



March 2, 2026

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer 
Subject: Agreement for Community Engagement Consultant Services

Overview

On December 3, 2025, the Orange County Transportation Authority released a request for proposals for community engagement consultant services to support the development of a community engagement plan, multilingual collateral material, collection and analysis of documented, data-informed input from hard-to-reach communities to inform long-range transportation planning. Board of Directors' approval is requested to execute an agreement for these services.

Recommendations

- A. Approve the selection of Modern Times, Inc. as the firm to provide community engagement consultant services.
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C250090 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Modern Times, Inc., in the amount of \$884,680, for a two-year initial term with one, two-year option term to provide community engagement consultant services.

Discussion

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is responsible for planning, funding, and delivering transportation investments that serve the mobility needs of Orange County's residents, businesses, and visitors. To support informed decision making, OCTA must understand how transportation services, programs and projects are experienced across different communities.

Since 2021, OCTA has conducted targeted outreach efforts to expand participation among communities that have historically been hard to reach using traditional engagement processes, including residents facing language, cultural,

or access barriers. These efforts established a foundation of trust with these communities, enabling a shift toward more data-informed, outcome-focused engagement to identify transportation needs, priorities, and barriers to access.

Under this agreement, the consultant will support OCTA in gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative input to help document how different populations use the transportation system, where gaps exist, and which improvements are most impactful.

The consultant will work under the direction of OCTA's Community Engagement team, in collaboration with OCTA's Public Outreach Department, to develop and implement a comprehensive community engagement program. The program will be guided by a detailed plan that establishes timelines, outreach methods, and performance measures, including demographic participation, geographic reach, partner involvement, digital engagement metrics, survey participation levels, and measures of awareness before and after engagement activities.

Working in close coordination with OCTA, the consultant will build on existing relationships with cultural, faith-based, senior, youth, and community-based organizations to support direct engagement. Activities will include a mix of in-person and digital methods such as community pop-ups, roundtables, listening sessions, workshops, and surveys designed to gather input and document transportation needs and priorities. Multilingual communications and culturally relevant materials will be used to ensure information is accessible and feedback is accurately captured.

In addition, the consultant will implement a targeted media strategy to expand awareness and participation. This effort will use multilingual content, partnerships with trusted community influencers, online engagement tools, and a mix of earned and paid media across television, radio, print, and digital platforms.

A key component of the program is the collection and analysis of community input to inform long-range transportation planning. Findings will be documented through regular reporting and a final summary report identifying key themes, transportation priorities, access challenges, and actionable insights.

Measure M2, Orange County's half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements, awareness will be integrated throughout engagement activities to support informed dialogue about existing OCTA programs and future improvements. Program delivery will include dedicated project management, regular reporting aligned with clearly stated deliverables, and shared

engagement records to ensure accountability, consistency, and measurable outcomes.

Procurement Approach

The procurement was conducted in accordance with OCTA’s Board of Directors (Board)-approved procedures for professional and technical services. Award is recommended to the firm offering the most comprehensive overall proposal considering such factors as prior experience with similar projects, staffing and project organization, work plan, as well as cost and price.

On December 3, 2025, Request for Proposals (RFP) 250090 was issued electronically on OpenGov, OCTA’s on-line e-procurement system. The solicitation was advertised in a newspaper of general circulation on December 3 and December 8, 2025. A pre-proposal conference was held on December 9, 2025, with 16 attendees representing nine firms. Two addenda were issued to make available the pre-proposal conference registration and presentation, as well as to provide responses to written questions.

On December 29, 2025, 13 proposals were received. An evaluation committee consisting of staff from the Contracts Administration and Materials Management, Public Outreach, and Marketing and Customer Engagement departments met to review all the proposals received. The proposals were evaluated based on the following evaluation criteria and weightings:

- Qualifications of the Firm 20%
- Staffing and Project Organization 25%
- Work Plan 30%
- Cost and Price 25%

Several factors were considered in developing the evaluation criteria weightings. Qualifications of the firm criterion was weighted at 20 percent as the firms had to demonstrate experience providing inclusive outreach services, including ability to communicate technical information to hard-to-reach populations in understandable and culturally relevant terms. Staffing and project organization criterion was weighted at 25 percent as the project team had to demonstrate adequate resources and the expertise to engage the Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Farsi, Arabic, and other language-speaking communities. The work plan was weighted at 30 percent as the firms had to demonstrate its approach to continuing outreach efforts and fostering ongoing relationships with different constituencies in Orange County. Cost and price criterion was weighted at 25 percent to ensure OCTA receives the best value for the services provided.

