




June 1, 2026

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer 

Subject: Agreement for Public Outreach Consultant Services for Rail Capital Projects

Overview

On January 26, 2026, the Orange County Transportation Authority released a request for proposals for public outreach consultant services for rail capital projects. Board of Directors' approval is requested to execute an agreement for these services.

Recommendations

- A. Approve the selection of Arellano Associates, LLC, as the firm to provide public outreach consultant services for rail capital projects.
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C250187 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Arellano Associates, LLC, in the amount of \$800,610, for a four-year initial term with an option term of up to 24 months to provide public outreach consultant services for rail capital projects.

Discussion

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) owns and maintains more than 40 miles of operating railroad right-of-way in Orange County that extends from the City of Fullerton to the San Diego County Line in the City of San Clemente. The rail corridor is used by Metrolink and Amtrak passenger trains in addition to freight trains. OCTA, in partnership with Metrolink, is advancing multiple regional rail capital projects.

Major activities associated with the projects include bridge demolition and reconstruction, retaining wall construction, pile driving, track removal and installation, station construction, and utility work. These complex construction activities will result in temporary disruptions to adjacent communities such as

long- and short-term local street and trail closures, service interruptions, noise, and other construction-related impacts.

OCTA, with consultant support, implements public outreach programs for these projects, many of which are underway. The current consultant agreement with Arellano Associates ends June 30, 2026. The new agreement would support outreach services for the following ongoing projects:

- **Coastal Rail Stabilization Priority Projects**

Area 3 – Construction: Constructs a 1,400-foot-long catchment wall and restores a beach trail in the City of San Clemente. Construction began in mid-2025 and is expected to be completed in late 2026.

Area 4 – Design: Proposes to construct a shoreline protection structure, perform riprap repair, and sand nourishment. Environmental clearance and preliminary engineering are underway and are expected to be completed in late 2026.

Areas 1, 2, and 4 – Environmental: Proposes sand placement at three locations along the City of San Clemente’s beaches to help stabilize the coastal rail line along the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor.

- **Inland Slope Stabilization Rehabilitation Project – Construction**

Rehabilitates slopes at six locations in the railroad right-of-way in the cities of Laguna Niguel, Lake Forest, and Mission Viejo. Construction began in early 2026 and is expected to be completed in mid-2026.

- **San Juan Creek Bridge Replacement Project – Construction**

Replaces the railroad bridge over San Juan Creek in the City of San Juan Capistrano and constructs a new foundation and substructure for a potential future rail bridge. Construction began in mid-2024 and is expected to be completed in early 2027.

The new agreement would also support outreach services for the following future projects:

- **Pacific Coast Highway Bridge Replacement Project – Environmental and Design**

Proposes to replace an existing railroad bridge over Pacific Coast Highway in the City of Dana Point that has reached the end of its useful life. The project is expected to advance to the environmental phase in early 2027.

- **Orange County Maintenance Facility – Design and Construction**

Constructs a maintenance facility in Irvine to store and service Metrolink trains. The environmental study was completed in mid-2022, and the project is expected to advance to the design phase once additional funding and agreements are secured.

- **Irvine Station Project – Environmental**

Proposes to reconfigure the Irvine Metrolink Station and rail infrastructure by extending or adding tracks and installing a pedestrian underpass. The environmental phase is expected to begin in mid-2026.

- **Placentia Station Project – Design**

Constructs a new train station in the City of Placentia, near State Route 57 (SR-57), serving the communities of Anaheim, Fullerton, Placentia, and Yorba Linda. Initiation of future phases is contingent upon an agreement between OCTA, Metrolink, and other parties.

Outreach may also be required for additional rail and station projects, as directed by OCTA. The agreement is structured on a time and expense basis, and consultant services will be used only as needed for projects that advance and require outreach support.

OCTA, with consultant support, will implement comprehensive public outreach programs designed to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of project benefits and timelines
- Proactively communicate construction activities and impacts
- Engage stakeholders, including hard-to-reach communities, early and often throughout project delivery
- Address and resolve community concerns in a timely manner

Outreach efforts are essential to minimizing the impacts of community disruptions, maintaining transparency, building trust, and enhancing safety. Stakeholders include residents, business owners, motorists, rail passengers, first responders, and trail users, as well as local and county agencies, corridor cities, beach communities, and school districts.

