining, and further development of innovative project finance methods, including the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan program;



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- d) Support fiscally-sound proposals to adequately address the HTF's structural deficit, including initiatives to address the impact of low- and zero-emission vehicles on transportation funding;
- e) Support tax policies that reduce costs or provide additional flexibility in OCTA's financial and operational activities;
- f) Support a stable source of proposed future revenues that provides adequate resources for future transportation needs;
- g) Oppose subjecting public transportation providers to gas tax liability or other fees that increase operating costs;
- h) Support efforts to ensure that all users of the national transportation system pay their "fair share" to maintain and improve the system;
- i) Support additional funding and regulatory flexibility to facilitate the use of alternative mobility providers;
- j) Support regulatory efforts that would allow for joint procurement processes.

**V. RAIL PROGRAMS**

Metrolink is Southern California's commuter rail system that links residential communities to employment and activity centers. Orange County is served by three Metrolink lines: the Orange County Line, the Inland Empire-Orange County Line, and the 91/Perris Valley Line. In support of these routes, OCTA owns 48 miles of rail right-of-way in Orange County on which Metrolink operates. OCTA serves as the primary construction lead for major capital improvements on this right-of-way, supported by OCTA's rail capital budget.

In addition, the state-supported Pacific Surfliner intercity passenger rail service, operated by Amtrak and managed by the LOSSAN Agency, provides passenger rail service between San Luis Obispo and San Diego. OCTA has served as the managing agency for the LOSSAN Agency since 2013, providing administrative and management support.

OCTA is also advancing the OC Streetcar Project, the county's first modern streetcar line. Running between the cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove, it will serve as a vital new connection to regional rail and bus services and is scheduled to begin revenue service in 2026.

While the status and future of these programs is uncertain, OCTA will be watchful to ensure that funding for these rail systems does not impact other transportation funding sources. Key advocacy efforts will emphasize the following:

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- a) Support funding for rail safety programs, including funding for operation and maintenance of Positive Train Control (PTC) safety technology and other safety enhancements;
- b) Support efforts to ensure that any alternative safety technology is interoperable with, and contains the same safety benefits as, the PTC system implemented on passenger rail corridors in Southern California;
- c) Support the availability of technical resources, such as wireless spectrum, to fully implement rail safety technology;
- d) Oppose increasing the current rail passenger liability cap and work with regional partners to ensure that any changes to the cap take into account the limited resources of passenger rail providers;
- e) Seek funding and other solutions, such as permit streamlining, to support adaptation and resiliency efforts throughout the rail corridor;
- f) Seek support, funding, and project streamlining to manage and address sea level rise, beach erosion, landslides, and other environmental impacts along the rail corridor.

**VI. TRANSIT PROGRAMS**

OCTA will continue with its focus on providing safe, reliable, and efficient transit services in Orange County. Federal transit funding is provided on both a formula and competitive basis. Discretionary funding under the IIJA has been highly competitive for transit programs. As future demand for transit funding increases due to environmental regulations and increased capital and operations costs put further strain on existing resources, creating more opportunities for predictable transit funding will continue to be a priority for OCTA. Specifically, OCTA will focus on the following:

- a) Encourage policies and guidance that incentivize public transit ridership;
- b) Support funding and incentives to develop free- or reduced-fare transit programs without impacting existing programs or creating unfunded mandates;
- c) Monitor policies regarding zero-emission transit fuels to ensure they remain technology neutral;
- d) Support reinstating and expanding of tax incentives for using compressed natural gas, hydrogen, and other zero-emission transit fuels;
- e) Support efforts to create a more competitive marketplace for transit buses to help drive down costs and strengthen the supply chain.

