



**December 9, 2021**

**To:** Transit Committee

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

**Subject:** Bus Operations Performance Measurements Report for the First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2021-22

### **Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority operates fixed-route bus and demand-response paratransit service throughout Orange County and into neighboring counties. The established measures of performance for these services assess the safety, courtesy, reliability, and overall quality of the services. This report summarizes the year-to-date performance of these services through the first quarter of fiscal year 2021-22.

### **Recommendation**

Receive and file as an information item.

### **Background**

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) operates a countywide network of 58 routes, including local, community, rail connector, and express bus routes serving over 5,000 bus stops. Fixed-route bus (OC Bus) service operates in a 798 square-mile area, serving more than three million residents in 34 cities and unincorporated areas, with connections to transit services in Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside counties. OCTA provides these services through both directly operated fixed-route (DOFR) and contracted fixed-route (CFR) service. OCTA also provides OC ACCESS, a federally mandated paratransit service, which is a shared-ride program available for people unable to use the OC Bus service because of functional limitations. Performance measures for OC Bus, OC ACCESS, and OC Flex services are summarized and reported quarterly (Attachment A).

In response to a significant decline in ridership as the result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, OC Bus service has operated on a

significantly reduced schedule, beginning with a Sunday-only schedule, seven days a week, implemented in March 2020. This was followed by the implementation of a Saturday schedule, six days a week, in June 2020. This level of service was sustained through the entirety of fiscal year (FY) 2020-21, ending June 30, 2021. In August 2021, additional capacity was added to support emerging ridership trends, particularly the return of students to in-person instruction, the gradual return of employees to offices and work sites, and the resumption of commercial, retail, and recreation activities throughout the county. Through the first quarter of FY 2021-22, 52 of the 58 total OC Bus routes were operated.

### ***Discussion***

This report provides an update on the performance of the OC Bus and OC ACCESS services by presenting the current trends and comparisons with OCTA-established performance standards for transit system safety, courtesy, and reliability. OCTA counts preventable vehicle accidents to evaluate system safety, customer complaints to assess courtesy, and both on-time performance (OTP) and miles between road calls (MBRC) to measure service reliability.

This report includes performance through the first quarter, including the months of July, August, and September of FY 2021-22. It is important to note that OCTA continues to operate a reduced level of service as a result of the prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As ridership remains significantly lower on both OC Bus and OC ACCESS, though consistently trending upward since January 2021, the return of students to in-person instruction, increased traffic congestion, and road construction are directly impacting the delivery of service. This is reflected in the performance discussed in the attached report.

- Safety – DOFR and CFR OC Bus service performed below the accident frequency standard of one preventable accident per 100,000 service miles. OCTA Operations and contracted staff continue to stress safety in the bus loading/unloading zones and vehicle operation that impacts passenger safety inside the vehicle (passenger falls). Roundtable discussions continue with coach operators to discuss safety and identify problem locations where fixed-object strikes frequently occur. Accident prevention is also reinforced during post-accident retraining and during annual refresher training. OC ACCESS service performed above standard.
- Customer Service – Customer service is measured by evaluating the number of valid customer complaints received compared to boardings. Through the first quarter, the DOFR and CFR modes of service performed above the respective standards. OC ACCESS fell below the standard as

increasing ridership and driver shortages resulted in challenges to meet key metrics, most notably OTP, causing an increase in customer complaints.

- Reliability – Through the first quarter, the OTP for all services is below standard largely due to increased ridership and dwell times at bus stops, increase in traffic congestion, and routing detours due to construction.
- The MBRC for DOFR OC Bus service exceeded the standard, while CFR OC Bus service and OC ACCESS both came in below the standard. Causes included major engine and transmission failures, electrical issues, several cooling system component failures, vehicle mileage, and fleet age (OC ACCESS).

The report also includes:

- An assessment of the efficiency of OCTA transit operations based on industry standards for ridership, productivity, farebox recovery, and cost per revenue vehicle hour;
- A review of contractor performance for CFR and OC ACCESS services;
- A route-level performance evaluation that includes subsidy per boarding, revenue per boarding, and resource allocation (buses); and
- A status on the initiatives implemented under the OC Bus 360° Program, including OC Flex and the College Pass Program.

### ***Summary***

Through the first quarter of FY 2021-22, the performance of OC Bus service exceeded the performance in the area of courtesy, but performance is below the standard for safety and reliability (OTP). CFR service also performed below standard with respect to MBRC. OC ACCESS performed above the safety standard, but is below standard for all other measures. OCTA staff continue to focus on continuous improvement in safety and reliability as detailed in the report. In addition to tracking the established key performance indicators, staff will continue to manage the service contracts pursuant to contract requirements and work to identify other strategies to improve overall system performance.

***Attachment***

- A. Bus Operations Performance Measurements Report, First Quarter, Fiscal Year 2021-22

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