



November 14, 2024

To: Transit Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: 2024 OC Transit Vision Progress Update

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "DEJ", with the word "For" written in smaller letters above the signature.

Overview

The OC Transit Vision is a 30-year integrated master plan for enhancing and expanding public transit service in Orange County. This plan recommends improvements to existing transit service and identifies future potential transit corridors. The draft executive summary and action plan has been developed for Board of Directors' consideration. The final 2024 OC Transit Vision is expected to be complete by the end of 2024.

Recommendation

Direct staff to incorporate draft recommendations into the final 2024 OC Transit Vision Report which will inform the upcoming 2026 Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) initiated the 2024 OC Transit Vision (Plan) in spring 2023, building off of the 2018 Plan. This effort takes a high-level look at long-term transit needs throughout Orange County and recommends both improvements to existing transit service and identifies a series of corridors suitable for additional transit improvement. In addition, the Plan will guide future recommendations for fixed-route bus service and innovative mobility strategies. Projects identified in the Plan will be included in the OCTA Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and position OCTA for upcoming transit funding opportunities.

Discussion

The draft 2024 OC Transit Vision Executive Summary (Attachment A) is the culmination of efforts completed over the last 18 months. These efforts included regular updates to, and input from, the OCTA Citizens Advisory Committee,

Transit Committee, and Board of Directors (Board). General public and other stakeholder input was solicited via interviews and throughout the process, which is also reflected in the Plan.

Development of the Plan was initiated through the “State of OC Transit” report, which provided the existing conditions for the transit system. This was followed by the establishment of the project goals and objectives to determine countywide priorities for transit. During this step, 24 “Transit Opportunity Corridors” (TOC) were identified, evaluated, and screened to determine the top TOCs in Orange County where transit demand is strongest for increased service and capital investments. In addition to the corridor recommendations, proposals for transit service improvements in other areas of Orange County have also been included. The draft 2024 OC Transit Vision Executive Summary provides an overview of the process and recommendations. The full report is expected to be completed by the end of the year and will be posted on the OCTA website.

Staff presented the draft recommendations to the Board in May 2024. The Board directed staff to implement Phase 2 of the public outreach plan to gather feedback on the draft countywide transit strategies with a focus on selecting the top TOCs. Evaluation criteria were applied to rank the top ten TOCs that will advance to the final list of recommendations. Based on public input and technical analysis, the Plan outlines the following countywide transit strategies and ten TOCs.

Strategies for Countywide Improvements

In areas of Orange County not recommended for TOCs, the Plan recommends additional public transit service to better meet the needs in these communities. These recommendations include:

- Fully implement the Making Better Connections Plan with Board-approved improvements to OC Bus routes and conduct an OC Bus Comprehensive Operations Analysis to identify additional systemwide enhancements.
- Analyze remaining TOCs that did not make the list of top ten for potential OC Bus improvements.
- Conduct an Express Bus and follow-up Freeway Bus Rapid Transit Study that addresses post-pandemic regional travel demand.
- Monitor the performance of OC Flex and pursue partnerships through Project V to expand on-demand services.
- Implement OC ACCESS software integration and a transportation network company (Uber/Lyft) pilot program to expand paratransit access.
- Promote the OC Vanpool subsidy increase and expand partnerships with employers.
- Coordinate with active transportation projects to improve first/last mile connections and conduct a follow-up study to expand mobility hubs.

These recommendations are being considered for inclusion in the LRTP. This process will help determine which projects are feasible to be included in the LRTP's financially constrained project list.

Transit Opportunity Corridors to Major Destinations

As Orange County looks to the future, the core of the County will continue to become more dense with respect to housing, employment, and activity areas as well as concentration of key destinations. Meeting the related transportation needs will require more efficient and effective public transportation options given that roadways are approaching full capacity.

The Plan anticipates increased transit demand on Harbor Boulevard with the commencement of the OC Streetcar operations. The OC Streetcar will travel between the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center in the City of Santa Ana and the intersection of Harbor Boulevard and Westminster Avenue in the City of Garden Grove. The Plan recommends ten-minute peak frequencies for the Harbor Boulevard TOC with potential capital investments to improve speed and reliability such as transit signal priority and dedicated bus lanes.

