



**March 4, 2019**

**To:** Regional Planning and Highways Committee

**From:** Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

**Subject:** Regional Planning Update

### **Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority has been working with partner agencies throughout the Southern California region on various planning and policy issues. This report serves to inform the Board of Directors on regional planning activities regarding the Southern California Association of Governments' 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, and other coordination activities.

### **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, 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' meetings;
- South Coast Air Quality Management District working groups;
- Interregional planning coordination meetings (OCTA, SCAG, the San Diego Association of Governments, and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Districts 7, 11, and 12); and
- SCAG technical working groups.

Since the last update in August 2018, there have been several important developments regarding ongoing and/or recently completed regional and statewide planning activities involving the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), and SCAG. 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*****CNRA – Update to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines**

In December 2018, the Office of Administrative Law approved CNRA's CEQA Guidelines (Guidelines) updates that included revised guidance for analyzing transportation impacts pursuant to SB 743 (Chapter 386, Statutes of 2013). The updated Guidelines state that the transportation impacts of a project are generally best measured by evaluating vehicle miles traveled (VMT) that are attributable to a project. The Guidelines also note that automobile delay is not a significant effect on the environment for land use projects. The new procedures authorized in the updated Guidelines may be used now, but they are not required until July 1, 2020, to allow time to update agency procedures.

For transportation projects, the Guidelines allow lead agencies discretion on which metric to use for evaluating a project's transportation impact. However, criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts must promote reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, development of multimodal transportation networks, and diversity of land uses. The Guidelines further indicate that transportation project impacts that are adequately addressed at a programmatic level (such as in a program environmental impact report [PEIR] for a Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy [RTP/SCS]) may tier from that analysis to potentially streamline project-level environmental analyses. Staff will coordinate with SCAG to address opportunities to tier off the 2020 RTP/SCS PEIR.

Staff is evaluating how the Guidelines may affect planned capacity enhancements such as the Measure M Freeway Program and buildout of the Master Plan of Arterial Highways. Caltrans has committed to implementing the Guidelines and will provide direction specific to state facilities. Similarly, OPR has developed a draft technical advisory document as discussed below. Once Caltrans and OPR finalize their recommendations, staff will have a better idea of the effect on planned projects.

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**OPR – Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA**

Complementing the updated CEQA Guidelines addressed above, OPR's draft technical advisory is intended to serve as a resource for planners, land use officials, and CEQA practitioners regarding the assessment of VMT, thresholds of significance, and mitigation measures for local agencies to use at their discretion. The draft technical advisory recommends assessing the amount of vehicle travel a transportation project will induce when adding capacity such as general-purpose lanes, high-occupancy vehicle lanes, auxiliary lanes, or lanes through grade-separated interchanges.

The technical advisory recommends that analysis of transportation projects also address the following:

- Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts;
- Near-term and long-term effects;
- Consistency with state GHG reduction goals;
- Impacts on development of multimodal transportation networks; and
- Impacts on development of a diversity of land uses.

Staff is currently reviewing the draft technical advisory, which is available for comment through March 15, 2019. Staff also intends to coordinate with SCAG to ensure Orange County project impacts are adequately addressed per the technical advisory in the 2020 RTP/SCS PEIR for potential tiering opportunities.

**SCAG – 2020 RTP/SCS Development**

The last SCAG RTP/SCS was adopted in 2016 and, per state and federal planning requirements, an updated plan must be adopted by April 2020.

Beginning in fall 2017 and ending October 1, 2018, SCAG solicited information from cities, counties, and subregions on current land use, anticipated population, household and employment growth, resource areas, sustainability practices, and local transit-supportive measures to document how the region is growing. The information gathered will be used to identify and evaluate potential future growth scenarios for Southern California and associated impacts on GHG emissions. Input from jurisdictions on locally anticipated household and population growth will also be used by SCAG as part of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment process with the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

Transportation project data from County Transportation Commissions was collected in November 2018, including the \$43.4 billion program of projects from OCTA, consistent with the final 2018 Long-Range Transportation Plan. SCAG is incorporating this data to conduct travel-demand modeling and air quality emissions analysis per state and federal requirements.

SCAG will be using scenario planning to develop, evaluate, and consider options to meet 2020 RTP/SCS goals. The scenarios will be presented in a series of public workshops by summer 2019 and will illustrate the impact of distinctive policy and investment choices. The growth scenarios will also be compared to a “base case” to evaluate the merits of regional decisions for the 2020 RTP/SCS. The base case takes into account locally planned growth, land use policies, sustainability practices, local transit-supportive plans and policies, and anticipated transportation improvements through the horizon year of the RTP/SCS.

On January 23, 2019, SCAG issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the 2020 RTP/SCS PEIR. A PEIR is a “first-tier” CEQA document designed to consider “broad policy alternatives and program wide mitigation measures” (state CEQA Guidelines Section 15168). The PEIR will evaluate potential direct and indirect effects, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts resulting from the RTP/SCS program of projects. It will also identify mitigation measures to address significant impacts. (Lead or responsible agencies have the discretion to determine at the project-level which mitigation measures are applicable and feasible, based on the project-specific circumstances.) As a first-tier document, the PEIR may serve as a resource for subsequent, project-specific environmental review documents. Project-level environmental analyses will be prepared by implementing agencies (such as OCTA) as individual projects proceed through the development process. Staff will coordinate with SCAG on opportunities to tier from the 2020 RTP/SCS PEIR.

Key milestone dates for the development of the 2020 RTP/SCS are summarized below:

- January 2019 – PEIR NOP release;
- End of June 2019 – Modeling completed;
- October 2019 – Draft 2020 RTP/SCS released for public review;
- November 2019 – Draft PEIR released for public review; and
- April 2020 – SCAG Regional Council adopts 2020 RTP/SCS and 2020 RTP/SCS PEIR.

***Summary***

Staff is engaged in ongoing activities regarding transportation planning in Orange County and Southern California. Several of these activities involve efforts to address environmental impacts associated with planned transportation investments. Staff intends to remain engaged to protect the interests of OCTA. Most of these activities are still developing, and staff will return with updates as necessary.

***Attachment***

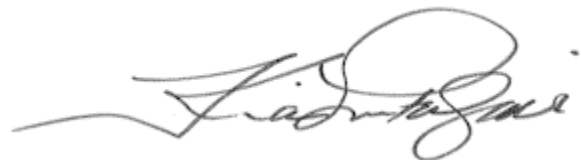
- A. March 2019, Regional Planning Activities

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