



May 3, 2021

To: Regional Planning and Highways Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Regional Planning Update

Overview

Updates on regional planning matters are provided regularly to highlight transportation planning issues impacting the Orange County Transportation Authority and the Southern California region. This update focuses on the State's Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure, the California Transportation Plan 2050, the Southern California Association of Governments' preparations for the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and a set of proposed Transportation Control Measure substitutions.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) regularly coordinates with other planning and regulatory agencies within the Southern California region. This coordination is conducted at many levels, involving the 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, policy committees, and technical working groups,
- State Route 91 (SR-91) Advisory Committee,
- Regional Chief Executive Officers meetings,
- South Coast Air Quality Management District working groups; and
- Interregional planning coordination meetings (OCTA, SCAG, the San Diego Association of Governments, and the California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] districts 7, 8, 11, and 12).

Staff most recently provided a regional planning update to the Board in November 2020. The status of items previously presented and other ongoing regional planning activities is recorded in a matrix that identifies lead agencies, a summary of each activity, key dates, as well as OCTA's interests and current involvement as summarized in Attachment A.

Since the November update, new activities have emerged concerning the State's Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) and California Transportation Plan (CTP) 2050, the SCAG 2024 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), and proposed substitutions of Transportation Control Measure (TCM) projects in the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). A discussion of each of these new activities is provided below.

Discussion

CAPTI

On March 10, 2021, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) released the draft CAPTI as a response to executive orders (N-19-19 and N-79-20) signed by Governor Newsom and targeted at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation and increasing the use of zero-emission vehicles. CAPTI outlines a framework for aligning the State's transportation funding investments with the State's climate, public health, and social equity goals.

CAPTI generally aims to prioritize state-directed funding, such as the State Highway Operation and Preservation Program (SHOPP) and Interregional Improvement Program, as well as competitive funding programs, such as SB 1 (Chapter 5, Statutes of 2017) Solutions for Congested Corridors Program (SCCP), Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCIP), and Local Partnership Program (LPP) (Attachment B). Projects that invest in zero-emission vehicles and multimodal transportation options, such as transit and active transportation projects, will be prioritized for funding while limiting future investments in projects that are believed to increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT), such as highway capacity projects. Other funding programs that are impacted but already adhere to these priorities are the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Improvement Program and the Active Transportation Program (ATP).

Over the last few months, CalSTA has reached out to environmental stakeholders and advocates and held multiple meetings with other stakeholders to discuss CAPTI. The plan was also presented formally by CalSTA at the California Transportation Commission (CTC) on March 24, 2021, and at the

April 8, 2021 joint meeting of the CTC, California Air Resources Board (CARB), and California Department of Housing and Community Development. Several CTC Commissioners and CARB Board Members, as well as other commenters, indicated strong support for CAPTI. A central argument in support of CAPTI and the emphasis on VMT-reducing investments was that reducing VMT also improves public health, reduces infrastructure costs, and supports more efficient land use.

At both meetings, concerns were expressed by several CTC Commissioners and representatives from business, labor, and construction regarding CAPTI economic impacts to the construction industry and jobs, freight transportation, the State falling behind on road maintenance and rehabilitation, the shift in transportation funding priorities established in SB 1, and the impacts to lower-income households that commute long-distances to better-paying jobs. Additionally, representatives from the business community, labor, construction, and freight industries expressed that they were left out of the process, and in response, two workshop dates (April 20, 2021 and April 23, 2021) were added to engage with these stakeholders on CAPTI.

At the April 12, 2021 Board meeting, a presentation entitled, “State Plans and Policies Related to Climate Change” provided background on CAPTI, as well as a summary of challenges and opportunities resulting from the reframed state priorities. Challenges resulting from CAPTI include:

- Shifting expectations and commitments away from congestion reduction and transportation system preservation to reducing VMT and GHG emissions,
- Tying transportation funding to local agency actions on development projects (particularly for infill and affordable housing),
- Limiting flexibility for capacity projects that reduce National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) pollutant emissions but increase VMT, and
- Limiting transit investment to start-up operations only with a lack of funding for long-term operations.

