



May 5, 2025

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Sole Source Agreement for Motorist Assistance Call Answering Services

Overview

The Orange County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies provides motorist assistance services through the 511 Motorist Assistance and Traveler Information System, as well as a network of freeway call boxes across Orange County. A contracted call answering center currently oversees calls from both services under an agreement that is set to expire on June 30, 2025. To ensure the continued operation of these services, a new call center agreement must be executed.

Recommendation

Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute sole source Agreement No. C-5-3932 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and AAMCOM, LLC, in the amount of \$645,455, to provide call answering services for the 511 Motorist Assistance and Traveler Information and Freeway call box systems for a six-year term.

Discussion

The California Legislature established the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) to implement and maintain motorist aid systems, including roadside call boxes. In 1987, the Orange County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (OC SAFE), working as an agency under the Orange County Transportation Commission, introduced a network of solar-powered cellular call boxes to facilitate motorist assistance. In 1991, the Orange County Transportation Commission and Orange County Transportation District consolidated, creating the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA). Since then, the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) has acted as the OC SAFE Board. Initially, state law required the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to answer SAFE requests for motorist assistance. However, with increased cellular 911 call

volumes, call box calls were deprioritized, leading to long wait times. In 1997, legislation permitted SAFE to contract with private call answering center (CAC) providers, utilizing CHP-approved operational guidelines and remote messaging systems (RMS). In 2005, OC SAFE transitioned to private CAC services, resulting in improved response efficiency for freeway call boxes.

As cell phone use became widespread, the use of call boxes declined. This shift, coupled with the Federal Communications Commission designating the 511 Motorist Assistance and Traveler Information System (511) as the national traveler information number, prompted California Legislature to amend the Streets and Highways Code in 2007. The amendment eliminated the requirement for a system of freeway call boxes and gave SAFE more flexibility to allocate funds to other motorist aid services, including 511 and Freeway Service Patrol.

In 2008, OC SAFE collaborated with the Service Authorities for Freeway Emergencies in Los Angeles and Ventura counties to expand services to include a 511. Today, the 511 system is the central tool for real-time traffic updates, trip planning, and public transit information. The system also includes mobile call box (MCB) functionality, allowing motorists to reach a CAC for roadside assistance. Although OC SAFE maintains approximately 269 freeway call boxes, most calls for motorist assistance now come through 511, making it the primary service for roadside help.

OC SAFE regularly pursues regional partnerships to optimize service delivery and leverage costs. In 2012, OC SAFE collaborated with the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA) and Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) to consolidate operational costs by procuring a joint CAC agreement. This was repeated in 2018 for the CAC agreement, which currently serves Orange County, Riverside County, and San Bernardino County motorist assistance programs.

In December 2024, SBCTA, the lead agency for the joint CAC agreement, announced it would not be exercising options terms in the joint CAC contract, opting to decommission its call boxes. RCTC also plans to remove its call boxes by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2024-25. Since neither agency will operate 511 motorist assistance or freeway call boxes beyond FY 2025, OC SAFE must secure a standalone contract for CAC services to continue supporting Orange County 511 MCB functionality and freeway call boxes.

OC SAFE remains committed to efficient, cost-effective motorist assistance services. The transition to an independent CAC contract will ensure uninterrupted support for Orange County's motorist assistance programs.

Establishing this contractual relationship aligns with OC SAFE's long-term strategy to adapt to evolving motorist needs while maintaining high service standards.

With significant decreases in call box usage and the challenges of maintaining aging infrastructure, SAFEs across the state are reassessing their motorist services programs. Many are transitioning from traditional freeway call boxes to more modern and cost-effective solutions, such as the 511 mobile call box. Staff is evaluating the effectiveness of the Orange County call box system and plan to present a report with recommendations to the Board in early FY 2025-26.

Procurement Approach

This procurement was handled in accordance with OCTA's Board-approved policies and procedures for sole source procurements.

The contracted CAC provider must utilize CHP-approved RMS and support real-time text (RTT) for hearing-impaired motorists. AAMCOM, LLC (AAMCOM), is the only CAC provider authorized to operate the proprietary RTT system and the only provider with a CHP-approved RMS. AAMCOM meets OCTA's criteria for being a sole source provider. Based on its technical ability and financial status, AAMCOM is deemed responsible.

AAMCOM services all California SAFEs except for Ventura County, which contracts directly with the CHP due to its limited number of call boxes. Given AAMCOM's exclusive approval by the CHP for RMS, staff engaged with the firm to obtain a quote for continued CAC services.

The AAMCOM quote was reviewed by staff from the Contracts Administration and Materials Management (Camm) and Motorist Services departments to ensure compliance with the contract terms and conditions, as well as the technical requirements.

In accordance with OCTA's sole source procurement procedures, any sole source contract exceeding \$50,000 requires a price review by OCTA's Internal Audit (IA) Department. AAMCOM did not submit a detailed cost breakdown for its proposed pricing. As a result, IA performed agreed-upon procedures, comparing AAMCOM's pricing for CAC, Motorist Aid – 511, RTT/Teletypewriter, project management, and language support to the pricing outlined in the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) agreement. Internal Audit calculated the annual pricing for each category under both the AAMCOM quote and the SANDAG agreement and then determined the total cost over a six-year period for each. The review confirmed that AAMCOM's six-year total is four

percent lower than the SANDAG agreement. Therefore, pricing is deemed fair and reasonable.

Fiscal Impact

Funding for this project is included in OCTA's FY 2025-26 Budget, Motorist Services Department – Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies Fund, Account No. 0013-7629-S1001-CGA and local SAFE funds. Future year costs will be included in the FY 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29, 2029-30, and 2030-31 budgets.

Summary

Staff recommends the Board of Directors authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute sole source Agreement No. C-5-3932 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and AAMCOM, LLC, in the amount of \$645,455, to provide call answering services for the 511 Motorist Assistance and Traveler Information and Freeway call box systems for a six-year term.

Attachment

None.

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