



**September 10, 2020**

**To:** Transit Committee  
**From:** Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer  
**Subject:** October 2020 Bus Service Change

### **Overview**

The October 2020 bus service change will continue to provide the same level of bus service as was implemented in June 2020. This recommendation is based on stable ridership demand during the coronavirus pandemic. Staff will develop a contingency plan in case additional service is needed between October 2020 and the regularly planned February 2021 schedule change.

### **Recommendation**

Receive and file as an information item.

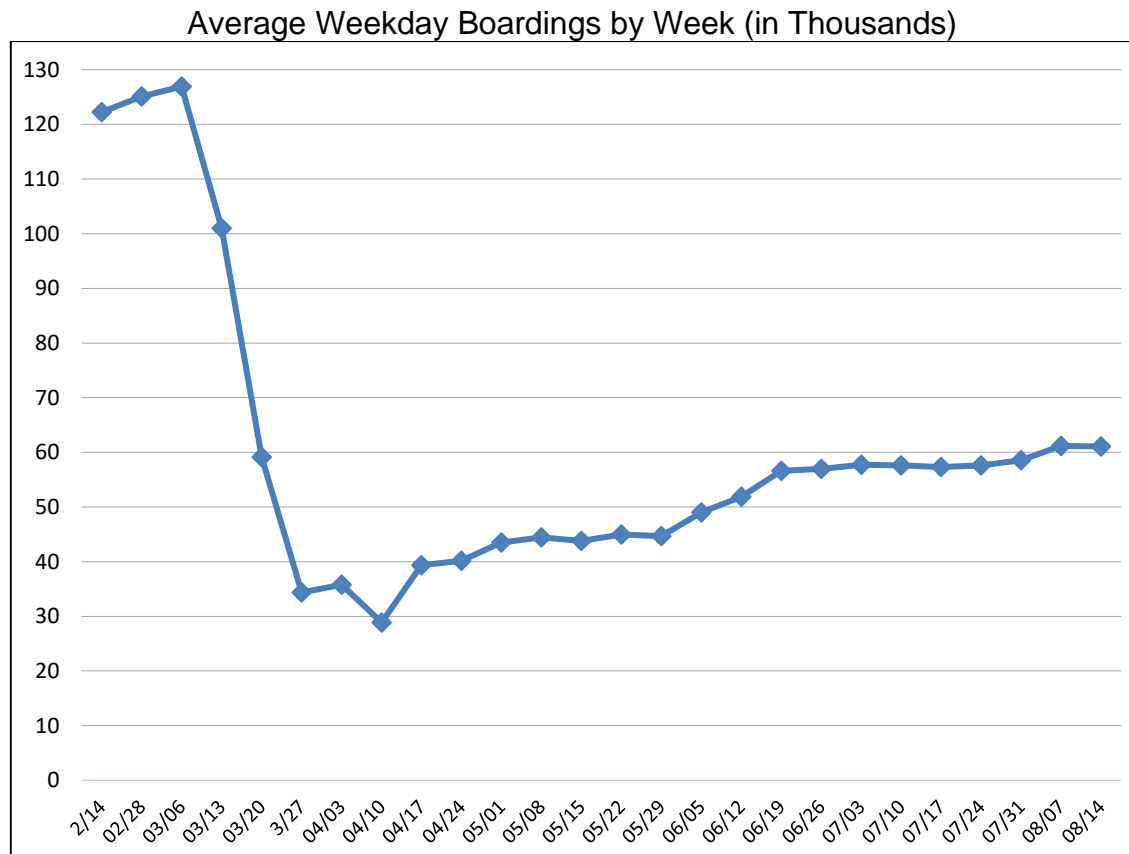
### **Background**

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) implements schedule and route revisions to selected bus routes three times a year, in February, June, and October. The next bus service change is scheduled for implementation on October 11, 2020. OCTA implemented an emergency service change on March 23, 2020, which reduced service in response to significantly diminished ridership and to comply with Governor Newsom's stay-at-home order, and help protect the health of OCTA employees while providing a baseline level of service for customers needing to make essential trips. Service was subsequently added as part of the June service change to address increases in ridership as businesses began to re-open. The service change in October will continue with the same schedules implemented in June 2020. Additional bus trips and trippers will continue to be operated, as needed, based on social distancing requirements.

### **Discussion**

After the implementation of the Governor's stay-at-home order, weekday OC Bus ridership dropped significantly. Weekday ridership decreased from approximately 125,000 boardings to the low 30,000s immediately after the stay-at-home order but has been steadily recovering and is now in the low

60,000s. On March 23, 2020, OCTA reduced fixed-route bus service by approximately 40 percent by implementing Sunday service schedules on all routes, seven days a week. The June service change provided an enhanced Saturday service schedule on weekdays and a regular schedule on Saturdays and Sundays. This amount of service equates to about 75 percent of pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) service levels. Ridership has remained relatively stable since the June service change. The chart below shows average weekday ridership from before COVID-19 stay-at-home orders were instituted through mid-August. The level of service implemented in June 2020 should be sufficient to meet demand. Staff will continue to monitor passenger loads and dispatch additional bus trips on routes where social distancing may be an issue.



### Contingency Plan

Staff has been developing contingency plans, which could be implemented between October 2020 and the regularly planned February 2021 service change if ridership increases to a level which cannot be accommodated by existing service levels. The plan will assume increased passenger loads and provide additional frequency as needed to accommodate additional ridership growth. Events that could trigger the implementation of this plan could include ridership increases caused by schools reopening for in-person classes and reopening of major businesses and event centers.

**Front-Door Boarding and Fare Collection**

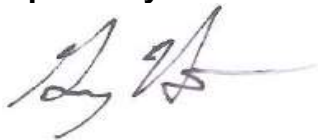
In March 2020, staff implemented rear-door boarding in order to provide additional protection for OCTA coach operators against COVID-19. As a consequence, use of the farebox was no longer possible as this portion of the bus was cordoned off from the rest of the vehicle. Staff has been exploring how to safely reintroduce front door boarding to allow for full fare collection and to provide additional passenger seating. Maintenance staff has designed and begun the installation of clear plastic shields between the coach operator compartment and farebox. This, in combination with the face covering requirements, onboard hand sanitizing dispensers, and onboard face covering dispensers, will provide the option to return to front-door boarding as soon as October. When implemented, the number of passengers allowed on each 40-foot bus will be increased from 15 to 20, which should allow for sufficient social distancing with front-door boarding. Capacity on 60-foot buses will increase from 20 to 35 passengers. The change will provide OCTA with the ability to handle more demand with scheduled services, reduce wait times, and provide better customer service.

***Summary***

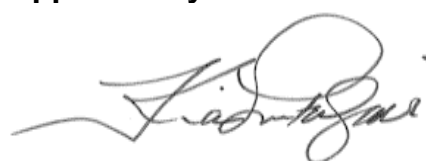
The October 2020 bus service change will keep the same schedules as were implemented in June 2020. Staff will continue to monitor ridership and develop a contingency plan to implement additional service if necessary, between October and February 2021. Staff will also work towards reimplementing front-door boarding for fare collection and increased passenger seating.

***Attachment***

None.

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