



**December 6, 2021**

**To:** Executive Committee

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

**Subject:** Employment and Travel Follow-Up Survey Results

### **Overview**

In an effort to gain an understanding of the impacts of the coronavirus on employment and travel in Orange County, a scientific, statistically valid survey was conducted during the month of July 2020, which served as a baseline to assess patterns at that stage of the pandemic. A subsequent follow-up survey was conducted in September 2021 to assess current employment and travel to see how the commute or remote work patterns may have shifted during the past year.

### **Recommendation**

Receive and file as an information item.

### **Background**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) triggered a statewide stay-at-home mandate in March 2020, effectively shuttering many sectors of the world's fifth largest economy for several months and sending ripple effects through most aspects of daily life. In addition to the direct economic impacts including job losses, salary cuts, and reduced spending, the threat of COVID-19 and the closure of non-essential businesses dramatically altered how and where people work, play, shop, and travel.

Although the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines, relaxation of stay-at-home mandates and modified public health guidelines in 2021 have allowed many workers the option to return to the office, questions remain as to what percentage of workers have done so, how they are commuting, and whether they anticipate these patterns will change once the pandemic is over. The answers to these questions are highly relevant to the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) mission to develop an integrated and balanced transportation system that supports the diverse travel needs of, and

reflects the character of, Orange County. As a follow-up to the baseline scientific survey conducted in July 2020, a scientific survey was conducted in September 2021 to assess the current impacts of COVID-19 to track against the baseline survey to help assess how travel patterns, attitudes, and priorities may have changed.

### ***Discussion***

The purpose of the Employment and Travel surveys has been to develop a statistically reliable understanding of how public attitudes, working arrangements, travel behaviors, and mode choice have been altered over the course of the pandemic, as well as how these patterns are likely to change once the pandemic is over. This follow-up tracking survey represents the second in a two-part study. The baseline survey profiled work arrangements, travel behavior, and relevant activities among Orange County residents prior to the pandemic (January and February 2020) and several months into the pandemic (June 2020) to document changes. The follow up-survey conducted in September 2021 captured the same information for the current period, as well as respondents' expectations for the post-pandemic period.

A total of 2,119 randomly selected Orange County adult residents participated in the follow-up survey between September 2 and September 26, 2021. The survey followed a mixed-method design that employed multiple recruiting methods (email, text messages, and telephone) and multiple data collection methods (telephone and online). The interviews averaged 15 minutes in length and were conducted in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Specifically, the follow-up survey was designed to:

- Identify the issues that residents view as the most important facing Orange County today,
- Gauge residents' expectations for COVID-19,
- Profile their employment status, work schedule, frequency of remote work, and commute behavior in September 2021 and expectations for the post-pandemic period,
- Profile their use of rideshare, transit, and active transportation, as well as their shopping and dining habits in September 2021 and expectations for the post-pandemic period, and
- Among employees who work from home, gauge the impacts of doing so on their work experiences and performance.

Approaches to using this survey will continue to be combined with other travel data that can be used in future decision-making efforts. Staff has been collecting

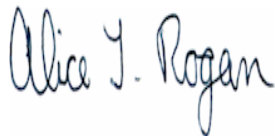
available data from Google, Apple, the California Department of Transportation, and other sources that can complement this survey information as well as any other OCTA surveys to help inform future planning efforts.

***Summary***

A statistically valid Employment and Travel Survey was conducted during the month of September 2021 as a follow-up to a similar baseline survey conducted in July 2020 to gain a better understanding of the effects of COVID-19 on employment and travel in Orange County and will be used to help inform future planning efforts.

***Attachment***

*None.*

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