The evaluation committee utilized a best-value selection process for this RFP. The best-value determination is based on a 100-point scale. The RFP required proposing firms to submit a separate price proposal in a sealed package. In order to focus on the technical aspects of the proposals, the evaluation committee first evaluated the written proposals on technical merit based on the weighted criteria for qualifications of the firm, staffing and project organization, and work plan, which represented a maximum of 75 points of the total proposal score. After the interviews and the technical scores of the short-listed firms were finalized, the sealed price proposals of the short-listed firms were opened and shared with the evaluation committee. The cost and price score, which represented a maximum of 25 points of the total proposal score, was then factored into the overall proposal score for a maximum of 100 points.

On January 12, 2026, the evaluation committee reviewed the proposals based only on the technical evaluation criteria and short-listed the two most qualified firms listed below in alphabetical order:

Firm and Location

Arellano Associates, LLC (Arellano)
Headquarters: Chino Hills, California
Project Office: Chino Hills, California

Modern Times, Inc. (Modern Times)
Headquarters: Pasadena, California
Project Office: Pasadena, California

On January 22, 2026, the evaluation committee conducted interviews with the two short-listed firms. The interviews consisted of a presentation by each firm to demonstrate the firms' understanding of OCTA's requirements, including their approach to the scope of work and plans for the first 60 days of the project. The firms' project managers and key team members had an opportunity to present each team's qualifications and respond to the evaluation committee's questions. Questions addressed each firm's proposed approach to community engagement, staffing roles and team organization, methods for engaging underserved and multilingual communities, rider-facing outreach activities, and processes for collecting, analyzing, and reporting qualitative and quantitative engagement data to inform long-range transportation planning and Measure M2 awareness, as well as specific clarification questions related to both firms' proposal.

Based on the evaluation of written technical proposals and the information obtained from the interviews, as well as cost and price, the evaluation committee

recommends Modern Times for consideration of the award. The following is a brief summary of the proposal evaluation results.

Qualifications of the Firm

Modern Times was founded in 2009 and is headquartered in the City of Pasadena with approximately 67 employees. The firm demonstrated experience providing community engagement and public outreach services for transportation agencies, including OCTA's Trust-Building Campaign, Gold Runner Southern California Outreach for the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, community outreach and construction relations for the Metro G Line Bus Rapid Transit Improvements Project for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro), and community outreach for the Sixth Street Viaduct Replacement Project for the City of Los Angeles. Modern Times proposed subcontractors to provide multilingual language outreach and translation services, as well as to provide quantitative services and analysis. The proposed subcontractors have previously worked with Modern Times on similar projects. Modern Times received positive comments from its references.

Arellano, founded in 1994 and headquartered in the City of Chino Hills, has over 80 employees. The firm demonstrated expertise providing public outreach and community engagement services in support of transportation planning efforts for local and regional agencies. Arellano has supported outreach for OCTA planning and policy initiatives, including the Measure M2 Ten-Year Review public outreach, long-range and corridor planning studies, as well as the Interstate 710 South Corridor Task Force and Long Beach–East Los Angeles Corridor Mobility Investment Plan projects for LA Metro and the Los Angeles County Bicycle Master Plan Update for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. To support quantitative research and polling services, Arellano proposed subcontractor support for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Vietnamese outreach, as well as survey design, data collection, and analysis services. The firm received positive comments from its references.

Staffing and Project Organization

Modern Times proposed a project team with defined roles and responsibilities aligned with the scope of work. The proposed project manager has 15 years of experience in communications, public outreach, and community engagement and is currently serving as the project manager for OCTA's Trust-Building Campaign. The project team includes dedicated community outreach leads and support staff with experience conducting in-person engagement, multilingual

outreach, digital and ethnic media coordination, and data collection for transportation-related projects.

The proposed project organization identifies reporting relationships among the prime consultant and subcontractors and provides staffing resources to support multilingual outreach and evaluation activities across required language communities. During the interview, the project team presented their roles and provided thorough responses to the evaluation committee's questions.

