



October 8, 2020

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Bus Operations Performance Measurements Report for the Fourth Quarter of Fiscal Year 2019-20

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 highlights proposed changes to the method for counting passengers, measuring on-time performance, and summarizes the year-to-date performance of the fixed-route and paratransit services through the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2019-20.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) operates a countywide network of 60 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 Orange, Los Angeles, 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 both OC Bus and OC ACCESS services are summarized and reported quarterly (Attachment A).

Discussion

This report provides an update on the performance of the OC Bus and OC ACCESS services through the fourth quarter, including the months of April, May, and June of fiscal year (FY) 2019-20 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 uses both on-time performance (OTP) and miles between road calls (MBRC) to measure service reliability. This report also discusses proposed changes to the method for counting passengers and the calculation and goal for OTP.

The performance trends identified for the fourth quarter reflect the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and subsequent national guidelines and state order put in place to reduce the spread. The state's "stay-at-home" order and the guidelines for social distancing significantly impacted travel patterns, leading to the need to reduce service and implement other safety measures, including rear-door boarding and capacity limits on buses.

- Safety – DOFR OC Bus and OC ACCESS services both remain below the accident frequency standard of one preventable accident per 100,000 service miles. DOFR remained below standard, between April and June, as the number of preventable accidents was approximately the same compared to last quarter and the same time last year, with less miles operated due to COVID-19. OCTA Operations staff continues to focus on and stress the importance of safety, conduct safety-related campaigns, and promote the safe driving award program. In particular, trend analysis indicates right side clearance has been an issue and recent safety campaigns have focused on preventing this type of accident. For OC ACCESS service, the number of preventable accidents reported between April and June was six. This represents an 81 percent decrease from the 33 accidents reported the previous quarter and an 86 percent increase in miles between preventable accidents compared to the third quarter. This yielded a slight improvement in the year-to-date average of 3.6 percent, but still below the standard. CFR OC Bus service continued to perform above standard.
- Customer Service – Customer service is measured by evaluating the number of valid customer complaints received compared to boardings. Through the fourth quarter, all modes of service performed above the respective standards.

- Reliability – Cumulative OTP for OC Bus and OC ACCESS for the FY remained below target. However, for the fourth quarter, April through June, OC Bus OTP averaged 88.1 percent, with DOFR and CFR averaging 89 percent and 86.1 percent, respectively. OTP for OC ACCESS was 0.1 percent higher than last quarter, and 0.6 percent lower than the 93.1 percent reported during the same period last year.

The MBRC for all modes of service exceeded the standard through the reporting period. OCTA staff will continue to monitor performance in this area and work with the contractor to sustain or improve overall performance.

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);
- A status on the initiatives implemented under the OC Bus 360° Program, including OC Flex and the College Pass Program; and
- Updates regarding the use of automated passenger counters for the collection of ridership data and a modification to the metric for OTP beginning with the new FY.

In an effort to more effectively measure and assess the performance of OC Bus and OC ACCESS services both during the pandemic and in a post-COVID-19 environment, staff has thoroughly evaluated the manner in which passengers are counted and OTP is calculated. As a result of this evaluation, staff is proposing an adjustment to both the method for counting passengers and OTP, which will bring OCTA closer to standard industry practice with respect to data collection, and performance measurement and reporting as described below and more thoroughly discussed in Attachment A.

Passenger Counts – Automatic Passenger Counters (APC)

OCTA has historically utilized the farebox as the method for reporting and recording boarding data, or passenger counts. In response to COVID-19 and efforts to minimize non-essential contact, passengers were diverted from the front, where the farebox is located, to the rear door for boarding. APCs are located at both the front and rear doors of all OCTA buses and capture boarding data automatically. OCTA has been evaluating the expanded use of APCs over

the past few years; this data has been helpful for planning purposes as you can determine passenger loads at various points along a route. With the change in the boarding process in early April, staff began utilizing the APC data to capture all boarding information since the farebox would not be able to capture the rear door boarding. Utilizing the APCs has a proven and effective method for capturing boarding data, and staff is proposing to utilize the APCs as the primary data source moving forward.

OTP

The current methodology used for tracking and reporting OTP accounts for the late departures from scheduled time points on a route as printed in the bus route schedule. After evaluating similar data collected and reported by peer agencies and through OCTA's participation in the American Bus Benchmarking Group (ABBG) collaborative, staff proposes to modify OCTA's current OTP methodology to include early departures from scheduled time points in addition to late trips in the calculation of OTP. An early departure is one in which the bus leaves an established timepoint more than 59 seconds ahead of the posted schedule. Including the early departures will provide for a more thorough overall measure of OTP.

In connection with this proposed change, staff is also recommending an adjustment to the OTP standard of 85 percent to 80 percent. In considering this adjustment, staff reviewed OTP data from ABBG for 23 other transit properties. It should be noted that only six of 23 agencies included in the ABBG collaborative have been able to meet an OTP of 85 percent, while 11 of the 23 agencies were able to achieve an OTP standard of 80 percent. In evaluating the historical trend of OTP for both DOFR and CFR, recent performance trends have been below the current standard of 85 percent, primarily driven by traffic impacts and construction-related activities. Adjusting the standard to 80 percent is consistent with performance of the ABBG collaborative. Staff will continue to monitor OTP and report quarterly, including any recommendations to further adjust the OTP standard.

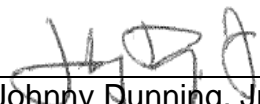
Summary

Through the fourth quarter of FY 2019-20, the performance of OC Bus and OC ACCESS services exceeded performance in the areas of courtesy and reliability (MBRC) but was below the standard for safety (except CFR) and OTP. OCTA staff continues to focus on continuous quality 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

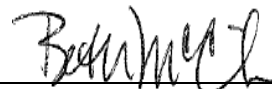
- A. Bus Operations Performance Measurements Report, Fourth Quarter, Fiscal Year 2019-20

Prepared by:

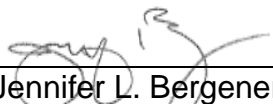


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