



February 5, 2018

To: Regional Planning and Highways Committee

From: Darrell Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Regional Planning Update

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority coordinates regularly with planning and other agencies in Southern California. An update on state and regional activities regarding rule-making, greenhouse gas emission reduction target setting and strategies, and planning coordination efforts is provided for information purposes.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

Regional coordination is conducted at many levels, involving the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Board of Directors (Board), executives, and technical staff. Some examples of the regional planning forums in which OCTA participates include:

- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council and policy committees,
- State Route 91 Advisory Committee,
- Regional Chief Executive Officers' (CEO) meeting,
- Regional CEOs' Sustainability Working Group,
- South Coast Air Quality Management Plan Advisory Group,
- Interregional planning coordinators (OCTA, SCAG, the San Diego Association of Governments, and the California Department of Transportation Districts 7, 11, and 12),
- SCAG technical working groups.

Since the last update in July 2017, there have been several important developments regarding ongoing and/or recently completed regional and statewide planning activities led by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), the California Air Resources Board (CARB), SCAG, and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). A discussion of these developments is provided below. A summary of additional regional planning activities monitored by OCTA staff is provided in Attachment A.

Discussion

OPR – Proposed Updates to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines

SB 743 (Chapter 386, Statutes of 2013) generally states that increases in automobile delay (measured as level of service) will no longer be considered a significant impact under CEQA for infill developments. The statute directs OPR to propose revisions to the CEQA guidance that identify criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts that promote:

1. The reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions,
2. The development of multimodal transportation networks,
3. A diversity of land uses.

Proposed CEQA revisions were submitted to the California Natural Resources Agency by OPR on November 27, 2017. OPR's proposal states that the best metric to address these criteria is vehicle miles traveled (VMT). OPR also recommends exercising a provision in law that allows the proposed CEQA revisions to apply statewide, rather than to only projects in more urban areas with higher-frequency transit. It is anticipated that the final rulemaking will be complete by the end of 2018, and that a grace period would be provided through January 1, 2020. Staff intends to remain engaged and provide comments as necessary through the rulemaking process.

The proposal includes a technical advisory component that sets expectations for CEQA significance thresholds. For example, housing and office developments would generally have a significant impact unless the per capita or per employee VMT is reduced 15 percent below existing conditions. In general, significant impacts are identified under CEQA only if conditions with the project are worse than without the project. However, OPR's recommendation presumes that a development that maintains existing VMT levels would have a significant impact, since the law is seeking to reduce GHG emissions.

Transportation projects are expected to measure and mitigate induced VMT, but the proposed guidelines do not identify a specific threshold. Furthermore, the guidelines allow lead agencies on roadway capacity projects (including highways) to identify which metric to use, implying that delay metrics (i.e. level of service) can continue to be used. However, the lead agency would still need to demonstrate consistency with the three criteria listed above. The proposed guidelines also note that project-level analysis can tier from analysis completed through a Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), or similar program-level analysis.

These provisions respond to some of the OCTA concerns communicated to OPR by providing more flexibility for roadway projects than previous language proposed by OPR. Details regarding how the tiering works still need to be worked out before this guidance goes into effect in 2020. Regardless, once finalized, it is likely there would be little impact on OCTA's Measure M Freeway Program since almost all the environmental documents are scheduled to be completed prior to 2020. However, if the environmental documents were to be revisited post-2020, the SB 743 requirements would need to be addressed.

CARB – Climate Change Scoping Plan, Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Purchase Requirements, and GHG Emission Reduction Targets

2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan

On December 14, 2017, CARB approved the 2017 update of the Climate Change Scoping Plan (Scoping Plan). This update addresses the statewide GHG reduction goal for 2030 (40 percent below 1990 levels), which was established through SB 32 (Chapter 249, Statutes of 2016). It should be noted that the Scoping Plan and the reduction goal established through SB 32 address all sectors, not only transportation.

The Scoping Plan identifies strategies that CARB believes are necessary for achieving the statewide GHG reduction goals. Some transportation sector strategies target zero-emission technologies. These are some of the most effective strategies for reducing emissions. However, CARB also puts a heavy emphasis on strategies related to SB 375 (Chapter 378, Statutes of 2008) that generally intend to promote active transportation or transit, rather than driving. The SB 375-related strategies have a relatively minor impact on emission reductions compared to most zero-emission technology strategies. OCTA comments on the draft document recommended that efforts should focus on cost effective technology improvements (Attachment B).

ZEB Purchase Requirements

CARB released a draft discussion document for the Innovative Clean Transit regulation that is intended to require public transit operators to purchase ZEBs. CARB sees this as a strategy to advance the technology, reduce costs, and ultimately provide a clean heavy-duty fleet in California. The draft document identifies the following goals:

- Support the near-term deployment of ZEBs where the economics are viable and where transit service can be maintained or expanded,
- Improve transit service while working towards meeting a long-term vision for transitioning to zero emission technologies across all transit modes,
- Partner with transit agencies to pilot innovative approaches to improve access to transit systems with zero emission first- and last-mile solutions.

CARB is Proposing the Following ZEB Purchase Requirements:

- 25 percent of vehicles purchased beginning in 2020,
- 50 percent in 2023,
- 75 percent in 2025,
- 100 percent in 2029.