Outreach strategies and tactics will include multilingual stakeholder briefings and presentations, in-person and virtual meetings, and print and digital materials.

These efforts will include ongoing coordination with project development and construction teams to ensure accurate and consistent messaging. The program will include regular monitoring and evaluation of outreach performance metrics to inform and refine communication strategies for each project, and to ensure accountability, consistency, and measurable outcomes.

Procurement Approach

This procurement was handled in accordance with OCTA's Board of Directors (Board)-approved procedures for professional and technical services. Various factors are considered in the award 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, and work plan, as well as cost and price.

On January 26, 2026, Request for Proposals (RFP) 250187 was issued electronically on OpenGov, OCTA's online e-procurement system. The solicitation was advertised in a newspaper of general circulation on January 26, and February 2, 2026. A pre-proposal conference was held on February 3, 2026, with 29 attendees representing 12 firms. Two addenda were issued to make available the pre-proposal conference registration sheets and presentation, as well as to provide responses to written questions.

On February 23, 2026, six proposals were received. An evaluation committee consisting of members from the Contracts Administration and Materials Management, People and Community Engagement, Public Information Office, and Rail Capital Programs departments met to review all proposals received. The proposals were evaluated based on the following evaluation criteria and weightings:

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

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 public outreach experience on rail projects during construction phases. Staffing and project organization criterion was weighted at 25 percent as the firms had to demonstrate an experienced, well-rounded team consisting of staff having adequate availability, as well as relevant experience performing outreach services on large construction projects. Work plan criterion was weighted at 30 percent as the plan had to consider the unique needs of a corridor composed of residential, commercial, and industrial businesses. Additionally, the proposed work plan had to demonstrate an understanding of the Project scopes and challenges, as well as the level of effort required. Cost and price criterion was weighted at 25 percent to ensure that OCTA receives 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. 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 March 9, 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:

Firms and Location

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

MBI Media (MBI)
Headquarters: Covina, California
Project Office: Covina, California

On March 16, 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. 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 hard-to-reach and multilingual communities, and communication strategies.

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 Arellano for consideration of the award. The following is a summary of the proposal evaluation results.

Qualifications of the Firm

Arellano, founded in 1994 and headquartered in the City of Chino Hills, is a public communications and community outreach firm with more than 80 employees supporting transportation and infrastructure programs throughout Southern California. Arellano demonstrated expertise in providing strategic public communications and stakeholder engagement for rail and capital improvement projects. Arellano's outreach services span the project lifecycle, including planning, environmental clearance, pre-construction coordination, and active construction for regional and local agencies. Arellano is currently performing rail outreach services for the Coastal Rail Stabilization Projects, San Juan Creek Bridge Replacement Project, and the Inland Slope Rehabilitation Project. Additional rail outreach experience includes OCTA's Coastal Rail Resiliency Study, Laguna Niguel to San Juan Capistrano Passing Siding Project, and the City of Corona's McKinley Street Grade Separation Project. The firm received positive comments from its references.

MBI was founded in 1989 and is headquartered in the City of Covina, with 15 full-time employees supported by additional part-time personnel. The firm specializes in strategic communications and public outreach services and offers full-service outreach support, including project management, community engagement, digital communications, branding, and graphic design. MBI demonstrated experience providing strategic communications and community engagement services for transportation agencies and municipalities throughout Southern California, including Metrolink, LA Metro, and the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA). Relevant experience includes providing outreach and engagement services for Metrolink rail initiatives, serving as lead outreach consultant for LA Metro's Link Union Station Project, overseeing corridor-wide outreach for segments of the CHSRA Program, and providing construction-phase outreach services for OCTA's Interstate 405 Improvement

Project. The firm proposed subcontractors to support multicultural outreach and additional engineering and public relations support. MBI received positive comments from its references.

