

Appendix E

Public Involvement Documentation

November 10, 2009

Mr. Steve DeGeorge
Ventura County Transportation Committee
950 County Square Drive, Suite 207
Ventura, CA 93003

Dear Steve:

The following is a detailed description/documentation of our work on behalf of the Ventura County Transportation Commissions' Transit Investment Study.

Introduction

Consensus Planning Group, Inc. (Consensus) was retained by Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. to facilitate a community outreach program on behalf of the Ventura County Transportation Committee's Transit Investment Study.

The goals of the Public Participation Plan were to:

- Communicate proactively with stakeholders about the Transit Investment Study and how their participation is important in the planning process
- Ensure that Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) Board Members and Elected Officials were kept apprised of the planning process and key milestones
- Educate and engage a broad-based group of stakeholders
- Elicit feedback from stakeholders regarding key transportation needs

The objectives of the Public Participation Plan were to:

- Utilize a variety of outreach techniques that make it easy for stakeholders to be informed and participate at whatever level of interest or time available
- Develop public information materials that are engaging through design and function while conveying complex technical information in clear and concise language
- Communicate with stakeholders and document the entire outreach effort

Following is a detailed report of the activities accomplished by Consensus:

- Created Public Participation Plan (Appendix 1) for the project:
 - Developed and refined draft public participation plan, including samples of an interview questionnaire and interview request letter
 - Presented and followed up with Transcom members to elicit their thoughts and obtain recommendations on who to involve in this process within their respective jurisdictions
 - Updated public participation plan based on feedback by Transcom members
 - Finalized public participation plan

- Created key stakeholders database to distribute information about the Transit Investment Study (Appendix 2) that included:
 - Ventura County of Governments study participants
 - Ventura County Transportation Commission Board members
 - Transportation-oriented groups
 - Elected officials
 - Business groups
 - Community-based organizations
 - Political organizations
 - Neighborhood associations
 - Institutions
 - Top employers
 - City Transportation/Planning Commissions

- Participated in January 29, 2009 Ventura County of Governments' (VCOG) meeting
 - Developed questionnaire for January 29 VCOG meeting (Appendix 3)
 - Staffed meeting and engaged participants to complete survey
 - Conducted follow-up calls to meeting attendees to encourage study participation
 - Prepared technical report to summarize responses from VCOG members (Appendix 4)

- Established feedback mechanism for Transit Investment Study on www.goventura.org
 - Created architecture for inclusion of Transit Investment Study on website (Appendix 5)
 - Developed web-based survey form for visitors to complete online

- Planned two community workshops to officially seek comments and feedback regarding transit needs within the county
 - Identified and secured dates and venues for workshops in Camarillo and Thousand Oaks
 - Developed community workshop strategy and format (Appendix 6)
 - Created mailing invite and printed and conducted mailing to more than 500 contacts (Appendix 7)
 - Noticed all community-based organizations and neighborhood associations, transportation-oriented groups, and local libraries in Ventura County to distribute community workshop invitation to their memberships and post invitation in public gathering sites
 - Designed and purchased Ventura County Star and Acorn advertisements in advance of the workshops (Appendix 8)
 - Revised questionnaire for community workshops (Appendix 9)
 - Drafted funding board for Funding station at workshop
 - Prepared materials for the workshops including sign-in sheets, team name tags, and VCTC commission name tags
 - Organized and staffed April 9th workshop in Camarillo and April 15th workshop in Thousand Oaks

Organizations contacted and results achieved include:

- Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation
Resulted in distribution of invite to all offices and properties they own
- Ventura County Visitors and Convention Bureau
Resulted in calendar section of website and on upcoming events banner on the home page
- Camarillo Council on Aging
Resulted in the transportation committee chair making an announcement at their committee meeting and forwarding the invite to the rest of the council
- Ventura Agricultural Association
Resulted in forwarding of invite to board members and general membership of the Association
- Ventura County Civic Alliance
Resulted in forwarding of invite to membership
- Filipino American Council of Ventura County
Resulted in announcement at March 31 board meeting and distribution of invite to Council membership via email
- Wilson Senior Center
Resulted in posting of invite in event bulletin
- Lions Club
Resulted in posting of information on website
- LULAC
Resulted in forwarding invite to board and announcement at upcoming meeting
- Rotary District Office
Resulted in distribution of invite at all district offices
- Senior Concerns
Resulted in forwarding of invite to staff and members
- Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance
Resulted in forwarding of invite to staff
- Ventura Senior Recreation Center
Resulted in forwarding of invite to centers and staff
- City of Thousand Oaks Council on Aging
Resulted in an e-blast to more than 600 people
- Ventura County Area Council on Aging
Resulted in forwarding of invite to all staff
- Ventura County Parks Department
Resulted in forwarding of invite to all staff
- Camarillo Library
Resulted in posting of invite on library's bulletin
- Fillmore Library
Resulted in posting of invite on library's bulletin
- Moorpark Library
Resulted in posting of invite on library's bulletin
- Santa Paula Public Library/Blanchard Community Library
Resulted in posting of invite on library's bulletin

