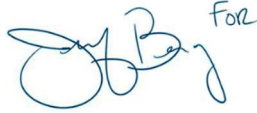




February 12, 2026

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer 

Subject: Award the Agreement for the Bus Stop Electronic Signage Expansion Project

Overview

On July 14, 2025, the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors approved the release of a request for proposals to select a firm for the development and implementation of real-time arrival signage at various bus stop locations. Board of Directors' approval is requested to award an agreement for the Bus Stop Electronic Signage Expansion Project.

Recommendations

- A. Approve the selection of Urban Solar Corporation as the firm to provide electronic signage for selected bus stop locations.
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-5-4117 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Urban Solar Corporation, in the amount of \$1,537,918, for a five-year term, to provide electronic signage for selected bus stop locations.

Discussion

In 2022, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) initiated a pilot project to implement 26 electronic signage (eSignage) devices at OC Bus Rapid 553 bus stops. These eSignage devices display near real-time arrival information, are powered by a solar battery, mounted on free-standing poles, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant, managed via a hosted content management system (CMS), and receive updates via cellular service.

Positive passenger feedback from the pilot project has supported securing additional funding to expand the project. By offering timely and reliable bus arrival information, the expanded eSignage network will enhance customer convenience and improve the efficiency and visibility of transit services along OCTA's busiest corridors.

The Bus Stop eSignage Expansion Project (Project) will be implemented in the following three phases:

Phase one will deploy 39 new eSignage devices along McFadden Avenue between Harbor Boulevard and Grand Avenue in the City of Santa Ana. This corridor received 2021 Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) grant funding for the City of Santa Ana to implement transit signal priority enhancements and transit-focused street improvements, including new shelters, benches, and lighting as part of the City's ongoing bicycle boulevard project. As part of this coordinated effort, a portion of the REAP funding will be used by OCTA to deliver the 39 eSignage devices included in this phase.

Phase two will deploy up to 99 additional devices along the three other OC Bus Rapid routes, which were selected due to their high service frequency and ridership. OCTA has secured State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funding to support this expansion. Implementation is expected to begin after Phase One, though concurrent deployment may occur if Phase One schedules are not affected.

Phase three will replace the 26 existing eSignage devices deployed as the pilot project and currently installed at OC Bus Rapid 553 stops. This phase will also be funded through STIP grant funds. Implementation is planned to begin after the pilot project contract expires on May 24, 2027.

The routes included in this project were selected to complement ongoing transit-focused infrastructure projects and to target a wide population of riders, and deployment as noted above is consistent with the grant funding received.

Procurement Approach

The procurement was handled in accordance with OCTA Board of Directors (Board)-approved procedures for professional and technical services. Various factors are considered in the award for professional and technical services. Award is recommended to the firm offering the most comprehensive overall proposal considering such factors as prior experience with similar projects, staffing and project organization, work plan, as well as cost and price.

On July 14, 2025, the Board authorized the release of Request for Proposals (RFP) 5-4117, which was issued electronically on CAMM NET. The Project was advertised in a newspaper of general circulation on July 14 and July 21, 2025. A pre-proposal conference was held on July 23, 2025, with 11 attendees representing six firms. Two addenda were issued to make available the pre-proposal conference registration sheet and presentation, as well as handle issues related to the RFP and provide responses to written questions related to the RFP.

On August 12, 2025, four proposals were received. An evaluation committee consisting of OCTA staff from the Contracts Administration and Materials Management, Information Systems, Transportation Modeling, and Operations departments, as well as an external representative from the City of Santa Ana met to review all the proposals received.

The proposals were evaluated based on the following Board-approved evaluation criteria and weightings:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| • Qualifications of the Firm | 20 percent |
| • Staffing and Project Organization | 25 percent |
| • Work Plan | 30 percent |
| • Cost and Price | 25 percent |

Several factors were considered in developing the evaluation criteria weightings. The qualifications of the firm criterion was weighted at 20 percent to ensure the firm has prior experience in developing and implementing eSignage devices for similar projects as outlined in the scope of work. Staffing and project organization criterion was weighted at 25 percent to ensure the firm's project team has the requisite expertise for completing a project of similar size. Work plan was weighted at 30 percent to ensure the firm demonstrated their understanding and approach to meeting all task requirements. Cost and price criterion was weighted at 25 percent to ensure that OCTA receives value for the services provided.

On August 26, 2025, the evaluation committee reviewed the proposals based on the Board-approved evaluation criteria and short-listed the two most qualified firms listed below in alphabetical order:

Firm and Location

Entourage Partners, LLC doing business as Papercast North America
(Papercast)
Headquarters: Saint Petersburg, Florida
Project Office: Saint Petersburg, Florida

Urban Solar Corporation (Urban Solar)
Headquarters: Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
Project Office: Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

On September 3, 2025, the evaluation committee conducted interviews with the two short-listed firms. The interviews consisted of a presentation by each firm to demonstrate the firms' understanding of OCTA's requirements.

The firms' project managers and key team members had an opportunity to present each team's qualifications and respond to the evaluation committee's questions. Questions were related to the firms' understanding of the scope of work, experience with projects of a similar type, and approach to providing bus stop eSignage services.

At the conclusion of the interviews, a request for a best and final offer (BAFO) was issued to the short-listed firms based on clarifications to the price summary sheet regarding the ongoing maintenance of the 164 deployed eSignage devices and additional spare devices.

