



Metro

Board Report

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

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Agenda Number:

**LA SAFE BOARD MEETING
MAY 28, 2026**

SUBJECT: LA SAFE FISCAL YEAR BUDGET

ACTION: ADOPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 BUDGET

RECOMMENDATION

ADOPT the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (FY27) budget in the amount of \$9,111,536 for the operation and administration of the Los Angeles County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (LA SAFE). The budget includes the annual funding allocation for the agreement with the Public Transportation Services Corporation (PTSC) for direct labor and support services in the amount of \$2,230,286.

ISSUE

LA SAFE was created in 1988, pursuant to California Streets and Highway Code Section 2550 et. Seq. LA SAFE receives dedicated funding from a vehicle registration surcharge on each vehicle within Los Angeles County. The funds generated from the vehicle registration surcharge are used to provide motorist aid services to the motoring public 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 FY27 budget is provided in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND

Since its creation in 1988, LA SAFE has been providing motorist aid services in Los Angeles County, including but not limited to the Los Angeles County Kenneth Hahn Call Box System and the Southern California 511 Traveler Information system (SoCal 511). During Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (FY26), LA SAFE continued to fund, develop, implement, and operate a variety of activities. These activities included:

- Operation and maintenance of the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System
- Operation and maintenance of SoCal 511 within the five-county region (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties)
- Management of the interagency agreements with the five County partners for the operations and maintenance of SoCal 511, enabling additional cost-sharing and collaborative

opportunities. In FY26, these agreements, as well as an agreement with Access Services, resulted in approximately \$745,000 of cost-sharing revenues for the operation of SoCal 511. This revenue stream could increase in the future as the counties of San Diego, Imperial, and Santa Barbara have recently expressed interest in joining SoCal 511.

- 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 LA SAFE services.
- Continued operation of the SoCal 511 Traveler Information Center (TIC) to better support and coordinate with our partners during major events that can impact travel within the region.
- Collaboration with Metro on the funding, use, and development of the Regional Integration of Intelligent Transportation Systems (RIITS) to support LA SAFE data needs.
- Improvement of the SoCal 511 website and the operational/data systems to support the improvements.
- Continuation of marketing and educational efforts to promote and increase public awareness and the use of SoCal 511 and motorist aid services.

DISCUSSION

For FY26, LA SAFE programs continue to be of value to both motorists and transit users. The Kenneth Hahn Call Box system, which includes 600 physical call boxes and a mobile call-box service, continues to provide roadside assistance to stranded motorists throughout Los Angeles County. The mobile call-box service consists of calls from personal cellular phones via the SoCal 511 Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone system. In calendar year 2025, the Kenneth Hahn Call Box system supported 2,146 calls from call boxes (a 14% decrease from the previous year) and 24,700 calls through the mobile call-box service, which is relatively consistent with the previous year. In the past several years, the mobile call-box service has steadily handled at a much higher volume than the physical call boxes at approximately a ratio of 11 to one.

SoCal 511 continues to provide a variety of traveler information across its various platforms and remains an important information source during unplanned major events such as the winter storms and wildfires in Southern California. During these events, SoCal 511 provides augmented information by staffing the traveler information center, co-located at the CHP and Caltrans Los Angeles Regional Transportation Management Center, and updates relevant information in real-time on all SoCal 511 platforms. SoCal 511 usage across the web, phone, and mobile application platforms consistently reaches one million annually. The FY26 SoCal 511 marketing campaign continues to aim at increasing general awareness of the program. By the end of FY26, marketing media, including radio, billboards, bus shelters, search engines, and social media, are projected to drive over 1.5 million interactions via the web, mobile app, and phone services/platforms. Targeted marketing efforts are projected to make over one hundred million impressions, increasing the general awareness of SoCal

511 services.

