



# Metro

## Board Report

Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation  
Authority  
One Gateway Plaza  
3rd Floor Board Room  
Los Angeles, CA

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### LA SAFE BOARD MEETING MAY 23, 2024

**SUBJECT: LA SAFE FISCAL YEAR BUDGET**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

ADOPT the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (FY25) budget in the amount of \$7,858,565 for the operation and administration of the Los Angeles County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (LA SAFE). This budget amount includes the annual funding allocation for the agreement with the Public Transportation Services Corporation (PTSC) for direct labor and administrative support services in the amount of \$1,693,565.

#### **ISSUE**

LA SAFE was created in 1988, pursuant to California Streets and Highway Code Section 2550 et. seq. and is responsible for providing motorist aid services in Los Angeles County. To fulfill its mission, LA SAFE needs an annual budget and requires administrative support services, which are provided via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the PTSC. A summary of the proposed FY25 budget is provided in Attachment A.

#### **BACKGROUND**

During Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (FY24), LA SAFE continued to fund, develop, implement, and operate various motorist aid services, programs, and activities. These services, programs, and activities included:

- Operation and maintenance of the Kenneth Hahn Call Box system
- Operation and Maintenance of Southern California 511 Traveler Information System (SoCal 511) within the five-county region (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties)
- Finalization of the Interagency Agreement with Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) for the operations and maintenance of SoCal 511, enabling additional cost-sharing and collaborative opportunities. This Agreement, combined with the Agreements with San Bernardino and Riverside counties as well as Access Services, will result in cost-sharing

revenues for LA SAFE in the amount of \$750,000 for FY24 for the operation of SoCal 511

- Upgrades to the SoCal 511 mobile application, released in the first quarter of FY24 (August 2023)
- Coordination with Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California Highway Patrol (CHP), and other regional partners on the operation and development of the LA SAFE services
- Collaboration with Metro on the funding, use, and development of the Regional Integration of Intelligent Transportation Systems (RIITS) to support LA SAFE data needs
- Coordination with CHP and Caltrans for the ongoing operation of the SoCal 511 Traveler Information Center (TIC) within the Los Angeles Regional Traffic Management Center (LARTMC), in particular for major event support and timely communication of traveler information
- Continuation of the SoCal 511 marketing campaign to promote public awareness and the use of SoCal 511 traveler information services

## **DISCUSSION**

For FY24, LA SAFE programs and services continue to increase utilization. SoCal 511 usage for FY24 is projected to be approximately 824,000 (or about 69,000 users per month) for all platforms, including web, phone, mobile application, and social media. The FY24 marketing campaign continues to aim at increasing general awareness of the SoCal 511 program as well as increasing mobile app downloads. By the end of FY24, the marketing media, including radio, billboards, search engines, and social media, are projected to drive over 130,000 clicks to the website, about 7,000 calls, and over 21,000 app downloads. Also, these marketing tactics are projected to make over two billion impressions, increasing the general awareness of SoCal 511 services.

For FY25, LA SAFE will be working on the following projects and activities:

- Continuing the operation and maintenance of the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System
- Continuing operation of the SoCal 511 Traveler Information System
- Investigation, development, and deployment of improvements, new features, and services for SoCal 511 and the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System
- Enhancements to existing platforms to better support planned and unplanned events across all platforms, such as the 2023 I-10 freeway closure, destination-based trip planning, and upcoming major regional events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup, 2027 Super Bowl, and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Implementing SoCal 511 mobile app enhancements and improvements

- Collaboration with Metro’s mobile app working group to ensure that SoCal 511 services and data are fully integrated with Metro’s mobile app, resulting in a seamless experience for shared customers across the five-county region
- Continuation of SoCal 511 marketing awareness and customer education efforts
- Development of a SoCal 511 market analysis and customer experience study, inclusive of focus groups and surveys
- Initiation of a strategic review of SoCal 511
- Collaboration with regional callbox operators/agencies
- Collaboration and coordination with SoCal 511 partners and stakeholders
- Initiation of the Interagency Agreement with Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) for the operations and maintenance of SoCal 511, enabling additional cost-sharing and collaborative opportunities
- Collaboration with Metro and other partners on the development and operation of RIITS to improve the quality and availability of real-time data and services provided into SoCal 511

