



# MOTORIST SERVICES UPDATE

**Fiscal Year 2018-19**

## **Introduction**

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) serves as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) and the management agency for the Orange County Taxi Administration Program (OCTAP). SAFE and OCTAP are both managed by the Motorist Services Department of the Operations Division. SAFE operates the call box system, the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program and also participates as a partner with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California Highway Patrol (CHP), Los Angeles County SAFE (LA SAFE), and Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC), in the development and operation of the Southern California 511 Motorist Aid and Traffic Information System (511).

OCTAP permits taxicab companies, taxicab vehicles, and taxicab drivers on behalf of Orange County (County) and its 33 participating cities, ensuring that program permit requirements are met prior to issuing an operating permit. OCTAP performs permitting functions and monitors for continued permit eligibility. Local law enforcement agencies enforce OCTAP regulations in the field, through the adoption of OCTAP regulations into their local municipal codes.

This report provides a summary of activities that occurred during fiscal year (FY) 2018-19.

## **Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies**

### ***Call Box System***

The OCTA SAFE operates a network of call boxes located on freeways, toll roads, select state highways, and select transit centers. Funding to operate the call box system comes from a \$1 registration fee on vehicles registered in the County, which generated approximately \$2,993,529 in FY 2018-19. Revenue from the \$1 registration fee pays for the cost of contracted maintenance, call-answering services, call box cellular phone service, the proportional share of the actual wage for one-half of the CHP SAFE Coordinator position, and the proportional share of the wages and benefits of Motorist Services staff. Remaining revenue support the 511 and Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) motorist aid programs.

Highway call box numbers include call boxes temporarily removed for construction. There are currently 384 call boxes located on freeways and toll roads, and 26 call boxes located on Carbon Canyon Road, Ortega Highway, and Santiago Canyon Road.

SAFE will be required to implement a radio upgrade in FY 2020-21, as cellular service providers abandon their 4G cellular networks for newer cellular technologies. To address this technology change, staff will prepare a replacement plan that may include additional call box reductions and placing more emphasis on mobile call box functionality within the 511 system.

## Motorist Services Update

### Fiscal Year 2018-19

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Call box cellular service is provided on the AT&T Global System for Mobiles network, through an agreement available under the National Association of State Procurement Officers (NASPO). OCTA realizes significant savings under the NASPO rate structure.

Forty-one call boxes were knocked down or damaged because of vehicle collisions in FY 2018-19, resulting in repair costs of \$137,828. Staff worked with CHP accident investigators and OCTA Risk Management to recover costs associated with repairing call boxes when possible. The maintenance and service contract includes a provision for the replacement of 10 percent (or 41 callboxes) per year. Due to this provision, OCTA incurred no additional costs for repair. Repair costs recovered through loss claims are used to help offset the cost of the maintenance and service contract. During FY 2018-19, \$25,942 was recovered for call box knockdowns. This includes \$13,511 for knockdowns occurring during FY 2018-19 and \$12,431 recovered from claims made during previous FYs. An additional \$20,571 is pending investigation and subrogation.

Table 1 provides a summary of knockdown and recovery efforts for FY 2018-19. Table 2 provides a summary of funds recovered from previous year knockdowns.

**Tables 1 and 2 – Call Box Knockdown Loss Recovery**

| FY 2018-19 Knockdowns |   |                  |     |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|-----|
| 34                    | Unrecoverable - No Accident Report Available        | \$103,744        | 75% |
| 4                     | Submitted to Risk Management for Recovery (Pending) | \$20,572         | 15% |
| 3                     | Recovered by Risk Management During Same FY         | \$13,511         | 10% |
| <b>41</b>             | <b>Total FY 2018 Knockdowns</b>                     | <b>\$137,828</b> |     |

| Risk Management Previous Year Recovery Progress    |          |
|--|----------|
| Recovered in FY 2018-19 from Previous Fiscal Years | \$12,431 |
| Pending from Previous Fiscal Years                 | \$4,993  |

Mobile Call Box (MCB) – 511 service was deployed as part of the 511 system on July 26, 2012. MCB service allows motorists to reach assistance using a personal cell phone, rather than using a freeway call box, by calling 511. The calls are routed to the OCTA call box call-answering center, similar to utilizing a freeway call box. During FY 2018-19, the contracted call-answering center answered 1,049 calls for assistance through the call box system, which is 16 percent lower than calls received in FY 2017-18, and 4,298 calls for motorist aid through the MCB system, which was 11 percent higher

