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OCTA Delivers First Wave of Sand as Part of Coastal Rail Protection Efforts

The quarter-mile of sand to be placed on North Beach in San Clemente over the next week is the initial deposit on a commitment to make sand a major part of emergency rail protection

ORANGE – The Orange County Transportation Authority marked a key milestone in its ongoing emergency effort to protect the coastal rail line today with an initial sand nourishment effort getting underway in San Clemente.

More than 300 truckloads of sand from a quarry in Palm Springs, totaling approximately 3,400 cubic yards of sand, are scheduled to be delivered to the shoreline between the rail line and the ocean over the next week along a more than quarter-mile span of beach.

The sand is being placed along the beach as an immediate step to help reinforce the rail line while longer-term reinforcement work continues.

OCTA leaders emphasized that this first wave of sand is an important initial deposit on a much larger effort to place a total of up to 540,000 cubic yards of sand along the San Clemente coastline, pending sand sourcing and additional state and federal permitting approvals.

“I want to thank the collective effort of agencies and leaders at every level of government who helped make this initial sand placement a reality,” **said OCTA Vice Chair Jamey M.**

Federico, also a Dana Point Councilmember. “Reaching this milestone was possible because of our federal and state partners, multiple agencies including the Federal Railroad Administration, the California State Transportation Agency, California Transportation Commission, the Coastal Commission, the City of San Clemente, and the community.”

The work is part of OCTA’s ongoing effort to focus on four priority areas to protect the rail line through south Orange County, which is a vital link in Southern California’s rail network for passengers, freight and military assets. The sand nourishment is estimated to cost about \$900,000.

“This initial placement of sand highlights our dedication to securing our rail corridor and protecting our coast,” **said OCTA Director Katrina Foley**, also the county’s Fifth District Supervisor. “Unfortunately, slow, excessive bureaucracy prohibits OCTA from bringing the

remaining sand San Clemente desperately needs. We must work collaboratively with all levels of government to expedite sand renourishment efforts and protect our iconic Orange County beaches.”



Additional work near Mariposa Point is scheduled to begin later this month and will include restoration of the popular San Clemente Pedestrian Beach Trail and construction of a nearly 1,400-foot-long catchment wall to protect the rail line from debris caused by sliding on the hill above. That work is scheduled to be completed in summer 2026.

Background on the Emergency Rail Reinforcement Project

Over the past four years, San Clemente’s eroding bluffs – on both city and private property – have repeatedly forced the closure of the rail line that has operated largely uninterrupted for more than 125 years.

With the goal of preventing additional interruptions to service, OCTA is leading efforts to immediately reinforce four of the most vulnerable areas along the 7-mile stretch of rail in San Clemente while continuing a Coastal Rail Resiliency Study that will pursue additional solutions to protect the line for the next roughly 30 years.

The first part of that emergency work started in April and finished in June, including the strategic repair and placement of large boulders known as riprap to protect the track from coastal erosion.

OCTA worked in partnership with Metrolink and the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, which operates Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner, to temporarily halt passenger service while that work was completed on an expedited construction schedule over six weeks. Current work to place the sand on the shoreline and subsequent work is not expected to affect passenger rail service.



The total package of projects in the four emergency areas is estimated to cost approximately \$310 million. The project components consist of 95% sand and 5% armoring.

The state will also lead a separate study exploring longer-term solutions for keeping the rail line operating, perhaps including eventually moving the rail line inland. The schedule for that study has not yet been determined.

To stay updated on current efforts, please visit www.octa.net/railemergency.

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Photo attached: OCTA Board Members and executives gather with federal, state and local elected leaders on Friday, Sept. 5 to mark the beginning of sand nourishment in San Clemente to help protect the coastal rail line. Photo courtesy of the Orange County Transportation Authority.

About OCTA: The Orange County Transportation Authority is the county transportation planning commission, responsible for funding and implementing transit and capital projects for a balanced and sustainable transportation system that reflects the diverse travel needs of the county's 34 cities and 3.2 million residents. With the mission of keeping Orange County moving, this includes freeways and express lanes, bus and rail transit, rideshare, commuter rail and active transportation. To sign up for more OCTA news, visit octa.net/GetConnected.