



**DATE:** February 26, 2025

**TO:** Orange County Planning Commission

**FROM:** OC Development Services/Planning

**SUBJECT:** General Plan Amendment TGPA 24-02 – Transportation Element

**PROPOSAL:** Recommend the Board of Supervisors adopt proposed General Plan Amendment TGPA 24-02 to update the Transportation Element to reflect changing development and traffic patterns.

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION / ZONING DISTRICT:** Not Applicable

**LOCATION:** Unincorporated Areas of Orange County

**APPLICANT:** OC Development Services

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

OC Development Services/Planning recommends the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive staff report and public testimony.
- b. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 2025-02 (Attachment 1) recommending that the Board of Supervisors:
  - (1) Find that the proposed project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Common Sense Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3).
  - (2) Revise the County of Orange Transportation Element contained in the proposed General Plan Amendment TGPA 24-02 to:
    - (a) Reclassify the existing classification of Primary Arterial (divided four-lane) to Divided Collector (divided two-lane with a center turn-lane)

for Santiago Canyon Road between the State Route 241 and Live Oak Canyon Road.

- (b) Reclassify the existing classification of Major Arterial (divided six-lane) to Primary Arterial (divided four-lane) for El Toro Road between Live Oak Canyon Road and Pheasant Creek.
- (c) Reclassify the existing classification of Major Arterial (divided six-lane) to Asymmetric Primary Arterial (divided five-lane) for El Toro Road between Pheasant Creek and Portola Parkway.
- (d) Delete Black Star Canyon Road between Silverado Canyon Road and the Orange County/Riverside County line.
- (e) Include the definition of Divided Collector in the Transportation Element.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Staff received authorization from the Planning Commission on December 11, 2024, to initiate General Plan Amendment TGPA 24-02 to update the County of Orange (County) Transportation Element including the Circulation Plan to reflect changing development and traffic patterns due to reduced future growth projections in the County. Orange County Public Works (OCPW) initiated a Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) (Attachment 2) amendment request with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) after evaluation of a Transportation Assessment (TA) (Iteris, March 2024 – Attachment 3). The TA compares the existing MPAH roadway designations for Santiago Canyon Road, El Toro Road between SR-241 and Portola Parkway, and Blackstar Canyon Road, against proposed modifications to those roadway designations to conform the designations to reduced growth projections through the year 2045. The MPAH depicts a Countywide roadway network intended to ensure coordinated transportation system development among local jurisdictions in Orange County.

## **PROPOSED PROJECT:**

The MPAH currently designates Santiago Canyon Road as a Primary Arterial (four lanes divided), but currently operates as a rural two-lane undivided collector separated by a double yellow line or with a striped median and designated turn pocket.

El Toro Road is currently designated as a six lane Major Arterial in the MPAH, but currently operates as a two-lane undivided collector south of Live Oak Canyon Road and widens to three, four, five and finally to six-lane divided roadway at Portola Parkway.

Black Star Canyon Road is currently designated as a Secondary Arterial in the MPAH, but currently exists primarily as a rural unpaved road with vehicular access mainly restricted to a small number of residents via a locked gate around a mile north of Silverado Canyon Road. The

paved section at its southern end just north of Silverado Canyon Road serves as access to Baker Canyon and to county hiking and biking trails beyond the locked gate.

The TA was performed to evaluate the potential reclassification of Santiago Canyon Road, El Toro Road between State Route 241 and Portola Parkway, and the deletion of Blackstar Canyon Road from the MPAH. The proposed reclassifications of the roadway segments are meant to support the County's effort to improve traffic conditions and conform to changing traffic patterns, and growth estimates. Over the last ten years the population growth projections have indicated reduced future growth compared to previous years. As a result, some of the future planned roadway infrastructure to support the previously assumed higher population growth may no longer be necessary. The TA analyzed whether reclassification of the three roadways above to road classifications with lessor capacity could be accomplished without impacting traffic conditions or Level of Service (LOS).

