



July 10, 2025

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Cooperative Agreement with the Southern California Regional Rail Authority and the City of San Clemente to Replace and Rehabilitate the Pedestrian Audible Warning System

Overview

The City of San Clemente has requested assistance from the Orange County Transportation Authority to replace and rehabilitate the Pedestrian Audible Warning System which provides for safe operations through seven at-grade pedestrian railroad crossings in San Clemente. To support this request and to maintain continued safe rail operations, Board of Directors' authorization is requested to enter into a cooperative agreement which defines the roles and responsibilities of the Orange County Transportation Authority, Southern California Regional Rail Authority, and the City of San Clemente for the implementation of the Pedestrian Audible Warning System Rehabilitation Project.

Recommendations

- A. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Cooperative Agreement No. C-5-4115 between the Orange County Transportation Authority, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority, and the City of San Clemente.
- B. Authorize the use of up to \$1,818,000 in SB 125 (Chapter 54, Statutes of 2023) Transit Program for the replacement and rehabilitation of the controller system for the Pedestrian Audible Warning System Rehabilitation Project.
- C. Authorize staff to process all necessary amendments to the Federal Transportation Improvement Program and execute or amend all necessary agreements to facilitate the above actions.

Discussion

In August 2013, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and the City of San Clemente (City) entered into Cooperative Agreement No. C-3-1528 to implement the Rail-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Enhancement Program to enhance safety at the seven pedestrian at-grade crossings and allow the use of the Pedestrian Audible Warning System (PAWS). At the City's request, these enhancements were applied to seven at-grade pedestrian crossings along the San Clemente Beach Trail, including Dije, El Portal, Corto, San Clemente Pier, T-Street, Lost Winds, and Calafia (Attachment A). PAWS provides a locally directed artificial horn sound at each of the crossings in lieu of the routine sounding of horns by approaching trains. The PAWS safety improvements allow the railroads to operate under a train horn sounding waiver from the Federal Railroad Administration. The agreement also established a cost-sharing formula of 88 percent provided by OCTA and 12 percent provided by the City for the construction of the PAWS project. OCTA owns the railroad right-of-way, commonly referred to as the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo rail corridor, and through agreement Metrolink operates and maintains the railroad on behalf of OCTA. The City and Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) entered into a separate construction and maintenance agreement in May 2016, to define their roles and responsibilities for the PAWS system during and post construction.

In March 2025, the City informed OCTA that the existing PAWS had exceeded its useful life and has become technologically obsolete, making spare parts difficult or impossible to obtain, consequently compromising the system's future reliability and maintenance viability. The existing PAWS is currently operational and if they incur failure or are damaged, depending on the specific component, they may not be able to be repaired. To ensure continuation of safe rail operations throughout the City and to maintain the use of the PAWS in lieu of train horn warnings, staff recommends that OCTA fund the necessary PAWS replacement and rehabilitation which includes new software and hardware that controls the PAWS. OCTA and the City are proposing the same 88 – 12 percent cost-sharing formula as was in the original PAWS cooperative agreement with the City. The rehabilitated PAWS should be serviceable for approximately ten years and will be maintainable and have replacement hardware available for repairs as needed. The City will continue to be responsible for maintaining the PAWS in accordance with the cooperative agreement.

SB 125 amended the Budget Act of 2023, creating a formula funding program which is distributed to regional transportation planning agencies (RTPA) by the California State Transportation Agency and is referred to as the SB 125 Transit

Program. Designated as an RTPA for this purpose, OCTA is responsible for using or further distributing these funds to qualifying transit operators.

The use of SB 125 Transit Program funds is consistent with the Board of Directors (Board)-approved SB 125 Transit Program, which recommended funding towards several project categories, including Critical Rail Infrastructure. The City has prepared the plans, specifications, and estimates for the necessary replacement and upgrades of the PAWS, and the replacement and rehabilitation will be delivered by SCRRA utilizing their on-call signal contractor to install and integrate the upgraded system with the railroad signalization system. SCRRA has the expertise and is well-suited to construct the upgrades, including testing and acceptance of new and modified mission critical signal and communication systems. Additionally, SCRRA will manage the project and their contractor and coordinate with OCTA and the City. The work will utilize the existing planned railroad work windows, and no additional rail service impacts are anticipated with the proposed work; however, intermittent sounding of the train horns is expected during construction and testing. OCTA will work with City to assist in notifying the residents. The work is expected to begin in fall 2025 and completed within three months.

Fiscal Impact

The project is in OCTA's Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget, Capital Programs Division, Account No. 0018-7831-C5075-447. The Project is funded by the SB 125 Transit Program and the City's local contribution with a total cost of \$1,818,000.

Attachment B provides the updated Capital Funding Plan which provides summarized funding information for all OCTA capital projects.

Summary

Staff requests Board approval for the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Cooperative Agreement No. C-5-4115 between OCTA, SCRRA, and the City, in the amount of \$1,818,000, and authorize the use of up to \$1,818,000 in SB 125 Transit Program funds for the replacement and rehabilitation of hardware and software for the Pedestrian Audible Warning System Project.

Attachments

- A. Pedestrian Audible Warning System (PAWS) Project
- B. Capital Funding Programming Report

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