



January 9, 2025

To: Transit Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: February 2025 Bus Service Change

Overview

The proposed February 2025 bus service change implements changes to OC Bus service consistent with the Making Better Connections Study. The changes include reducing wait times and adjusting bus routes to improve overall service quality and reliability. The service changes also include adjustments to bus schedules in response to customer comments and operator feedback.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

In October 2022, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) completed a comprehensive study of the bus transit system, known as the Making Better Connections (MBC) Study. The MBC Study assessed emerging travel trends and recommended optimizing the transit network to better serve Orange County residents, workers, and visitors. The Board of Directors approved the final service plan that emerged from the MBC Study on October 24, 2022. The MBC Study strives to improve bus service on high-ridership routes, reduce wait times, and simplify route structures. OCTA continues to implement these recommendations steadily through the service change process.

OCTA implements regular schedule and route revisions to selected OC Bus routes four times a year (February, May, August, and November). The proposed bus service changes discussed herein are scheduled for implementation on February 9, 2025.

Discussion

OC Bus continues to experience a significant recovery in post-coronavirus (COVID-19) ridership with ridership at 99 percent of pre-COVID-19 levels. These gains outpace the national trend and other peer agencies in Southern California and indicate that the OCTA MBC Study recommendations have been responsive to ridership trends and patterns. The proposed February 2025 changes represent continued progress in implementing the MBC Study recommendations and will boost service in response to the increasing ridership demand.

OCTA regularly monitors OC Bus performance and makes adjustments as needed to improve the service. These adjustments consider changes in traffic conditions, school schedules or land-use changes, customer comments, and coach operator feedback. The changes are intended to improve overall transit service and the performance of the individual bus routes.

The proposed February 2025 changes will focus on MBC Study-related changes and improvements to service quality and reliability. These service changes focus on the following enhancements/modifications:

- Improved frequencies on Routes 59, 60, 71, and 560
- Minor trip additions on Routes 26, 37, and 47
- Reduced frequencies on weekends on Routes 59 and 129
- Route eliminations on Routes 82 and 87
 - Portions of these route will be served by Routes 89 and 177
- Alignment changes on Routes 66, 89, 90, 167, and 177
 - Routes 66, 90, and 167
 - Reroute due to the closure of the Irvine Valley College bus zone
 - Route 89
 - Extend the route from Santa Margarita Parkway/Los Alisos Boulevard to serve Rancho Santa Margarita due to the elimination of Route 82
 - Route 177
 - Extend the route from its current southern terminal at the Laguna Hills Transportation Center to serve Laguna Niguel due to the elimination of Route 87
- Schedule adjustments to improve on-time performance and connections on Routes 29, 47, 55, 59, 64, 66, 83, 89, 90, 91, 123, 129, and 543

A notable improvement included in the February 2025 changes is the creation of timed connections at the Laguna Hills Transportation Center, with only a five-minute wait time between transfers. This scheduling practice makes it easier

for riders to transfer between routes to reach their destination, particularly when bus service runs less frequently than every 30 minutes. This improvement would benefit Routes 83, 89, 91, and 177. For example, an afternoon peak hour trip starting from downtown Laguna Beach on Broadway Street to the Santa Ana train station will save an OC Bus rider 25 minutes in travel time for the trip. The proposed February 2025 bus service change recommendations are detailed in Attachment A and depicted in Attachments B and C.

The proposed changes will increase bus service levels, equating to approximately 31,431 more revenue vehicle hours annually. System-wide service levels will increase to about 1.55 million annual revenue vehicle hours following the implementation of the changes.

Title VI and Environmental Justice Analysis

Staff conducted a Title VI and Environmental Justice Analysis of the MBC Study, per Federal Transit Administration requirements and consistent with OCTA policy. The February 2025 proposed changes were included in that analysis. The analysis accumulated the impacts on minority and low-income communities by comparing the transit service levels before and after the route changes. Based on this analysis, the proposed changes to the bus system, taken in their entirety, will not have a disparate impact on minority people nor a disproportionate burden on low-income people.

Summary

The proposed February 2025 bus service change is a continuation of the implementation of the Making Better Connections Study. This includes improvements to the span and frequency of service and new route alignments with the goal of improving OC Bus connections county-wide. Customers will be notified of the changes three weeks before implementation.

Attachments

- A. February 2025 Bus Service Change: Recommendations by Route
- B. February 2025 Bus Service Change: Bus Route Recommendations Map
- C. Route 82, 87, 89, 177 Alignment Changes Map

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