

Meeting of March 11, 2024

OCTA Contributes \$27.5 Million to Preserve Habitat and Wildlife

The Orange County Transportation Authority's Board of Directors received an update on OCTA's efforts to protect and preserve important habitat and wildlife through the Environmental Mitigation Program.

The program works with state and federal wildlife agencies to purchase undeveloped land and fund habitat restoration projects, offsetting environmental impacts from Measure M freeway projects.

Since the inception of the program, OCTA has acquired approximately 1,300 acres of open space throughout Orange County and has funded 12 restoration projects. OCTA has contributed \$27.5 million to an endowment that will ensure that the open space preserves will be protected for future generations, and is on track to meet its funding goal of \$46.2 million by 2028.

I-5 South County Improvements Nearing Finish Line

OCTA's board received an update on the I-5 Improvement Project between SR-73 and El Toro Road.

The \$644 million project spans 6.5 miles and will add one regular lane in both directions between Avery Parkway and Alicia Parkway, reconstruct and add auxiliary lanes, and improve on- and off-ramps.

The project is being constructed in three segments. The first segment, between SR-73 and Oso Parkway, is 90% complete. The second segment, between Oso Parkway and Alicia Parkway, is 92% complete. And the third segment, between Alicia Parkway and El Toro Road, is 87% complete.

The improvement project will also reconstruct the Los Alisos Boulevard overcrossing and interchanges at Avery Parkway and La Paz Road, as well as extend a second carpool lane in both directions between Alicia Parkway and El Toro Road. The project is anticipated to be completed in late 2024.

For more information on the project, visit octa.net/I5SouthCounty.

OCTA Continues Work to Protect Coastal Rail Line

The OCTA board received an update on OCTA's efforts to complete emergency work to protect the rail line in San Clemente, as well as its ongoing study to find lasting solutions to prevent additional emergencies by addressing other areas in need of reinforcement.

OCTA and Metrolink are continuing work on a nearly 200-foot-long catchment wall at Mariposa Point in San Clemente to protect the track, following a Jan. 23 landslide on a privately-owned slope above the rail line.

At the same time, OCTA is leading the Coastal Rail Resiliency Study, which aims to evaluate and implement strategies to fortify the railway in the vulnerable 7-mile stretch between Dana Point and the San Diego County line and to keep rail traffic moving through the area for the next 30 years, while longer-term solutions are explored.

The initial assessment presented to the board identified seven areas along that stretch in need of reinforcement and monitoring. The potential solutions are meant to protect the track from threats on the coastal and inland side caused by erosion and storm surges, among other risks.

OCTA is meeting with groups of stakeholders to discuss the study and get input along the way. Two listening sessions with the public are being planned on April 11 via Zoom, and on May 21 in San Clemente. To register to attend either meeting and to receive updates, please visit octa.net/CRRS.