Based on the evaluation of the written proposals and the information obtained from the interviews and BAFOs, as well as cost and price, the evaluation committee recommends Urban Solar for consideration of the award to provide bus stop eSignage services. The following is a summary of the proposal evaluation results.

Qualifications of the Firm

Urban Solar was founded in 2008. The firm has 15 employees and is headquartered in Victoria, British Columbia, with a manufacturing facility in Beaverton, Oregon. The firm manufactures solar energy systems for lighting and digital amenities. The firm has delivered more than 30,000 bus stop and shelter lighting and information systems across North America, including projects for Long Beach Transit, Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, Jacksonville Transportation Authority, and OCTA. Urban Solar's proposed subcontractors, which will provide battery-powered display units and iBus CMS, as well as installation and field maintenance have partnered with Urban Solar on several similar projects throughout California. The firm received positive feedback from its references.

Papercast was founded in 2016. The firm has 25 employees and is headquartered in St. Petersburg, Florida. The firm provides turnkey eSignage solutions, including the design, manufacturing, and integration of electronic paper (e-paper) displays, solar power systems, and CMS. Papercast has completed similar installations for Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Caltrain, and Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, and OCTA. The firm, serving as a subcontractor to Urban Solar for the OC Bus Rapid 553 project, currently supplies OCTA's existing e-paper displays and CMS. The proposed subcontractor, ITES MEDIA, Inc., will provide the ISO 27001-certified CMS hosted on Microsoft Azure. Additionally, the firm received positive feedback from its references.

Staffing and Project Organization

Urban Solar proposed a knowledgeable and experienced project team. The proposed project manager has four years of relevant experience. The firm's proposed team has an average of five years of industry experience. The project team includes key staff from Urban Solar's operations, engineering, and customer support divisions, as well as representatives from its subcontractors. The staffing structure reflects a collaborative approach, combining Urban Solar's manufacturing and project management expertise with the subcontractor's technical capabilities and extensive field installation and maintenance experience in Southern California. During the interview, the project team discussed its roles, proposed solution, and implementation process. The team members provided detailed responses to the evaluation committee's questions, which demonstrated their experience and ability to meet OCTA's requirements.

Papercast proposed a qualified and well-structured project team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The proposed project manager has 12 years of experience in business development and project management within the transit technology industry. The firm's proposed team has an average of 13 years of industry experience. The firm currently oversees North American operations and managed the deployment of OCTA's existing OC Bus Rapid 553 e-paper signage project. The team includes key personnel responsible for operations, technical integration, and customer support, supported by its subcontractor, which will provide the CMS, and prequalified electrical contractors responsible for field installation and maintenance. During the interview, the project team effectively described their roles, project approach, and implementation plan, demonstrating a strong understanding of OCTA's operational needs and confidence in their ability to successfully deliver the Project.

Work Plan

Urban Solar presented a comprehensive and well-organized work plan that demonstrated a clear understanding of the scope of work and OCTA's operational requirements. The firm described in detail the specifications and functionality of its proposed battery-powered e-paper display, the Axentia iBus CMS, and the integrated monitoring tools that allow for real-time device performance tracking. The proposal included a detailed project schedule outlining all key milestones, deliverables, and staff assignments for each phase of the Project. As an enhancement, Urban Solar proposed to include its PV Stop+ solar lighting system with the installation of the eSignage devices to improve safety and visibility at bus stops. The firm indicated that the solar lighting option was incorporated into the proposed pricing and would not increase the overall project cost. Additionally, Urban Solar proposed providing spare devices to ensure uninterrupted service in the event that a display requires maintenance or replacement.

Papercast presented a clear and structured work plan that demonstrated a thorough understanding of the scope of work and OCTA's technical and operational requirements. The firm outlined the specifications and capabilities of its proposed e-paper display, solar power components, and the CMS developed by ITES MEDIA. The proposed solution includes an enhanced monitoring platform that allows for centralized management of all display units, providing real-time performance data and device health information. The firm provided a detailed project schedule with defined milestones, deliverables, and staff responsibilities for each phase of implementation. The proposed work plan also includes the integration of existing OCTA e-paper displays into the new CMS, allowing for systemwide consistency and improved operational efficiency.

Cost and Price

Pricing scores were based on a formula which assigned the highest score to the firm with the lowest total firm-fixed price and scored the other proposals' total firm-fixed price based on its relation to the lowest total firm-fixed price. Urban Solar proposed the lowest total firm-fixed price. Additionally, the total price is below the OCTA project manager's independent cost estimate and therefore deemed fair and reasonable.

Fiscal Impact

This Project was approved in OCTA's Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget and will be fully funded with two different grants sources. Phase One (39 devices along the McFadden Avenue corridor) will be funded from the REAP Grants of 2021. Phases two and three (99 new and replacement of the existing 26 devices) will be from STIP funds.

Summary

Staff is recommending the Board of Directors authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-5-4117 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Urban Solar Corporation, in the amount of \$1,537,918, for a five-year term, to provide bus stop electronic signage for various bus stops.

Attachments

- A. Review of Proposals RFP 5-4117 Bus Stop Electronic Signage Expansion Project
- B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria Matrix (Short-Listed Firms) RFP 5-4117 Bus Stop Electronic Signage Expansion Project
- C. Contract History for the Past Two Years RFP 5-4117 Bus Stop Electronic Signage Expansion Project

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