## Motorist Services Update

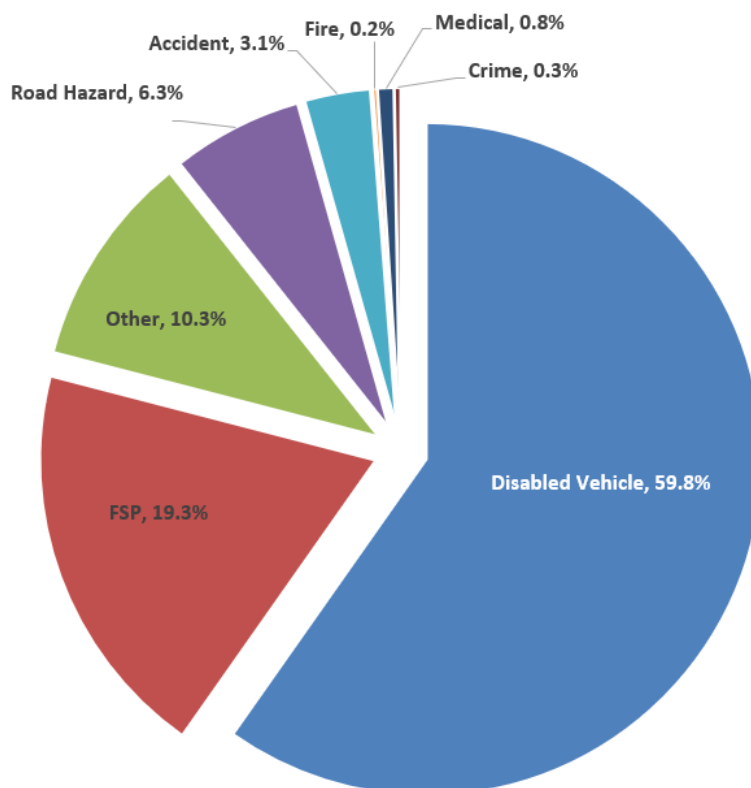
### Fiscal Year 2018-19

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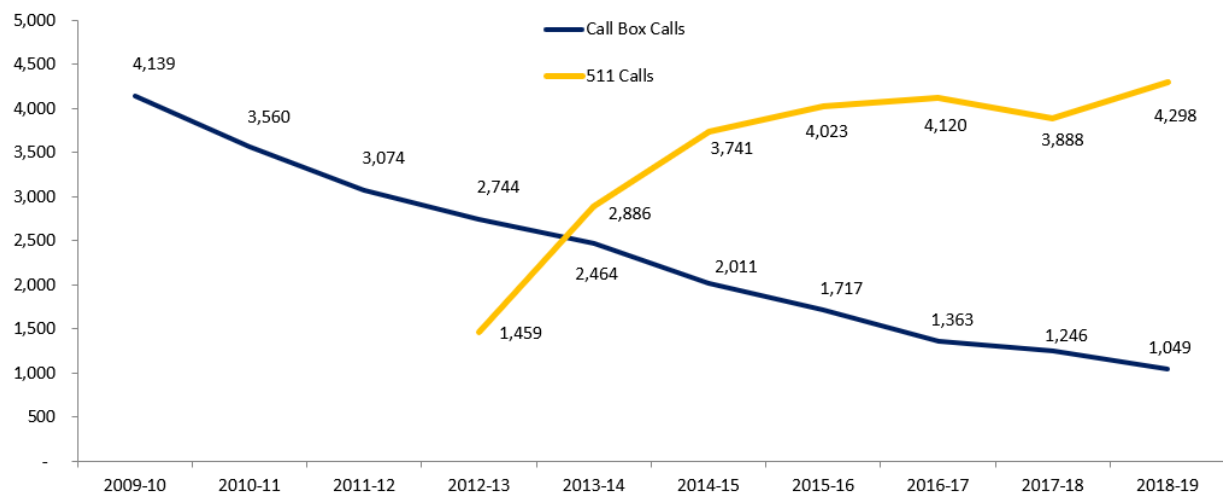
than FY 2017-18. Overall, Orange County calls for motorist assistance increased four percent in FY 2018-19.

Seventy-nine percent of the FY 2018-19 calls were for disabled vehicles or requests for FSP service. These calls included vehicles with flat tires, vehicles out of gas, vehicles overheated, or vehicles that were not operable due to a mechanical problem. When calls are received on roadways where and when FSP is deployed, a truck is dispatched to the caller's location to provide assistance. Calls received for road hazards, accidents, medical incidents, crimes, and fires are dispatched to the appropriate first responder. When a call is received from a call box on a roadway where and/or when FSP does not operate, such as on the toll roads, Carbon Canyon Road, Ortega Highway, and Santiago Canyon Road, the call-answering center assists the caller by offering to send a CHP rotation tow truck (at the caller's expense), by calling a road side assistance provider subscribed to by the caller, or by calling a family member or friend. Figure 1 depicts FY 2018-19 combined call box and 511 motorist aid calls by type. Figure 2 shows call box and 511 call volumes for the last ten years.

**Figure 1 - FY 2018-19 Combined Call Box and 511 Motorist Aid Calls by Type**



**Figure 2 - Annual Call Box and 511 Call Volumes**



Reasons for the decline in freeway call box calls likely include the expanded availability and use of cell phones, increased awareness of MBC functionality, increased awareness of the availability of roving FSP service during peak commute hours as well as expanded midday and weekend FSP service.

### ***Freeway Service Patrol***

FSP is a traffic congestion management program designed for the rapid removal of disabled vehicles from traffic lanes and shoulders, as well as timely response to accidents or incidents that require the removal of vehicles and/or debris from freeway traffic lanes. The FSP program is a partnership among Caltrans, CHP, and OCTA. OCTA contracts with private tow companies to provide this service. Each tow truck operator patrols an assigned freeway segment during service hours, stopping to assist stranded motorists. The tow truck operator offers assistance, such as changing a flat tire, providing a free gallon of gas, or taping a coolant hose. If assistance cannot be completed to restore the vehicle to driving condition within ten minutes, the tow truck operator will tow the vehicle off the freeway to a designated drop zone.

FSP began providing peak-hour service along county freeways in November 1992. FSP service during peak hours (6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.) is divided into ten areas (excluding construction zones), called service areas. Service areas are further divided into 34 peak hour beats. Five midday beats (10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) were added in 2007 and are now funded by Measure M2 (M2). Two additional midday beats were added in 2012 using M2 funds to cover congested areas of the freeway and major interchanges. Weekend service is operated on Interstate 5 (I-5) in South County, on State Route 91 (SR-91) through Anaheim Canyon, and on State Route 22 through the I-5 and State Route 57 (SR-57) interchanges using M2 funds. FSP service is also provided during non-peak hours (10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) in certain construction zone areas. In 2018, the Road Repair and Accountability Act, also

## **Motorist Services Update**

### ***Fiscal Year 2018-19***

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known as SB1, provided additional funding for new or expanded service. Additionally, FSP was deployed on SR-91 and SR-57 using SB1 funds.

The FSP program is funded through a combination of state and local funds including funds from the State Highway Account (SHA), SB1, through a \$1 fee on vehicle registration that supports the call box program and other motorist aid services, and through Measure M2 (M2). These funds pay for contracted towing services, CHP overtime attributable to the FSP program, one CHP dispatcher position, radio maintenance and operation, computer equipment maintenance and operation, field equipment and supplies, mandatory quarterly training, and the proportional share of the wages and benefits of Motorist Services staff.