The FY25 budget of \$7,858,565 million represents a decrease of approximately \$897,237 or 10.2% compared to the adopted FY24 budget. Specifically, the FY25 budget variances for each major budget category are as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Increase/ (Decrease)</u>
Administration	\$40,000
Direct Labor	(\$594,237)
Programs & Services	(\$343,000)

The Administration budget covers the general administrative costs for LA SAFE. It includes the budget for general office and computer supplies, insurance, training, travel/conference fees, and other general administrative support. This category is proposed to increase by \$40,000 or 11.8% for FY25. The \$40,000 increase is associated with LA SAFE administrative on-call services’ contract labor rate increases. In FY25, LA SAFE will reduce the insurance budget by approximately 4.8% to better align the budget with past expenditures related to general and excess liability. In FY24, staff worked with Metro’s Risk Management and Vendor Contract Management departments to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for LA SAFE’s insurance coverage to ensure adequate coverage for programs under LA SAFE. The RFP is in the blackout phase. However, a contract is expected to be awarded by the end of FY24.

The Direct Labor budget covers the costs for obtaining staff and associated administrative services from PTSC. This category includes the costs for direct labor, as-needed staff, allocated overhead,

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fringe, and other labor-related costs and is proposed to decrease by \$594,237 or 26% for FY25. The FY25 budget decrease is attributable to a reduction in the as-needed allocation and associated labor allocation costs assigned by PTSC. The FY25 as-needed allocation will enable LA SAFE to continue funding existing and obtain new as-needed staff to support a variety of tasks, including quality/customer experience usage and testing, data analytics, service improvements, and other special projects as needed. The FY25 FTE allocation of 5.82 FTEs is a decrease of 2.00 FTEs compared to the approved FY24 allocation due to the internal realignment of existing staff in support of program efficiencies and changes. LA SAFE is committed to continuing to effectively manage existing services, develop and implement customer-focused improvements, address emerging opportunities and technologies, engage in improved market and customer awareness, and strategically support planned and unplanned events such as was done for the I-10 freeway closure. In addition, LA SAFE will apply critical lessons learned and make necessary changes to all platforms as we prepare for upcoming major regional events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the 2027 Super Bowl, and the 2028 Olympics and Paralympic Games. Additional staffing resources may be requested in the future as the nature and scope of the improvements and changes are identified, developed, and implemented. PTSC calculates all costs and is consistent with Metro's costs and budget. Additionally, all FTEs are consistent with and included in Metro's FY25 budget.

The Programs & Services category provides the funding to administer, operate, maintain, improve, and develop the motorist aid services provided or supported by LA SAFE. This includes funding to support the continuing operation of existing services - the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System - fixed and mobile services, and SoCal 511. Funds also support the development of improvements to existing services and the research and development in support of new motorist services and projects. Funding for the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System includes a slight increase of \$27,000 to allow for CPI increases. However, the program is projected to remain stable, with slight variability due to in-field construction impacts. Funding for SoCal 511 operations, included in the Traveler Information System subcategory, is decreasing by \$205,000. However, FY25 funds include the strategic review and implementation of system improvements, including enhancements to the mobile app, website, and phone system and improved data sources to deliver better real-time traveler information.

The overall budget allocation for this category is proposed to decrease by \$343,000 or 5.6% in FY25. In addition to the \$2,605,000 in the Traveler Information System subcategory, there is \$2,035,000 attributable to market research and outreach, customer experience research and improvements, RIITS data and services improvements, and possible development/support of new motorist aid services. For example, staff continues to improve the quality of real-time transit data through general transit feed specifications-real time (GTFS-RT), which will improve traveler information for SoCal 511 customers. Specific to marketing and outreach, the FY25 budget includes funding to continue public awareness and customer education regarding the various SoCal 511 platforms and their benefits (mobile app, website, and phone). To date, SoCal 511 phone, website, mobile app, and social media usage remains stable at 69,000 average monthly users and is projected to reach 824,000 users in FY24. The mobile app has demonstrated growth, reaching over 15,000 downloads since the launch of the updated app in August 2023. Additionally, the SoCal 511 website shows an increase in time spent using the website in FY24 compared to FY23. SoCal 511 services have also demonstrated increased utility during major travel-impacting events such as the major winter storms, the

