




**September 15, 2022**

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

**Overview**

The Orange County Transportation Authority is continuing its effort to conduct comprehensive and meaningful outreach to Orange County's growing diverse communities. This report provides an annual update on the progress of the diversity and inclusion efforts that are part of milestones in the 2022 Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer Strategic Initiatives and Action Plan as well as plans to meet the future needs of diverse community members.

**Recommendation**

Receive and file as an information item.

**Background**

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) continues to work with community members and organizations that represent diversity in Orange County, such as ethnic groups, disadvantaged communities, and other under-represented people. More than a decade ago, OCTA's diversity work primarily centered on partnering with ethnic business groups to conduct procurement outreach at business expos, conferences, and other events. OCTA has leveraged those strong relationships with diverse business organizations over the past years by now engaging with the business community on OCTA's other transportation efforts beyond procurement such as transit marketing programs, capital improvement projects, and planning studies. Since then, OCTA's diversity outreach and inclusion efforts have continued to expand significantly to provide public involvement opportunities with Orange County's ethnic communities, and other hard-to-reach stakeholders. In addition to playing an important role in communications and planning, diversity outreach and inclusion efforts have become part of the agency's 2022 Board of Directors (Board) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Strategic Initiatives and Action Plan.

***Discussion***

As coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions have eased, the OCTA Diversity Outreach staff has returned to more face-to-face outreach with community members and organizations that serve Orange County's diverse audiences. Staff continues to build meaningful relationships with diverse communities helping to break down barriers that may discourage people or limit their involvement in OCTA's decision-making process. Through these outreach efforts, OCTA continues to foster relationships with numerous civic, social, business, and faith communities. The involvement and support of stakeholders that represent diversity are essential to the success of capital projects, planning studies, and transit programs.

**OCTA Diverse Community Outreach Trust-Building Campaign**

Introduced in early 2021, the OCTA Trust-Building Campaign was designed to help cultivate trust and increase awareness of OCTA among two key constituencies — Spanish- and Vietnamese-language speakers, which are the two largest non-English language populations in Orange County. This 18-month campaign included a communications program with culturally effective messages to enhance understanding of OCTA and its capital projects, transit programs, and planning studies by using compelling language and cultural references along with ambassadors and other influencers to inform the targeted community members.

During the course of the program, staff participated in community events and cultural festivals to inform diverse community members and other under-served populations about OCTA. Staff participated in 118 different events and meetings, engaging with cultural groups, community-based organizations, educational institutions, civic groups, and business associations. More than 70 percent of the events were in-person, including pop-ups at Northgate Markets, Asian markets, faith organizations, senior centers, and other gathering spaces. Staff worked to solicit comments, suggestions, and recommendations during both phases of the Making Better Connections Study and for the Youth Ride Free Pass. Additionally, staff distributed information to promote the Welcome Back Campaign, Value Pass for OC Bus, progress of the Interstate 405 (I-405) Improvement Project, updates for the OC Streetcar Project, as well as numerous planning studies including the Directions 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan.

During these events, staff leveraged their strong relationships with the Latinx and Vietnamese American communities, specifically with the news media, cultural ambassadors/influencers, and community leaders. These major events served as an important way to engage with OCTA's target audiences by

establishing a direct line of communication to gain a better understanding of what types of media these communities prefer and how they prefer to stay informed. During the course of the Trust-Building Campaign, staff reached more than 26,000 community members and more than 2,300 businesspeople representing diverse organizations and businesses in Orange County.

Staff also utilized both traditional communications and outreach tactics along with advertising in Spanish and Vietnamese television, radio, newspapers, and social media sites to promote OCTA projects. This included news stories and paid advertisements in the region's increasingly influential ethnic media. Staff developed and placed ads in the materials for the Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's Estrella Awards event, as well as in Excelsior, Nguoi Viet, and La Ranchera for Mother's Day in Vietnamese and Spanish to promote phase two of the Youth Ride Free Pass, consistently ensuring that images and language are both relevant and compelling to the audience.

#### **Building and Expanding Partnerships with Orange County Organizations**

During last nine years, staff has expanded outreach beyond the business community and in the past year, strengthened outreach efforts with key organizations that service the diverse populations of Orange County, including LGBTQ Center OC, CalOptima, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Orange County, Latino Health Access, Jamboree Housing Corporation, Orange County Social Services Agency and Family Resource Centers, and others. These groups not only help OCTA provide resources and information about transportation but also serve as places of community and connection — especially important to diverse and disadvantaged communities.

Staff attended virtual meetings and in-person community events hosted or supported by these organizations to share presentations and provide OCTA materials and other written and digital content. Staff is actively identifying 15 to 20 additional business and community organizations to include in future outreach by identifying mutual interests and establishing ongoing communications. These organizations have indicated that their strong partnerships with OCTA have been beneficial.

#### **Contracts Administration and Materials Management Support**

Staff worked closely with OCTA's Contracts Administration and Materials Management (CAMM) department to engage disadvantaged and minority-owned businesses by attending chamber of commerce events, mixers, and luncheons to share procurement opportunities. During the past year, staff coordinated a small-business workshop with the Small Business Development

Center Orange County attended by 89 minority small businessowners. This resulted in an increase in registrations for CAMM NET, OCTA's online procurement portal. Staff continues contributing to OCTA's goals by developing internal action plans for diversity, equity, and inclusion and belonging, including actively contributing to two internal task forces.

#### COVID-19 Update and Issues Management

Staff worked with the OCTA Public Information Office to provide Spanish- and Vietnamese-language support for in-language messaging and translations for changes affecting external audiences and stakeholders. This included the development of timely, relevant, and reliable communications materials, including press releases, social media, website content, and other materials. Staff also participated in two Spanish-language television interviews with Univision 34 and EstrellaTV during the potential OC Bus stoppage issue.

#### Diverse Community Leaders Group

OCTA's Diverse Community Leaders group continues to play an important role in providing valuable feedback to OCTA while learning about OCTA's transportation updates and plans. The quarterly Diverse Community Leaders group is comprised of influential community, business, faith, and education leaders representing diverse communities. The group was presented with updates and provided their feedback on the new federal infrastructure bill, transit programs for the Youth Ride Free Pass, the Welcome Back Campaign, OCTA's Active Transportation Program, the I-405 Improvement Project, the Directions 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan, the College Pass Program, information on the new OC Bus app, state funding for the State Route 55 Improvement Project, and other projects.

#### ***Summary***

OCTA continues to focus on reaching ethnically diverse communities and other under-represented populations, especially with in-person events and partnerships with community-based organizations that serve disadvantaged people. OCTA continues to build and cultivate relationships based on trust and position the agency for future success to help deliver the Board strategic initiatives of enhanced engagement with diverse and disadvantaged communities.

***Attachment***

None.

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