There are concerns being expressed from transit agencies throughout the state that these purchase requirements are being put in place prior to the technology being proven. This is also viewed as an unfunded mandate that may result in transit service cuts due to the cost of ZEB vehicles and infrastructure. Further, despite the stated goals listed above, the discussion document provides no relief if the implementation of the purchase requirement results in service cuts.

A CARB staff report is expected in June to advance the regulation. OCTA will continue participating in workshops to help refine the proposed regulation. It should also be noted that a more focused staff report regarding this issue will be provided to the Legislative and Communications Committee on February 15, 2018, and to the Board on February 26, 2018.

GHG Emission Reduction Targets

CARB is also updating the regional SB 375 GHG emission reduction targets for 2035 that are addressed within the RTP/SCS. Previously, CARB staff recommended increasing the 2035 per capita GHG emission reduction target to 21 percent below 2005 levels, well beyond the 18 percent target that SCAG recommended in coordination with the other three large Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in California. OCTA submitted comments in support of the collaborative MPO approach (Attachment C).

Subsequently, CARB twice delayed hearings to finalize the targets, while SCAG and others continued to negotiate for more achievable targets.

On December 14, 2017, CARB held an informational hearing where the recommendation was reduced to a more achievable 19 percent target. The targets are now anticipated to be finalized in spring 2018. Additionally, CARB staff will hold several workshops with stakeholders to continue refining the strategies that will help achieve statewide GHG goals. OCTA will participate in these workshops and continue coordination efforts with SCAG and the other partner agencies.

SCAG

2020 RTP/SCS Development Schedule

SCAG is currently reaching out to local jurisdictions to collect input on land use and growth projections throughout the Southern California region. Transportation-related information from County Transportation Commissions will be collected in November 2018, after OCTA anticipates finalizing the 2018 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). SCAG will then develop models, regional initiatives, and policies to meet the RTP/SCS goals, including the updated SB 375 targets discussed above. The draft 2020 RTP/SCS is expected to be released for public review in fall 2019, which will provide an opportunity to make any last refinements to the OCTA project submittal. Finally, the 2020 RTP/SCS is scheduled to be adopted by April 2020.

Transportation Control Measure (TCM) Substitution

The Transportation Corridor Agencies sent a letter to SCAG on November 13, 2017, agreeing to initiate a process to remove the TCM designation from the Express Lanes Connector Project between State Route 241 and the 91 Express Lanes. OCTA is currently working with SCAG on this substitution request. The goal of the effort is to transfer the TCM designation to a set of signal synchronization projects that are not currently designated as a TCM, that are programmed for implementation prior to 2021, and that have at least equivalent air quality benefits compared with the Express Lanes Connector. OCTA is currently analyzing this set of projects to ensure they meet all the necessary criteria. This process typically takes between six to 12 months to finalize.

Metro – Preparations for the 2028 Olympics

Metro recently unveiled an ambitious plan to deliver 28 transportation projects before the 2028 Olympics that are being held in Los Angeles.

Two of the proposed projects are near the border of Orange County – the Eastside Gold Line light rail extension into Whittier, and the West Santa Ana Branch light rail line that extends into Cerritos. Since these projects could affect Orange County, and because some venues in Orange County may host Olympic events, OCTA and Metro have signed a memorandum of understanding committing to regular coordination between the agencies and other stakeholders (Attachment D).

OCTA Look Ahead

OCTA continues to prioritize the development of the 2018 LRTP. Because the LRTP is well vetted and reflects many of OCTA's completed studies that have also been vetted, it can serve as a convenient resource and policy platform for many regional planning issues. Staff will also remain engaged in the items discussed herein and continue to monitor other planning activities that may impact transportation in Orange County and development of the LRTP.


Summary

Staff is engaged in ongoing activities impacting transportation planning and project delivery. Several of these involve emission reduction policies, including new requirements for environmental impact reports, revised GHG emission reduction targets at the state and regional levels, as well as proposed purchase requirements for ZEB. Staff is also engaging in coordination efforts with the Los Angeles County Metro for the 2028 Olympics, and with SCAG in preparation of the 2020 RTP/SCS and to initiate a TCM substitution. Most of these activities are still developing and staff will return with updates as necessary.

Attachments

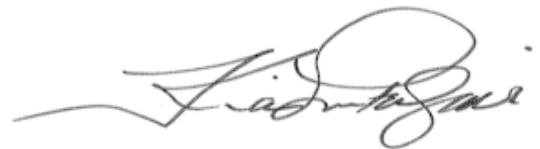
- A. February 2018, Regional Planning Activities
- B. Letter from Kia Mortazavi, Executive Director, Planning, Orange County Transportation Authority, to Mary Nichols, Chair, California Air Resources Board, RE: Comments on the 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update, Dated April 7, 2017
- C. Letter from Darrell Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Orange County Transportation Authority, to Clerk of the Board, California Air Resources Board, RE: Proposed Update to the SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Targets and Environmental Analysis, Dated July 19, 2017
- D. Memorandum of Understanding Between Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) and Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA)

Prepared by:



Gregory Nord
Principal Transportation Analyst
(714) 560-5885

Approved by:



Kia Mortazavi
Executive Director, Planning
(714) 560-5741