



April 7, 2025

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: Amendments to the Master Plan of Arterial Highways

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority administers the Master Plan of Arterial Highways, including the review and approval of amendments requested by local agencies. The cities of Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Irvine, and Stanton have requested amendments to the Master Plan of Arterial Highways that are recommended for approval. In addition, removal of the Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana River crossing is recommended for approval, and support letters have been received from the cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach. A status update is also provided on Master Plan of Arterial Highways coordination activities, including ongoing collaboration with the cities of Costa Mesa and Newport Beach.

Recommendations

- A. Approve amending the Master Plan of Arterial Highways to fully remove the Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana River crossing.
- B. Direct staff to close out the Memorandum of Understanding C-6-0834 among the cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach, and the Orange County Transportation Authority regarding agency responsibilities for implementing the consensus recommendation for the Garfield-Gisler Bridge Crossing over the Santa Ana River.
- C. Approve amending the Master Plan of Arterial Highways to accommodate the following requests:
 - 1. City of Anaheim: Remove Weir Canyon Road between Blue Sky Road and State Route 241 (not constructed).
 - 2. City of Costa Mesa: Reclassify Merrimac Way from a primary (four-lane, divided) arterial to a divided collector (two-lane, divided) arterial between Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road.

3. City of Irvine: Reclassify Yale Avenue from a secondary (four-lane, undivided) arterial to a collector (two-lane undivided) arterial between Michelson Drive and University Drive.
4. City of Stanton: Reclassify Orangewood Avenue from a secondary (four-lane, undivided) arterial to a divided collector (two-lane divided) arterial between Santa Rosalia Street and the eastern city boundary.

The Master Plan of Arterial Highways will be amended to reflect each approved request contingent upon receipt of documentation confirming that all affected general plans are consistent with the proposed amendment and are compliant with the California Environmental Quality Act. Amendment requests will expire if the Orange County Transportation Authority does not receive such documentation within three years of granting approval.

Should the proposed Master Plan of Arterial Highways amendment be modified for any reason after receiving approval, the modified Master Plan of Arterial Highways amendment must be returned to the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors for reconsideration and action.

- D. Direct the Executive Director of Planning, or her designee, to file a Notice of Exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act in support of the Master Plan of Arterial Highways amendment.
- E. Receive and file a status report of ongoing Master Plan of Arterial Highways coordination activities.

Background

The Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) coordinates roadway system planning across Orange County jurisdictions. The MPAH was first adopted by the County of Orange in 1956, and the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) assumed administration responsibilities in 1995. These responsibilities include the review and approval of MPAH amendments proposed by local agencies to maintain the integrity and continuity of the MPAH system. This is necessary to assess the potential for transportation-related concerns and ensure interagency collaboration to avoid unintended impacts in neighboring jurisdictions or regional transportation systems.

The following section provides details on the recommendation to remove the Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana River crossing, in collaboration with the cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach. Additional amendment requests from the cities of Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Irvine, and Stanton are discussed as well. Finally, a status report on other ongoing MPAH coordination activities is also provided that includes updates regarding collaborative efforts

with the cities of Costa Mesa and Newport Beach related to the active 19th Street amendment request by the City of Costa Mesa.

Discussion

Garfield-Gisler Bridge Removal

OCTA has been collaborating with the cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach (Cities) regarding the proposed MPAH amendment to remove the Garfield-Gisler bridge (Bridge). For nearly 20 years, the Cities have been jointly working to implement improvements in lieu of the Bridge, as agreed upon in the 2006 memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU required that OCTA, in coordination with the Cities, reevaluate the MPAH network performance with the implemented improvements before determining whether to delete the Bridge from the MPAH. Amendment No. 1 to the MOU extended the completion date of the reevaluation to the end of calendar year 2026. The intent of this change was to ensure that the Interstate 405 (I-405) Improvement Project would be completed and opened to traffic prior to conducting the reevaluation.

