Fulfilling Promises. Building a Better Tomorrow.

Measure M: Envisioning the Future

For more than 20 years, Measure M has been the major force behind traffic congestion relief in Orange County. Measure M is the half cent sales tax for transportation improvements first approved by Orange County voters in 1990, and renewed by voters for a 30-year extension in 2006. The combined measures raise the sales tax in Orange County by one-half cent through 2041 to alleviate traffic congestion, sustain economic growth, and ensure future mobility.


Through careful stewardship and strategic early action, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) kept the promises made to the voters under the original Measure M (M1). More than $4 billion worth of transportation improvements for Orange County were achieved over a 20-year period, including the widening of the State Route 22 (SR-22) - a project not included in the original plan. As a result, M1 was responsible for adding 192 freeway lane miles, improving 170 intersections and 38 freeway interchanges, and implementing Metrolink service to Orange County, which now carries the equivalent of one lane of traffic on the I-5 Freeway.

*Measure M2: Paving the Way for the Future (2011-2041)*

On November 7, 2006, nearly 70 percent of Orange County voted to extend the Measure M one-half cent sales tax for transportation improvements. Renewed Measure M, Measure M2 (M2), administered by OCTA, will provide more than $15 billion to improve transportation in Orange County over a 30-year period.

M2 allocates revenues in the same percentages as M1. In addition, M2 dedicates two percent of gross revenues to protecting Orange County beaches from transportation-generated pollution while improving ocean water quality. Also, a minimum of five percent of the M2 Freeway Program budget is available for comprehensive mitigation (rather than piecemeal) of the environmental impacts of freeway improvements. The M2 Freeway Mitigation Program is providing higher value environmental benefits such as habitat protection, wildlife corridors and resource preservation in exchange for streamlined project approvals for the freeway program as a whole.
Acceleration of Improvements

*Early Action Plan (2007-2012)*

In 2007, the OCTA Board of Directors approved the Early Action Plan (EAP) to accelerate the implementation of M2, from 2007-2012. The EAP allowed M2 projects to start before even one dollar of sales tax was collected in April 2011. This ensured delivery of transportation benefits to Orange County sooner and with significant cost savings.

*M2020 Plan (2012-2020)*

With the successful completion of the five-year EAP in 2012, the M2020 Plan (Plan) was developed to guide OCTA and M2 projects to 2020. The Plan outlines the projects and programs for all modes that can be delivered on an expedited schedule with anticipated schedules and major milestones. In total, the Plan will deliver more than $5 billion worth of transportation improvements bringing mobility relief years sooner to Orange County residents.

Safeguard and Oversight

The M2 Transportation Investment Plan has many taxpayer safeguards, including a Taxpayers Oversight Committee. Annual audits and regular public reports on projects’ progress are required. The M2 Transportation Investment Plan must be reported on a quarterly basis and a triennial assessment conducted. In addition, every 10 years, a review of the plan must take place to ensure that the plan stays current during its 30-year life span.
Progress to Date

Thanks to the EAP and the M2020 Plan, many projects were advanced to get improvements underway. Progress since the inception of M2 includes:

- $900 million allocated to date for freeway projects with work underway on all projects in the plan: six freeway projects are complete, an additional six are currently in construction and six more are to be in construction or complete by 2020 along with the nine remaining projects to be cleared environmentally;
- $246 million has been awarded to local jurisdictions in competitive funding for local streets and roads projects with $38 million in transportation improvements delivered, more than $110 million awarded for projects currently in construction and a plan to embark on $98 million more worth of projects within 3-5 years;
- More than 1,400 signaled intersections synched along 365 miles of streets keeping drivers moving efficiently;
- $385 million of flexible funding allocated to local jurisdictions for streets and road improvements to help the County of Orange keep up with the rising cost of repairing the aging street system;
- More than $600 million invested in the OC Bridges program to grade separate seven locations at high volume streets which are impacted by freight trains along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad: two of the seven projects are complete and the remaining five are currently in construction;
- Fifty-two Orange County rail-highway grade crossings enhanced with safety improvements.
- 10 new intracounty Metrolink trains added providing mid-day service within Orange County and a number of rail line and station improvements to accommodate future expanded service;
- Continuation of collaboration with Burlington Northern Santa Fe and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Authority to address track-sharing issues to further expand Metrolink service into Los Angeles;
- Two fixed-guideway projects in the project study process: the Anaheim Rapid Connection in environmental and the 4.1 mile Santa Ana-Garden Grove Fixed-Guideway project (The OC Street Car) entering into design;
- Completed the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC) which connects OCTA bus service, Metrolink, Amtrak, shuttles, and other private/public transportation as well as accommodates future high speed trains;
- Over $31 million provided for services to support seniors and persons with disabilities by reducing fares, providing senior non-emergency medical transportation services, and a senior mobility program;
- $9.8 million approved to fund community-based transit services that complement regional bus and rail services and meet needs not adequately served by regional transit service;
- $1.2 million allocated to local jurisdictions to provide and improve passenger amenities at 50 of Orange County’s busiest bus stops;
- A $55 million investment in comprehensive mitigation of environmental impacts of freeway improvement projects: OCTA has acquired seven properties totaling 1,300 acres and the restoration of 400 acres of habitats in exchange for expediting the permit process for the 13 M2 freeway projects;
- $38 million approved in water quality improvements to address urban runoff from transportation projects which has resulted in more than 213 gallons of water saved and nearly 500,000 cubic feet of trash eliminated from flowing into waterways.