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**VII. GOODS MOVEMENT**

The twin Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are considered two of the nation's busiest ports. The maintenance, improvement, and modernization of our region's goods movement infrastructure must continue to be a national priority if our region is to remain competitive with the rest of the world and responsive to the consumer needs of Southern California. Even though the IIJA continued to provide funding for goods movement projects and programs, revenue streams remain insufficient to fund the projects needed to offset the costs of moving these goods considering the many years of underinvestment. OCTA's advocacy efforts regarding goods movement will continue to emphasize the following:

- a) Pursue new, stable, dedicated, and secure sources of funding for goods movement infrastructure;
- b) Ensure that the benefits of newly-funded projects also take into account mitigation factors to impacted communities;
- c) Support a collaborative approach, including engaging with private sector partners, in developing and implementing the needed sustainable goods movement infrastructure programs and projects;
- d) Support regionally significant grade separation projects that improve the flow of goods and people throughout Southern California;
- e) Support local control of goods movement infrastructure and freight mobility projects;
- f) Support additional funding and policy reforms to aid in expediting transportation projects to address supply chain concerns;
- g) Ensure eligibility for funding and programs is available to all transportation modes that benefit regional goods movement.

**VIII. TRANSPORTATION SECURITY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

OCTA continues cooperative efforts with neighboring transit agencies, Urban Area Security Initiative partners, state and federal homeland security and emergency preparedness grant partners, and local jurisdictions to enhance the security and resiliency of Orange County's transportation system. OCTA will pursue the following priorities to ensure that the agency's safety, security, and emergency preparedness needs are met:

- a) Support increased funding for training, increased security, and emergency preparedness improvements with adequate flexibility to ensure that local

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agencies can effectively use the resources to also support all modes of transportation;

- b) Support a funding distribution that considers all risk threats, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters, as estimated by the Department of Homeland Security, in cooperation with state and local officials;
- c) Support programs that facilitate cooperation with security and emergency preparedness officials to refine and improve information exchange protocols, emergency preparedness systems, and regional data coordination;
- d) Support efforts to provide funding incentives and policy flexibility to facilitate programs to provide safe working conditions for coach operators and transit personnel;
- e) Support efforts to provide sufficient funding for transit agencies to implement physical security, mandated employee screenings, and cybersecurity directives while also incorporating transit agency technical expertise in developing regulatory guidelines and procedures.

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Federal environmental policies affecting OCTA include the National Environmental Protection Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Therefore, policies to further develop environmental and energy-efficient goals will likely have an impact on OCTA's operations. With such proposals in mind, OCTA will:

- a) Seek funding to comply with state and local environmental standards;
- b) Support expedited review for project development, right-of-way acquisition, and construction activities without impairing substantive environmental requirements;
- c) Ensure adequate funding and flexibility in the application of resiliency, natural infrastructure, or other climate-related policies to the delivery of mobility improvements, as opposed to mandates that would constrain transportation resources;
- d) Support efforts related to separate and distinct sand nourishment permits.

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**X. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

OCTA must also monitor several other administrative requirements, including new and expanded regulatory definitions that may affect the agency's operations. As such, OCTA will:

- a) Support expedited and improved federal reporting and monitoring requirements to ensure efficiency and usefulness of data while also eliminating redundant state and federal requirements;
- b) Oppose regulatory proposals that unreasonably subject OCTA to burdensome bureaucratic requirements or increased operational costs, making it harder to deliver projects and improve mobility in Orange County;
- c) Oppose policies adversely affecting the agency's ability to effectively address labor relations, employee rights, benefits, and working conditions, such as health, safety, and ergonomic standards;
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**APPENDIX**