For FY27, LA SAFE workplan includes the following projects and activities:

- Modernization of SoCal 511 IVR and digital (web and mobile app) platforms, which includes improvements identified from the customer experience study and technology evaluation
- Continuing operation of the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System
- Continuing operation of the SoCal 511 Traveler Information System
- Enhancements to existing system to better support planned and unplanned events across all platforms, such as natural/weather events, destination or point-of-interest based traveler information, and upcoming major regional events such as the 2027 Super Bowl, and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Continuation of marketing and education efforts
- Continued collaboration and coordination with SoCal 511 partners and stakeholders
- Possible partnership expansion to potentially include San Diego, Imperial, and/or Santa Barbara County 511s - current partners' buy-in, interagency agreements, system updates, etc.
- Continued collaboration with Metro on the development and operation of RIITS to improve the quality and availability of real-time data and services to support SoCal 511

The FY27 budget of \$9.11 million represents an increase of approximately \$704,521 or 8.4% compared to the Board-approved FY26 budget. The increase is mainly due to the modernization efforts that have been in the planning process for the past few years. The funding will support: 1) the initial development and deployment of the new SoCal 511 voice and digital service platforms using the most recent technologies and provide improved information in support of emergencies, major and mega events; 2) the operation and improvement to the data systems that collect, integrate, normalize and distribute the core data that support the operation of the SoCal 511 services; 3) new and/or improved data sources such as freeway cameras and updated real-time transit data through general transit feed specifications-real time (GTFS-RT); 4) market and customer experience research and improvements; 5) improved coordination with CHP to efficiently handle call box and 511 motorist aid calls; and other items that may be identified during the fiscal year.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The budget is used to support the continued safe and reliable operation of the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System and SoCal 511 traveler information system. Both systems support motorists by providing assistance and transportation-related information, improving the overall safety and reliability of the transportation network.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding in the amount of \$9,111,536 has been included in the FY27 proposed budget in 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 (Attachment B) demonstrates the financial capacity of LA SAFE to use its existing fund balance and projected revenue to fully fund the proposed FY27 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 expenditures.

EQUITY PLATFORM

LA SAFE programs assist all people in Los Angeles County, including residents and visitors. There are key features that ensure awareness and access to services provided by LA SAFE for disadvantaged populations, including limited-English proficiency and/or low-income communities within Los Angeles County. 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 to 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 the web platform can be translated into different languages using the web translation service, which is now built into the web browsers. The number of different languages that are translated varies by platform: Chrome - 240 languages, Edge - 60 languages, Safari - 20 languages, and Firefox - 100 languages, to reference a few. All web browsers cover the eight languages aside from English that Metro covers- Armenian, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), French, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The mobile app is also available in English and Spanish. SoCal 511 continues to deploy out-of-home advertisements such as billboards and bus shelters, targeting underserved communities throughout Los Angeles County. In FY26, over 90% of about 84 SoCal 511 Out of Home advertisements - billboards, bus shelters, gas station TVs, and LED trucks - were located in Equity Focus Communities (EFCs). Additionally, English and Spanish radio advertisements were aired. These radio stations reach listeners in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan region. Call boxes continue to be a resource for motorists who may not have or be able to use a mobile phone, and call box locations are accessible for mobility-impaired users. The call boxes themselves 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.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the

SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide, with these declining VMT trends due in part to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.* Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT. LA SAFE, as a separate legal authority, acknowledges Metro's Board-adopted VMT reductions and, as such, seeks to take action in support of VMT reductions.

As part of these ongoing efforts, this item is expected to contribute in some ways to further reductions in VMT. This item supports Metro's systemwide strategy to reduce VMT through operational and customer experience activities that will benefit and further encourage transit ridership, ridesharing, and active transportation. Pursuant to California Streets and Highway Code Section 2550 et. Seq., LA SAFE provides motorist aid services through its two main programs - the Los Angeles County Kenneth Hahn Call Box System and SoCal 511 traveler information system. Although both programs provide motorist aid services, the SoCal 511 program also provides multi-modal information to the traveling public in Los Angeles County, thus equipping travelers and transit users with essential up-to-date information.

