



June 18, 2020

To: Legislative and Communications Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Special Needs Advisory Committee Annual Update and Member Appointments

Overview

The Special Needs Advisory Committee was formed to advise the Orange County Transportation Authority on the transportation needs of senior citizens and persons with disabilities. The member appointment status and a summary of the committee's activities during the past year is provided with this report.

Recommendation

Receive and file the Special Needs Advisory Committee's status report.

Background

On January 13, 1992, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Board of Directors (Board), concurrent with approving the OCTA 1992 Complementary Paratransit Plan as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, voted to establish a standing citizens' committee, the Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC), to advise OCTA on the transportation needs of senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Discussion

The Special Needs Advisory Committee's (SNAC) mission is to advise OCTA on the promotion of integrated public transit services and improve communication between OCTA and its customers who have special transportation needs. SNAC members also provide support for OC ACCESS service eligibility appeals. The SNAC is comprised of 34 members appointed by the OCTA Board of Directors (Board). Members serve staggered three-year terms and meet quarterly.

The committee met three times during fiscal year (FY) 2019-20, with one regular meeting cancelled due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). During the year, the committee discussed the following items:

OC Bus 360° and FY 2019-20 Bus Service Changes

The committee was presented an overview of OC Bus service plan recommendations for FY 2019-20. SNAC feedback was incorporated into final recommendations to the Board regarding proposed bus service plans scheduled for October 2019 and February 2020. Several elements of the plan were discussed, such as public outreach, customer feedback, and changes to Route 213 that decreased travel times.

The SNAC received updates on the October 2019 and February 2020 service changes and provided feedback including discussion of bus route changes due to construction, weekend bus service to John Wayne Airport, and adding rider amenities such as USB charging ports for future consideration. Additional discussion from members included concerns that some cities were removing benches at bus stops to discourage loitering.

Mobility Management Travel Training

The SNAC received a presentation on OCTA's Mobility Management Travel Training, a grant-funded pilot program that provides training for OC ACCESS eligible customers to use fixed-route service. By providing this training, customers retain their OC ACCESS eligibility, while also gaining the flexibility of using OC Bus service at a significant cost-savings to OCTA. During the two-year pilot program, there were 50 large group workshops and 163 travel trainings, reaching more than 1,000 people. A resource book was also produced in partnership with 211OC.com. Committee members discussed the program and asked several questions about how to use 211 via phone or text message and how to receive additional copies of the resource booklet.

OC ACCESS

The committee received regular updates on the operations of several programs, including OC ACCESS. Matters discussed included paratransit ridership trends, wheelchair securement training, and the procedure to handle "no show" riders. Feedback and comments from the SNAC included the requests to have text or phone notifications when a scheduled OC ACCESS vehicle is arriving, discussion of scheduling options when requesting a trip, and requests to provide more detailed pickup location instructions to OC ACCESS drivers. This feedback

was provided directly to OC ACCESS staff for consideration and possible future implementation.

OC Flex

Committee members received an update on the results of the first six months of the new on-demand microtransit service, OC Flex, including the positive ridership trend and the frequent first/last mile connections with the large amount of OC Flex users going to transportation centers. Feedback included interest in which additional communities OC Flex may be offered, the wheelchair accessibility of the service, the cost of the fare, and the number of vehicles in service.

Public/Corridor Studies

The SNAC was presented with information about the Transportation Needs Assessment, Coordinated Plan, and Bristol corridor studies. Members reviewed proposed public feedback survey instruments and discussed the public outreach efforts. Feedback on the Coordinated Plan Survey, which helps OCTA develop a regional plan for 5310 funding requests, was particularly constructive, with the SNAC providing additional interested groups to be contacted and sharing the survey with their respective organizations.

Exceptional Service Awards

The presentation of exceptional service awards to OC ACCESS drivers continues to be an important and much appreciated function of the SNAC. This year the SNAC presented awards to six drivers for outstanding service to customers.

New Member Recruitment

The SNAC is structured such that each OCTA Board Member appoints two citizens to serve, creating a 34-member committee reflecting a broad representation of constituents from throughout Orange County. The terms of 12 SNAC positions expire on June 30, 2020. To commence the appointment process, the SNAC members whose terms are expiring were asked if they would be willing to serve for another term. For open seats, announcements were made seeking potential applicants by email to social service organizations, and outreach was conducted to individuals and agencies involved in services for senior and disabled individuals. A list was developed of interested and qualified potential applicants.

The opportunity to reappoint interested members for an additional term, along with recent resignations was presented to each OCTA Board Member and their staff in April. The recruitment period is now complete, and Board Members have either reappointed current members, appointed new members to begin service on July 1, 2020, or have appointments pending. A roster of members, including pending appointments, is included (Attachment A).

All candidates meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate interest and involvement with persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and others with special needs;
- Represent large, active constituencies with whom regular interface regarding transportation matters is conducted; and
- Commit to dedicate no fewer than 12 hours per year to OCTA meetings and activities.

Next Steps

New SNAC members will attend an orientation prior to their first committee meeting of the fiscal year on July 28, 2020. Staff will return to the Board next year with a report on the SNAC activities and notification of appointment of members whose three-year terms have expired. Outgoing members will receive resolutions of appreciation for their service.

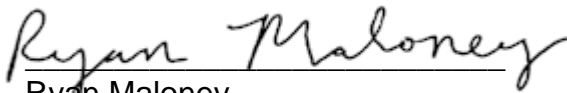
Summary

The SNAC continues to serve in an advisory and advocacy role on transit issues of importance throughout the year. A roster of members, including pending appointments, is included (Attachment A).

Attachment

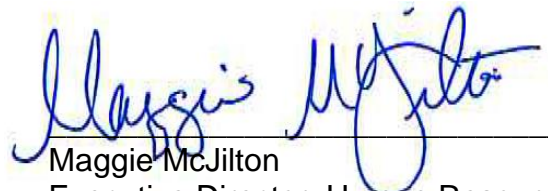
- A. Orange County Transportation Authority Special Needs Advisory Committee Roster Fiscal Year 2020-21

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