The TA concluded that the proposed MPAH amendment downgrading Santiago Canyon Road from a future four-lane Primary Arterial to a two-lane Divided Collector with a center-turn lane will not cause the daily LOS in the corridor to fall below acceptable levels in 2045. The TA also indicates that El Toro Road would operate at acceptable LOS with the roadway changed to Primary Arterial or Asymmetric Primary Arterial, depending on the segment. Finally, that the TA concluded that the future planned Black Star Canyon Road between Silverado Canyon Road and the Orange County/Riverside County line is no longer needed due to its lack of connectivity to Riverside County and concerns of severe environmental and cultural impacts from construction in the Cleveland National Forest. (Iteris, March 2024 – Attachment 3).

Therefore, based on the TA, OCPW proposes to make modifications to the County's Transportation Element (Attachment 4) including the Circulation Plan (Attachment 5) to reflect updated roadway designations. Staff is requesting the Planning Commission recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors to update the County's Transportation Element including the Circulation Plan to implement the following revisions:

1. Reclassify the existing classification of Primary Arterial (divided four-lane) to Divided Collector (divided two-lane with a center turn-lane) for Santiago Canyon Road between the State Route 241 and Live Oak Canyon Road. The proposed change would support the County's effort to improve traffic conditions on Santiago Canyon Road.
2. Reclassify the existing classification of Major Arterial (divided six-lane) to Primary Arterial (divided four-lane) for El Toro Road between Live Oak Canyon Road and Pheasant Creek. The proposed change would support the County's effort to accommodate class II bicycle lanes and improve traffic conditions on El Toro Road.
3. Reclassify the existing classification of Major Arterial (divided six-lane) to Asymmetric Primary Arterial (divided five-lane) for El Toro Road between Pheasant Creek and Portola Parkway. The reclassification would support the existing condition of three eastbound lanes and two westbound lanes, accommodate class II bicycle lanes and improve traffic conditions on El Toro Road.

4. Delete Black Star Canyon Road between Silverado Canyon Road and the Orange County/Riverside County line. The County's Circulation Plan currently depicts Black Star Canyon Road, between SR-241 and Live Oak Canyon Road, as a conceptually proposed Secondary Arterial. A corresponding road was deleted from the Riverside County highway plan and an open space preserve was established by the City of Corona in its place. As such, due to this lack of connectivity to Riverside County and concerns of severe environmental and cultural impacts from construction in the Cleveland National Forest, the County does not intend to implement this planned facility.
5. Include the definition of Divided Collector in the Transportation Element (See Attachment 4).
  - a. Divided Collector: A Divided Collector highway is a modified Secondary highway with a reallocation of pavement width to emphasize bicycle and pedestrian use. It provides one bicycle lane per direction, one through vehicle lane per direction, and divided by a painted two-way left turn lane or a raised median. It is designed to accommodate approximately 15,000 vehicles per day at Level of Service 'C'.

These requested amendments to the County's Transportation Element including the Circulation Plan reflect the changing development and traffic patterns, and are therefore, recommended for approval. The requests to reclassify the roadways were conditionally approved by OCTA's Regional Transportation Planning Committee and Board, on August 29, 2024, and September 9, 2024, respectively (Attachment 6). OCTA's conditional approval action remains conditional until OCTA receives documentation that the County has amended their General Plan and complies with the requirements of CEQA.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed General Plan Amendment TGPA 24-02 is exempt (Common Sense Exemption) from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) since there is no possibility that the revisions to the roadway designations may have a significant effect on the environment.

Submitted by:

Concurred by:

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Attachment 1 Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2025-02 to Adopt General Plan Amendment TGA 24-02

Attachment 2 Orange County Master Plan of Arterial Highways, 2024

Attachment 3 Iteris, Inc. Master Plan of Arterial Highways Reclassification Study, March 22, 2024

Attachment 4 Draft Orange County Transportation Element – Redline

Attachment 5 Draft of Proposed Update to the County of Orange Circulation Plan

Attachment 6 Orange County Transportation Authority Staff Report Board Approval regarding Amendments to MPAH (September 9, 2024)