



**September 14, 2020**

**To:** Members of the Board of Directors  
**From:** Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer  
**Subject:** Employment and Travel Survey Results

### **Overview**

In an effort to gain an understanding of the current impacts of the coronavirus on employment and travel in Orange County, a scientific, statistically valid survey was conducted during the month of July 2020.

### **Recommendation**

Receive and file as an information item.

### **Background**

The arrival of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the State of California (State) triggered a statewide shelter-in-place mandate in March 2020, 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 and reduced spending, the threat of COVID-19 and the closure of non-essential businesses altered how and where people work, play, shop, and travel.

Although the State has begun a phased reopening of the economy, the public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to be felt well into the future. What is less clear is how the experience of the last several months may also have lasting effects on public attitudes, work arrangements, and travel behaviors in ways that are relevant to the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) mission to develop an integrated and balanced transportation system that supports the diverse travel needs and reflects the character of Orange County. A scientific, statistically valid survey was conducted in early July to assess the current impacts of COVID-19, which can be used as a baseline against future assessments in determining how travel patterns and priorities may change.

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**Discussion**

The purpose of the Employment and Travel Survey, conducted by True North Research, Inc., was to develop a statistically reliable understanding of how COVID-19 and the temporary closure of non-essential businesses and schools in the State altered public attitudes, work arrangements, travel behaviors, and mode choices in the short-term. By taking a snapshot in July 2020, the survey also establishes baseline measures against which a future tracking survey can be employed to identify enduring, long-term impacts. Specifically, the survey was designed to:

- Identify the issues that residents view as the most important facing Orange County today,
- Gauge residents' expectations for the COVID-19 pandemic,
- Profile the employment status, work schedule, frequency of remote work, and commute behavior of survey participants in February 2020 (prior to the pandemic) and June 2020 (during the pandemic),
- Profile participant's use of rideshare, transit, and active transportation, as well as their shopping and dining habits in February 2020 (prior to the pandemic) and June 2020 (during the pandemic), and
- Identify participants' preferences with respect to remote work once the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

A total of 2,548 randomly-selected residents representing a sample of all Orange County adults participated in the survey between July 10 and July 22, 2020. The survey's maximum margin of error is  $\pm 1.94$  percent for questions answered by all 2,548 respondents countywide.

The survey followed a mixed-method design that employed multiple recruiting methods (telephone and email) and multiple data collection methods (telephone and online). The interviews averaged 15 minutes in length and were conducted in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

The key findings from the survey indicate:

- Employees working remotely at least one day per week increased from 23 percent in February to 61 percent in June,
- Average days working remotely per week increased from 0.76 in February to 2.52 in June,
- The percentage of employees who typically drive alone to a work site decreased from 77 percent in February to 47 percent in June,
- Use of carpool/vanpool, active transportation, and public transit for work commute was cut in half during this period, and

- Once the COVID-19 pandemic is over, about half of employees prefer to maintain (or increase) the percentage of days they remote work.

Approaches to using this survey combined with other travel data that can be used in future decision-making will be presented at a later date. Staff is currently collecting available data from Google LLC, Apple Inc., the California Department of Transportation, and other sources that can complement this survey information, as well as any future OCTA surveys to help inform future planning efforts.

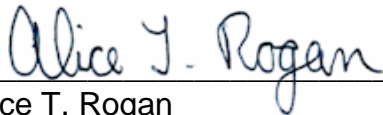
### **Summary**

A scientific, statistically valid survey was conducted during the month of July 2020 to gain a better understanding of the effects of COVID-19 on employment and travel and will be used to help inform future planning efforts.

### **Attachment**

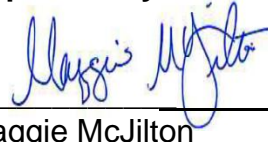
None.

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