On March 4, 2025, the Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana River Crossing Technical Review (Attachment A [Technical Review]), prepared by OCTA, was provided to the Cities for their review and concurrence. A peer review of the Technical Review was also conducted by a third-party engineering firm to provide additional assurance to the Cities of OCTA's evaluation methodology and findings. The resulting peer review document prepared by Iteris Inc. (Attachment B) was also shared with the Cities. The 2006 MOU and Amendment No. 1 to the MOU noted above are included in the appendices to the Technical Review.

The Orange County Transportation Analysis Model (OCTAM) 3.1 was used for the original evaluation in 2006 to analyze 2030 MPAH network conditions without the Bridge. The reevaluation in the Technical Review uses OCTAM 5.1 to assess 2050 MPAH network conditions without the Bridge. The results were compared to determine if the network is still expected to perform at least as well as the original evaluation results, despite forecasting an additional 20 years. Below is a summary of the findings from this analysis:

- The forecasted traffic volumes and congestion levels in the study area have either remained stable or improved compared to the 2006 study forecasts.
- All major parallel corridors and key Santa Ana River crossings have experienced stable or improved levels of service, with most roadways showing either a reduction in traffic volumes or roadway capacity increases that accommodate increased volumes.
- The updated OCTAM 5.1 model reflects significant changes since the original study, including demographic shifts, the completion of the

I-405 Improvement Project, and improvements to the region's transportation modeling approach.

- A comparison of the 2025 OCTAM 5.1 forecasts against the 2006 study confirms that the Bridge is not needed to effectively accommodate forecasted traffic demand in the area.
- Given the findings, further in-depth study of the Bridge is not warranted.

Based on these findings, the reevaluation demonstrates that, without the Bridge, the MPAH meets or exceeds expectations set by the original evaluation results, which were the basis of the 2006 MOU. The peer review and reviews by the Cities confirmed that the methodology and findings in the Technical Review are valid. Therefore, due to the infrastructure improvements that have been made since 2006, and in consideration of the support letters received from the Cities (Attachments C, D, and E), staff recommends Board of Directors (Board) approval of the amendment to remove the Bridge from the MPAH.

Additional Amendment Requests

MPAH amendment requests were submitted to OCTA by the cities of Anaheim (Attachment F), Costa Mesa (Attachment G), Irvine (Attachment H), and Stanton (Attachment I). Most of the amendments, which are summarized in the table below, support local active transportation initiatives. Maps for each amendment request are provided in Attachments J, K, L, and M, respectively.

Agency	Current Configuration	MPAH Classification	Requested Classification
1. Weir Canyon Road Extension – between Blue Sky Road and State Route 241			
Anaheim	Not Constructed	Four-Lane, Divided	Removal
2. Merrimac Way – between Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road			
Costa Mesa	Two-Lane, Divided	Four-Lane, Divided	Two-Lane, Divided
3. Yale Avenue – between Michelson Drive and University Drive			
Irvine	Two-Lane, Undivided	Four-Lane, Divided	Two-Lane, Undivided
4. Orangewood Avenue – between Santa Rosalia Street and eastern city boundary			
Stanton	Four-Lane, Undivided	Four-Lane, Undivided	Two-Lane, Divided

Detailed reviews of these amendment requests are documented in Attachment N. In brief, the performance of the MPAH and OCTA transit service is not expected to be adversely impacted by the requested amendments. They are, therefore, recommended for approval.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Amendments to the MPAH are exempt from CEQA review. With direction from the Board, staff will file a Notice of Exemption from CEQA for the proposed MPAH amendment.

MPAH Amendment Status Update

There are currently 21 active amendments proposed for the MPAH (Attachment O). Several of the active amendments are awaiting local action to amend their respective general plans. Others are either under review, in the cooperative study process, or pending resolution of issues with other agencies.