Arellano proposed a project team with experience supporting public outreach and transportation planning efforts. The proposed project manager has approximately 11 years of experience in public outreach, construction communications, and stakeholder engagement for transportation and capital infrastructure projects. The staffing plan includes personnel assigned to support Spanish and Vietnamese language outreach and a designated strategist for specialized community outreach. Although subcontractor staff was proposed to lead AAPI outreach, the individual did not participate in the interview, which raised concerns about staffing availability. Arellano did not elaborate on how the project team would provide outreach to Chinese, Korean, Farsi, Arabic, and other language-speaking communities identified in the scope of work. In addition, the proposed staffing plan reflected limited availability for several key roles, including the project manager, media and digital support, and data and evaluation support in order to meet the community engagement requirements.

Furthermore, after proposals were submitted, Arellano notified OCTA of a change to the originally proposed project manager because the individual was no longer with the firm. Arellano initially proposed a replacement project manager; however, after OCTA confirmed that the originally submitted project manager labor rates would remain unchanged, the firm proposed an alternate replacement project manager with a comparable level of experience and rates consistent with those originally submitted. During the interview, the project team presented their roles and responded to the evaluation committee's questions.

Work Plan

Modern Times proposed a work plan that addressed the elements of the scope of work and builds on OCTA's existing Trust-Building Campaign. The work plan emphasizes measurable engagement activities, including the use of tracking tools and dashboards with real-time metrics to support ongoing monitoring and reporting. The plan outlines continued engagement with Spanish- and Vietnamese-speaking communities and expanded outreach to other language-speaking communities, including Chinese, Korean, Farsi, and other underserved populations, consistent with the language requirements of the

scope of work. The work plan identifies the use of established relationships with community-based and faith-based organizations to support in-person outreach activities and culturally relevant engagement. Modern Times also described its proposed quantitative survey approach for multiple language groups and other hard-to-reach populations in Orange County. During the interviews, Modern Times presented its proposed approach and outlined its initial 60-day implementation activities, which further demonstrated the firm's expertise and ability to meet the goals and objectives of this project.

Arellano proposed a structured, task-oriented work plan aligned with the scope of work and OCTA's Trust-Building Campaign. The work plan describes a relationship-based engagement approach that includes stakeholder roundtables, listening sessions, workshops, pop-up events, and other community engagement activities intended to support insight generation and decision making for transportation planning efforts. While the proposal references multilingual and culturally relevant outreach and identifies the availability of bilingual and trilingual staff, the work plan provides limited detail regarding execution strategies, coordination, and quality control for multilingual communications. In addition, during the interview, the firm did not provide a sufficiently clear or measurable response regarding performance targets for the next phase of community engagement.

Cost and Price

Pricing scores were based on a formula which assigned the higher score to the firm with the lower weighted average hourly rate and scored the other proposal's weighted average hourly rate based on its relation to the lower weighted average hourly rate. Although Modern Times did not propose the lower weighted average hourly rates, they are deemed fair and reasonable as they are competitive among the proposing firms. In addition, Modern Times' total proposed budget is lower than the OCTA project manager's independent cost estimate.

Procurement Summary

Based on the evaluation of written proposals, the firms' qualifications, the information obtained from the interviews, as well as cost and price, the evaluation committee recommends the selection of Modern Times as the top-ranked firm to provide community engagement consultant services. Modern Times delivered a thorough and comprehensive proposal and an interview that was responsive to all the requirements of the RFP.

Fiscal Impact

The project was approved in OCTA's Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget, People and Community Engagement, Account No. 1861-7519-A5160-0NF, and is funded through local funds.

Summary

Staff is recommending the Board of Directors authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C250090 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Modern Times, Inc., in the amount of \$884,680, for a two-year initial term with a two-year option term, to provide community engagement consultant services.

Attachments

- A. Review of Proposals, RFP 250090 Community Engagement Consultant Services
- B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria Matrix (Short-Listed Firms), RFP 250090 Community Engagement Consultant Services
- C. Contract History for the Past Two Years, RFP 250090 Community Engagement Consultant Services

Prepared by:

Approved by:



Ted P. Nguyen
Senior Manager
714-560-5334

Maggie McJilton
Executive Director, People and
Community Engagement
714-560-5824



Pia Veasapen
Director, Contracts Administration
and Materials Management
714-560-5619