



October 4, 2021

To: Executive Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: South Orange County Transportation Projects Update and Cooperative Agreement

Overview

In April 2020, the Board of Directors directed staff to work with local agencies to advance project development efforts in south Orange County for a non-tolled extension of Los Patrones Parkway, widening a portion of Ortega Highway, and an extension of the Interstate 5 high-occupancy vehicle lane. Through a collaborative transportation planning process, a cooperative agreement supporting these projects has been developed. A status report on these three key projects is provided, as well as an overview of the cooperative agreement.

Recommendation

Authorize the Chief Executive Officer, or his designee, to execute a cooperative agreement with the County of Orange and the City of San Clemente to work cooperatively on south Orange County regional transportation solutions.

Background

In March 2020, consensus was reached by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) on project development efforts for three key south Orange County transportation improvements. These improvements include extending Los Patrones Parkway as a non-tolled arterial from Cow Camp Road to Avenida La Pata, widening Ortega Highway between Calle Entradero and Reata Road, and extending the Interstate 5 (I-5) high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes from Avenida Pico to the Orange/San Diego County line area (Attachment A).

Consistent with the consensus reached in March 2020, direction was given to staff in April 2020 by the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) to collaborate with partner agencies and stakeholders on advancing development and implementation of the three projects noted above. These projects focus on meeting near-term travel demand and fulfilling the intent of the now concluded South County Traffic Relief Effort (SCTRE). Additionally, longer-term multimodal solutions will be defined through OCTA's South Orange County Multimodal Transportation Study (SOCMTS), which is being developed in coordination with partner agencies in the study area. A proposed cooperative agreement supporting the three projects and SOCMTS is discussed below, along with updates for each project.

Discussion

The County initiated discussions between local agencies focused on finding a local solution to facilitate implementation of the agreed-upon projects. These discussions resulted in drafting a cooperative agreement between the City of San Clemente (San Clemente), OCTA, and the County (Attachment B). On September 28, 2021, to reaffirm their commitments to these projects, the County Board of Supervisors and the San Clemente City Council each approved execution of the proposed cooperative agreement. The agreement is intended to show consensus between the three agencies by committing to work cooperatively on south Orange County regional transportation solutions. The agreement also commits to protect the local conservation or protected open space areas in San Clemente from future roadway development.

This approach supports protection of conservation and protected lands within San Clemente, is consistent with OCTA's commitment to follow a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process that provides all partner agencies and stakeholders opportunities to engage and provide input. This is currently demonstrated in the ongoing development of the SOCMTS. OCTA is working collaboratively with 17 local jurisdictions, eight regional planning partners, several stakeholder groups, and the public to develop consensus on mobility challenges and solutions in south Orange County through 2045 and beyond (Attachment C).

The County and San Clemente are working together to advance the Los Patrones Parkway extension, which supports the April 2020 Board action. This has been shown through coordinated general plan amendments and by working collaboratively with OCTA to amend the Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH). Should the Board approve the recommended action, staff will proceed with executing the cooperative agreement between the three parties.

The remainder of this discussion provides brief updates on each of the three projects that were identified to fulfill the intent of the SCTRE.

Los Patrones Parkway Non-Tolled Extension: Preliminary Engineering Underway

The proposed non-tolled Los Patrones Parkway extension was added to the County's general plan, San Clemente's general plan, and OCTA's MPAH in early 2021. The MPAH and the general plans show the non-tolled Los Patrones Parkway extension will be built as a four-lane, divided arterial between Cow Camp Road and Avenida La Pata. In May 2021, the Board awarded funding to the County for preliminary engineering of the new facility through the competitive Measure M2 (M2) Regional Capacity Program. Specific alignments and cost details will be developed in the preliminary engineering phase that is anticipated to be complete in 2023. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027 and to be complete in 2031.

Ortega Highway Widening: Final Design Starting

This project will widen a 1.1-mile section of Ortega Highway between Calle Entradero in the City of San Juan Capistrano (San Juan Capistrano) and Reata Road (near the boundary between San Juan Capistrano and unincorporated county line) from one lane in each direction to two lanes in each direction. The project is environmentally cleared under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). In May 2020, the Board awarded funding to San Juan Capistrano for the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) phase. In June 2021, San Juan Capistrano, Caltrans, OCTA, and the County executed agreements to fund and initiate the PS&E phase that will be led by Caltrans.

Excluding prior work, the project cost is estimated at \$67.6 million for final design, right-of-way (ROW), and construction. OCTA is working with San Juan Capistrano, Caltrans, and the County to secure full funding for the project. Design and ROW acquisition is scheduled to be complete by 2025, with construction anticipated to be complete by 2028, assuming full project funding is secured.

I-5 Widening from San Diego County Line Area to Avenida Pico: Environmental Clearance Starting

This I-5 Improvement Project, from the San Diego County Line area to Avenida Pico, proposes to add one HOV lane in each direction, re-establish existing auxiliary lanes, modify ramps at select locations, and widen bridge

structures, where applicable. This 3.5-mile project will extend the HOV improvements that were completed as part of Project C in the M2 Freeway Program, and complete most of the remaining HOV lane network in Orange County.

OCTA is now developing a project report and environmental document, which are anticipated to be completed by 2024. As outlined in the OCTA/Caltrans cooperative agreement approved by the Board on June 8, 2020, OCTA is leading the environmental work, and Caltrans will have final approval authority under NEPA and CEQA. OCTA will also lead the stakeholder involvement process with various agencies including local cities, SANDAG, and other stakeholders. Detailed cost estimates and schedules will be worked out in the preliminary engineering phase, which is part of the environmental process.

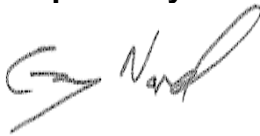
Summary

Three major projects to address south Orange County transportation needs are advancing through the project development process. This includes a non-tolled extension of Los Patrones Parkway, widening a portion of Ortega Highway, and extension of the I-5 HOV lane. With direction from the Board, staff will execute a cooperative agreement to support implementation of these projects and emphasize cooperative planning efforts on south Orange County regional transportation solutions.

Attachments

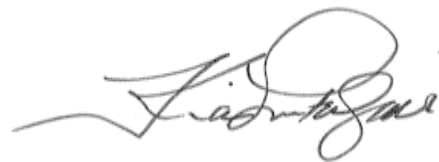
- A. Key South Orange County Transportation Projects
- B. Draft Cooperative Agreement
- C. South Orange County Multimodal Transportation Study, Key Partner Stakeholder Groups

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