

# GG jumps the track

The Orange County Transportation Authority would like county residents to think that Garden Grove's recent rejection of CenterLine was nothing more than an example of the council's pique at the way the agency is handling efforts to expand the 22 Freeway.

No doubt, the complicated 22 situation prompted the City Council to take an action it previously has avoided. But the city's vote nevertheless is a damning indictment of an 8.5-mile light-rail route that has no chance of improving congestion in Orange County. The CenterLine, as currently planned, doesn't go through Garden Grove, but the vote is a rebuke to an agency that wants to eventually expand the system throughout the county. Garden Grove officials have recently sued OCTA, arguing that the agency's widening of the Garden Grove freeway, which has been scaled back in the face of tough state budget times, will conflict with the city's plan to improve streets around the freeway entrances.

Now they have argued that OCTA should stop spending enormous sums on building a boutique rail system, when it cannot even meet the basic requirements of maintaining the county's freeway and road system. That's a point we frequently have made, given that the majority of the county's non-Measure M transportation funds is earmarked for rail.

"CenterLine is sucking up all the oxygen," Councilman Mark Leyes, the author of the motion to oppose CenterLine, told us. "It's taking all of their (OCTA's) talent, all of their energy, all of their resources." The

agency is crying poverty when dealing with the 22, Mr. Leyes added, yet has plenty of money to sink into a rail project that even the federal government continues to balk at.

The motion, which passed 5-0, makes the following points:

- OCTA's daily ridership projections for the project by 2025 are only 27,200, which is less than 1 percent of the county's current population;
- The estimated construction cost diverts money not only from the Garden Grove Freeway but from the county's entire transportation system;
- Construction and operation costs in other similar systems nationwide typically have been far higher than estimated;
- CenterLine requires the removal of street lanes and parking areas, which will contribute to traffic problems on arterial streets;
- The enthusiasm for CenterLine comes mainly from emotional arguments and the desire for trendy projects.

Therefore, the city last week called for OCTA to re-evaluate its support for the project, to consider alternatives to CenterLine and to put on the March ballot a county wide initiative to allow Measure M rail funds to be diverted to the 22 Freeway.

None of these things will happen, of course, given OCTA's unwavering light-rail fixation. But it helps to remind the public of the foolishness of OCTA's light-rail strategy. All five Garden Grove council members — Mr. Leyes, Bruce Broadwater, Bill Dalton, Mark Rosen and Van Tran — deserve taxpayers' kudos.