



April 16, 2026

To: Finance and Administration Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darrell E. Johnson", is positioned to the right of the "From:" line.

Subject: 91 Express Lanes Update for the Period Ending –
December 31, 2025

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority has owned and managed the operations of the 91 Express Lanes since January 2003. Since then, traffic volumes and toll revenues have fluctuated with changes in the economy and the added capacity to the State Route 91 corridor. During the month of December 2025, approximately 1.86 million trips were taken, and over 5.57 million trips were made during the last quarter of calendar year 2025 on the 91 Express Lanes in Orange County. This report focuses on the operational and financial activities for the period ending December 31, 2025.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County segment of the 91 Express Lanes (91 EL) is a four-lane, ten-mile tolled facility built in the median of State Route 91 (SR-91) between the State Route 55/SR-91 interchange and the Orange/Riverside County Line. The 91 EL was built by the California Private Transportation Company (CPTC) for a cost of approximately \$135 million and opened to travelers in 1995. An agreement with the California Department of Transportation included a non-compete provision that created a 1.5-mile protection zone along each side of SR-91. This zone prohibited improvements along the corridor and created mobility problems as the region and corresponding transportation demands grew.

To mitigate growing concerns over congestion, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) acquired the 91 EL franchise rights from the CPTC in January 2003. This eliminated the non-compete provision, clearing the

way for future enhancements to increase capacity and improve traffic flow along the SR-91 corridor.

With the non-compete provisions removed, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) received authority to extend the 91 EL to Interstate 15 (I-15) in 2008. At a cost of \$1.4 billion, the RCTC 91 Corridor Improvement Project added general-purpose lanes, tolled express lanes, auxiliary lanes, and direct express lane connectors from the 91 EL to I-15. The Riverside County segment of the 91 EL opened in 2017, providing customers with eight additional miles of travel on SR-91. To provide 91 EL customers with a seamless experience, OCTA and RCTC entered into a three-party operating agreement with one firm to service both facility segments.

Historically, the 91 EL has used congestion management pricing to adjust tolls quarterly based on the number of vehicles traveling through the express lanes. Since 2003, OCTA, and RCTC in 2017, have used this tolling method to provide customers with a safe, reliable, and predictable trip on the 91 EL. In November 2023, the RCTC 91 EL segment transitioned to dynamic pricing, which adjusts toll rates based on real-time traffic volumes to maintain free-flowing trips in accordance with RCTC's 91 EL Toll Policy and Toll Schedule. The OCTA 91 EL segment still utilizes congestion management pricing, adjusting tolls quarterly.

Motorists pay tolls using a transponder that automatically deducts the toll amount from a prepaid account. The transponder can be used on any California tolled facility through existing interoperability agreements.

OCTA and RCTC's tolling agreements allow both agencies to operate the 91 EL well into the future (2065 for OCTA and 2067 for RCTC). This provides customers with transportation options for 18 miles of travel in one of California's busiest corridors.

Discussion

The sections below discuss various operational data and information for the 91 EL in greater detail.

Traffic Volumes

The total traffic volume on the OCTA 91 EL for the month of December 2025 was 1,864,456. This represents a daily average of 60,144 vehicles. This is a 1.5 percent increase in total traffic volume from the same period last year when traffic levels totaled 1,837,504. For the 12 months ending December 2025, traffic volumes totaled over 22.2 million, representing a 2.5 percent increase from the same period in the prior year. The carpool percentage for December was

24.7 percent as compared to the previous year's rate of 27.2 percent. The decrease in carpool usage in the OCTA segment is similar to the decrease seen on the RCTC segment and can be attributed to the implementation of the occupancy detection system (ODS). Even though OCTA has not implemented the ODS, it appears that travelers are adjusting their lane selection and travel patterns on both segments.

Gross Potential Toll Revenues (GPTR)

GPTR for the month of December 2025 was \$6,161,309, which represents an increase of 7.4 percent from the prior year's total of \$5,737,481 for the month of December 2024. GPTR is equal to the toll rate times the number of vehicles traveling on the 91 EL (the amount does not consider violations or discounts). Over the previous 12 months, GPTR totaled over \$72.5 million, representing a 5.6 percent increase from the same period in the prior year.

Toll Adjustments

The Board of Directors (Board)-adopted Toll Policy requires staff to review traffic volumes on the Orange County segment of the 91 EL for potential toll adjustments on a quarterly basis. Based on the traffic volumes during the review period, no hours in the eastbound or westbound directions reached the trigger point for a toll adjustment in September 2025. As of December 2025, toll rates ranged from a minimum of \$1.95 to a maximum of \$9.35. Any potential toll adjustments for the quarter ending December 31, 2025, will be reported in the following report.

Number of Accounts and Transponders

The number of active accounts totaled 186,193, and 750,099 transponders were assigned to those accounts as of December 31, 2025. Over the past 12 months, the number of accounts increased by 4,187, while the number of transponders in circulation increased by 14,896. Over the past several years, there has been continued growth in the number of accounts and transponders, primarily driven by the extension of the 91 EL into Riverside County and the opening of the 15 Express Lanes with direct connectors from the 91 EL.

Outstanding Debt

As of December 31, 2025, the outstanding amount of the 91 EL tax-exempt 2023 Senior Lien Toll Road Revenue Refunding Bonds (Bonds) totaled \$35.6 million. The Bonds are rated "AA-" by Standard and Poor's, "AA3" by Moody's, and "AA-" by Fitch Ratings. The next scheduled interest payment is on February 15, 2026, and the next principal payment is on August 15, 2026.