Funds from M2 became available to support the FSP program in FY 2010-11. Guidelines for the use of M2 FSP funds were approved by the OCTA Board of Directors on February 13, 2012, and outlined as Project N of the M2 guidelines.

In April 2017, the Governor of California signed SB1 into law. The SB1 legislative package includes \$25 million dollars annually for California FSP programs. Caltrans has divided SB1 funding into two specific categories, namely, for inflation relief and new or expanded service.

SHA and SB1 funding is distributed to SAFE agencies based on freeway congestion levels, urban freeway lane miles, population in each county where FSP is operated, and local agency ability to provide required matching funds.

At least every three years, Caltrans contracts with a consultant to prepare a statewide benefit cost (B/C) analysis of the FSP program. The model used for the B/C analysis was developed by the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, following extensive field measurements before and after FSP deployment. The model estimates delay-saving benefits based on the FSP beats' geometric and traffic characteristics, as well as the frequency and type of FSP-assisted freeway incidents. The estimated benefits include reductions in incident-induced vehicular delays, fuel consumption, and air pollution emissions.

A B/C analysis for FY 2017-18 was completed in FY 2018-19. Results of the analysis for the OCTA FSP beats indicate that OCTA FSP maintains the highest B/C ratio in the state, providing an average of \$9.00 of congestion relief benefit for each dollar spent during weekday peak operating hours and \$7.00 of congestion relief benefit for each dollar spent during weekend operating hours. The combined program average is estimated to be \$9.00 of congestion relief benefit for each dollar spent on the program. Because the program provides significantly more service on weekdays than on weekends, the weekend service has little impact on the blended B/C average. While the OCTA FSP program has the one of the highest B/C ratios statewide, this represents a \$4.00 per hour decrease in B/C compared to FY 2016-17. Increased program and tow service costs, a reduction in the number of assists completed because of increased time required to complete documentation, and reductions in traffic congestion are believed to be the

## Motorist Services Update

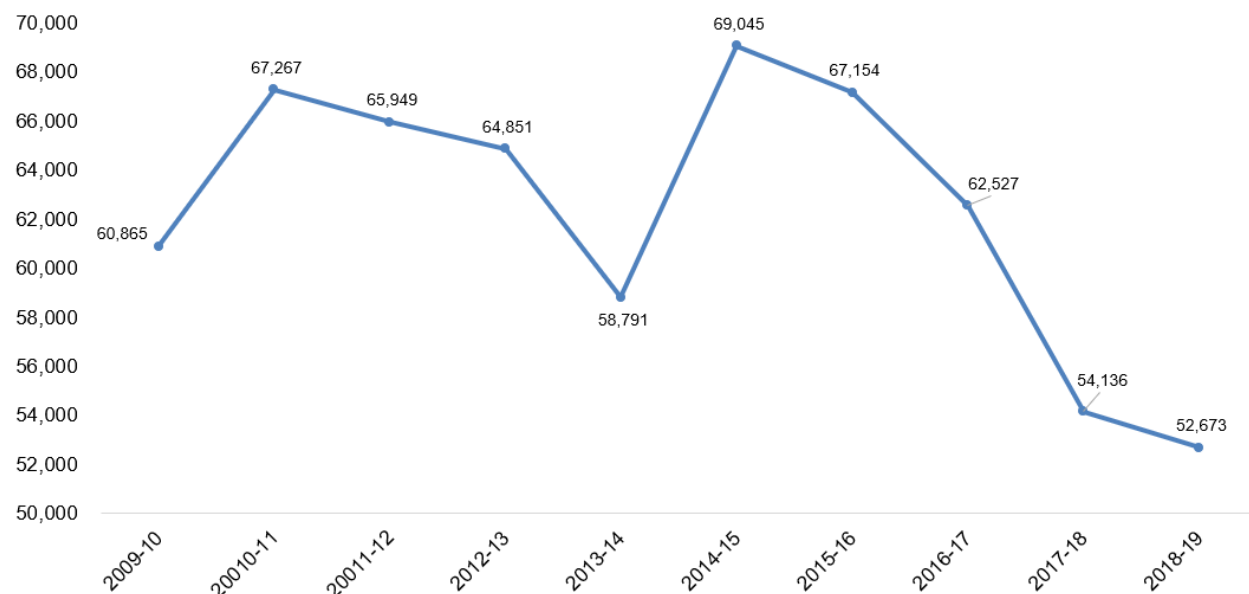
### Fiscal Year 2018-19

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primary contributors to the decrease in B/C. Caltrans plans to have a FY 2018-19 B/C analysis completed by the fourth quarter of FY 2019-20.

FSP tow truck operators provided 52,673 unique assists to motorists whose vehicles had become disabled in FY 2018-19, a 3 percent decrease from FY 2017-18. Reasons for the decrease in the number of assists include changes to CHP requirements that operators complete all assist paperwork and logbooks off the freeway, and more frequent assists requiring a tow off the freeway. Program supervisors have also been required to move some FSP drop zones further from the freeway due to changes in city parking regulations, which has increased the length of time required to complete an assist when a vehicle is towed off the freeway. These changes to the program operation all result in a reduction of the time that an FSP vehicle is available for service. Figure 3 shows total services provided annually for the last ten years.

**Figure 3 - Total Annual FSP Services**



In January 2013, staff deployed a new vehicle tracking and data collection system that utilizes OCTA-provided in-vehicle cradle point routers for vehicle tracking and tow contractor-provided iPad tablet devices for data collection. System functionality includes geo-fencing, schedule adherence, system alerts, and advanced reporting features designed to enhance program tracking. The data collection system includes a customer survey module that allows customers to complete an online survey. Most disabled vehicles are discovered by FSP operators while patrolling their service beats; however, CHP may also dispatch calls for service through the system from requests that come in through the call box, 511 and 911 systems, or through a CHP officer request. During FY 2013-14, FSP drivers were not entering assists that were dispatched by CHP through the mobile data terminal. Staff addressed the issue of inconsistent data collection for dispatched calls with FSP contractors and implemented procedures for manual data collection should a driver be unable to enter assist data into the automated system.

