




**May 4, 2020**

**To:** Executive Committee

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

**Subject:** Proposed Amendment to the Orange County Local Transportation Authority Measure M2 Ordinance No. 3

### **Overview**

The voter-approved Measure M2 Ordinance No. 3 requires that local jurisdictions meet a maintenance of effort requirement to remain eligible to receive Measure M2 funding. Local jurisdictions are experiencing a significant decline in general fund revenues because of the novel coronavirus pandemic, which is expected to impact their ability to meet this maintenance of effort requirement. An amendment to the ordinance is recommended to assist the local jurisdictions through this unprecedented period of economic uncertainty. The proposed amendment is presented for Board of Directors' consideration, and approval is requested to set a public hearing date initiating the amendment process.

### **Recommendations**

- A. Direct staff to initiate the process to amend the Orange County Local Transportation Authority Measure M2 Ordinance No. 3 to address the anticipated near-term negative growth in general fund revenues as it relates to the maintenance of effort requirement.
- B. Direct staff to set a date of June 22, 2020, for a public hearing and Board of Directors action to consider adoption of the amendment to the Orange County Local Transportation Authority Measure M2 Ordinance No. 3 as it relates to the maintenance of effort requirement.
- C. Approve updates to the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Measure M2 Eligibility Guidelines, including revised maintenance of effort forms addressing the changes needed to implement the proposed amendment.

### ***Background***

In November 2006, Orange County voters approved the Renewed Measure M2 Ordinance No. 3, also called Measure M2 (M2). The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is committed to fulfilling the promises made in M2. This means delivering all projects and programs included in the M2 Expenditure Plan and complying with the specific requirements identified in the M2 Ordinance No. 3 (M2 Ordinance). Also included in the M2 Ordinance is an amendment process to address unforeseen circumstances.

Over the next few months, OCTA and local jurisdictions will have a clearer picture of the implications of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its impact to sales tax revenues, fuel sales, and local agency general fund revenues (GFR). However, action is currently needed to ensure that OCTA can continue providing funds to eligible local jurisdictions.

Local jurisdictions are required to meet specific requirements in order to receive M2 revenues, one of which is related to maintenance of effort (MOE) spending levels. MOE is the amount the local jurisdiction's spend in discretionary non-transportation funds, or GFR, for streets and roads purposes. The intent is to ensure that M2 revenues do not supplant funding for streets and roads that a local jurisdiction was previously spending.

The original MOE level was established in 1991 with the first Measure M (M1) program using a five-year average of the funding amount local jurisdictions spent on streets and roads maintenance and construction between 1985 and 1990. The MOE amount remained unchanged during the 20-year life of M1; therefore, it did not keep pace with annual inflation. Recognizing the need for an adjustment, a process was included in the M2 Ordinance to update the MOE amount every three years. The adjustment is determined by looking back at the California Department of Transportation construction cost index growth during a three-year period and applying that growth rate to the MOE, with the exception that the increase cannot be greater than the jurisdiction's increase in GFR for the same period. The most recent adjustment approved by the Board of Directors (Board) on April 13, 2020, is only the third adjustment to the original MOE as established under M1.

### ***Discussion***

Because of the potential economic impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic, a limited amendment to the MOE requirements is proposed to ensure local jurisdictions can continue receiving M2 revenues. The M2 Ordinance requires jurisdictions to annually submit two items to OCTA related to MOE:

- 1) MOE certification – before the start of the annual fiscal year budget, local jurisdictions must certify that sufficient expenditures have been budgeted to meet the MOE benchmark.
- 2) Expenditure report – annually, local jurisdictions must submit a detailed financial report. This report is used to validate eligible uses of M2 funds and to report actual MOE expenditures to meet the MOE benchmark requirement.

These requirements – outlined in Section 6 of the M2 Ordinance, and in Section III of Attachment B to the M2 Ordinance – must be met in order for local jurisdictions to continue to receive M2 revenues. Attachment A provides the existing MOE language as included in the M2 Ordinance.

The M2 Ordinance allows for amendments for unforeseen circumstances, which is noted and further discussed in Section 12 of the M2 Ordinance. A specific process for amendments was established by the OCTA Board during M1 and has continued in M2. Amendments to the M2 Ordinance, which do not affect the Transportation Investment Plan, require a two-thirds vote from the OCTA Board, as well as a public hearing and notification process.

As the state-designated Local Transportation Sales Tax Authority responsible for administering M2, OCTA is committed to upholding the intent of the M2 Ordinance. As such, amendments should only be proposed when absolutely necessary to keep the M2 promises to voters. Amendments to M2 are not a normal occurrence. Over the last 29 years, between both M1 and M2, there have only been four ordinance amendments. During this same period, there have been ten plan amendments. Ordinance amendments are corrective changes in nature versus plan amendments, which address funding needs and cost savings through reallocation of funds between projects and programs within the same mode. The change required for MOE will require an ordinance amendment. Attachment B provides information on the amendment process, the language on amendments from the M2 Ordinance, and a history of the prior amendments.