Reserve Funds

The 2023 Bonds require three reserve funds: a major maintenance fund, an operating fund, and a debt service reserve fund. All three funds were fully funded with a total balance of approximately \$11.96 million as of December 31, 2025.

In addition to the required debt reserve funds, the OCTA Board elected to establish two additional reserve funds. An internal capital projects fund has a balance of \$33.38 million and is used for large capital projects for the 91 EL, such as pavement rehabilitation and back-office system (BOS) upgrades. The other reserve fund was established in 2017 for two future Measure M2 projects (Projects I and J) on the SR-91 corridor. Project I improves mainline freeway, interchanges, and replaces four bridges along SR-91 between west of SR-57 (Acacia Street) and east of State Route 55 (Lakeview Avenue), estimated to cost approximately \$790 million. Project I is being developed as three separate design and construction projects. The easternmost segment commenced construction in April 2025, the westernmost segment is currently in the bid phase and is anticipated to start construction in early 2026, and the middle segment is in the final design phase. All three segments of Project I are anticipated to be completed by late-2030. Project J includes operational improvements on SR-91 between State Route 241 and the Orange/Riverside County Line and is currently scheduled for completion in 2035. The balance in that reserve fund is \$263.51 million and is used for project expenses as they are incurred. Lastly, OCTA has approximately \$43.84 million set aside in excess toll revenues for SR-91 corridor projects.

Operations Update

In March 2022, Cofiroute USA, LLC (CUSA) deployed a new BOS for the 91 EL for both Orange and Riverside counties. Since deployment, CUSA, OCTA, and RCTC staff have continuously monitored the BOS performance and the customer service center (CSC) performance. As part of ongoing monitoring, Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are assessed for damages in accordance with the contract requirements. OCTA and RCTC staff have finalized the KPI damages for the months of July 2025 through November 2025. These KPI damages are a result of OCTA and RCTC identified performance issues with the BOS and CSC, totaling \$73,430 for both agencies.

For OCTA, the total penalties amounted to \$38,360. Of this amount, \$25,787 was attributed to BOS performance, of which \$11,428 was waived, and \$14,359 was assessed. The remaining \$12,573 in KPI damages was attributed to CSC performance failures, with the full amount assessed in the corresponding monthly invoices. Staff is working on finalizing the KPI damages for December 2025, which will be reported in the following quarterly report.

Attachment A summarizes some of the KPIs of the CSC over the past 12 months. The KPI for service level for the speed of answer (KPI 5) was met in October and missed only once in November and twice in December. The abandonment rate KPI (KPI 6) was met in all three months of the quarter. CUSA continues to evaluate staffing levels and review the communication schedule to optimize message delivery timing. Prior corrective measures have shown improvement in meeting KPI 5 and KPI 6 in the past quarter compared to the prior year.

Operational Acceptance Testing was passed in June 2025. Since then, staff has been working closely with CUSA to address deferred and punch-list items. As of December, CUSA has made progress in completing the deferred and punch-list items, but some items remain outstanding. All deferred and punch-list items must be completed before Final Acceptance. Staff will report on the status of Final Acceptance in the following report.

OCTA and RCTC substantially completed the upgrade project for their video wall and advanced traffic management system (ATMS) in the Traffic Operations Center. The ATMS was commissioned in July 2025 and completed acceptance in December. Staff will now oversee the project for the operations and maintenance phase.

OCTA staff has also been supporting RCTC in implementing the Occupancy Detection System (ODS) on the Riverside segment of the 91 EL. The ODS enables RCTC to verify that at least three occupants are present during travel. If fewer than three occupants are present, the carpool discount will not be given, and a \$5 occupancy correction fee will be added. The ODS went live on August 4, 2025, and staff has been working collaboratively with CUSA to ensure that the system accurately assesses tolls and fees for users who do not meet the occupancy requirements. Staff will continue to work with CUSA on customer communication, system monitoring, and overall ODS oversight.

During the reporting period, OCTA and RCTC staff worked with CUSA to complete system changes to remove the zero-emissions vehicle (ZEV) discount as approved by the OCTA Board on September 8, 2025. Staff worked with CUSA to send updated account documents and notices to customers, informing them of the change well in advance. Customers were provided the ZEV discount until December 31, 2025, as a courtesy and to allow for ample time for communications to be sent and system changes to be completed. All the system changes were completed before the end of the year, and the discount was discontinued as of January 1, 2026. Staff will monitor the changes to the system and evaluate any issues appropriately on the KPI scorecard.

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On December 27, 2025, the 91 EL celebrated 30 years of operations, providing motorists with a reliable congestion-free option on the SR-91 corridor. To celebrate this occasion, the 91 EL conducted a marketing promotion to boost customer accounts and travel on the 91 EL during the holiday weeks in December. The promotion provided 30 91 EL customers who used the OCTA segment during the promotion period with a \$100 toll credit for future tolls on the OCTA segment of the 91 EL.

Looking at the Quarter Ahead

OCTA 91 EL staff will focus on completing the punch-list items for the BOS acceptance, along with monitoring the BOS for stability and ensuring ZEV discount changes were completed appropriately. Staff will also continue to review BOS and CSC operations and apply the applicable KPIs to the monthly scorecards. During this period, OCTA will also continue to support RCTC in monitoring the ODS. Lastly, OCTA staff will work with RCTC to plan and project costs for the future BOS for the 91 EL.

Summary

An operational report for the 91 Express Lanes for the period ending December 30, 2025, is provided for the Board of Directors' review. The report provides a summary of key operational and financial activities.

Attachments

- A. 91 Express Lanes, Key Performance Measures, December 2025
- B. 91 Express Lanes Status Report, December 2025

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