- Grant R. Brimhall Library
Resulted in posting of invite on library's bulletin
 - Oxnard Public Library
Resulted in distribution of invite to all Oxnard libraries
 - Ventura County Library
Resulted in distribution of invite to 14 libraries in County
 - Help of Ojai
Resulted in posting of invite at center
 - Port Hueneme Community Center
Resulted in posting of invite at center
 - Moorpark Active Adult Center
Resulted in posting of invite on event's bulletin and forwarding of invite to all staff
 - Ojai Valley Green Coalition
Resulted in mention in April newsletter
- Managed daily and weekly activities for the project including:
- Participating in weekly team conference calls and discussions regarding community outreach activities
 - Checking the project hotline daily for inquiries about the study and workshop RSVPs
- Media relations:
- Consensus secured an interview with the Ventura County Star showcasing the study and the workshops. Consensus created a media brief with key themes and messages and staffed the interview with Darren Kettle, VCTC Executive Director. The interview resulted in an article in the paper prior to the April 9th community workshop in Camarillo.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In today's politically sensitive and competitive funding environment, broad public participation and support is critical to the success of any major public infrastructure project. However, getting the general public to participate in the development of a project is getting ever more challenging as stakeholders spend more and more time commuting to/from work and engaged in essential daily activities. We witnessed this challenge first hand.

In order to obtain the sought-after feedback from the community and to ensure that any plans the Commission puts forth for the future of transit in the county encompass the thoughts of the residents, we recommend hosting additional workshops throughout the county. Our budget only allowed for two workshops, this limited the number of participants because of travel limitations and time constraints.

In addition, to raise awareness about the Commission throughout the county with the goal of greater participation in determining the future of transit, we suggest individual meetings with stakeholder organizations throughout the county including Chambers of Commerce, major employers, business groups, homeowner associations, community-based and social service organizations, and schools, colleges, and universities. While these groups were contacted to

participate in the study, they did not contribute in a significant way. Attending their monthly meetings or meeting with them in their locales will generate additional feedback desired for the study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (213) 438-1755 ext. 117 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Sara M. Costin
Director



*Ventura County Transportation
Commission
Transit Investment Study*

Questionnaire Report

March 2009

Executive Summary

Consensus Planning Group, Inc. (CPG), worked with the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) to solicit feedback from key stakeholders in Ventura County to help identify current and future transportation needs throughout the County.

At the Ventura County Council of Governments' monthly meeting on January 29, 2009 a survey was given to elected officials and other city representatives representing the ten cities of Ventura County. The survey serves as one component of VCTC's Transit Investment Study (TIS). Due to their intimate understanding of constituent issues, especially those relating to local and regional transportation issues, their feedback is critical for the TIS.

The **most important issues** to the participants with regard to the current and future transportation needs for Ventura County are (in order of prevalence):

1. Frequency of transit thereby reducing headways.
2. Connectivity between east and west Ventura County.
3. Accessibility to transit via more strategically based bus stops and increasing weekend/evening service.
4. Service deficiencies throughout Ventura County especially in Santa Paula, Fillmore and Ojai.
5. Lack of funding throughout Ventura County creating transportation challenges on both the local and regional level; however, participants largely agreeing that constituents would not support a tax measure to increase funding.

Key Issues

Key Issues Summary

Based on questionnaires submitted to date, the following are the key issues raised by stakeholders:

Regional

1. **Frequency-** More frequent service would minimize the amount of time riders spend on the bus and would help promote transit as a viable transportation alternative.
2. **Connectivity-** Lack of connectivity and coordination between cities makes it difficult for transit riders to travel from one side of the county to the other, whether east to west or north to south. Stronger transit connections between cities need to exist to create accessibility to jobs, educational centers, government centers, etc.
3. **Accessibility-** Enhance accessibility by providing more busses, additional strategic bus stops and improving service during evenings and weekends.
4. **Multi-modal transit center-** Create a transit hub in downtown Ventura that ties Metrolink, Amtrak, Greyhound, VISTA and future rail service.
5. **Regional bus service-** Combine existing transit services into one regional bus service managed by a regional authority. Respondents said this would increase the effectiveness of funding and service throughout Ventura County.

