

# ACC-OC 2024 FEDERAL ISSUE BRIEFS AND LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



## HOUSING AND LAND USE

Overview: Housing is a top priority in Orange County where the median home price is \$1.26 million and the demand for housing has outpaced supply. Cities and local officials know the needs of their communities best. To effectively address housing challenges, maintaining local land use authority and control is essential, while working with the private sector and the federal government on housing solutions. Although Orange County is more built out than other regions of Southern California, there are opportunities to create new options for affordable housing, renting, and home ownership in a way that complements our local communities' character and goals.

Recommendations include:

- Increased collaboration between cities and the U.S. Housing & Urban Development Department to support cities and protect local control while achieving housing goals.
- Include robust funding for the following housing programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) in the FY24 appropriations package and create new tools to confront the housing crisis. In addition, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit should be expanded.
- Support legislation to increase the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) percentage to help finance construction and preservation of affordable homes nationwide.
- Support direct funding for local governments to accelerate housing development including CDBG, HOME, and the Housing Trust Fund.
- Support housing stability programs for residents in distress including Housing Choice Vouchers, Emergency Solutions Grants Program, Rural Housing Programs; and enact the Eviction Crisis Act.
- Make cities and towns of all sizes eligible for capacity building, technical assistance, and pre-development programs like the Thriving Communities initiative and the "Yes In My Backyard" competitive grant program.
- Support grants and tax-credits for affordable and public housing improvements including cost-saving energy efficiency improvements and expanded access to broadband.



## WATER SOLUTIONS AND ENVIRONMENT

Overview: Supporting Orange County's population and economy requires a reliable and sustainable source of water and natural resources. At the same time, overly burdensome environmental regulations often result in unfunded mandates that make compliance difficult for many cities.

Recommendations include:

- State and federal cooperation, funding and policy adoption to ensure balanced implementation of a modernized Delta Conveyance to achieve the co-equal goals of Delta ecosystem restoration and improved water supply reliability.
- Federal funding for the development of local and regional projects that will improve water reliability through transfers, desalination, water use efficiency, storage and water recycling.
- A sustainable solution for the Colorado River water supply resource.
- Support the long-term reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Cooperation from the federal government to ensure environmental regulations do not impose unnecessary burdens or unintended consequences on local governments or communities.



## UTILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY

Overview: Orange County has historically made significant investments in its energy, telecommunications, environmental, transportation, and water infrastructure, but continued support from the federal government to maintain these investments is crucial. Cities are at the intersection of local, regional, state, and federal infrastructure networks and play a critical role in ensuring the right systems are in place to best serve their communities.

Recommendations include:

- Support continued rollout of broadband infrastructure, access, and affordability programs and federal funding (e.g. Affordable Connectivity Program).
- As nationwide goals for renewable energy advance, cities need adequate support from the state and federal government and public/private utilities to ensure reliability and affordability.
- Support reauthorization and full annual funding of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.
- Implementation of federal Infrastructure Legislation that provides for equitable distribution of funds, maintaining or increasing funding levels for critical programs, prioritizes local discretion in programming and allocation decisions, and rewards regions with local revenue matching abilities.
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act provided significant investments for addressing climate change, supporting clean energy and making communities more resilient in the face of extreme weather events and natural disasters.
- Include funding for battery storage to ensure system resiliency.



## HOMELESSNESS & MENTAL HEALTH

Overview: Homelessness is a growing crisis across California and impacts cities of all sizes, geographic locations, and socioeconomic levels, including Orange County. Homelessness is both a housing and mental health challenge. Local governments are on the front line of addressing homelessness, and support from the federal government is critical to solutions.

Recommendations include:

- Efforts to develop sustainable and ongoing funding sources for the creation of permanent supportive housing and affordable housing in local communities, including tax increment tools.
- Increased federal appropriations for key housing and homeless assistance grant programs and legislative initiatives that authorize funding for comprehensive services and care coordination, including housing stabilization services funding paired with housing subsidies.
- Increased funding for federal programs, including but not limited to, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Community Development Block Grant Program, and Emergency Solutions Grants; and advocate for increased resources to meet the increasing demand for disability compensation, health care related claims, and the housing needs of its growing veteran population.
- Sufficient resources and flexibility to implement federal initiatives, as well as advance federal, state, and local partnerships to provide evidence-based treatment to youth and adults experiencing homelessness with mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Funding and federal support for innovative solutions to mental health services.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview: Cities are drivers of economic development in their communities, everything from implementing major capital improvement and infrastructure projects, to attracting and retaining business ventures, to providing critical public services. Cities constantly navigate the challenge of growing their economies while complying with state and federal mandates, many of which are unfunded. Development of our future workforce is also just as crucial to Orange County's economic vitality.

Recommendations include:

- Support funding for the RECOMPETE Pilot Program, which will provide funding to persistently distressed communities to develop and implement 10-year economic development strategies and create jobs.
- Support and invest in sector partnerships to connect local workers to careers in local industries that have significant hiring needs and expected growth.
- Support investments in direct workforce funding, including the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and National Apprenticeship Act.
- Maintain stability of government operations to minimize disruptions in local governance by preserving local funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act.



## TRANSPORTATION

Overview: Seamless mobility is essential to the quality of life of Orange County cities. Effective transportation networks reduce congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and provide essential connectivity for residents and workers. Orange County is a self-help county with a dedicated half cent sales tax committed to funding vital transportation systems. Our cities work in partnership with our transportation agencies, as well as federal agencies to fund multi-modal transportation programs and projects. ACC-OC requests the following:

Recommendations include:

- Ensure Orange County receives its fair share of Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds.
- Maximize federal transportation funding programs that are formula-based to ensure predictability and to quickly obligate them to ready-to-go projects.
- Ensure implementation of Build America, Buy America requirements, specifically those related to construction materials, are done in a feasible manner to ensure that materials are adequately available for purchase within the United States.
- Seek funding opportunities, and coordination with federal partners, including the Federal Rail Administration, on impacts to intercity rail from coastal erosion.
- Maintain flexibility for regions to direct federal funds to priority projects.
- Ensure adequate funding is provided to all areas of the region that are hosting events for the 2028 Olympics, including transportation security funding.
- Continue to fund first and last mile connection projects as part of building a seamless transportation network.
- Begin conversations with transportation stakeholders early to facilitate an on-time adoption of the next transportation reauthorization.