**Principles for Surface Transportation Reauthorization Legislation**

1. Develop a fiscally sound, innovative solution to the Highway Trust Fund's structural revenue deficit that ensures long-term sustainability for both highway and transit funding. The solution should be based on a fair-share, user-pays approach that ensures all users contribute to the maintenance and improvement of transportation infrastructure. It should also maintain the historical commitment to transit funding from the Highway Trust Fund, reduce volatility in transportation resources, and support forward-looking strategies.
2. Protect and preserve the LOSSAN Rail Corridor as a critical, interregional transportation asset vital to national defense, goods movement, economic vitality, and regional mobility. Secure dedicated funding and permit streamlining to quickly address infrastructure vulnerabilities, ensuring the corridor remains resilient against disruptions that could impact military readiness, supply chain efficiency, and passenger rail connectivity along one of the nation's most strategically significant rail corridors.
3. Prioritize the use of formula funding with sufficient flexibility to respect the unique nature of regional transportation agencies in the Southern California Association of Governments region.
4. Support reinstating the suballocation process to county transportation commissions to ensure federal formula funds are proportionally distributed. Restoring this process will empower local and regional agencies to direct investments where they are most needed, ultimately leading to more efficient use of funds, project delivery, and greater overall impact on transportation infrastructure and mobility.
5. Ensure that funding new infrastructure programs do not replace or adversely affect the delivery of transportation funding that has been traditionally used by the Orange County Transportation Authority.
6. Support maintaining dedicated federal transit funding, including the historic 80-20 highway-transit funding split, and ensuring transit agencies have the flexibility needed to effectively operate, maintain, and improve services.
7. Prevent impediments to infrastructure investments and funding because of issues beyond an agency's control, such as air quality attainment.

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8. Expedite and improve the efficiency of environmental reviews for infrastructure projects by streamlining requirements, reducing redundancies, and supporting reciprocity between the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, while providing additional funding to accelerate state and federal review processes. Additionally, support adjusting federalization thresholds to prevent unnecessary oversight of smaller projects and improve efficiency, expanded use of exemptions for various classes of projects, and use of programmatic reviews.
9. Improve the federal grant process by streamlining Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), standardizing application requirements, and enhancing predictability to reduce administrative burdens and accelerate funding delivery. Establish merit-based criteria, prioritize efficiency and economic development, introduce structured annual grant cycles, and implement a fast-track approval process for critical project components. Additionally, allow abridged resubmissions for previously unsuccessful applications and ensure NOFOs are concise and accessible to agencies with limited resources. Avoid imposing overly complex reporting requirements that create unnecessary compliance burdens.
10. Promote a transparent and fair discretionary grant process that ensures local control and balanced regional distribution, free from arbitrary limits, unreasonable matching requirements, or other policies that would discourage federal funding from flowing to Orange County.
11. Provide stable, long-term funding and policy support for passenger and freight rail to enhance federal investment in key rail corridors, streamline project delivery, improve safety, and strengthen rail's role in goods movement and national defense.
12. Advocate for strategic federal investment in transportation infrastructure and streamlined project delivery to support Orange County's role in the successful execution of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. Ensure that federal policies facilitate permitting efficiency, workforce readiness, and partnerships that enhance Orange County's transportation network and global competitiveness while minimizing disruptions to daily operations
13. Support fair and flexible tolling policies based on user-pay principles. Any federal oversight should respect regional decision-making, and the unique transportation needs of differing regions. Toll revenues should continue to be prioritized for debt service, a reasonable return on private investment, and the costs related to operation and maintenance of the facility, while also authorizing

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excess revenues to be used for transportation investments, consistent with state laws.

14. Support the preservation of tax-exempt financing for surface transportation projects, ensuring public agencies retain the ability to issue and refinance tax-exempt debt.



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With over three million residents, Orange County is the third most populous county in California and the sixth most populous county in the nation. Orange County is one of the most densely populated areas in the country and is served by one of the nation's busiest transit systems. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) serves as the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in Orange County. OCTA manages a multimodal transportation system, overseeing a range of services including buses, Metrolink commuter rail, paratransit, and freeway improvements, as well as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, ensuring diverse mobility options for residents and visitors.

The 2025-26 Federal Legislative Platform serves as a framework document to guide OCTA's statutory, regulatory, and administrative goals and objectives in Washington, D.C. The Key Policy Issues section offers guidance on the policy issues that will likely be the focus of the 119th Congress, and the later sections present guiding policy statements for the other major issues that may arise. Positions on individual items not directly addressed in this document will be brought to the OCTA Board of Directors for formal action.