Local

1. **Transit deficiencies-**
 - a. Increase transit options specifically VISTA service in East County cities such as Ojai, Fillmore, Santa Paula, and Piru not only to connect between cities but enhance accessibility to the rest of the county.
 - b. Currently, unincorporated areas outside of Ojai city limits do not have sufficient public transit options.
 - c. Northwest Port Hueneme and Hueneme Bay do not have mass transit especially for seniors who reside in that region.
 - d. Improve transit west of Victoria Avenue, beach communities, and Oxnard Transportation Center.
 - e. Bus routes in Thousand Oaks are inefficient.
2. **SR-101/ SR-23 interchange-** Upgrade existing interchange to reduce bottlenecks and increase the flow of traffic.
3. **Dial-A-Ride programs-** Protect transportation options for the aging and disabled population who depend on dial-a-ride and paratransit programs to travel throughout Ventura County.
4. **SR- 118-** Widen and landscape SR-118 to increase flow of traffic in Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Moorpark region.

5. **Metrolink-** Expand Metrolink service in Ventura County by providing a station in downtown Ventura and Thousand Oaks.
6. **Bike paths-** Create more bike paths and increase pedestrian pathways in every city.
7. **Bus shelters-** Provide more bus shelters in every city.
8. **Funding-** Provide funding for Ojai Trolley, Gold Coast Transit, and HELP Ojai's van service.
9. **Improvements-** Improve bypass on Highway 33 through Casitas Springs to increase safety and reduce traffic.
10. **Street paving-** Improve both streets and highways by repaving existing roads.

Funding

The general consensus is that there is not enough funding on both the local and regional levels and there is an ongoing struggle to find resources to fund projects. Cities are faced with difficult challenges when prioritizing projects based on limited federal financial support. Furthermore, Ventura County lacks funding for both capital projects and ongoing maintenance and operations.

1. Tax Measure

- a. More than half of the participants said that their constituents would not support a tax measure devoted to transportation infrastructure. Reasons cited include the state of the economy as well as increasing taxes on the State level, and for cities like Oxnard and Port Hueneme a ½ cent sales tax is already in place to fund transportation improvements.
- b. Those who thought their constituents would support a county wide tax measure said it would require an extensive public relations effort to educate stakeholders on the necessity and benefits of implementing such a measure. Benefits to emphasize would include increasing support for transit operations, improving transportation services for workers in the county, and highlighting how the measure will improve quality of life.

Other concerns

1. **Geography-** The geography of Ventura County makes it difficult to develop a cohesive county wide transportation system because the region is extremely large and spread out (about 1,800 square miles) and is divided by the Conejo grade.
2. **Light rail-** Although transit is important, various participants mentioned the pursuit of light rail as a viable transportation option for the future. The Conejo grade poses an impediment to light rail, so other routes such as Highway 126 should be considered for future light rail development to transport East County residents to the Santa Clarita Valley and Ventura government and employment centers.

Conclusion

Participants who advocated the pursuit of both regional and local transit solutions believe that by addressing both issues concurrently the most effective transportation vision will be created that tackles local and county-wide transit needs. However, participants who favored regional transit planning as Ventura County's priority believe we need to solve current deficiencies first and develop a comprehensive transportation plan for the future on a regional scale. As noted, participants cited frequency, connectivity and accessibility to transit on both a regional and local level as the largest impediment to the use of transit throughout Ventura County. Only by addressing these current and future needs will Ventura County be able to increase ridership and create a transit system that is convenient and viable. Locally, East County cities are the least connected to the rest of Ventura County and other areas such as Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and Santa Clarita. Transit service in these cities needs to be improved on a large scale by providing more routes, more buses and higher frequency of service. Although the future transportation vision of Ventura County depends largely on the availability of funding resources, participants were reluctant to advocate the implementation of a regional tax measure devoted to expanding transportation infrastructure, citing the state of the economy and increasing taxes throughout the state as existing obstacles; however, participants noted that a strategic public relations campaign that educated voters on the needs and benefits could be effective in swaying voters.

Questionnaire Participants

Questionnaire/Interview Participant	Organization
Linda Parks	Supervisor, Ventura County 2 nd District
Donald J. Katz	Staff Member, Ventura County 2 nd Supervisorial District
Kathy Long	Supervisor, Ventura County 3 rd District
Kristy Weir	Mayor, City of Buenaventura
Don Waunch	Mayor, City of Camarillo
Kevin Kildee	Vice Mayor, City of Camarillo
Jennifer Herrera	City of Camarillo
Mark Van Dam	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Moorpark
Joe DeVito	Mayor, City of Ojai
Sylvia Muñoz-Schnopp	Councilmember, City of Port Hueneme
Tony Volante	Former Mayor, City of Port Hueneme
Judy Rice	City Clerk, City of Santa Paula
Fred Robinson	Councilmember, City of Santa Paula
John Procter	Former Councilmember, City of Santa Paula
Steven Sojka	Councilmember, City of Simi Valley
Carl Morehouse	Councilmember, City of Ventura