## Motorist Services Update

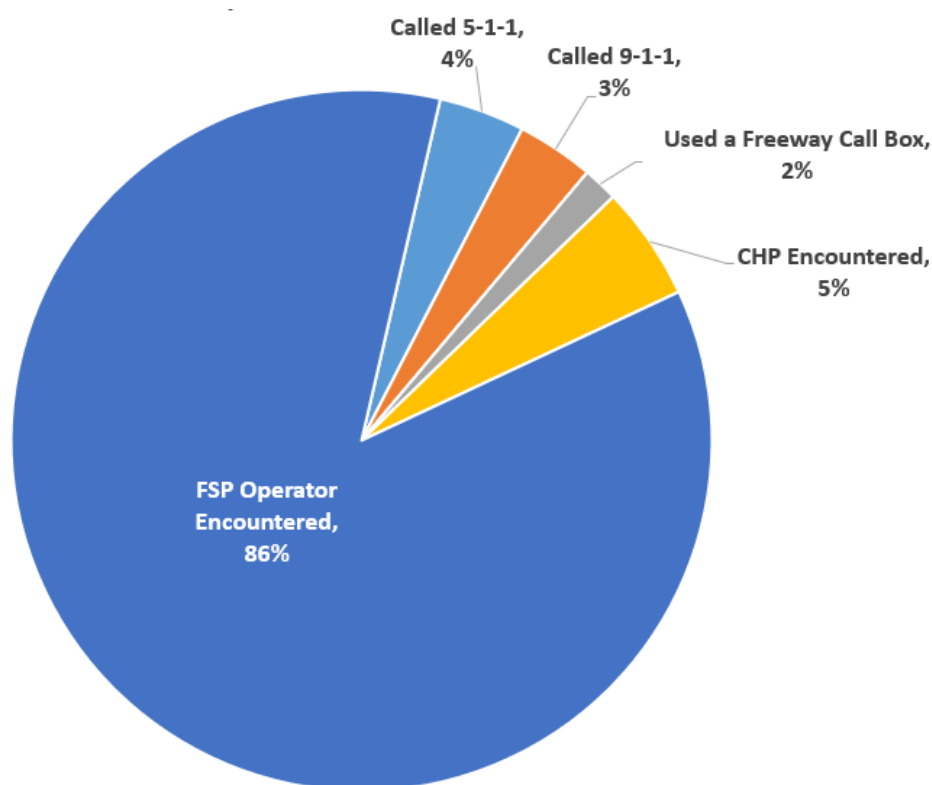
### Fiscal Year 2018-19

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This has led to better data collection practices, an increase in data capture, a better understanding of the assist data, and more accurate overall performance reporting. Recent trends of more vehicles requiring tows off the freeway and increased time spent on each assist associated with CHP requirements to pull off the freeway to enter assist data have led to reductions in the overall number of assists provided.

Customers receive FSP assistance through a variety of methods. Survey responses from customers who received FSP assistance indicate that 86 percent of FSP assists are initiated through FSP operator discovery of the vehicle. Figure 4 shows how survey respondents received FSP service in FY 2018-19.

**Figure 4 – How FSP Customers Received Service – FY 2018-19**



When an FSP operator stops to provide assistance, the operator initiates an incident using the tablet device. After completing the assist, the operator enters basic vehicle and location information, type of service provided, and closes the assist transaction. The system then returns the operator to an “On Patrol” status. The customer, at their convenience, may complete a web-based customer survey to provide feedback about their experience.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of assists by type for FY 2018-19. The highest number of recorded assists required that the vehicle be towed, followed by the changing of a flat tire and providing a gallon of gasoline. Information Assist generally refers to incidents where tow operators discover a motorist stopped on the side of the road whose vehicle is not



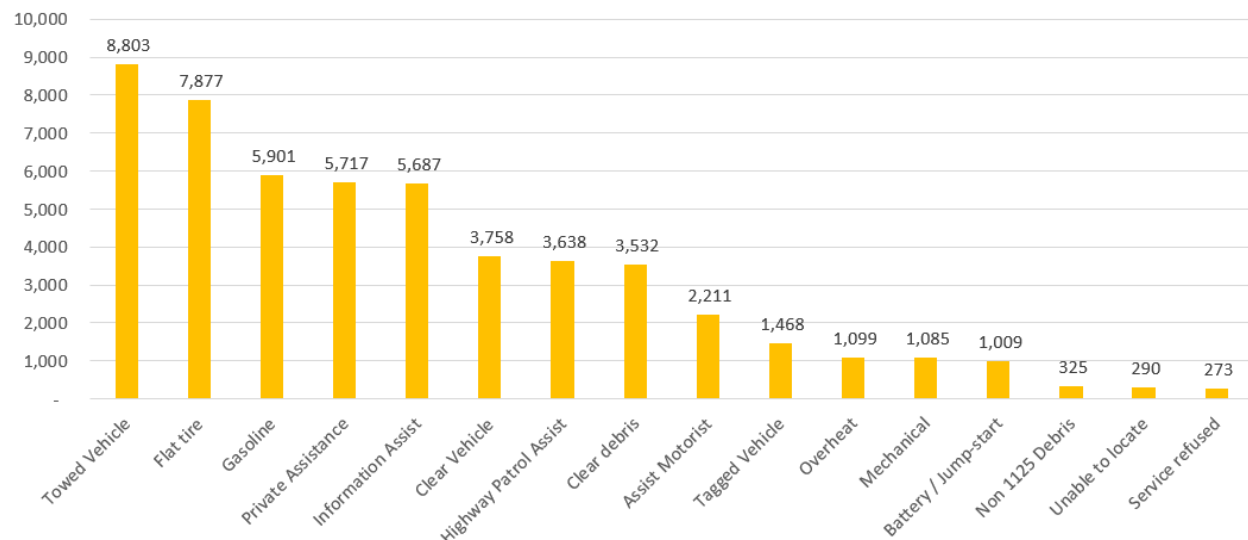
## Motorist Services Update

### Fiscal Year 2018-19

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disabled. Reasons motorists are stopped on the side of the freeway often include navigation, telephone calls, texting, emailing, and resting.

