



**December 11, 2025**

**To:** Transit Committee

**From:** Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

**Subject:** February 2026 OC Bus Service Change/Public Hearing Preview for the OC Bus Route 862 Title VI Service Evaluation and Fare Equity Analysis

### **Overview**

The February 2026 OC Bus service change recommends minor adjustments consistent with the regular service change process. In conjunction with the February service change, a Title VI (Civil Rights Act of 1964) service evaluation and fare equity analysis is needed to comply with a route discontinuation that will be superseded by the OC Streetcar service. As a recipient of a full funding grant agreement, the Orange County Transportation Authority is required to conduct a Federal Transit Administration compliant Title VI analysis six months prior to the service change implementation. Staff has completed this analysis and following the required public hearing, is requesting the Board of Directors' approval to submit the service and fare equity Title VI analysis to the Federal Transit Administration.

### **Recommendations**

- A. Receive and file the February 2026 OC Bus service change as an information item.
- B. Receive and file public input on the OC Bus Route 862 Title VI service evaluation and fare equity analysis.
- C. Direct staff to finalize and submit the OC Bus Route 862 Title VI service and fare equity analysis to the Federal Transit Administration, consistent with the full funding grant agreement.

### **Background**

In late 2022, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) completed a comprehensive study of the bus transit system, known as the Making Better

Connections (MBC) Study. The MBC Study assessed emerging travel trends and recommended optimizing the transit network to better serve Orange County residents, workers, and visitors. The Board of Directors (Board) approved the final service plan that emerged from the MBC Study in October 2022. The MBC Study strives to improve bus service on high-ridership routes by reducing wait times and optimizing route structures. Ninety percent of the recommendations included in the MBC study have been implemented as of November 2025, with the remaining recommendations anticipated to be fully implemented by August 2026.

OCTA implements regular schedule and route revisions to selected OC Bus routes four times a year (February, May, August, and November). The proposed bus service changes discussed herein are scheduled for implementation on February 8, 2026, with a focus on improvements to service quality and reliability.

In addition to the February 2026 service change, OCTA is preparing for the implementation of OC Streetcar and improvements to connecting OC Bus routes. OCTA, as a recipient of federal funds, must comply with certain requirements when modifying the transit system. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.1B provides recipients of FTA financial assistance with guidance and instructions necessary to carry out the United States Department of Transportation Title VI regulations (49 CFR part 21) and integrate anti-discrimination practices into its transit-related programs and services. This includes establishing procedures for monitoring and ensuring nondiscriminatory service delivery, conducting equity analyses for major service changes and fare adjustments, collecting and reporting demographic data, developing public participation plans that engage minority and low-income populations, and implementing ongoing compliance measures to prevent discrimination in all transit-related programs and services.

### ***Discussion***

#### **February 2026 OC Bus Service Change**

OCTA regularly monitors OC Bus performance and makes adjustments, as needed, to improve the service. These adjustments consider changes in traffic conditions, school schedules, land-use changes, customer comments, current ridership demand, and coach operator feedback. The changes are intended to improve the performance of individual bus routes and transit service overall.

The proposed changes for February 2026 will focus on improvements to service quality and reliability. These changes include the following enhancements/modifications:

- Frequency improvements on Route 37 Sunday;
- Minor schedule adjustments to address coach operator or customer feedback on Routes 38, 47, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60, 177, 472, and 473; and
- Schedule adjustments to improve on-time performance on Routes 26, 37, 46, 50, 71, 90, 91, 150-151, and 178.

The proposed February 2026 changes are detailed in Attachments A and B.

The proposed changes would result in an increase in bus service levels of approximately 1,400 revenue vehicle hours annually, which is consistent with the current fiscal year 2025-26 budget.

#### Title VI Service Evaluation and Fare Equity Analysis

##### Bus-Rail Interface Plan and Title VI Service Evaluation

As part of the original full-funding grant agreement application, staff developed a Bus-Rail Interface Plan to evaluate bus service connections to the OC Streetcar. The intent of this analysis is to:

- Minimize service duplication between the bus service and streetcar;
- Enhance connectivity between the streetcar and the supporting bus service; and
- Maximize ridership potential with the bus and streetcar service.