### **Key Policy Issues in the 119th Congress**

A number of significant transportation issues will be discussed in the 119th Congress. OCTA will focus its advocacy efforts on the following principles:

- a) Support transportation funding investments and policy flexibilities that allow OCTA to provide essential, multimodal mobility improvements, and services in order to meet the mobility needs of Orange County;
- b) Request annual appropriations at least consistent with authorized funding levels and advanced appropriations provided in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) are maintained in order to meet our county's critical infrastructure needs;
- c) Oppose efforts to redirect, reduce, or eliminate existing transportation funding programs, ensuring funding OCTA receives from IIJA ~~and the Inflation Reduction Act~~ is maintained;
- d) Oppose rescissions or other arbitrary funding cuts to transportation programs;
- ~~e) Advocate for full funding of transportation programs without placing new limitations or conditions on the distribution of funds that would impede the delivery of infrastructure projects;~~ **(Moved to Transportation Funding Section)**
- e) Ensure that Highway Trust Fund (HTF) revenues continue to be used for transit expenditures for capital and operations, **including any new revenue**;

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- f) Ensure that air quality determinations and policies do not constrain funding availability or otherwise undermine OCTA's ability to deliver transportation improvements;
- g) Ensure that Orange County is eligible for funding provided to meet air quality standards for the South Coast Air Basin and oppose efforts that would impact the use of transportation funding;
- h) Seek support for adaptation and resiliency efforts related to the environment for critical transportation infrastructure;
- ~~j) Seek funding and other solutions, such as permit streamlining, to support adaptation and resiliency efforts throughout the rail corridor; (Moved to Rail Programs Section)~~
- ~~k) Seek support, funding, and project streamlining to manage and address sea level rise, beach erosion, landslides, and other environmental impacts along the rail corridor; (Moved to Rail Programs Section)~~
- i) Encourage federal leadership, in conjunction with state and local collaboration, in developing long-term studies related to potential track relocation in the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor;
- j) Support the authority to secure direct funding for Orange County projects;
- k) Support efforts to preserve local flexibility in the administration of toll lanes and use of toll revenues;
- l) Support efforts to ensure local control is maintained in policy decisions made by local transportation agency boards in delivering, funding, and operating transportation programs and projects;
- m) Seek to ensure OCTA's projects and programs related to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles are eligible for any related funding assistance or incentives, project delivery tools, and/or regulatory relief.

**I. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

Current federal law does not require the appropriation of authorized HTF dollars. Therefore, the annual appropriations process will continue to play an important role in funding OCTA's programs and projects. OCTA will continue to advocate for the largest possible amount and share of appropriations funding to ensure adequate resources to meet the infrastructure needs of Orange County.

OCTA will continue to aggressively pursue discretionary funding for transportation projects within the statutory and regulatory requirements of funding programs and the

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current funding status of OCTA's capital program. Other funding priorities for OCTA include:

- a) Support sustainable transportation funding levels that allow OCTA to continue to improve mobility in and around Orange County;
- b) Support funding for the Capital Investment Grants program to allow for an expansion of bus and rail transit projects;
- c) Ensure that federal funding is available for capital purposes to the extent not needed for direct operating costs;
- d) Support funding, with increased flexibility, for safety and security grant programs in order to protect Orange County's transportation system, including highways, transit operations and facilities, rail lines, and related software systems;
- e) Support funding for commuter and intercity passenger rail corridors in Orange County;
- f) Support funding to develop training information programs to instruct on the use of new technology and address workforce needs at transit and transportation agencies;
- g) ~~Advocate to ensure for transit and transportation agencies to be eligible for transportation funding programs under the~~ for Inflation Reduction Act funding ~~to supports~~ transit and transportation programs;
- h) Seek responsible revenue solutions to fund future transportation projects without adversely affecting an agency's ability to provide services;
- i) **Advocate for full funding of transportation programs without placing new limitations or conditions on the distribution of funds that would impede the delivery of infrastructure projects. (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**

