



November 16, 2023

To: Legislative and Communications Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Performance Evaluation of State Legislative Advocate, Topp Strategies

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darrell Johnson", is written over the "From:" line of the memo.

Overview

The firm Topp Strategies provides state legislative advocacy services for the Orange County Transportation Authority. A staff evaluation of the services provided during this legislative session is presented to the Board of Directors for consideration and further comment.

Recommendation

Receive and file the staff evaluation of the state advocacy services of Topp Strategies as an information item and provide any additional comments.

Background

Since 2007, Moira Topp has served as the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) primary state legislative advocate through her former employment with Sloat Higgins Jensen and Associates, and then as a subcontractor on OCTA's prior contract with Platinum Advisors, LLC. On October 26, 2020, the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) awarded a new contract for state legislative advocacy services to Topp Strategies, with Platinum as a subcontractor. Under the new contract, Moira Topp continues in her role as lead state legislative advocate for OCTA. The new agreement took effect on January 1, 2021, for a two-year term, with two, two-year option terms. On July 25, 2022, the Board exercised the first two-year option term, which will last until December 31, 2024.

Discussion

Annually, OCTA staff evaluates the services provided by the state legislative advocate with respect to major issues addressed and general services provided. Staff's evaluation of the services provided by Topp Strategies is included in Attachment A. The major issues and general services provided by Topp Strategies have been evaluated based on effort and outcome using a rating of excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor.

Staff has rated Topp Strategies' efforts overall as "excellent" based on responsiveness, advancing OCTA's positions and policies, and assisting in building cooperative relationships with legislators and members of various state departments, boards, and commissions. Staff has rated Topp Strategies' outcomes overall as "excellent" based on the outcomes of the issues discussed.

Next year, the expected focus of Topp Strategies' advocacy for OCTA will include continued efforts related to seeking funding, project delivery and planning assistance to address climate change impacts to the Los Angeles - San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor within Orange County; protecting taxpayer intent in the passage of local sales tax measures, ensuing projects and programs can be delivered, and; engaging in the Transit Transformation Task Force. In addition, priorities for Topp Strategies will include advancement of OCTA's positions on legislation and policy goals contained in the Board-adopted 2023-24 OCTA State Legislative Platform, and continued policy discussions about strategies for the State to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction goals; methods to address safety for both coach operators and passengers when using transit; interoperability for toll operators; and protecting state budget allocations for transportation purposes.

To assist the Board in fully evaluating Topp Strategies, the legislative advocate's current scope of work is included as Attachment B.

Summary

An evaluation of state legislative advocacy services performed by Topp Strategies is presented to the Board of Directors for information and further comment.

Attachments

- A. Staff Evaluation of Services Provided by Topp Strategies for 2023
- B. Sacramento Legislative Advocacy and Consulting Services Scope of Work

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