
News Release

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SCAG Honors OCTA, San Juan Capistrano with a 2022 Sustainability Award

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA)'s partnership with the City of San Juan Capistrano on the 2C Ranch Habitat Restoration Project is being honored by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) as one of its 2022 Sustainability Award winners.

In all, seven innovative projects across the six-county region will take home the prestigious Sustainability Awards during ceremonies at SCAG's Regional Conference and General Assembly May 5 in Palm Desert.

OCTA and the city are being honored in the Green Region Initiative category for the habitat project, which transformed an area plagued by illegal dumping, graffiti and non-native weeds into an ecosystem supporting native plants and wildlife. Threatened wildlife such as the coastal California gnatcatcher and the Bell's Vireo have been found in the new habitat. The new area also provides greater protection against wildfires, by removing weeds and debris that once filled the area. Local businesses, nurseries, contractors and residents were employed to work on habitat restoration.

As part of the Orange County Conservation Corps, 50 young adults also were brought in to assist.

"Congratulations to OCTA and the City of San Juan Capistrano on this well-deserved recognition of their collective vision and collaboration on the Habitat Restoration Project. This is a model for innovative solutions to the environmental and land-use challenges, not only here in Orange County but across the SCAG region," said Art Brown, Buena Park City Councilmember and incoming Second Vice-President of SCAG.

Said current SCAG President Clint Lorimore, Mayor of Eastvale, "The Habitat Restoration Project is truly a groundbreaking effort. As all of our Sustainability Award-winning projects illustrate, Southern California leads the nation in integrating technology and creative thinking to build healthier, more vibrant communities."

Among the notable regional honorees is the Volvo LIGHTS (Low Impact Green Heavy Transport) project, winner of the Outstanding Achievement in Sustainability award. The project – a partnership between the South Coast Air Quality Management District, Volvo and 12 other public and private entities – developed a blueprint to introduce zero-tailpipe emission battery-electric trucks and equipment into the market. During the project, which ran from 2019 to 2022, the partners demonstrated a range of innovations that over a 10-year period would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 30,200 metric tons.

In the category of Alternative Fuels and Infrastructure, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink) is being honored for its Metrolink Trains Run on Fossil-Free Fuels Project. With its 538 miles

of track and 62 stations, the nation's third-largest commuter rail network plays an essential role in Southern California's transportation system. Transitioning Metrolink to all modes of renewable energy sources to reduce emissions will help the SCAG region reach clean air goals and provide a cleaner way to travel for customers and those who keep the trains running. By using renewable diesel fuel, Metrolink trains reduce harmful pollutants while decreasing carbon dioxide by up to 80%.

Orange County also earned two Sustainability Award honorable mentions: Advance OC, for its Orange County Equity Map, and Community Development Partners, for the Casa Querencia housing development.

"We congratulate all of our award winners, whose work represents the best of the best when it comes to meeting our sustainability goals and improving quality of life. Innovative projects such as these are critical to the health, welfare and economic viability of our region," said Kome Ajise, SCAG Executive Director.

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.