## **II. SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION**

The IIJA (Pub. L. No. 1147-58) authorized over \$567 billion over five years for programs. With the IIJA as law, OCTA has focused much of its advocacy efforts on implementation efforts that allow state and local government agencies to move forward with a federal partner on critical transportation projects. Now with the IIJA set to expire on September 30, 2026, OCTA will dually prioritize implementation while also advocating for its priorities related to enacting long-term reauthorization legislation. **In 2025, the OCTA Board approved a set of guiding principles to inform**

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**reauthorization discussions, which are included in the appendix. Those notwithstanding, As such** OCTA will advocate for the following policies:

- a) Support the greatest possible share of funding for California and OCTA, focusing on increasing formula funds;
- b) Support increased flexibility in transportation funding programs to promote greater local decision-making in the planning process;
- c) Ensure a long-term partnership with the federal government that helps OCTA address transit capital and operating revenue needs;
- d) Oppose unfunded federal mandates that further reduce the resources of state and local transportation agencies;
- e) Oppose policies that undermine or limit local control over land use decisions;
- f) Ensure fair suballocations of funding to account for additional costs, increased administrative responsibilities, and the potential for increased liabilities to which the agency may be subject;
- g) Oppose limitations or other arbitrary conditions on discretionary transportation grant programs that prevent an equitable distribution of transportation resources;
- h) Support policies that encourage ridesharing, teleworking, vanpool and related congestion relief programs for Orange County commuters;
- i) Oppose any effort to further reduce transportation funding for OCTA or California, advocating for a fair and equitable share;
- k) Support efforts to reinstate the state suballocation process regarding the distribution of federal formula funding;
- l) Support funding to address the current ~~climate-related~~ vulnerabilities on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor to prevent future service disruptions;

**III. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING**

In the 119th Congress, OCTA will continue to support the implementation of the IIJA while finding ways to complement the programs and provisions authorized under federal law. During this time, OCTA will advocate for the following issues:

- a) Pursue continued eligibility of Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program funding for operating expenses associated with any fixed-guideway or eligible bus projects;

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- b) Support expanded use of alternative delivery methods for federally-funded transportation projects;
- c) Support expedited review and payments to local agencies and their contractors for project development, right-of-way acquisition, and construction activities;
- d) Support efforts to authorize, fund, and streamline the delivery of bicycle and pedestrian projects in Orange County;
- e) Advocate for policies to encourage, when possible, a complete streets approach to multimodal project planning in order to expedite project delivery;
- f) Support flexibility and increased local decision-making authority regarding the operation of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in order to reduce or eliminate the unintended consequences resulting from Section 166 of the Federal Highway Act or any similar policy regulating degradation of HOV lanes;
- g) Encourage cooperation between local, state, and federal partners to mitigate or eliminate any policy that places burdensome requirements on operators related to degradation of facilities and performance;
- h) Support streamlining and greater flexibility of Federal Buy America requirements including increased clarification on market availability and technical feasibility of the Build America, Buy America Act requirements created in the IIJA to prevent any unintended disruption to projects and programs;
- i) Support efforts to clarify roles and responsibilities related to toll enforcement policies to allow for interoperability between toll facilities while affirming user privacy;
- j) Encourage policies on the planning, delivery, and operation of tolling projects that are aligned with the flexibility provided in California State law;
- k) Support ~~equitable policies to ensure that~~ inclusive public engagement, planning, and delivery of mobility improvements **that** best serves all the residents of Orange County;
- l) Support a collaborative approach to understanding the capital infrastructure and operational needs of local and state transportation agencies, as well as private sector partners, in the testing, development, demonstration, deployment, and operation of autonomous and connected vehicle technologies, while encouraging policies that ensure their safe implementation.

