



October 19, 2023

To: Legislative and Communications Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Diversity Outreach Update

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Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority continues 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 outreach efforts that are part of the Chief Executive Officer Action Plan to meet the 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 underrepresented people. More than a decade ago, OCTA's diversity outreach work primarily centered on partnering with ethnic business groups to conduct procurement outreach at business expos, conferences, and other events.

More recently, OCTA has leveraged those strong relationships with diverse business organizations by engaging with the business community on OCTA's transportation efforts such as transit marketing programs, capital improvement projects, and planning studies. This work directly contributes to the agency's diversity outreach and inclusion efforts that have become an important part of the 2023 Board of Directors (Board) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Strategic Initiatives and Action Plan.

Discussion

Over the past year, OCTA Diversity Outreach staff increased the number of opportunities to engage with Orange County's diverse community members, business groups, community-based organizations, hard-to-reach audiences, seniors, and other disadvantaged groups. The amount of person-to-person outreach has grown with activities at cultural festivities, resource fairs, business events, senior centers and pop-up events at community gathering places.

These efforts to cultivate relationships of trust help increase awareness of OCTA, provide an opportunity to share information about transportation services and programs, and encourage input on planning studies and other efforts. Additionally, community engagement also helps break down barriers for historically underserved and marginalized communities so that OCTA can continue to establish and improve relationships with civic, social, business, and faith communities. Diverse stakeholders' participation and support play a pivotal role in the success of transit programs, capital projects, and planning studies for OCTA.

OCTA Diversity Outreach's Trust-Building Campaign

OCTA's Trust-Building Campaign began in spring 2021 with a goal to help cultivate relationships of trust and increase awareness of OCTA among Orange County's Spanish, Vietnamese, and other non-English speakers. The campaign was developed with input from the diverse communities and included a communications program with culturally effective messages to enhance the understanding of OCTA capital projects, transit programs, and planning studies. This was done by using language and cultural references along with ambassadors and other influencers to inform the targeted community members.

During 2023, the third year of the trust-building effort, staff participated in 164 community events, cultural festivals, and other activities to inform diverse community members and other under-served populations about OCTA. This represents a 39 percent increase over last year. Major cultural community and business events with large number of people who visited the OCTA booth included:

- More than 14,000 people at several Lunar New Year events in February
- Nearly 900 people at Black History Festival in the City of Anaheim on February 4
- More than 800 people at the Korean Cultural Festival in the City of Irvine on May 13

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- More than 11,900 people at three resource fairs in the City of Anaheim and one in the City of Costa Mesa during the summer
 - More than 6,000 people at OC Pride Festival in the City of Santa Ana on June 24
 - 1,100 people at Moon Lantern Festival in the City of Westminster on September 9
 - 1,600 people at Moon Festival in the City of Fountain Valley on October 1
 - More than 1,000 people at World Korean Business Convention in the City of Anaheim October 11 to October 14
 - More than 3,000 people at Primavera Festival, Cinco de Mayo Festival, Fiestas Patrias Festival, and other cultural commemorations with the Hispanic community

In addition to connecting with large numbers of hard-to-reach community members, staff has also engaged with seniors, communities of faith, and others in smaller settings throughout the County.

Staff solicited input for Directions 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan, gathering more than 6,500 responses from diverse community members at the OCTA booth. Staff also distributed information about the Youth Ride Free Pass, numerous transit marketing programs, programs for seniors and people with disabilities, transit training opportunities for caregivers, the OC Streetcar Project, the Interstate 405 (I-405) Improvement Project, and other transportation programs.

During many cultural events throughout the year, staff leveraged strong relationships with the Asian American, Hispanic, and other diverse communities, specifically with the news media, cultural ambassadors/influencers, and community leaders to help increase visibility of OCTA and its transportation projects, programs, and plans. These major events served as an important way to engage with OCTA's targeted 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. So far this year for the Trust-Building Campaign, staff reached more than 48,300 community members and 7,900 small-business people as compared to 26,000 community members and more than 2,300 businesspeople in 2022.

Staff utilized both traditional communications and outreach tactics along with advertising in Spanish and Vietnamese on television, radio, newspapers, and social media sites to promote OCTA projects. This included earned news coverage for OCTA's Transit Equity Day, OCTA's participation in the Black History Month Parade and Unity Festival, and OCTA's booth for

mid-autumn festivities. Staff developed and placed in-language ads for the Orange County Hispanic Chamber, in Excelsior, La Ranchera, LSTV, Người Việt, and Việt Báo, to increase awareness 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 Other Organizations in Orange County

Staff continued to strengthen working partnerships with organizations that provided important services for Orange County's diverse and vulnerable communities, including CalOptima, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Orange County, Family Resource Centers, Jamboree Housing Corporation, Latino Health Access, Orange County Social Services Agency, The LGBTQ Center OC, and others.

This year, staff worked more closely with Moving Forward Psychological Institute, the Norooz Clinic Foundation, and other organizations that provide mental wellness services. This work helped generate awareness of OCTA among 1,400 community members during five outreach events on mental wellness for both caretakers and the general community. These mental health community leaders not only help OCTA provide resources and information about transportation programs, projects, and plans, but they also serve as places of community and connection — especially important to diverse and disadvantaged communities.

Staff participated in weekly meetings with many organizations — both existing partners and new partnering organizations, such as Goodwill of Orange County, Santa Ana Parks and Recreation Department, and several senior centers in central and northern Orange County with diverse constituents — to share OCTA collateral materials and digital content. Staff continues each year to identify 15 to 20 additional business, community, civic, and nonprofit organizations to foster partnerships and involve them with ongoing programs and projects as well as to seek their support with future transportation initiatives and plans.

Collaboration with Contracts Administration and Materials Management

Staff worked closely with OCTA's Contracts Administration and Materials Management (CAMM) Department to engage with disadvantaged and minority-owned businesses by attending numerous ethnic chambers' conferences, workshops, mixers, and other events to share procurement opportunities. Staff participated in 62 business events throughout Orange County, engaging with nearly 12,000 diverse business owners over the past two

years. Staff has participated in over 40 events with over 8,000 attendees collectively so far this year, representing nearly a doubled effort from the prior year.

During these events, staff shared information on OCTA's procurement process, provided hands-on help and assisted with questions in addition to informing the small business owners and their representatives about a host of different transportation updates and news.

During the past year, staff coordinated small-business workshops with the Small Business Development Center of Orange County and other business groups attended by more than 200 minority small business owners. This work generated increases in registration numbers for OCTA's online procurement portal.

Diverse Community Leaders Group

OCTA's Diverse Community Leaders Group is comprised of influential community, business, faith, and education leaders in Orange County. The diverse leaders continue to play an important and active role in providing their constituents' valuable feedback to OCTA while also sharing OCTA's transportation updates and plans with their members.

The group has been instrumental in helping to generate public input for the Transportation Demand Management Plan, the Making Better Connections Study, and the Long-Range Transportation Plan along with sharing their suggestions to enhance messaging for transit marketing programs, helping OCTA reach diverse audiences with construction updates for the OC Streetcar and I-405 projects, supporting Active Transportation initiatives, and many other programs and projects.

Summary

OCTA continues to focus on reaching diverse communities and underrepresented 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 and CEO initiatives of enhanced engagement with diverse, disadvantaged, and other hard-to-reach communities.

Attachment

None.

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