However, CAPTI also presents opportunities, including:

- Potential funding for both rail and bus transit capital projects, as well as pedestrian and bikeway improvements,
- Likely funding for zero-emission buses and charging infrastructure,
- Potential for funding some capacity projects if VMT increase can be mitigated, and
- Likely funding for efficiency improvements that employ technology (e.g., signal coordination).

In addition to the CTC-hosted CAPTI workshops on April 20 and 23, 2021, the public review period for CAPTI runs through May 19, 2021. OCTA will provide comments consistent with the challenges and opportunities noted above. Subsequent implementation of CAPTI will entail updates to guidelines to the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program, SHOPP, Interregional Transportation Improvement Program, ATP, SCCP, TCIP, and the LPP. OCTA will review and comment on changes to each of these funding programs as appropriate to address any conflicts with OCTA plans or projects.

CTP 2050

The CTP 2050 is the State's statutorily fiscally unconstrained long-range transportation vision for multimodal mobility and reducing GHG emissions. The CTP does not contain projects but includes policies and strategies intended to influence local and regional transportation plans. As noted in the November 2020 update, OCTA provided comments on Caltrans' Draft CTP 2050. OCTA's comments were addressed, but other changes between the draft and final plan are of note. For example, the final plan mirrored other efforts by the State to prioritize GHG emissions and VMT reductions and deemphasize addressing congestion. Specifically, the final plan removed all references in the CTP 2050 of impacts on vehicle hours of delay. Other notable changes include halving the assumed number of residents of California teleworking in the future (from 50 percent of Californians in the draft plan to 25 percent in the final plan) and adding several new performance measures and recommendations related to equity. Although no explanation is provided regarding the reduction in teleworking, data from the United States Census Bureau indicates that more than 70 percent of the highest-earning households (with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more) switched to teleworking during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic while 30 percent of median income households (with annual incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000) switched, and less than 13 percent of the lowest-earning households (with annual incomes of less than \$25,000) switched. Along with other additions related to equity addressed below, the revised assumptions related to teleworking may also reflect an equity consideration.

The final CTP 2050 included three new equity performance measures involving tracking:

- Number of communities and community-based organizations meaningfully engaged in the development of plans and projects,
- Air quality in low-income and disadvantaged communities, and
- Access to active travel modes in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

New equity recommendations included in the final CTP 2050 call for:

- Establishing policies to protect marginalized and disadvantaged communities from displacement and community fragmentation that may result from transportation investments, and
- Expanding requirements for funding programs to provide meaningful benefits to low-income and disadvantaged communities.

It is worth noting that the recommendation in the above bullet is already being incorporated into the state funding programs as part of CAPTI.

Caltrans is planning on releasing an Implementation Element later this calendar year. The final CTP 2050 identifies several new components that will be part of the Implementation Element, including to:

- Identify short- (five-year), mid- [five- to ten-year], and long-term [ten-plus-year] implementation actions, each with agency leads, process expectations, and anticipated outcomes,
- Identify initial financial needs and sources for short-term implementation actions, and
- Identify statutory changes that may be needed to implement the plan.

OCTA will review and provide input on the Implementation Element as appropriate to address any conflicts with OCTA plans or projects.

Caltrans is planning on completing the next CTP by 2025.

SCAG 2024 RTP/SCS

The RTP/SCS documents major transportation investments in the SCAG region over a 20-year horizon, at minimum, and is required to be updated every four years under state and federal law. While the most recent RTP/SCS was adopted in 2020, the development of the next RTP/SCS is underway, with a scheduled adoption in April 2024. SCAG plans on using the same branding (Connect SoCal) used in the recently adopted 2020 RTP/SCS and is focusing on process improvements and data updates and refinements. SCAG also plans on addressing how the COVID-19 pandemic recovery may impact long-term trends and the region's evolving needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Three key emphasis areas for the 2024 RTP/SCS are equity, climate change resilience, and closing the digital divide. SCAG currently has initiatives underway related to these emphasis areas, including:

- Racial Equity Early Action Plan – Provides a framework for internally and externally focused actions on equity and social justice,
- Regional Climate Adaptation Framework – Assists local and regional jurisdictions in managing the negative impacts of climate change, and
- Broadband Action Plan – Aims to increase broadband access in underserved communities.