In addition to the Call Box services for drivers, and importantly for VMT analysis, SoCal 511 provides traffic and transit information, including bus/rail schedules and real-time arrival information for the majority of transit operators within the five-county Southern California region. SoCal 511 also provides regional rideshare (carpool and vanpool), park-n-ride, and bike share information via its platforms - phone, website, and mobile app. One of the goals of SoCal 511 is to provide information to enable a shift/change of route (time and/or travel path) and mode. In calendar year 2025, the utilization (engaged uses) of SoCal 511 platforms was split 62% for transit, rideshare, and bike share content and 38% for traffic content, reflecting a 2-percentage-point shift from last year's 60%/40% distribution. Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets were designed to build on the success of existing investments, and this item aligns with those objectives. The proposed budget reflects admin, operations, system developments/improvements, and labor costs, The majority of the budget under Motorist Services Improvement for this item will be dedicated to SoCal 511 traveler information system improvements and modernization (see above Discussion), thus, the project team assessment is that the net benefit to transit users shows that this item will continue to contribute to the reduction of VMT.

*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Recommendation supports strategic plan goals #1 and #2 as outlined below:

1. Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling; and
2. Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.

LA SAFE programs consist of motorist aid and traveler information services to all travelers and commuters within the Southern California region. The motorist aid, provided through the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System, helps callers with motorist assistance and/or connects the callers with the

appropriate roadside help. The SoCal 511 traveler information system provides transportation information such as bus and rail schedules and real-time arrival times, traffic conditions, rideshare and bike share resources, and a trip planning service through multiple dissemination platforms. These services provide comprehensive transportation network information and transportation options that enable people in Metro's region and the neighboring counties to make informed travel decisions, potentially enhancing their customer experience.

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 make a modification, either a decrease or an increase, to the proposed budget. This alternative is not recommended since the proposed budget was developed to ensure that LA SAFE is sufficiently funded for FY27. The proposed budget ensures LA SAFE's ability to properly fulfill its mission and comply with all existing legal and statutory requirements and is consistent with Metro's proposed FY27 budget.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of the proposed FY27 budget, staff will begin implementation of FY27 projects and efforts. Staff will monitor the budget and projects to ensure LA SAFE meets all its requirements in a fiscally responsible manner.

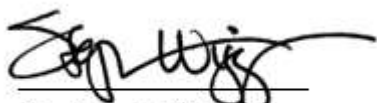
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget Summary

Attachment B - Five-Year Financial Forecast

Prepared by: Linda Hui, Director, SoCal 511, LA SAFE (213) 922-2117
Kenneth Coleman, Executive Officer, Shared Mobility, (213) 922-2951
Steven Gota, Interim Deputy Chief Officer of Operations, Shared Mobility, (213) 922-3061

Reviewed by: Conan Cheung, Chief Operations Officer
(213) 418-3034



Stephanie Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT A

**Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Summary
Total Expenditure Categories**

CATEGORY	FY27	
	PROPOSED BUDGET	PERCENTAGE
Administration	226,250	2%
Direct Labor	2,230,286	24%
Programs & Services	6,655,000	73%
Call Box Operations	1,000,000	
Traveler Information System	1,330,000	
Motorist Services Improvements	4,325,000	
Total	9,111,536	

**Proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget Summary
Comparison FY26 Budget vs. FY27 Budget**

CATEGORY	FY26	FY27	VARIANCE	% Change
	APPROVED BUDGET	PROPOSED BUDGET		
Administration	228,146	226,250	(1,896)	-0.8%
Direct Labor	2,174,869	2,230,286	55,417	2.5%
Programs & Services	6,004,000	6,655,000	651,000	10.8%
Call Box Operations	1,279,000	1,000,000	(279,000)	-21.8%
Traveler Information System	1,725,000	1,330,000	(395,000)	-22.9%
Motorist Services Improvements	3,000,000	4,325,000	1,325,000	44.2%
Total	8,407,015	9,111,536	704,521	8.4%

ATTACHMENT B

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY SERVICE AUTHORITY FOR FREEWAY EMERGENCIES
FINANCIAL FORECAST (\$000)
FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027**

