



September 7, 2017

To: Regional Planning and Highways Committee
From: Darrell Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: Motorist Services Update for Fiscal Year 2016-17

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority Motorist Services Program includes the following elements: call box system, Freeway Service Patrol, Southern California 511 travelers' information system, and the Orange County Taxi Administration Program. Collectively, the scope of these programs includes assisting motorists; mitigating traffic congestion; allowing the public to access information on highway conditions, transit services, and other important traveler information; and managing taxicab permitting processes and enforcement for Orange County and its 34 cities. This report provides an update on program activities for fiscal year 2016-17.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) serves as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE), and manages the Orange County Taxi Administration Program (OCTAP). SAFE and OCTAP are managed by the Motorist Services Department of the Transit Division. SAFE operates the call box system and the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program, and participates as a partner with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Highway Patrol, Los Angeles County SAFE (LA SAFE), and Ventura County Transportation Commission in the development and operation of the Southern California 511 travelers' information system. OCTAP permits taxicab companies, taxicab vehicles, and taxicab drivers on behalf of Orange County and its 34 cities.

Discussion

Motorist Services staff has implemented a number of changes designed to improve program oversight, operations, business processes, planning, and development. This report provides a summary of major activities that occurred during fiscal year (FY) 2016-17.

In FY 2015-16, SAFE received state approval on a call box reduction plan, and reduced the number of freeway call boxes from 621 to 410. SAFE upgraded call box hardware to new 3G cellular radio technology, and completed the project during FY 2016-17 with the installation of highly visible diamond-reflective call box signs for each call box. The SAFE averaged 3.7 calls a day through the call box network in FY 2016-17. OCTA continues to utilize AT&T as its cellular service provider, securing preferred rates that are available to OCTA through the National Association of State Procurement Officers, previously known as the Western States Contracting Alliance. In Orange County, motorist aid calls are also received through the 511 program, with 4,120 calls received last FY. This is a 2.4 percent increase over FY 2015-16.

FSP tow truck operators provided 62,527 services for motorists who had disabled vehicles during FY 2016-17. This is a seven percent decrease over FY 2015-16. The FSP program recorded 1,825 customer comments through the Customer Relations call center and FSP online customer survey in FY 2016-17. Callers who were happy with the service comprised 98 percent of the total comments received in FY 2016-17. A benefit/cost (B/C) analysis prepared for FY 2014-15 indicated that, overall, the Orange County FSP provides \$18.00 of congestion relief for each dollar spent on the program. The FY 2015-16 B/C has been delayed because of Caltrans staffing changes and is scheduled to be released in the second quarter of FY 2017-18. Caltrans plans to have the FY 2016-17 B/C analysis completed by the fourth quarter of FY 2017-18.

The Southern California 511 interactive voice response system received an average of 118,352 calls per month in FY 2016-17, with five percent of the calls originating in Orange County. The Go511.com website received an average of 27,293 hits each month. In FY 2016-17, LA SAFE, with participation from OCTA staff, procured a vendor for the further development of the Go511 system. In addition to making 511 content more relevant to users, the project aims to establish cooperative agreements with the Riverside County Transportation Commission and the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority to bring Riverside and San Bernardino into the Go511 and rebrand the system to "So Cal 511."

To increase awareness of the 511 program in Orange County, staff initiated awareness campaigns to educate OCTA employees and the public about the 511 program. Outreach efforts included events at OCTA operating bases and distributing 511 promotional materials through FSP operators at the reception desk at OCTA's 600 building, and to bus patrons using OC Fair Express and Laguna Beach Summer Breeze bus services.

At FY 2016-17 year-end, OCTAP oversaw the regulation of 21 taxicab companies, 610 taxicab vehicles, and 630 taxicab drivers, down significantly from FY 2015-16 year-end. Some reasons for the decline may include taxicab drivers migrating to transportation network companies permitted by the California Public Utilities Commission and increases in commercial liability insurance costs. OCTAP staff enforced taxicab regulations by verifying eligibility prior to issuing an OCTAP permit and monitoring companies, drivers, and vehicles for continued compliance. OCTAP staff monitored for continued compliance with OCTAP regulations by monitoring drug and alcohol testing program enrollment and test results, monitoring Department of Justice subsequent arrest notifications, monitoring Department of Motor Vehicle Pull Notice records, performing compliance reviews of permitted taxicab companies, and performing annual and random vehicle inspections to ensure continued compliance with OCTAP regulations.

OCTAP staff performed 1,524 taxicab vehicle inspections during the year, including 444 random inspections and 245 cursory inspections. Random inspections occur at the OCTAP facility, with vehicles selected through a random generator within the OCTAP database. Vehicles are also called in for random inspection when necessary, based on a report or in-field observation. Cursory inspections occur in the field at John Wayne Airport (JWA) in coordination with Orange County Sheriff officers and JWA Ground Operations personnel.

Although not mandated by OCTAP regulations, 51 percent of permitted taxicabs are clean-fuel vehicles. Thirty-six percent of permitted taxicabs have the capacity to carry five or more passengers, with more than 14 percent of the vehicles being wheelchair accessible. OCTAP staff assisted in the resolution of 26 complaints, issued 23 warnings and fines, suspended two permits, and revoked nine permits during the year. OCTAP also denied three taxicab operator permits because they did not meet the minimum requirements set forth in the OCTAP regulations.

The OCTAP program is no longer financially sustainable under the current revenue structure. OCTA issued the member agencies a twelve-month notice of its intent to withdraw as the administrator of the program in June 2016, as required in the cooperative agreements with the agencies. OCTA has since

determined that there are sufficient reserves to sustain the program through December 2017, and has agreed to extend its participation as the administrator of the OCTAP program through December 2017. OCTA Government Relations staff have been working closely with the Orange County City Managers Association to have cities fund the OCTAP program for the remainder of FY 2017-18 and determine OCTA's potential role in the OCTAP program beyond FY 2017-18.

Additional information regarding each of these program areas can be found in Attachment A.

Summary

An annual report for Motorist Services and OCTAP has been prepared to highlight program activities and accomplishments for FY 2016-17.

Attachment

- A. Motorist Services Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2016-17

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