As a result of the analysis, a program of bus service revisions was developed. The proposed revisions include the elimination of a redundant bus route (Route 862) coinciding with the commencement of OC Streetcar revenue service, adding service to several bus routes to increase service frequency, and extending the service span on several connecting routes.

OCTA introduced Route 862 in 2019, designed as a short-term shuttle service in Downtown Santa Ana to replicate OC Streetcar service throughout the construction period, with the alignment detailed in Attachment C. Route 862 operates from 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. Monday through Friday with peak

frequencies every ten minutes, and weekends from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. with peak frequencies every 20 minutes. With the opening of the OC Streetcar in 2026, Route 862 will become redundant and is proposed for discontinuation. The OC Streetcar will operate Monday through Thursday from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Sunday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The OC Streetcar will operate every ten minutes from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and every 15 minutes during evenings and weekends. The new service will feature the same fare structure as Route 862 and all local fixed-route services.

Work to evaluate the proposed service revisions has been undertaken to determine if the changes would result in any disparate impacts on minority populations or disproportionate burdens on low-income populations. The analysis considered the amount of service, travel time, service availability, and cost to community members and transit riders.

The evaluation found that the proposed change will not result in a disparate impact on minority populations or place a disproportionate burden on low-income populations within the study area. In general, there will be an increased level of transit service within the study area with a longer OC Streetcar route that serves more destinations compared to Route 862, an enhanced OC Bus network with increased span and frequencies on certain routes within Downtown Santa Ana, and improved bus-rail service connectivity.

#### Public Improvement Plan

As part of the analysis, OCTA completed a Public Involvement Plan to gather input on the proposed route elimination and to educate the public, especially key target audiences, about the availability, use, and benefits of alternative transit options.

OCTA engaged the community through an outreach effort that included bilingual materials, neighborhood meetings, surveys, and in-person events. A total of 277 people participated in the public survey, which was offered in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin. The feedback showed that over 80 percent of Route 862 riders concluded that the OC Streetcar will meet their transportation needs.

#### Fare Equity Analysis

In accordance with the FTA Circular 4702.1B and OCTA's Service and Fare Change Evaluation Policy (EO-520.02SERVICE), a fare equity analysis was

conducted to evaluate whether any fare changes associated with the discontinuation of Route 862 would result in a disparate impact on minority populations or a disproportionate burden on low-income populations.

Fares will be identical to current OC Bus fixed-route services, and riders will be allowed to transfer seamlessly between the OC Streetcar and OC Bus using the same fare media, including cash, Wave smartcard, and mobile app platforms. As such, there is no fare increase or new fare products being introduced, and therefore, no disparate impact or disproportionate burden is anticipated under the fare change thresholds defined in OCTA policy (a difference exceeding ten percent between protected and non-protected groups).

### ***Summary***

The proposed February 2026 OC Bus service change will result in minor adjustments to OC Bus service. These adjustments include improvements to service quality and reliability. Customers will be notified of the changes three weeks prior to implementation.

The Title VI service evaluation and fare equity analysis determined that the planned discontinuation of Route 862, coinciding with the commencement of the OC Streetcar revenue service, is not expected to result in adverse impacts to protected population groups. Riders will benefit from increased service frequency and connectivity available through the OC Streetcar. Furthermore, as the OC Streetcar will operate under the existing OC Bus fare structure, no disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens are anticipated. Following the public hearing and subsequent Board approval, staff will finalize the Title IV service and fare equity analysis and submit it to FTA consistent with the requirements of the full funding grant agreement.

***Attachments***

- A. February 2026 OC Bus Service Change: Recommendations by Route
- B. February 2026 Service Change: Bus Route Recommendations
- C. Route 862 and OC Streetcar Alignment
- D. Title VI Service Evaluation and Fare Equity Analysis for Route 862 and the OC Streetcar

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