



AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

December 2, 2002

Ms. Ellen S. Burton
Project Manger
Orange County Transportation Authority
550 South Main Street
Post Office Box 14184
Orange, CA 92863-1584

RE: Directions 2030

Dear Ms. Burton:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on Directions 2030, OCTA's draft Long Range Transportation Plan. The transportation challenges facing Orange County, and other Southern California counties, are difficult, and they are getting worse by the year. The underlying force behind these challenges is growth, including growth in population, travel demand, economic activity, and trade. To accommodate this growth, and to maintain and improve Southern California's mobility, prosperity, and high quality of life, transportation projects and plans must meet the real travel needs and priorities of commuters, residents, businesses, communities, and visitors, and they must do so effectively and efficiently.

Directions 2030 presents a substantial and comprehensive mix of transportation projects and services for implementation or consideration through 2030. A large majority of these projects and proposals appear to offer real and lasting improvements to Orange County's transportation networks. One significant exception is the continued inclusion of the CenterLine light rail line, and several proposed extensions to the substantially shortened first phase of this project.

More promising aspects of Directions 2030 include increasing the capacity, efficiency, and safety of the county's streets and roads, highways and freeways, local and express bus services, Metrolink commuter rail, and non-motorized travel options such as bicycling and walking. Directions 2030 also includes new higher-speed, higher-capacity bus rapid transit (BRT) services. BRT offers many of the travel advantages of light rail transit, but at a much lower cost, with fewer disruptions to communities, business, and traffic, and with the ability to reach far more riders and destinations.

Based on our analysis of OCTA's draft Long Range Transportation Plan, and based on our continuing support of transportation projects and plans that can effectively maintain and improve mobility and safety, the Auto Club urges OCTA to make the following



changes to Directions 2030. These changes, we believe, will substantially improve the plan's abilities to meet the diverse and growing travel needs of Orange County's residents, businesses, and visitors.

- 1. Remove the CenterLine light rail project, and two proposed extensions, from both the balanced and preferred plans.**

The CenterLine project, if it remains in the plan, would consume 10% of all of the County's transportation resources, and 20% of all non-highway expenditures, yet only provide service to an extremely small fraction of the County's travelers. The CenterLine project is simply too expensive for the limited mobility benefits it would provide. Instead, additional BRT lines should be implemented to serve the same, and many more, communities and destinations that are currently contemplated for the CenterLine. A light rail line could always be contemplated at a later date if ridership reaches or exceeds capacity on the new BRT routes.

- 2. Reallocate funds that would have been used for the CenterLine project to advance, and include additional, transit and highway projects and services.**

Projects and services that could be funded with reallocated CenterLine funds, and advanced from the preferred to the balanced plans, include higher-frequency local and express bus services, additional BRT lines, and more Metrolink service. Needed street and freeway projects could also be added or advanced, including additional "smart streets" and freeway choke point improvements, the addition of travel lanes on SR-91 and I-405, capacity improvements to the north/south SR-57 corridor, and a new highway link between Orange and Riverside Counties.

- 3. Include an extension of Measure "M" in the financial assumptions for the balanced portion of the plan, and begin working with cities and interested parties, including the Auto Club, to identify the framework and priorities for the extension of this vital funding source.**

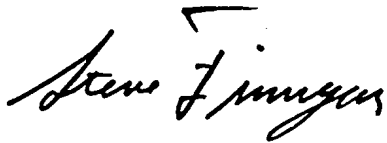
The Auto Club recently worked with the Riverside County Transportation Commission to successfully extend their local transportation sales tax measure, and we have called for lowering the two-thirds vote requirements for such measures.

- 4. Seek federal discretionary funds for large, high-priority, but not fully funded, projects, such as BRT lines, improvements to SR-91, I-405, and the SR-57 corridor, and a new route to Riverside County.**

Again, thank you for this opportunity to provide comments and feedback on Directions 2030. We look forward to continuing our work with OCTA to effectively and efficiently maintain and improve mobility and safety for all Orange County travelers. In that spirit,

the Auto Club recently released *The Quiet Crisis, Transportation and Mobility in Southern California*. This report calls for public and private sector organizations to come together in support of many of the same common sense and effective transportation improvements included in Directions 2030 and recommended in this letter. The Auto Club will work with interested partners over the next year and beyond to refine and implement various aspects of *The Quiet Crisis*. Please call me at 714-885-2307 if you have any questions or if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Finnegan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Stephen Finnegan
Transportation Policy, Analysis, and Advocacy

C: Arthur Leahy
Dave Elbaum
OCTA Board of Directors