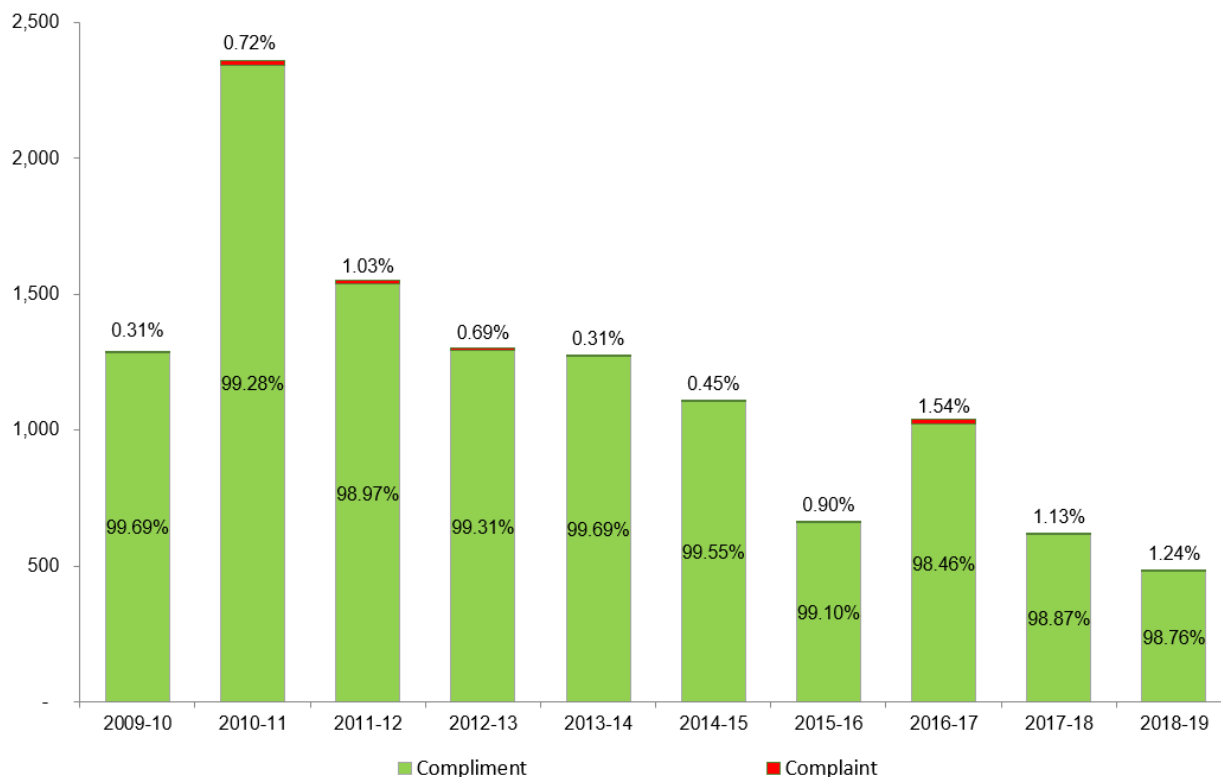
**Figure 5 - FSP Assists by Type – FY 2018-19**



Primary assist types include changing a flat tire, information assist, providing a gallon of gasoline, waiting for private assistance, towing a vehicle to a designated drop zone if unable to remedy the issue within program guidelines, and assisting CHP officers. Other assist types include clearing disabled vehicles or debris from the freeway traffic lanes, tagging unattended vehicles for CHP attention, or assisting motorists with overheated vehicles or with minor mechanical defects.

The FSP program recorded 485 customer comments through the Customer Relations call center and FSP online customer survey in FY 2018-19. Callers who were happy with the service comprise 99 percent of the total comments with approximately one percent not satisfied with the service. Complaints included dissatisfaction with the service provided, operator driving technique, and claims for damage. A CHP Program Supervisor investigates each customer complaint and provides a response to the complaining party. CHP Program Supervisors also follow-up with FSP contractors and tow operators as appropriate to address customer concerns and to prevent future occurrences. Claims for damage range from stripped or broken wheel studs to damage caused as the result of a collision. OCTA is shielded from claims for damage by contract language that requires FSP contractors to name OCTA as additional insured and to indemnify and hold OCTA harmless against any claims for loss or damage. Figure 6 charts compliments and complaints received for the last ten years.

**Figure 6 - FSP Customer Comments**



In FY 2012-13, staff implemented a new web-based survey as part of the new LATATrax system, which was later transitioned to the Survey Monkey platform. The survey allows staff to gear survey questions toward specific performance areas such as time waited before assist, FSP operator courtesy, FSP operator knowledge, overall experience, and overall satisfaction with the service. The web-based survey also helps reduce OCTA costs associated with calls received by the Customer Relations Call Center for FSP program customer comments. Tables 3, 4, and 5 show that 97 percent of the respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with three key service statements, with approximately one percent indicating that they did not agree. Customers who reported dissatisfaction (disagree) with the survey area and provided contact information were contacted for follow-up.