	PROJECTED YEAR-END 2025/26	PROPOSED BUDGET 2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
SAFE FUNDS							
Projected Registration Surcharge	\$7,900	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Projected Beginning Year SAFE Fund Balance	\$44,819	\$47,236	\$47,359	\$49,050	\$49,591	\$49,881	\$50,090
Projected Interest	\$474	\$479	\$493	\$501	\$504	\$506	\$507
Other	\$745	\$755	\$770	\$786	\$801	\$817	\$834
FUNDS AVAILABLE	\$53,938	\$56,470	\$56,622	\$58,336	\$58,896	\$59,204	\$59,431
EXPENSES/OBLIGATIONS							
Administration	\$228	\$226	\$275	\$300	\$350	\$375	\$375
Direct Labor	\$2,174	\$2,230	\$2,297	\$2,366	\$2,437	\$2,510	\$2,585
Programs & Services	\$4,300	\$6,655	\$5,000	\$6,079	\$6,229	\$6,229	\$6,229
TOTAL EXPENSE/OBLIGATIONS	\$6,702	\$9,111	\$7,572	\$8,745	\$9,016	\$9,114	\$9,189
PROJECTED YEAR END BALANCE	\$47,236	\$47,359	\$49,050	\$49,591	\$49,881	\$50,090	\$50,242

**Los Angeles County
Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies
Five-Year Financial Forecast
Fiscal Year 2026 – 2027**

Notes and Assumptions

The FY27 Five-Year Financial Forecast has been developed to provide a snapshot of LA SAFE's current financial situation and project the impact of the proposed FY27 budget to the overall financial condition of LA SAFE. The forecast is based on the assumptions and notes listed herein.

The use of SAFE funds is strictly limited per California Streets and Highways Code Section 2550 et. seq., which requires LA SAFE to first use its dedicated funds to support motorist aid services such as the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System, Southern California 511 (SoCal 511) and other motorist aid services.

The forecast demonstrates that LA SAFE has sufficient financial capacity to fund the services and activities as proposed in the FY27 budget and to absorb the impact of the FY27 budget for the next five years.

This forecast includes the projected costs of operating the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System and SoCal 511 and funding improvements to motorist services programs. All financial figures will be refined as better information is obtained and more accurate projections can be made. This forecast is updated annually as part of the LA SAFE budget approval process.

SAFE FUNDS

This section provides a summary of the projected funds available to SAFE.

- **Projected Registration Surcharge**

This category provides the projected annual revenue generated by the \$1.00 vehicle registration surcharge. The forecast is a conservative forecast based upon historical actuals. Overall, the registration surcharge is projected to remain relatively constant for the next five years. However, this will be an item that will require annual review as recent increases to the cost of owning a vehicle in California, behavioral changes regarding vehicle ownership, impact of ride/car sharing services, technological changes and other related items may impact the overall number of registered vehicles.

- **Projected LA SAFE Fund Balance**

The LA SAFE fund balance provides the projected balance from the end of the previous fiscal year.

- Projected Interest

This category forecasts the projected interest income derived from LA SAFE funds invested as pool with Metro funds, based upon a conservative 1% rate of return on the investment base. The investment base is defined as the total funds available less 80% of the projected fiscal year expenditure. The total funds available are defined as the “Projected Registration Surcharge” + “Projected LA SAFE Fund Balance”.

- Other

This represents other sources of funds for LA SAFE from partner agencies for their apportionments of SoCal 511 traveler information operations and maintenance program expenses. To date, SoCal 511 has existing agreements with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and San Bernadino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA). There is a potential increase in these funds in the future as San Diego, Imperial and Santa Barbara County 511s have recently expressed joining SoCal 511. Staff will work on the possible partnership expansion with both the current members and the future additions.

EXPENSES/OBLIGATIONS

- Administration

This category summarizes the funds programmed for general administrative support services and equipment costs. Items such as travel, training, office supplies, computer equipment, insurance, legal, and other general administrative support required for the administration of LA SAFE are included in this category.