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Hurricane, and the I-10 freeway closure, which occurred during FY24. The FY25 budget will allow staff to continue and expand the campaign to cover more geographic areas, obtain new customer data, and continue with SoCal 511 improvements and applications. In addition, staff will continue increasing engagement with partner agencies, community-based organizations, and stakeholders to secure in-kind support for SoCal 511 through their channels (e.g., websites, mobile app links, timetables, and other related materials).

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

The budget supports the continued safe and reliable operation of the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System and SoCal 511. Both systems support motorists by providing a service from which motorists can request assistance and obtain transportation-related information, improving the overall safety and reliability of the transportation network.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Funding in the amount of \$7,858,565 has been included in the FY25 proposed budget for project 300209 and allocated to cost centers 2221 (Shared Mobility Executive Office), 3351 (SAFE), 4740 (Intelligent Transportation Systems), and 7140 (Marketing). The Five-Year Financial Forecast demonstrates the financial capacity of LA SAFE to use its existing fund balance and projected revenue to fully fund the proposed FY25 budget.

### **Impact to Budget**

The source of funds for this action is locally generated DMV fees dedicated to LA SAFE. These funds are not eligible for bus and rail operating or capital expenditures.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

LA SAFE programs assist all people in Los Angeles County, including residents and visitors. Disadvantaged populations, including limited English proficiency and/or low-income communities within Los Angeles County, benefit from the services provided by LA SAFE. For example, SoCal 511 provides free traffic and transit information within a five-county region, enabling users to make efficient local and regional transportation choices and support them when they need motorist assistance. Currently, this service is offered in Spanish and English via an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system (also known as a phone system), and our web platform is translated into eight languages. The mobile app is also available in English and Spanish. In FY25, SoCal 511 continues to require marketing efforts for billboard advertisements and vehicle wraps to be located in Equity Focus Communities (EFCs). As was done in FY24, 100% of about 130 SoCal 511 billboards and wrapped vehicles will be located in EFCs throughout Los Angeles County. Additionally, English and Spanish radio advertisements will continue to be aired in FY25. Those radio stations reach listeners in the Los Angeles County metropolitan region and Inland Empire. Call boxes continue to be a resource for motorists who may not have or are able to use a mobile phone, and call box locations are accessible for mobility-impaired users. The call boxes support communication through RTT / TTY / TDD for all customers who may be hearing impaired, deaf, and/or speech impaired. Further,

operators fluent in Spanish are available to support Spanish-speaking callers, and over 200 other languages are supported through contracted translation services. This ensures that the call boxes can continue to be effective and accessible for people with limited English Proficiency in communities within Los Angeles County.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board may elect not to adopt the proposed budget. This alternative is not recommended as it would result in the discontinuation of LA SAFE operations and its programs. Without the budget, LA SAFE will be unable to administer its programs and fulfill its statutory motorist aid mission.

The Board could choose to modify the proposed budget, either decreasing or increasing it. This alternative is not recommended since the proposed budget was developed to ensure that LA SAFE is sufficiently funded for FY25. The proposed budget ensures LA SAFE's ability to fulfill its mission properly, comply with all existing legal and statutory requirements, and is consistent with Metro's proposed FY25 budget.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Upon approval of the proposed FY25 budget, staff will begin implementing FY25 projects and efforts. Staff will monitor the budget and projects to ensure LA SAFE meets all its requirements in a fiscally responsible manner.

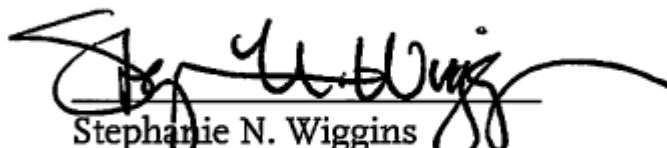
### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Proposed Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Summary

Attachment B - Five-Year Financial Forecast

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