The next Connect SoCal will be developed over four phases.

1. Foundations and Frameworks (now – early 2022): Initiate plan development process and establish plan goals.
2. Data Collection and Policy Development (early 2022 – early 2023): Collect input from local jurisdictions and county transportation commissions, conduct research, identify emerging regional trends, and discuss plan policies and strategies with stakeholders.
3. Outreach and Analysis (early 2023 – mid 2023): Conduct public workshops, incorporate feedback from outreach activities, and analyze data.
4. Draft Plan and Adoption (late 2023 – early 2024): Prepare a draft plan for public review and final plan for consideration by the SCAG Regional Council for adoption by April 2024.

TCM Substitution

Project schedules are regularly updated and amended in the SCAG FTIP. However, certain types of projects, known as committed TCM, may require a replacement project that can be implemented by a certain date before amending the FTIP. TCM's are transportation projects or programs that adjust trip patterns or otherwise influence vehicle use in ways that reduce air pollutant emissions. TCMs are considered "committed" if they have funds programmed for right-of-way or construction in the first two years of an approved SCAG FTIP.

TCMs are also included in the Air Quality Management Plan and State Implementation Plan to help demonstrate how NAAQS will be met for specific years. Calendar year 2023 is one of the key attainment years for the NAAQS. Therefore, committed TCMs that are scheduled to be open to public use by December 31, 2022, cannot be delayed without first demonstrating that a substitute can be implemented by December 31, 2022, and that it provides at least equivalent air quality benefits. This ensures the region stays on track to meet the 2023 NAAQS attainment requirement and is eligible to access federal transportation funds.

The Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) decided to delay the planned widening of the existing toll roads. These projects are identified as committed TCMs. TCA determined that toll road widenings were not needed in the near-term. These projects are located on the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor (between Interstate 5 [I-5] in the City of San Juan Capistrano and approximately MacArthur Boulevard in the City of Irvine; FTIP Project ID: ORA10254), Eastern Transportation Corridor (along State Route 241/261/133 between I-5 and SR-91; FTIP Project ID: ORA050), and Foothill Transportation Corridor-North (between Oso Parkway and the Eastern Transportation Corridor; FTIP Project ID: ORA051). Because these toll road projects could have eased congestion on parallel routes (e.g., I-5) and help traffic move more freely in south Orange County, less air pollution would have been produced. Accordingly, it is necessary to identify projects that produce equivalent air quality benefit.

The County of Orange has cancelled the Hazard Avenue Bikeway Project (FTIP Project ID: ORA170205), which was also a committed TCM. Additionally, schedule updates to three OCTA projects (Anaheim Canyon Station [FTIP Project ID: ORA085004], Placentia Commuter Rail Transit Station [FTIP Project ID: ORA030612], and Paratransit Expansion Vehicle Purchase [FTIP Project ID: ORA130099]) also require TCM substitutions as the new completion dates would be beyond December 31, 2022.

OCTA is working with SCAG on the above substitution request. The goal of the effort is to transfer the TCM designation to a set of signal synchronization projects that will be programmed for implementation prior to December 31, 2022. Initial analysis has indicated these signal synchronization projects will have at least equivalent air quality benefits compared with the projects listed above. This is due to a significant decrease in tailpipe emissions that occurs when vehicles operate within an optimal speed range. OCTA will continue to analyze this set of projects in coordination with SCAG to ensure they meet all the necessary criteria. This process is anticipated to take between six to 12 months to finalize. An update on this effort will be provided to the Board in mid-2021.

Summary

Staff continues to coordinate ongoing activities regarding transportation planning in Orange County and Southern California. As drafts of these planning documents are released, staff will review and provide comments as needed to protect OCTA's interests. Staff will continue to keep the Board informed on the status of these ongoing activities.

Attachments

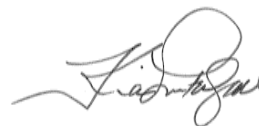
- A. Regional Planning Activities, May 2021
- B. Transportation Funding Programs Impacted by the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI)

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