**IV. FISCAL REFORMS & ISSUES**

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Transportation infrastructure projects are critical drivers in job creation and business development. Legislative and regulatory proposals can impact the ability of transportation agencies to deliver these infrastructure projects. Expediting project delivery serves as a key tool for driving economic growth and stimulating activity. Regarding these developments, OCTA will:

- a) Oppose policies that would divert revenues generated by locally-approved sales taxes to programs and projects that are not included in the sales tax ordinance;
- b) Support removing barriers to the release of transportation funding, including allowing local agencies to advance projects with local funds in order to limit lengthy processes that delay project delivery;
- c) Support expansion, streamlining, and further development of innovative project finance methods, including the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan program;
- d) Support fiscally-sound proposals to adequately address the HTF's structural deficit, including initiatives to address the impact of low- and zero-emission vehicles on transportation funding;
- e) Support tax policies that reduce costs or provide additional flexibility in OCTA's financial and operational activities;
- f) Support a stable source of proposed future revenues that provides adequate resources for future transportation needs;
- g) Oppose subjecting public transportation providers to gas tax liability or other fees that increase operating costs;
- h) Support efforts to ensure that all users of the national transportation system pay their "fair share" to maintain and improve the system;
- i) Support additional funding and regulatory flexibility to facilitate the use of alternative mobility providers;
- j) Support regulatory efforts that would allow for joint procurement processes.

### **V. RAIL PROGRAMS**

Metrolink is Southern California's commuter rail system that links residential communities to employment and activity centers. Orange County is served by three Metrolink lines: the Orange County Line, the Inland Empire-Orange County Line, and the 91/Perris Valley Line. In support of these routes, OCTA owns 48 miles of rail right-of-way in Orange County on which Metrolink operates. ~~OCTA's rail capital~~

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~~budget supports improvements to the regional commuter rail system in Orange County, and under existing policy, OCTA is the primary construction lead on major capital improvements to the regional commuter rail system on its right-of-way. OCTA~~ **serves as the primary construction lead for major capital improvements on this right-of-way, supported by OCTA's rail capital budget.**

~~In addition to Metrolink services, Orange County is also served by the state-supported Pacific Surfliner intercity passenger rail service, traveling between San Luis Obispo and San Diego. The Pacific Surfliner is operated by Amtrak and managed by the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Agency (LOSSAN) Agency, provides~~ **passenger rail service between San Luis Obispo and San Diego.** OCTA has served as the managing agency for the LOSSAN Agency since 2013, providing administrative and management support.

**OCTA is also advancing the OC Streetcar Project, the county's first modern streetcar line. Running between the cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove, it will serve as a vital new connection to regional rail and bus services and is scheduled to begin revenue service in 2026.**

~~Other rail systems could also travel through Orange County at some point in the future, including additional intercity rail service. While the status and future of these programs is uncertain, OCTA will be watchful to ensure that funding for these rail systems does not impact other transportation funding sources. Key advocacy efforts will emphasize the following:~~

- a) Support funding for rail safety programs, including funding for operation and maintenance of Positive Train Control (PTC) safety technology and other safety enhancements;
- b) Support efforts to ensure that any alternative safety technology is interoperable with, and contains the same safety benefits as, the PTC system implemented on passenger rail corridors in Southern California;
- c) Support the availability of technical resources, such as wireless spectrum, to fully implement rail safety technology;
- d) Oppose increasing the current rail passenger liability cap and work with regional partners to ensure that any changes to the cap take into account the limited resources of passenger rail providers;
- e) **Seek funding and other solutions, such as permit streamlining, to support adaptation and resiliency efforts throughout the rail corridor; (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**

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- f) **Seek support, funding, and project streamlining to manage and address sea level rise, beach erosion, landslides, and other environmental impacts along the rail corridor. (Moved from Key Policy Issues Section)**
- e) ~~Monitor the ongoing waiver process in relation to implementing the California Air Resources Board's In-Use Locomotive Regulation.~~

