



August 15, 2019

To: Legislative and Communications Committee
Darrell E. Johnson
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: Diversity Outreach and Inclusion Update

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority has a diversity outreach and inclusion program as part of its communications efforts. The goal of the program is to cultivate relationships of trust and utilize different outreach, communications, and marketing methods in order to tap into the potential for increased engagement among Orange County's diverse community members. This report provides an update on recent outreach activities.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

Orange County has a culturally rich community where, according to U.S. Census data, 34 percent of Orange County's population is Hispanic/Latino and 21 percent represent the Asian community. In addition to those significant numbers, approximately 1.1 million people in Orange County speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, or Mandarin at home. These demographics demonstrate the importance of the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) providing outreach to ethnic communities by engaging with leaders and organizations representing Orange County's diversity.

Discussion

OCTA executes various multimedia marketing and outreach efforts, partners with key stakeholders, actively participates in culturally significant events, and proactively employs other methods to better engage with diverse stakeholders. OCTA also conducts personalized one-on-one meetings and communicates via emails and phone calls with individuals representing diversity. This ongoing diversity outreach helps cultivate and sustain relationships of trust between OCTA and the diverse communities that it serves. These efforts also help OCTA

stay in tune with the pulse of ethnic communities and, most importantly, to hear and understand their concerns and issues to enhance transportation.

Business and Cultural Events

OCTA is among the leading public agencies in Southern California in connecting with minority-owned businesses and helping business owners understand the procurement process and how to compete for contracting opportunities. OCTA partners with business organizations, including the Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce of Orange County, the Korean American Chamber of Commerce of Orange County, the Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County, and others.

Throughout the year, OCTA staff members participate in numerous stakeholder events that include expos, conferences, and other business events attended by members of ethnic business organizations in order to share procurement opportunities and provide updates on transportation projects, programs, and plans. OCTA staff members are not only involved as members of various chambers of commerce and business associations representing diversity, but they also take a leadership role in helping these organizations with strategic planning and providing counsel to the mutual benefit of both the respective organizations and OCTA.

Commemorating cultural holidays and milestones is an important way to connect with members of Orange County's diverse community and to honor their unique heritage. In addition to recognizing and celebrating two holidays significant to Mexican Americans, Día de la Independencia on September 16 and Día de los Muertos on November 1, OCTA also participates in Black History Month in February, and in the Lunar New Year holiday also known as "Tết" in Vietnamese, "Seollal" or "Gujeon" in Korean, and "Nónglì xīnnián" in Chinese that occurs in late January or early February. From sharing social media posts with well-wishes for the community to attending celebrations with a visible presence, OCTA helps increase awareness of the role of transportation in improving the quality of life for community members.

Translations and Beyond

Past research has shown opportunities to boost the level of awareness of OCTA's important role in delivering transportation improvements. One critical way of increasing that understanding is by having project information translated into the languages understood by members of the community. A majority of OCTA project fact sheets, brochures, flyers, public notices, and questionnaires are now translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese with language priority varying by project based on the respective demographic numbers. Interpreters

and/or bilingual staff members also are on hand for open houses, community activities, and other public events to share transportation information and seek public feedback in numerous languages.

Planning studies, capital project development, and active construction projects represent a great opportunity to utilize in-language and culturally significant messaging both in written form and with images rather than merely translating existing printed technical transportation materials that may often be complicated. Even more important than the printed information and website copy, ethnic community members trust hearing and seeing information when presented in person by OCTA staff or by their peers and/or leaders within their respective cultural or ethnic group. OCTA will continue to identify opportunities to strengthen ethnic community's engagement with in-person communications in addition to ensuring translated information or having interpreters at meetings and events.

In the coming months, there are many opportunities to gain feedback on important planning studies with communities of diversity in the study areas such as the Beach Boulevard Corridor Study and the Bristol Street Transit Corridor Study. In addition, two of the region's largest infrastructure projects, the I-405 Improvement Project and the OC Streetcar Project, will be highlighted to ethnic communities especially since both projects have short-term construction impacts to these communities along with long-term benefits once completed. The 16-mile I-405 Improvement Project encompasses a large slice of Orange County with many ethnic communities, while the OC Streetcar, with its 4.15-mile route, is situated in one of the nation's most-highly concentrated number of Spanish speakers in the City of Santa Ana (Santa Ana), with significant numbers of Vietnamese and Korean speakers on the eastern end of Santa Ana and throughout the City of Garden Grove.

New Approaches and Tools for a New Orange County

Transit marketing to Orange County's significant diverse community members is becoming increasingly important. Baseline customer information in Spanish, Vietnamese, and other languages helps keep customers informed of changes to their bus routes or schedules. The website with numerous targeted landing pages in Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese also helps increase riders' awareness of specific bus routes and transit campaigns to help improve ridership numbers.

OCTA also works collaboratively with internal and external partners to develop and implement a plan targeting Latino along with Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, and other ethnic communities with the OC Bus 360° campaign. It responds to customers' comments, concerns, and inquiries in different languages. OCTA also utilizes multimedia tactics such as direct mailings, collateral materials, and

advertising in TV, radio, newspapers, and social media sites in numerous languages. The targeted cost-effective messaging helps increase awareness of OC Bus and Metrolink, making it more compelling to non-native English speakers in order to help drive diverse communities to explore bus and rail services. OCTA also works with community partners to help elevate understanding of important transit issues facing ethnic communities.

OCTA's Diverse Community Leaders Group

OCTA hosts a quarterly meeting with an informal ad-hoc group of leaders representing business, community, civic, faith, education, and nonprofit organizations. The Diverse Community Leaders group represents approximately 30 different Orange County-based organizations such as:

- Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- National Hispanic Business Women Association
- Asian Business Association of Orange County
- Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County
- Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce of Orange County
- Korean American Chamber of Commerce of Orange County
- Orange County Chinese-American Chamber of Commerce
- Santa Ana College
- Delhi Center
- Orange County United Way
- Chùa Điều Ngự Vietnamese Buddhist Temple

The group has been helpful on numerous planning studies, capital construction projects, and marketing campaigns by sharing information with their constituencies and providing feedback that has helped OCTA improve different projects. The group is open to any leader representing diversity who wishes to actively participate in learning about OCTA's many transportation plans, projects and programs, and who wants to share that information with their respective organizations to help OCTA increase its engagement with its many diverse communities.

Creating Meaningful Outcomes

OCTA's diversity outreach program helps enhance engagement and awareness of transportation services and programs within Orange County's ethnic communities. From integrating diversity into larger campaigns to proactively reaching out to a diversity leader during a one-on-one conversation, generations of mistrust between government and communities of diversity can be dispelled.

It also takes sustained genuine effort in reaching out and engaging with diverse communities to build an effective program where most of OCTA's programs have a significant diversity strategy. That's when community members feel that they have an important role with the current and future state of transportation in Orange County.

Summary

Staff continues to research, plan, execute, and evaluate the diversity and inclusion efforts for planning studies, capital project outreach, and transit marketing with the goal of reaching and engaging with more members of Orange County's diverse communities in both a meaningful and cost-effective way.

Attachments

None.

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