



March 14, 2019

To: Transit Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: OC Vanpool Program Update

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Overview

The OC Vanpool Program is a public-private partnership designed to encourage vanpooling in Orange County by providing commuters a convenient transportation option for daily home-to-work trips. The OC Vanpool Program provides a variety of benefits such as emissions reduction, federal funding generation, and broadening the reach of transportation services. The report provides an update on the OC Vanpool Program.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

Since 2007, the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) family of transportation services has included a vanpool program, which provides a convenient way for commuters to pool resources to save time and money by sharing a ride. A vanpool is a group of up to 15 people who regularly commute to work in a shared van.

Benefits of the OC Vanpool Program (Program) include:

- Offering commuters a cost-effective transportation option.
- Providing direct, express service between neighborhood collection points and worksites.
- Helping the region achieve air quality goals by offering a convenient alternative to single-occupant vehicle travel.
- Lowering operating cost via a public-private partnership that results in an efficient transportation mode.

- Increasing federal funding for transit; historically, OCTA has received Section 5307 funding at a rate of more than two dollars for every one expended on the Program since its inception.

Discussion

As Orange County's public transportation planning agency and provider, OCTA administers and manages the Program. The Program currently serves 93 Orange County employers at 119 worksites. Fifty percent of the OC Vanpools have been active for five or more years.

During fiscal year 2017-18, OCTA operated 538 vanpools reducing 2,152 single occupant vehicles from Orange County roads and freeways. In addition, an estimate by the South Coast Air Quality Management District staff indicates that these vanpools eliminated 11,506 tons of greenhouse emissions by reducing nearly 35 million single occupant vehicles miles.

The average vanpool one-way trip is 33.5 miles with an average number of 6.6 passengers per vanpool. Thirty-four percent of existing originate from within Orange County; with the remaining 66 percent originating in Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, or San Diego counties and traveling to Orange County. Most vanpools operate five days a week. The average cost per passenger is \$155 per month after the OC Vanpool subsidy is applied. Vanpool participants have a common destination point and similar work hours.

The Program is administered by OCTA through a public-private partnership with three distinct participants including OCTA, van providers, and vanpool riders.

OCTA's Role**Administration and Reporting**

OCTA contracts with a vanpool provider, currently Enterprise, and provides a \$400 per month, per vehicle subsidy to offset the vanpool rider's vehicle lease cost. Working with Enterprise, OCTA approves vanpool participants, collects vehicle revenue miles, passenger miles, operating expense data, and completes monthly and annual reports to the National Transit Database (NTD). Additionally, OCTA provides the public and employers with step-by-step instructions for finding or starting a vanpool through the website. Lastly, OCTA helps vanpool participants report and comply with the Program requirements to ensure ease of use and continued participation. Specific requirements of the Program related to formation and occupancy are provided in Attachment A.

As Orange County's public transit provider, OCTA generates federal Section 5307 grant funding based on passenger and revenue vehicle miles traveled. These statistics are reported annually in the NTD and form the basis for grant funding.

Outreach and Marketing

OCTA develops and implements marketing and outreach programs to employers and commuters in Orange County. Utilizing a unifying rideshare campaign, OCTA offers two annual promotions – Dump the Pump in June and California Rideshare Week in October. Both promotions help create public awareness and encourage participation in vanpools through advertising, in-person outreach, and promotional incentives. Vanpool marketing campaigns targeting businesses and commuters are conducted through digital advertising, direct mail, in-person meetings, and on-site events.

Vanpool Contractor

OCTA currently contracts with Enterprise to provide vanpool services. These services include: the vehicle, insurance, and maintenance to participants through a lease agreement that can be terminated with a 30-day notice. Enterprise also collects lease payments from participants, advertises and markets the program, coordinates sales activities with OCTA staff, and provides OCTA with data required for NTD reporting.

Vanpool Riders

Vanpool riders lease a vehicle from OCTA's contracted vanpool provider and share the costs of the lease, fuel, tolls, and parking. One person from each vanpool group serves as the driver/coordinator and is responsible to record and report the required monthly NTD data to OCTA.

OCTA requires an initial 70 percent occupancy rate to qualify for the Program. The vanpool group must maintain a minimum 50 percent occupancy level to remain eligible for the \$400 monthly subsidy.

Program Growth and Success

As of December 2018, there were 503 active vanpools. The vanpool program has demonstrated steady growth since 2007, at an average eight percent annual growth rate. The decrease in 2018 was mainly a result of new vanpool programs initiated by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA), which now claim the vanpool miles traveled for the vans traveling to worksites in their counties.

Before RCTC and SBCTA had vanpool programs, OCTA provided subsidies to the vanpools traveling between Orange County, Riverside, or San Bernardino counties, and therefore claimed all the data for NTD reporting. Twenty-one vanpool groups were transferred to RCTC's and eight vanpool groups were transferred to SBCTA's vanpool programs during 2018, based on the vanpool regional agreement.

The success of the Program is demonstrated by the retention record of the Program. There are 104 vanpools, 23 employers, and 211 people who have participated in the Program for more than ten years. Fifty percent of the OC Vanpools have been active for more than five years. The program has shown consistent growth since 2007 (Attachment B).

Last November 2018, 49 representatives from Orange County employers who participate in the Program attended a meeting at OCTA. Resolutions of appreciation were presented to employers who have participated in the Program for ten or more years. Sixteen of the 23 employers were in attendance to accept the resolutions. The meeting also provided staff with an opportunity to showcase the new OC Vanpool website and tools available for employers to promote and manage their programs.


Summary

The OC Vanpool Program is a cost-effective transit mode which provides employers and employees with a reliable and affordable commute option. Vanpools provide air quality benefits by reducing long distance trips and congestion on roads and freeways.

Attachments

- A. OC Vanpool Program Requirements
- B. Maximum Vanpools Operating by Fiscal Year

Prepared by:


Sandy Boyle
Section Manager, OC Vanpool
Program
714-560-5761

Approved by:


Beth McCormick
General Manager, Operations
714-560-5964


Jennifer L. Bergener
Chief Operating Officer, Operations
714-560-5462