**VI. TRANSIT PROGRAMS**

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- c) Monitor policies regarding zero-emission transit fuels to ensure they remain technology neutral;
- d) Support **reinstating** ~~the continuation~~ and **expanding** ~~the expansion~~ of tax incentives for using compressed natural gas, hydrogen, and other zero-emission transit fuels;
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- c) Support programs that facilitate cooperation with security and emergency preparedness officials to refine and improve information exchange protocols, emergency preparedness systems, and regional data coordination;
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- a) Seek funding to **comply with** ~~meet~~ state and local environmental **standards** ~~quality requirements, including requirements for zero-emission buses, alternative fueling stations, and future greenhouse gas reduction requirements;~~
- b) Support expedited review for project development, right-of-way acquisition, and construction activities without impairing substantive environmental requirements;
- c) Ensure adequate funding and flexibility in the application of resiliency, natural infrastructure, or other climate-related policies to the delivery of mobility improvements, as opposed to mandates that would constrain transportation resources;
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- c) Oppose policies adversely affecting the agency's ability to effectively address labor relations, employee rights, benefits, and working conditions, such as health, safety, and ergonomic standards;

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- d) Oppose policies that limit state or local pension benefit reforms.

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- 2. Protect and preserve the LOSSAN Rail Corridor as a critical, interregional transportation asset vital to national defense, goods movement, economic vitality, and regional mobility. Secure dedicated funding and permit streamlining to quickly address infrastructure vulnerabilities, ensuring the corridor remains resilient against disruptions that could impact military readiness, supply chain efficiency, and passenger rail connectivity along one of the nation's most strategically significant rail corridors.**
- 3. Prioritize the use of formula funding with sufficient flexibility to respect the unique nature of regional transportation agencies in the Southern California Association of Governments region.**
- 4. Support reinstating the suballocation process to county transportation commissions to ensure federal formula funds are proportionally distributed. Restoring this process will empower local and regional agencies to direct investments where they are most needed, ultimately leading to more efficient use of funds, project delivery, and greater overall impact on transportation infrastructure and mobility.**
- 5. Ensure that funding new infrastructure programs do not replace or adversely affect the delivery of transportation funding that has been traditionally used by the Orange County Transportation Authority.**
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- 7. Prevent impediments to infrastructure investments and funding because of issues beyond an agency's control, such as air quality attainment.**
- 8. Expedite and improve the efficiency of environmental reviews for infrastructure projects by streamlining requirements, reducing redundancies, and supporting reciprocity between the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, while providing additional funding to accelerate state and federal review processes. Additionally, support adjusting federalization thresholds to prevent unnecessary oversight of smaller projects and improve efficiency, expanded use of exemptions for various classes of projects, and use of programmatic reviews.**
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- 10. Promote a transparent and fair discretionary grant process that ensures local control and balanced regional distribution, free from arbitrary limits, unreasonable matching requirements, or other policies that would discourage federal funding from flowing to Orange County.**
- 11. Provide stable, long-term funding and policy support for passenger and freight rail to enhance federal investment in key rail corridors, streamline project delivery, improve safety, and strengthen rail's role in goods movement and national defense.**
- 12. Advocate for strategic federal investment in transportation infrastructure and streamlined project delivery to support Orange County's role in the successful execution of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. Ensure that federal policies facilitate permitting efficiency, workforce readiness, and partnerships that enhance Orange County's transportation network and global competitiveness while minimizing disruptions to daily operations**

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- 13. Support fair and flexible tolling policies based on user-pay principles. Any federal oversight should respect regional decision-making, and the unique transportation needs of differing regions. Toll revenues should continue to be prioritized for debt service, a reasonable return on private investment, and the costs related to operation and maintenance of the facility, while also authorizing excess revenues to be used for transportation investments, consistent with state laws.**
- 14. Support the preservation of tax-exempt financing for surface transportation projects, ensuring public agencies retain the ability to issue and refinance tax-exempt debt.**