One of the active amendment requests was submitted by the City of Costa Mesa in 2019 to reclassify West 19th Street from a primary arterial to a divided collector. At the time, the City of Newport Beach requested to delay consideration of the City of Costa Mesa's amendment request while updating its General Plan, citing potential traffic demand increases related to the proposed Banning Ranch development. In 2021, OCTA reengaged with the cities of Costa Mesa and Newport Beach, but discussions were complicated and ultimately stalled by the pending sale of Banning Ranch, now known as the Frank and Joan Randall Preserve (Randall Preserve), and other evolving land-use plans. In 2024, the Board directed staff to re-engage the cities of Costa Mesa and Newport Beach. This led to a May 2024 meeting where all parties agreed that OCTA should conduct a traffic study to assess MPAH facilities within the Randall Preserve area including the proposed MPAH amendment to reclassify West 19th Street, after state-mandated housing element updates are completed in February 2025.

OCTA recently executed a consultant contract to support this cooperative traffic study of MPAH facilities in the Randall Preserve area. The study aims to establish consensus on MPAH network needs before moving forward with recommending agreed upon amendments, including the West 19th Street amendment. At the time of preparing this staff report, a meeting with all parties was scheduled for April 4, 2025, to kick off the study and discuss the study's scope, timeline and next steps.

Summary

A consensus has been reached between OCTA and the Cities to remove the Bridge from the MPAH. Additionally, the cities of Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Irvine, and Stanton have requested further amendments to the MPAH. Based on an analysis of the changes requested, the MPAH guidance has been satisfied, and staff recommends Board approval of all the requested amendments. Finally, OCTA is initiating a study in collaboration with the cities of Costa Mesa and Newport Beach to determine MPAH network needs in the Randall Preserve area and to build consensus on a final set of amendments that will include a resolution to the 2019 request from the City of Costa Mesa regarding West 19th Street.

Attachments

- A. Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana River Crossing Technical Review
- B. FINAL Peer Review – Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana River Crossing Technical Review
- C. Letter from Raja Sethuraman, Public Works Director, City of Costa Mesa, to Rose Casey, Executive Director, Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated March 13, 2025, re: Master Plan of Arterial Highways – Concurrence with the Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana Crossing Technical Review
- D. Letter from Scott Smith, Public Works Director, City of Fountain Valley, to Rose Casey, Executive Director, Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated March 11, 2025, re: Master Plan of Arterial Highways – Concurrence with the Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana Crossing Technical Review
- E. Letter from Chau Vu, Public Works Director, City of Huntington Beach, to Rose Casey, Executive Director, Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated March 17, 2025, re: Master Plan of Arterial Highways – Concurrence with the Garfield-Gisler Santa Ana Crossing Technical Review
- F. Request Letter from Rudy Emami, PE, Director of Public Works, City of Anaheim, to Rose Casey, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated February 4, 2025, re: City of Anaheim Master Plan of Arterial Highways Amendment Request – 2025 General Plan Update
- G. Request Letter from Raja Sethuraman, Public Works Director, City of Costa Mesa, to Gregory Nord, Section Manager III, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated November 18, 2024, re: Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) Amendment Request – Merrimac Way, City of Costa Mesa, Focused Traffic Study
- H. Request Letter from Sean Crumbly, Director Public Works & Sustainability Department, City of Irvine, to Kia Mortazavi, Executive Director, Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated October 7, 2024, re: Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) Amendment Request – Yale Avenue between Michelson Drive and University Drive

- I. Request Letter from Cesar Rangel, Public Works Director / City Engineer, City of Stanton, to Kia Mortazavi, Executive Director, Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated December 18, 2024, re: Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) Amendment Request – Orangewood Avenue between Santa Rosalia Street and City Limits
- J. City of Anaheim MPAH Amendment Map
- K. City of Costa Mesa MPAH Amendment Map
- L. City of Irvine MPAH Amendment Map
- M. City of Stanton MPAH Amendment Map
- N. Master Plan of Arterial Highways Amendment Detailed Discussion
- O. Status Report on Pending Master Plan of Arterial Highways Amendments

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