Given the financial impacts anticipated to occur as a result of COVID-19, it will be challenging for all local jurisdictions to satisfy MOE expenditure report requirements for fiscal year (FY) 2019-20 and MOE certification and expenditure report requirements for FY 2020-21. For reference, OCTA sales tax collections in FY 2018-2019 were \$331 million. Due to COVID-19, OCTA is anticipating a 33 percent decline in sales tax in the fourth quarter of FY 2019-20. As a result, OCTA anticipates finishing FY 2019-20 with \$303 million in sales tax receipts, which represents a \$28 million (8.5 percent) decrease in sales tax when compared to FY 2018-19. In addition, an early forecast by Muni Services, the firm that prepares OCTA's short-term forecasted growth rate, is anticipating an additional 4.5 percent reduction in sales tax for FY 2020-21 to \$290 million.

In total, OCTA anticipates collecting \$41 million (12.4 percent) less sales tax in FY 2020-21 than in FY 2018-19 due to COVID-19.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 may not permit local jurisdictions to meet the MOE benchmark requirement for the FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21. Initial estimates, based upon an informal OCTA poll, indicate local jurisdictions expect, on average, an approximate seven percent reduction in FY 2019-20 revenues (with some estimates as high as 14 percent), and an approximate seven percent reduction in FY 2020-21 revenues (with some estimates as high as 15 percent). City of Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley sent a letter to OCTA Chief Executive Officer Darrell E. Johnson on April 16, 2020 (Attachment C), expressing concern related to lost revenues and requesting a suspension of the MOE requirement for three years, the reduction of the MOE benchmark requirement, and potentially allowing agencies up to seven years to repay the required MOE if they are not able to meet the requirement after the proposed suspension period.

Staff reviewed and considered several options ranging from no changes to the MOE requirement, to suspending the MOE requirement – the latter of which is inconsistent with the legislative intent of the M2 Ordinance because M2 revenues would supplant and not supplement local revenues.

In consultation with OCTA legal counsel, staff has developed a solution intended to be fair and reasonable for all jurisdictions with the goal of balancing local funding issues with the intent of M2 Ordinance. If approved, this will provide local jurisdictions with a path forward before the approaching FY 2020-21 MOE certification requirement deadline of June 30, 2020. Therefore, staff is recommending an amendment to the Orange County Local Transportation Authority M2 Ordinance No. 3, Section 6, MOE Section to:

- Require submittal of the FY 2019-20 expenditure report and accept the actual expenditures reported as meeting the MOE requirement, even if the total expenditure amount is below the MOE benchmark requirement for FY 2019-20.
- Modify the MOE budget certification requirement for FY 2020-21 to require that local jurisdictions certify a budget that commits to continuing the same proportional share of streets and roads expenditures to GFR, based upon the proportion of the current MOE benchmark to GFR that were reported in their respective Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for FY 2018-19, at a minimum. This approach allows the MOE amount to float with fluctuations in local agency GFR levels in FY 2020-21 while upholding the intent of the M2 Ordinance to use M2 revenues as supplemental funding. Attachment D provides the revised temporary MOE benchmark for FY 2020-21, and Attachment E provides the revised MOE certification form.

- Require local jurisdictions to submit the FY 2020-21 expenditure reports to confirm that they have met the proportional share of total GFR or MOE dollar amount as defined in Attachment D.

The proposed amendment language is provided in Attachment F. The process and timing for amending the M2 Ordinance and MOE submittals is shown below:

Actions	Date
Governor declared a state of emergency related to COVID-19	March 4, 2020
Governor enacted the stay-at-home order	March 19, 2020
M2 Eligibility Guidelines, FY 2020-21 approved	April 13, 2020
OCTA Executive Committee considers M2 amendment	May 4, 2020
OCTA Board considers M2 amendment and sets a public hearing date for June 22, 2020	May 11, 2020
Proposed amendment sent to local jurisdictions for public review prior to public hearing (Attachment F)	May 12, 2020
Taxpayers Oversight Committee provided an update on ordinance amendment	May 12, 2020
Issue public hearing notice (at least 30 days prior to public hearing)	May 21, 2020
Public hearing on amendment and roll call vote by Board (requires two-thirds vote)	June 22, 2020
Adopted amendment transmitted to local jurisdiction	June 23, 2020
Local jurisdictions required to submit the MOE certification for FY 2020-21 (Attachment E)	June 30, 2020
Local Fair Share disbursement for fourth quarter, FY 2019-20 (estimated date)	July 15, 2020
Amendment effective 45 days following adoption	August 6, 2020
Local Fair Share disbursement (estimated date)	September 16, 2020

### **Summary**

An amendment to the M2 Ordinance to assist local agencies in managing the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is proposed. The amendment modifies the MOE requirements for FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 while upholding the legislative intent of the M2 Ordinance. Staff also requests the Board set a public hearing date for June 22, 2020, and approval of an updated MOE Certification Form is proposed.

***Attachments***

- A. Orange County Local Transportation Authority Ordinance No. 3, Maintenance of Effort Requirements Excerpt, Section 6, Page 3
- B. Procedures to Amend the Renewed Measure M Transportation Investment Plan and Ordinance No. 3, Language Excerpt and Amendment History
- C. Letter from Mayor Katrina Foley, City of Costa Mesa, to Darrell Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated April 16, 2020
- D. FY 2020-21 MOE Benchmark as a Percentage of FY 2018-19 GFR
- E. Appendix I, Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Certification Form
- F. Draft Ordinance Amendment Language, Section 6, Page 3

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