**Table 3 - Safety**

| The FSP Operator was concerned for my safety |              |              |               |                |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Fiscal Year                                  | Disagree     | Neutral      | Agree         | Strongly Agree |
| 2014   | 3            | 4            | 31            | 237            |
| 2015   | 2            | 2            | 44            | 264            |
| 2016   | 2            | 3            | 14            | 155            |
| 2017   | 5            | 8            | 34            | 223            |
| 2018   | 1            | 6            | 11            | 128            |
| <b>2019</b>                                  | <b>0</b>     | <b>6</b>     | <b>3</b>      | <b>60</b>      |
| <b>Percentage</b>                            | <b>1.20%</b> | <b>2.32%</b> | <b>10.98%</b> | <b>85.50%</b>  |

**Table 4 – Professionalism**

| The FSP Operator was knowledgeable and professional |              |              |              |                |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Fiscal Year   | Disagree     | Neutral      | Agree        | Strongly Agree |
| 2014  | 1            | 2            | 8            | 265            |
| 2015  | 0            | 2            | 16           | 292            |
| 2016  | 2            | 2            | 10           | 159            |
| 2017  | 4            | 9            | 24           | 232            |
| 2018  | 3            | 2            | 10           | 131            |
| <b>2019</b>   | <b>0</b>     | <b>2</b>     | <b>2</b>     | <b>64</b>      |
| <b>Percentage</b>                                   | <b>0.96%</b> | <b>1.53%</b> | <b>5.63%</b> | <b>91.88%</b>  |

**Table 5 – Courtesy**

| The FSP Operator treated me with courtesy and respect |              |              |              |                |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Fiscal Year   | Disagree     | Neutral      | Agree        | Strongly Agree |
| 2014  | 2            | 1            | 8            | 264            |
| 2015  | 1            | 1            | 13           | 298            |
| 2016  | 3            | 3            | 3            | 164            |
| 2017  | 9            | 2            | 22           | 233            |
| 2018  | 3            | 3            | 3            | 137            |
| <b>2019</b>   | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>2</b>     | <b>66</b>      |
| <b>Percentage</b>                                     | <b>1.45%</b> | <b>0.81%</b> | <b>4.11%</b> | <b>93.63%</b>  |

***Southern California 511 Motorist Aid and Traffic Information System***

The 511 system is a partnership between Caltrans, CHP, LA SAFE, OCTA, and VCTC, to provide a motorist aid and traveler information system for Orange, Los Angeles, and Ventura counties. The official launch of the 511 system occurred in January 2011. The Go511 mobile application was launched in May 2014. The 511 system allows travelers and commuters to access up-to-the minute information on highway conditions, traffic speeds, transit, and commuter services via the Go511 mobile application, the same information that they receive by dialing 511 from their telephone. Also, by visiting Go511.com, users can obtain similar information compared to calling 511. Driving directions and information on bicycling, airports, and taxis are also available.

In FY 2016-17, LA SAFE, with participation from OCTA staff, procured a vendor for the further development of the 511 system. Known to the project partners as the Next Gen 511, the project provides a more robust interactive voice response system for callers, a less governmental looking interface for web users, and improved mobile content for application users. The Next Gen 511 project also aims to establish cooperative agreements with the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA), to bring Riverside and San Bernardino into the 511 system and rebrand the system from “Go511” to “SoCal511.” LA SAFE and OCTA staff are still working with staff from RCTC and SBCTA to develop the necessary cooperative agreements to implement this part of the project and hope to have RCTC and SBCTA integrated into the SoCall511 system in the third quarter of FY 2019-20.

Southern California 511 Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system services were transitioned to a new vendor as part of 511 system next-generation development. The IVR received an average of 49,000 calls per month during FY 2018-19, with seven percent of the calls originating in Orange County. Although the total number of 511 calls are down when compared to FY 2017-18, the percentage of calls originating from Orange County increased from five percent to seven percent. Figure 7 displays the number of IVR calls received during FY 2018-19, along with the percentage of calls that originated from Orange County.

