



November 20, 2025

To: Legislative and Communications Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Orange County Transportation Authority's 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms

Overview

Halfway through each legislative session, staff conducts a refresh of the Orange County Transportation Authority's State and Federal Legislative Platforms to ensure updates are incorporated on relevant issues that are anticipated to be of discussion for the upcoming year. The final drafts of the revised 2025-26 Orange County Transportation Authority State and Federal Legislative Platforms are submitted for consideration and adoption by the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors.

Recommendations

- A. Adopt the revised final draft of the 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms.
- B. Direct staff to distribute the adopted platforms to elected officials, advisory committees, local governments, affected agencies, the business community, and other interested parties.

Background

At the beginning of each legislative session, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) adopts updated legislative platforms to guide OCTA's state and federal advocacy activities for the duration of the upcoming session. With each session covering a two-year period, revisions to the legislative platforms are presented to the Board of Directors (Board) midway through the sessions to reflect any significant changes since adoption by the Board. Official OCTA legislative positions not directly addressed by the legislative platforms will be brought to the Board for separate action during the legislative sessions.

The initial drafts of the 2025-26 State and Federal Legislative Platforms were reviewed and approved for further circulation by the Legislative and

Communications Committee on October 16, 2025, and by the Board on October 27, 2025. After receiving additional feedback, the State and Federal Legislative Platforms have been refined further and are included as Attachments A and B. The recommended revisions are designated by text in bold.

When developing the 2027-28 State and Federal Legislative Platforms next year, a more widespread input solicitation process will occur, with outreach to interested groups, stakeholders, and individuals to allow for a more comprehensive update for the next legislative session.

2025-26 OCTA State Legislative Platform

The final proposed revisions to the 2025-26 OCTA State Legislative Platform are summarized below. Language was edited, amended, or removed as necessary to ensure grammatical and stylistic integrity.

Staff proposes two principles related to anticipated recommendations from the California State Transportation Agency's Transit Transformation Task Force final report, established under SB 125 (Chapter 54, Statutes of 2023). The task force was charged with evaluating and recommending strategies to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and financial stability of California's transit network.

New platform language was added to monitor potential legislative proposals to modify the Transportation Development Act and ensure that any efforts to establish a replacement framework are both effective and appropriate. Any opportunities to modernize performance metrics or streamline administrative processes should be pursued in a manner that does not negatively affect existing funding structures, local discretion, or agency responsibilities. Similarly, proposed language emphasizes the importance of maintaining local flexibility in service planning and fare coordination to minimize unnecessary state involvement.

Another proposed revision expresses support for extending the Federal State Transportation Improvement Program (FSTIP) approval period to help prevent delays in project delivery arising from federal transportation conformity requirements and the timing of emissions modeling updates. In 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined that the South Coast Air Quality Management District had outstanding contingency obligations under the Clean Air Act, prompting coordination among the district, the California Air Resources Board, and federal partners to maintain progress while technical issues were addressed. Because the Emission Factors model, known as EMFAC, must receive federal approval for use in conformity analyses, any delay in that process can affect the ability to finalize regional determinations and advance new transportation projects.

The current FSTIP is effective through 2028, but state law requires a new update in 2027 that depends on timely federal conformity approval. Many emissions reductions within state and local control are already reflected in existing plans, meaning future conformity findings may rely more heavily on federal measures, creating potential scheduling risk for project authorization. To maintain continuity if approval timelines are extended, the platform supports legislative authority for the California Department of Transportation and the California Transportation Commission to extend the existing program document, similar to the temporary extension authorized under SB 1291 (Chapter 715, Statutes of 2020). This approach would help preserve funding eligibility and delivery schedules for major highway and transit improvements while conformity work is completed.

Finally, new principle is recommended related to the implementation of SB 79 (Chapter 512, Statutes of 2025), which authorizes housing density in areas served by certain levels of transit service. The platform directs staff to support legislation to amend SB 79 by updating definitions and making other changes as needed to ensure continued community support for transit projects. This will be done in close alignment with OCTA's partner agencies. OCTA will remain engaged with local jurisdictions and the State throughout implementation to ensure that these new policies complement regional mobility and operational goals.

Sponsored Legislation

The 2025-26 State Legislative Platform identifies one area in which OCTA intends to pursue sponsor legislation. Specifically, OCTA plans to sponsor legislation to revise its governing statute to allow the operation of a charter bus service to support major regional events, including the 2026 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. Under existing law, OCTA's enabling legislation limits the agency's authority to provide fixed-route transit services within Orange County and expressly excludes charter bus operations. As a result, OCTA does not currently have the authority to operate charter service, even in situations where doing so would relieve congestion and support regional mobility. To provide this service, OCTA would require statutory authorization similar to what was recently granted to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) for the same purpose. In addition to state statutory authorization, OCTA would also need to obtain federal approval from the Federal Transit Administration in the form of a charter bus service waiver.

The need for this legislation is time-sensitive, as the FIFA World Cup begins next year. OCTA is working with regional partners to plan a service between the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center and SoFi Stadium to help manage transportation demand during tournament events. Providing this flexibility would allow OCTA to assist in safely and efficiently moving passengers

to and from event venues while maximizing the use of its existing fleet and workforce. This legislative effort would ensure that OCTA has the same level of authority as other large California transit agencies, such as LA Metro and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, which have received statutory approval to provide charter bus services for the FIFA World Cup. Staff anticipates working with the Legislature to advance this proposal early in the 2026 legislative session to ensure the authorization is in place ahead of the FIFA World Cup.

2025-26 OCTA Federal Legislative Platform

The final proposed revisions to the 2025-26 OCTA Federal Legislative Platform are summarized below. Language was edited, amended, or removed as necessary to ensure grammatical and stylistic integrity. Overall, only one change was necessary to update the Federal Legislative Platform.

Specially, staff recommends adding language pertaining to supporting efforts to streamline U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulatory and permitting processes to accelerate the delivery of critical transportation projects, particularly those that involve coastal or environmental work. OCTA has worked closely with the USACE on emergency stabilization and protection efforts along the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor. These emergency actions highlighted challenges with existing USACE procedures that can delay urgent work needed to protect vital infrastructure. Additionally, OCTA has encountered complications related to the determination of the mean high tide line when placing protective sand or other materials along the coastline. These jurisdictional uncertainties can significantly slow project implementation, even when the work is necessary to maintain safe and reliable transportation services.

By improving coordination and expediting review and permitting timelines, the USACE can better support local and regional agencies in delivering timely resilience and safety projects that protect public assets and ensure the continuity of critical rail operations.

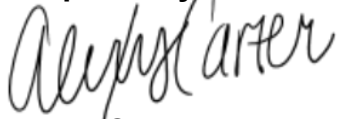
Summary

The 2025-26 OCTA State and Federal Legislative Platforms are presented for consideration and adoption.

Attachments

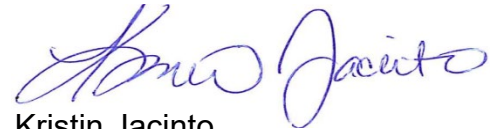
- A. Orange County Transportation Authority 2025-26 State Legislative Platform
- B. Orange County Transportation Authority 2025-26 Federal Legislative Platform

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