The Plan also proposes both short-term and long-term improvement strategies for the Katella Avenue TOC. A short-term recommendation is to extend OC Bus Rapid Route 553 from the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC) to the Anaheim Resort along Katella Avenue starting in 2025. The route currently serves the Main Street corridor through downtown Santa Ana and the City of Orange. The proposed 2.3-mile extension from ARTIC to the Anaheim Resort at Harbor Boulevard would approximately double OC Bus frequencies, improve multimodal connections, and promote a convenient one-seat ride for residents and workers to the resort area. A long-term recommendation is to extend limited-stop bus service on Katella Avenue from the Anaheim Resort to California State University, Long Beach.

Transit Opportunity Corridors to Transportation Hubs

As the Los Angeles Metro rail system continues to expand, the Southeast Gateway Line will terminate close to the Orange County Line near the Los Cerritos Center in Cerritos around 2035. As part of the Plan, the La Palma Avenue/Lincoln Avenue TOC was evaluated as an east/west corridor connecting North Orange County with regional bus service and the future Southeast Gateway Line in Los Angeles County.

In October, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority's Metrolink (Metrolink) expanded its regional rail service in Orange County with seven additional trips on the Orange County Line and four additional trips on the Inland Empire-Orange County Line. Long-term plans call for further increases in the number of rail trips. The Plan recommends two potential east/west TOCs that

would facilitate regional travel between the Goldenwest Transportation Center in the City of Huntington Beach and the Tustin Metrolink Station. The Edinger Avenue TOC would serve high-density residential neighborhoods in central Orange County, while the Warner Avenue TOC would increase bus frequencies in the emerging Tustin Legacy mixed-use district in the City of Tustin. Other TOCs with connections to Metrolink stations include the Westminster Avenue/17th Street TOC at the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center, Main Street TOC at ARTIC, and the Garden Grove Boulevard/Chapman Avenue TOC at the Orange Metrolink Station.

Throughout the public involvement process, OCTA staff received requests to expand transit service to John Wayne Airport. This recommendation was included as part of the 2018 OC Transit Vision and the Bristol Street Corridor Study in 2020. OC Bus Route 76 currently travels to the airport approximately every hour. The Plan recommends studying the feasibility of a State College Boulevard/Bristol Street TOC that would serve the John Wayne Airport every ten minutes during peak hours and every 15 minutes during off-peak hours.

Another major transportation hub is the Fullerton Park-and-Ride, which serves six OC Bus routes and one Los Angeles Metro bus route. The Beach Boulevard TOC would travel from the Fullerton Park-and-Ride to Pacific Coast Highway in the City of Huntington Beach.

The TOCs are recommended for areas which justify the higher level of capital and operating investment required for higher-capacity transit. Either ten- or 15-minute peak frequencies are being proposed for the TOCs, depending on the corridor. In general, the cities with the highest transit ridership would have the most lines, and 17 of 34 cities would have at least one line.

Public Engagement

Community input is a key factor when developing the proposed strategies and options that will help shape the OC Transit Vision. The primary goals are to inform target audiences about transit options, key issues and challenges, and to gather input. In spring and summer 2024, an engagement strategy was executed to increase awareness of the Plan and encourage active participation in a community webinar and survey, which included questions related to the TOCs. The countywide transit strategies were also presented and discussed during the stakeholder and general public meetings.

The following engagement was completed from May to July. All materials were created in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. A complete Phase 2 Public Engagement and Survey Analysis Report is included in Attachment B.

- Collected 4,423 multilingual surveys
- Hosted a community webinar, community leader's roundtable, planning forum, and elected official's roundtable
- Presented and facilitated discussions at OCTA's Citizens Advisory Committee, Diverse Community Leaders group, and bus customer roundtable
- Engaged more than 3,300 community members at 20 events throughout Orange County
- Reached more than 75,000 readers through Spanish and Vietnamese newspapers
- Sent five email notices in multiple languages to more than 2,500 interested community stakeholders
- Advertised the webinar and survey through Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) posts

OCTA incorporated survey results and public feedback when scoring the ten TOCs. OCTA also used public feedback to improve countywide coverage, such as expanding transit service in higher-growth areas, facilitating regional connections through express bus service, and constructing mobility hubs.

Summary

With Board direction, OCTA will incorporate draft recommendations and action plan into the final 2024 Plan report which will inform the upcoming 2026 LRTP. The final 2024 Plan report will be posted on OCTA's website and will be made available to cities and the public upon request.

Attachments

- A. 2024 OC Transit Vision, Executive Summary
- B. 2024 OC Transit Vision Public Engagement and Survey Analysis Report Phase 2

Prepared by:



Charles Main
Transportation Analyst, Principal
(714) 560-5904

Approved by:



Kia Mortazavi
Executive Director, Planning
(714) 560-5741