Staffing and Project Organization

Arellano proposed a structured staffing plan designed to provide executive oversight, dedicated project management, and field-level outreach support for OCTA's rail capital projects. The proposed team includes a project manager with nine years of experience leading public outreach for complex rail and infrastructure capital improvement projects. The staffing plan includes a community liaison to oversee implementation of outreach strategies, community relations representatives to conduct field outreach to residents, businesses, and corridor stakeholders, communications specialists to prepare written materials, construction notices, digital content, and presentations, and multilingual outreach staff to support engagement with diverse communities. During the interview, the project team highlighted staff's experience and provided thorough responses to the evaluation committee's questions.

MBI proposed a project team with defined roles and responsibilities aligned with the scope of work. The proposed project manager has more than 25 years of experience in public outreach and transportation communications on rail projects for Metrolink and other transportation agencies. The project team includes a community liaison who has supported outreach efforts for Metrolink and the CHSRA and who would be responsible for stakeholder coordination and field-level engagement activities. The proposed organizational structure integrates in-house project management and creative services with subcontractor support for multilingual and specialized outreach, providing scalability to support multiple rail capital projects. During the interview, the project team presented their roles and provided thorough responses to the evaluation committee's questions.

Work Plan

Arellano proposed a structured work plan focused on minimizing community disruption, maintaining transparency, and supporting the successful delivery of OCTA rail capital projects. The work plan includes coordination with OCTA staff at project initiation to confirm outreach objectives, review project schedules and anticipated construction impacts, and develop project-specific outreach strategies tailored to the scope of work and sensitivity of each project. The work plan outlined a stakeholder identification element that includes development and maintenance of stakeholder databases consisting of adjacent residents and businesses, community-based organizations, corridor users, elected officials,

agency partners, and emergency responders. Proposed engagement activities include door-to-door outreach, stakeholder meetings, business briefings, community presentations, and coordination with local agencies. During active construction, Arellano proposed implementation of proactive notification strategies for construction schedules, closures, rail service adjustments, night or weekend work, and major milestones using print and digital formats such as email alerts, social media and website updates, and field notifications.

MBI provided a comprehensive work plan that demonstrated an understanding of OCTA's rail capital outreach requirements, including tailored outreach strategies for each of the rail capital projects listed in the scope of work demonstrating an understanding of each project's characteristics and challenges. The work plan indicated that outreach efforts would not only inform stakeholders about individual construction activities but also connect project communications to broader rail improvement initiatives. MBI's work plan also included development of comprehensive outreach strategies aligned with project goals, schedules, and key milestones. MBI emphasized transparency and constructive dialogue with stakeholders, including engagement with hard-to-reach communities. The proposal also identifies coordination with community-based organizations and implementation of multilingual outreach strategies to support inclusive engagement. MBI proposed a structured, metrics-driven public outreach approach that integrates traditional and digital engagement tools, while incorporating translation services and multilingual outreach to serve hard-to-reach communities.

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. Arellano proposed the lower weighted average hourly rate. In addition, Arellano's proposed rates are consistent with OCTA's project manager's independent cost estimate, as well as those of comparable public outreach contracts for similar scopes of work. Therefore, Arellano's proposed hourly rates are deemed fair and reasonable.

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 Arellano as the top-ranked firm to provide public outreach consultant services for rail capital projects. Arellano delivered a thorough and comprehensive proposal and an interview that was responsive to all the requirements of the RFP.

Fiscal Impact

Funds are included in OCTA's Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget and, pending approval, will be included OCTA's Proposed FY 2026-27 Budget, People and Community Engagement Division, account nos. 0018-7519-TR231-26Q, 0018-7519-TR232-26Q, 0018-7519-C5054-0DX, 0017-7519-TR022-16H, 0018-7519-A0001-0JK, and funded with federal, state, and local funds.

Summary

Staff is recommending the Board of Directors authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C250187 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Arellano Associates, LLC, in the amount of \$800,610, for a four-year initial term with an option term of up to 24 months, to provide public outreach consultant services for rail capital projects.

Attachments

- A. Review of Proposals, RFP 250187 Public Outreach Consultant Services for Rail Capital Projects
- B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria Matrix (Short-Listed), RFP 250187 Public Outreach Consultant Services for Rail Capital Projects
- C. Contract History for the Past Two Years, RFP 250187 Public Outreach Consultant Services for Rail Capital Projects

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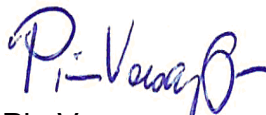


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