**Figure 7 - 511 IVR Calls Received, Calls with Orange County Percentages**

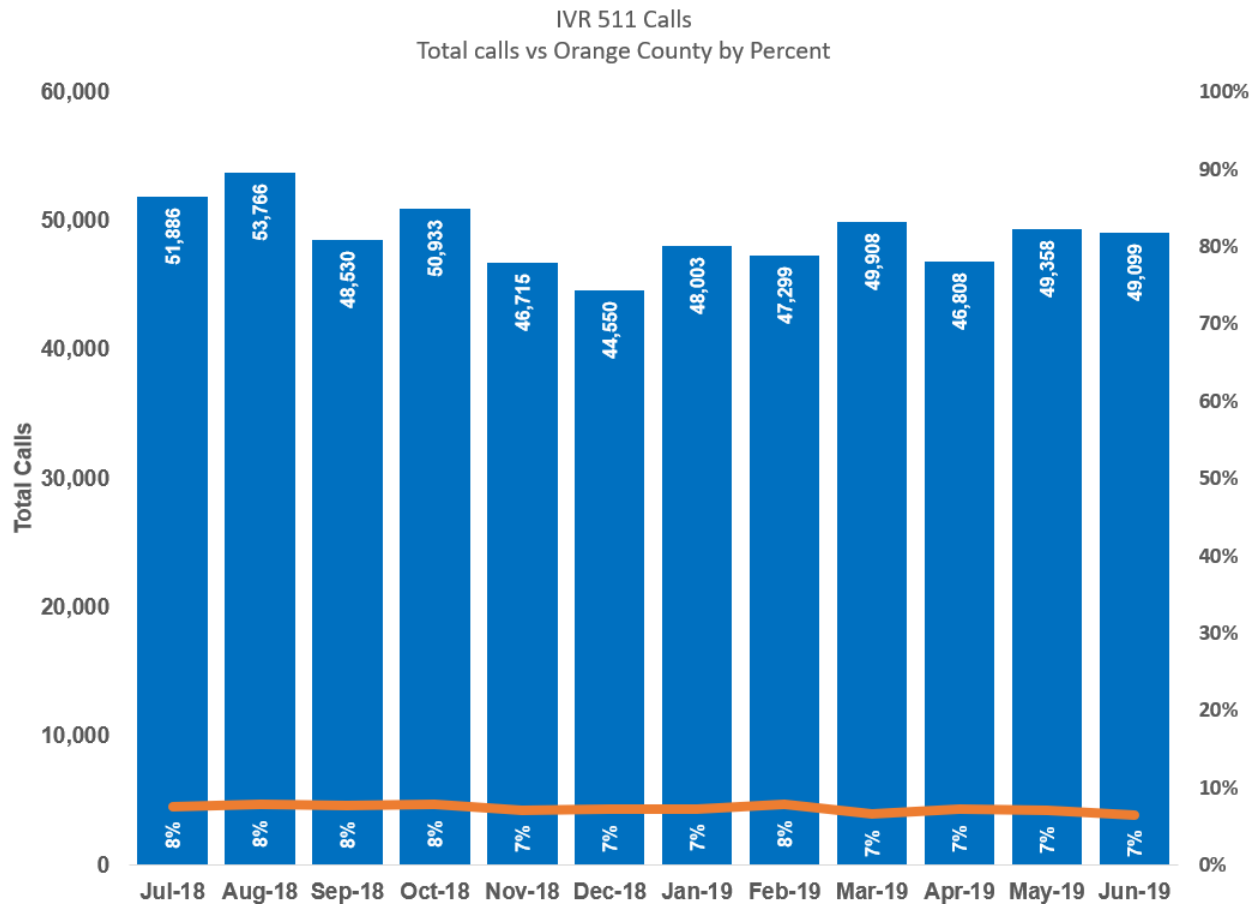


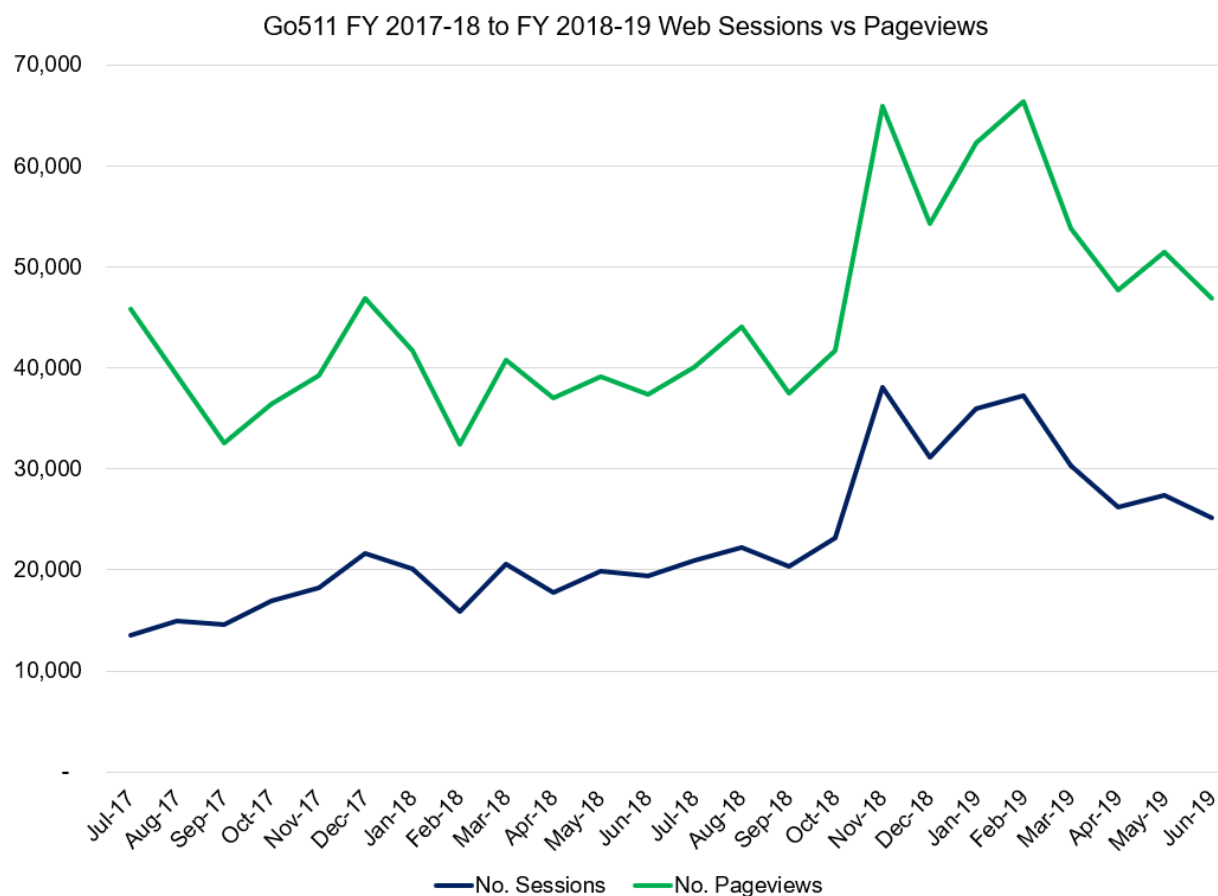
Table 6 displays the number of Go511.com website visits and page views during FY 2018-19 for Los Angeles and Orange counties. The Go511.com website received an average of 28,204 hits per month, up 7.5 percent from an average 24,489 hits per month in FY 2017-18. The decline in website visits may be due to the previous vendor reporting each page that was viewed in addition to website hits (essentially double counting). To ensure reporting consistency, LA SAFE and OCTA staff are now using data available through Google Analytics to track website sessions and page views. This data is more reliable and will be consistent, regardless of the vendor contracted to provide support and web content development for the Go511 website. Figure 8 shows the number of website visits and page views for FY 2017-18.

