



Regional 511 Traveler Information Systems Contract and Service Continuity Considerations

Receive & File

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**Attachments:** No

**Referring Committee:** CVR-SAFE

**Issue:**

Staff is developing a proposal for Traveler Information System technical services that ensures continued phone access to essential freeway service patrol and motorist aid services. This is a continuation of a January 2024 SACOG Board action that authorized staff to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an updated 511 Traveler Information System.

**Request:**

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**Recommendation for Board:**

None; this item is for information and discussion only.

**Recommendation for Committee:**

None; this item is for information and discussion only.

**Background:**

California Streets and Highways Code § 2557 established the authority and funding mechanism for Service Authorities for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE) programs to implement and operate motorist aid services. Initially, these funds were primarily used for installing and maintaining roadside call boxes; as transportation technology and safety needs evolved, the statute was amended to allow additional programs related to motorist aid and roadway safety. In 2016, acceptable uses were expanded to include freeway service patrol, 511 Traveler Information Systems, transportation demand management services, changeable message signs, and roadway hazard removal.

SACOG maintains a 511 Traveler Information System platform for providing regional traveler information accessible through a website, mobile app, and an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone service. The IVR phone system allows motorists to dial “511” from their phones and request Freeway Service Patrol (FSP)/Motorist Aid, consistent with the services provided at roadside call boxes. The underlying Sacramento Transportation Area Network (STARNET) system was developed to integrate real-time information about the condition of the transportation system and process it for regional distribution.

In January 2024, staff received board approval to release an RFP for an updated 511 Traveler Information System and authorized the Executive Director to select a vendor and negotiate and execute a contract with a not-to-exceed budget of \$2 million. Staff sought to procure an updated Traveler Information System platform that supports roadway data management, trip planning, and IVR functionality, as well as integrated Transportation Demand Management (TDM) services, such as commuter subsidies, carpool/vanpool integration, and alternative mobility campaigns.

However, a preliminary Request for Information (RFI) highlighted the funding and development limitations for developing such a fully integrated traveler services platform. Therefore, staff reevaluated the procurement strategy and focused on releasing individual contracts for distinct traveler information support services. The competitive procurement process for a replacement TDM services platform was completed in close coordination with transportation management associations (TMAs) partners and subsequent software platform development with the selected vendor, and the platform launched in February 2025 as “NorCal GO.” Following CVR-SAFE board authorization in September 2024, a 511 Traveler Information System maintenance & operations services contract was renewed for an additional year.

In February 2025, staff shared potential scenarios with the CVR-SAFE board regarding the removal of traditional call boxes due to increasing maintenance costs and static revenue. Discussion supported the “Accelerated” call box scenario for removing virtually all call boxes in the region, especially with equivalent service available through mobile call box functionality (i.e., calling 511 for roadside assistance).

#### **Discussion/Analysis:**

With the 511 Traveler Information System contract set to expire in October 2025, and the financial necessity of call box removal, maintaining IVR phone service functionality for regional access to call box answering services remains a priority.

511 Traveler Information Systems have historically been critical for providing roadway information, traffic and transit data, and trip-planning to the region. However, STARNET data has failed to gain traction with local agencies and transit operators, limiting the regional benefit of this open data hub. Additionally, travelers increasingly rely on third-party alternatives for trip planning, real-time traffic, and transit information.

Staff is developing a proposal for streamlined 511 Traveler Information services that are solely focused on supporting IVR services to maintain reliable and intuitive connectivity to core motorist aid services such as FSP. While access to motorist aid services is the most critical function safety consideration, staff will assess viability of including general traveler information (such as directions and transit information) through IVR phone system if is cost-effective and provides a meaningful benefit to the region’s travelers.

#### **Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

The CVR-SAFE FY 2024-2025 budget includes \$435,000 as the current amount for 511/Traveler Information Systems services. However, staff is still refining a potential budget for new streamlined 511/motorist aid service contract to account for potential development costs, but the intent is that a streamlined service results in cost savings in future years.

#### **List of Attachments:**

Not applicable