The FY27 budget for administrative services is proposed to maintain similar level as FY26. The administrative costs are forecasted to increase slightly in FY28 and to remain constant beyond FY28.

- Direct Labor

This category summarizes the funds programmed to cover the costs associated with LA SAFE’s staffing resource needs. This includes overhead, salary, fringe benefits and as-needed labor costs. The FY27 budget allocation will remain at the same level as FY26.

- Programs & Services

This category summarizes the funds budgeted in direct support of the programs, projects and services operated by or to be funded by LA SAFE. The FY27 budget for this category is proposed to increase by \$704,521 or 8% compared to the adopted FY26 budget. The primary cause of this increase is due to the planned modernization of SoCal 511 voice and digital service platforms, development of the data system improvements, and the overall system improvements.

The following is a breakdown of program and service categories for FY27:

Call Box Program

Funds programmed to cover the costs to operate and maintain the Kenneth Hahn Call Box System which continues to provide roadside assistance to stranded motorists on the freeways throughout Los Angeles County. The system manages calls coming through the physical call boxes and through motorists' personal phones. FY27 funding for the Call Box Program is proposed to decrease by \$279,000. The proposed budget decrease reflects the overall decrease in operation and maintenance of call box due to its lower inventory and decrease in call center cost due to lower call volumes from call boxes. The forecast assumes potential new contracts needed to keep the program operational and available to LA County residents over the five (5) year period.

Traveler Information System – Southern California 511

Funds programmed to support the operation, maintenance and improvement of the Southern California 511 (SoCal 511) system. SoCal 511 is a regional traveler information system operated in partnership with LACMTA, the Orange County Transportation Commission, the Ventura County Transportation Commission, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, CHP and Caltrans. The system provides individuals with the ability to obtain traffic, transit, commuter services and other general traveler information via their phone or the internet.

The FY27 allocation for SoCal 511 traveler information program is proposed to decrease by \$395,000 or 22.9% compared to the FY26 allocation. The proposed budget decrease is due to the changes in the operation and maintenance contracts and the planned platform modernization and improvements. The proposed budget will cover operation and maintenance of the current system for half the fiscal year. It is anticipated that the modernized system will be running in the latter part of the fiscal year and will not require the same level of maintenance in FY27. However, it is the forecast assumes future increases in FY28 and beyond to support new contracts needed to support daily operation and maintenance of the SoCal 511 IVR, web and mobile platforms. As things change quickly with any technology-based service, staff will be closely monitoring the service to make any changes as a result of market conditions. Any changes will be reflected in future forecasts.

Motorist Services/Strategic Initiatives

This category includes funds programmed to enable LA SAFE to support improvements to existing motorist services programs, develop new motorist services, and pursue strategic initiatives. The FY27 allocation for Motorist Services is proposed to increase by \$1,325,000 (44%) in comparison to FY26 allocation, as procurements for system modernization and improvement were initiated in FY26 and will continue in FY27.

The proposed budget will cover the continued implementation of the strategic improvements, marketing and promotion of SoCal 511 in EFCs, and QA/QC services and improvements. Additionally, the funds will enable LA SAFE to support new opportunities, provide strategic and communication services, research new technologies, develop and enhance applications, and continue work to standardize real-time transit data through general transit feed specifications-real time (GTFS-RT), which will improve traveler information for SoCal 511 customers.

The proposed budget increase is due mainly to the continued efforts with modernization and improvement of the existing platforms as well as stabilization and expansion of data to better support planned and unplanned events across all platforms, such as natural/weather events, upcoming major regional events including 2027 Super Bowl and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, etc. The initial major milestones for these projects are targeted to be completed in the second half of FY27, and the project is expected to carry on into FYs 28 and 29 which is reflected in the funding forecast for FYs 28 and 29. The funding forecast will also support daily operation and maintenance of the SoCal 511 IVR, web and mobile platforms. As things change quickly with any technology-based service, staff will be closely monitoring the service to make any changes as a result of market conditions. Any changes will be reflected in future forecasts.