**Motorist Services Update**  
**Fiscal Year 2018-19**

**Table 6 - Southern California 511 Usage by Quarter – FY 2017-18**

|                             | 1st Quarter<br>Jul-Sep 2018 | 2nd Quarter<br>Oct-Dec 2018 | 3rd Quarter<br>Jan-Mar 2019 | 4th Quarter<br>Apr-Jun 2019 | Total   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Number of Website Sessions  | 63,622                      | 92,449                      | 103,619                     | 78,751                      | 338,441 |
| Number of Website Pageviews | 121,721                     | 162,005                     | 182,529                     | 146,105                     | 612,360 |
| <b>IVR Calls Received</b>   |                             |                             |                             |                             |         |
| Total IVR Calls             | 154,182                     | 142,198                     | 145,210                     | 145,265                     | 586,855 |
| Orange County               | 11,932                      | 10,540                      | 10,517                      | 10,063                      | 43,052  |

**Figure 8 – Go511 Web Sessions versus Pageviews**



To increase motorist awareness of the 511 program in Orange County, staff initiated an awareness campaign distributing 511 logo promotional materials to the public through FSP operators assisting motorists, through the OCTA store and reception area at OCTA's 600 building, through distribution to bus patrons using OC Fair Express, at the KABC Holiday Stuff-A-Bus event, and at other events as appropriate. In FY 2017-18, staff

## Motorist Services Update

### Fiscal Year 2018-19

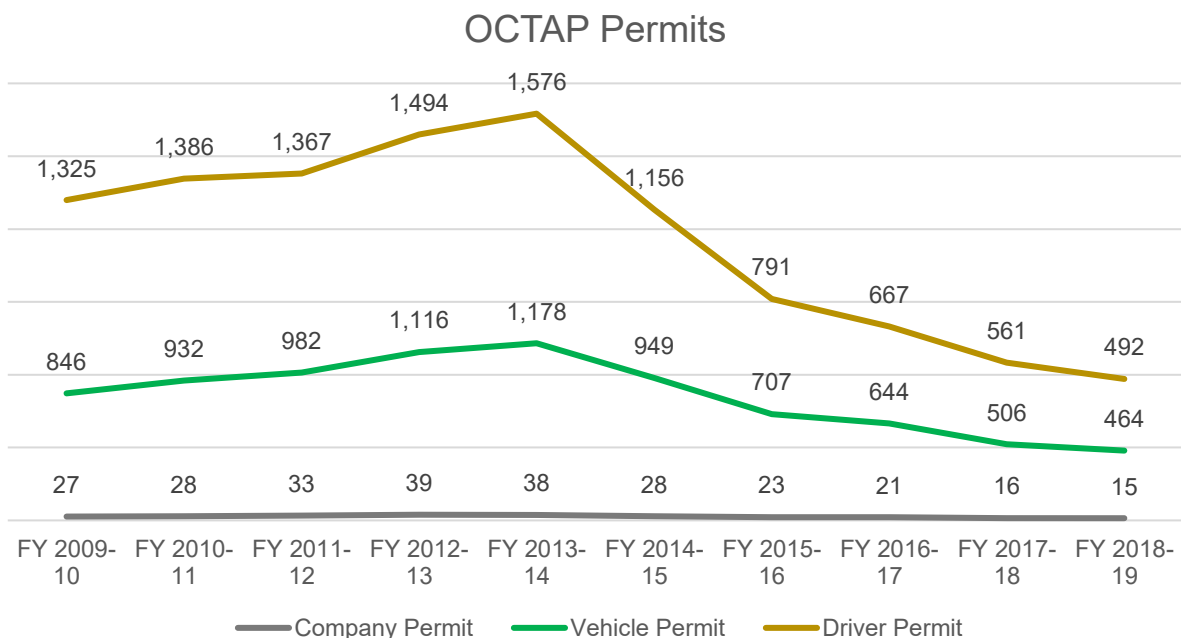
applied 511 Motorist Aid decals on all Orange County Freeway call boxes to help increase awareness of mobile call box functionality within the 511 program. Users dialing 511 and selecting Motorist Assistance from an Orange County, Ventura County, or Los Angeles County freeway will reach the call box call center and may obtain roadside assistance as if calling from a freeway call box. Staff will continue to market the 511 program to increase public awareness of the program and has initiated the marketing of the changeover to “SoCal511” which will eventually include Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

## OCTAP

The OCTAP staff manages taxi permitting processes, performs vehicle inspections, administers OCTAP regulations, and oversees compliance by taxicab companies and drivers on behalf of Orange County and its 33 participating cities. These activities are funded through annual permit fees and fines paid by permit holders, and by participating agency contributions.

At the close of FY 2018-19, OCTAP issued permits to 15 taxicab companies, 464 taxicab vehicles, and 492 taxicab drivers to operate in Orange County. A continuing decline in the number of taxi permits issued in FY 2018-19 can be attributed to the strong competition in the taxi industry from Transportation Network Companies like Uber and Lyft. Figure 9 shows the history of OCTAP permitted taxicab companies, vehicles, and drivers for the last ten years.

**Figure 9 – OCTAP Operating Permits – On June 30 each year.**



**Motorist Services Update**  
***Fiscal Year 2018-19***

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Although not mandated by OCTAP regulations, more than 57 percent of permitted taxicabs are clean-fuel vehicles. Thirty-four percent of permitted taxicabs have the capacity to carry five or more passengers, with approximately 20 percent of the vehicles being wheelchair accessible.

In addition to permitting taxicab companies, drivers, and vehicles, OCTAP staff performs regulation compliance checks, issues warnings, assesses fines, suspends permits, revokes permits, and performs other administrative functions on behalf of the member agencies. Permit holders who are issued a fine, have their permit suspended or revoked, along with new applicants who are denied a permit, have the right to appeal the action. Representatives of the OCTAP member agencies hear the appeals and render a decision on the action.