



# Orange County Transportation Authority

## Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget Workshop Questions & Answers

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**1. Question: In what format was the proposed budget information provided to the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Board Members?**

**Answer:** The Clerk of the Board emailed a dropbox link that contained the proposed budget information on May 3, 2023.

**2. Question: What was the reasoning behind reducing coach operators by eight full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in the proposed budget?**

**Answer:** The coach operator count is based on the amount of service, overtime assumptions, and hiring assumptions which include attrition and recruiting efforts. This fluctuates annually based on the service delivery plan and OCTA's ability to retain and attract coach operators.

**3. Question: Are the reduced coach operator FTE's OCTA positions?**

**Answer:** Yes. All positions in the budget are directly employed by OCTA and do not include any contracted positions. These positions are currently vacant. As a result, no employees are being laid off.

**4. Question: What are the costs of the zero-emission buses in comparison to compressed natural gas (CNG) buses and what is the reason for mixing different types of zero-emission buses?**

**Answer:** The current cost of a 40-foot CNG bus is approximately \$700,000. The costs of the zero-emissions vehicles are as follows:

- Hydrogen Fuel Cell 40-foot bus = \$1.4 million each
- Battery Electric 40-foot bus = \$1.2 million each

OCTA is piloting both technologies to see what fits best for the organization in the long term. In doing so, capabilities related to the number of buses that can be fueled, as well as the number of buses that could be charged, were taken into consideration when determining how many buses to purchase as part of the expanded pilot.

**5. Question: Can the 18 percent of Measure M2 (M2) sales tax dollars allocated to Local Fair Share be adjusted?**

**Answer:** No. The percentage of the allocation cannot be adjusted. The percentage is codified in OCTA's M2 ordinance.



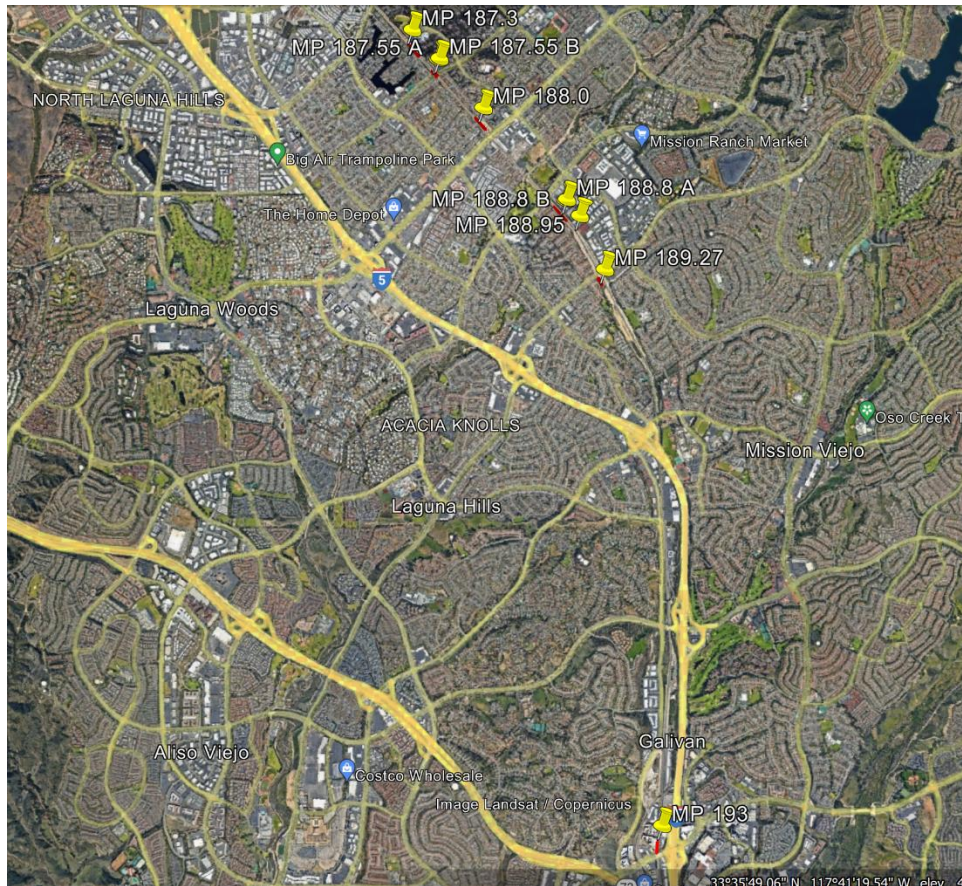
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**6. Question: Can you provide some more information on two allocations in the Regional Rail Capital Program (“Coastal Slope Stabilization” & “Mission Viejo/Laguna Niguel Slope Stabilization”)?**

**Answer:** There is \$3.7 million in the proposed budget for “Coastal Slope Stabilization”. Of the \$3.7 million budgeted, \$2 million is to retain a consultant to do the Phase I Study which will address short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions. This effort will be largely funded with Surface Transportation Block Grant revenues. The remaining \$1.7 million largely relates to Cyprus Shores follow on landscape mitigation and closeout activities for ground anchors related to the emergency tie-back effort in San Clemente. A second study related to the potential relocation of the rail line is not in the proposed budget as it has not yet been determined which agency would lead that effort.

The \$5.7 million budget request for the Mission Viejo/Laguna Niguel Slope Stabilization project relates to preventive activities previously identified for corrective work along the OCTA-owned rail right-of-way. This effort will provide slope and drainage improvements along rail right-of-way in the locations pinned in the map below.





**7. Question: Why are we not designating for future 405 Express Lanes project expenses?**

**Answer:** The 91 Express Lanes is a mature tolled facility, having been in operations for the past 27.5 years. As such, excess revenues are generated on an annual basis and are invested in the State Route 91 corridor on improvement projects. The 405 Express Lanes will commence operations in late 2023 and is expected to experience a multi-year ramp-up period as customers incorporate the new Express Lanes into their travel options. Ramp-up periods are common for new tolled facilities. The FY 2023-24 405 Express Lanes project budget is assumed to be balanced based upon the forecasted revenues and expenditures.

Furthermore, it is important to note that OCTA currently has a \$629 million Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan for the 405 Express Lanes. Any excess revenues generated in the first five years after opening must be held in a Distribution Lock-Up Fund. After five years, OCTA will have access to the funds, however half of all excess revenues will need to go towards paying down the existing loan. In future fiscal years, as the TIFIA loan is paid down and 405 Express Lanes revenues exceed expenditures, staff will set aside designations for future expenditures.

**8. Question: What purpose does the Call Box Program serve in this modern age of cell phones?**

**Answer:** The Call Box Program receives approximately 1,000 calls per year from motorists. Every few years, OCTA staff evaluates cellular service carrier coverage, call box call volumes, and other metrics to consider reductions in the number of call boxes. OCTA has reduced the number of call boxes from more than 1,200 at the program's inception to just under 300 today. It is important to note that the program exists as some of the individuals making calls do not have a cell phone, their cell phone is not charged, or their cellular carrier does not have a good signal in the area (like on Santiago Canyon Road, Carbon Canyon, Ortega Highway, and some areas of the toll roads); making this service essential for them. Additionally, Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies funds (\$1 registration fee) are dedicated funds that may only be used for Motorist Aid programs. These funds cannot be used anywhere else.