**Ventura County Transportation Commission
Transit Investment Study
Community Outreach Findings
May 2009**

I. Executive Summary

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) commissioned a study to identify issues concerning existing public transportation needs and service deficiencies in Ventura County. VCTC hired Consensus Planning Group, Inc. (Consensus) to solicit feedback from stakeholders in Ventura County. Consensus utilized a variety of outreach techniques to ensure stakeholders throughout the County were informed and participated in the study. Specifically Consensus,

- Solicited elected officials to participate in one-on-one or telephone interviews.
- Created a key stakeholders database of more than 550 to distribute information about the study.
- Participated in the January 29, 2009 Ventura County of Governments' (VCOG) meeting for newly-elected officials.
- Established a feedback mechanism for the study on www.goventura.org.
- Planned two community workshops (on April 9 and April 15) to seek comments and feedback regarding transit needs within the County. Outreach for these events included a direct mail/return request piece to more than 550 residents and local/regional organizations and (2) follow-up phone calls to remind organizations about the workshops and obtain commitments.

Of the 56 surveys received at the workshops and on-line, the two most discussed issues among respondents were (1) reliability, accessibility, and frequency of transit options throughout Ventura County and (2) the need for connectivity between east and west Ventura County.

Participants at the community workshops expressed their appreciation and support for such venues to provide comments, and encouraged VCTC to host additional events throughout the County. Our sense is that many attendees had not previously participated in transportation meetings held by VCTC or the transit operating agencies.

II. Methodology

The questionnaire was used at three stakeholder meetings:

- (1) January 29, 2009 Ventura County of Governments' monthly meeting,
- (2) April 9, 2009 VCTC Community Workshop in Camarillo and
- (3) April 15, 2009 VCTC Community Workshop in Thousand Oaks.

The questionnaire was also available on the VCTC website (www.goventura.org). The workshops were publicized in the *Ventura County Star* and *The Acorn* newspapers. Leading up to each workshop, Consensus conducted reminder phone calls to leading business groups, transportation-oriented groups, and community-based organizations to encourage attendance and participation. Several of these groups committed to distribute the workshop invitation to their membership, post the workshop information on their membership calendar, announce the workshop at their board meeting, post the workshop information on their website, and mention the workshop in their newsletters.

Fifty-six surveys were collected from two community workshops (April 9, 2009 in Camarillo and April 15, 2009 in Thousand Oaks), at the Ventura County Council of Governments' monthly meeting on January 29, 2009, and via the www.goventura.org website.

Participants who attended the community workshops were key stakeholders, community group leaders and Ventura County residents. The participants represented various cities including:

Ventura	15
Camarillo	14
Oxnard	5
Newbury Park	5
Ojai	3
Port Hueneme	3
Santa Paula	3
Simi Valley	2
Somis	2
Oak Park	1
Thousand Oaks	1
Moorpark	1
Buenaventura	1

III. Questions Asked

1. What Ventura County city do you reside?
2. Which specific issues concern you regarding the existing public transportation services and/or infrastructure?
3. In your opinion, what are the most commonly cited transportation infrastructure deficiencies?
4. In Ventura County, which areas/communities do you believe have insufficient public transit options?
5. Should Ventura County be focused on pursuing local or regional transit solutions?
6. Which public transit projects do you believe are a priority?
7. In your city, do you believe there is adequate funding for public transportation? Which projects do you believe should receive funding?
8. Would you and/or your friends and family support a regional tax measure devoted to expanding transportation infrastructure?
9. In your opinion, what can VCTC do to encourage cooperation between cities to form a cohesive transportation vision?
10. Please identify any current issues or concerns that you are aware of in your community that may affect future transportation improvements.
11. What can VCTC do in their public outreach and/or information materials to encourage community members to participate in this study?
12. What key stakeholders/organizations would you suggest meeting with that would be interested in participating in this study?
13. Are there any additional transportation improvements that are needed that we have not discussed?

IV. Key Findings from the Public

Overall, respondents feel that public transit is slow and inconvenient. There is an overwhelming sense that connectivity around the County needs to be improved whether it is by bus, train, or bike paths. Generally residents feel that it is easier to get in their car and drive to their destination.

Regional

1. **Frequency-** More frequent service would minimize the amount of time riders spend on the bus and would help promote transit as a viable transportation alternative.
2. **Connectivity-** Lack of connectivity and coordination between cities makes it difficult for transit riders to travel from one side of the County to the other, whether east to west or north to south. Stronger transit connections between cities need to exist to create accessibility to jobs, educational centers, government centers, etc.
3. **Accessibility-** Enhance accessibility by providing more busses, additional strategic bus stops and improving service during evenings and weekends. Identify job access areas that should be transit accessible.
4. **Multi-modal transit center-** Create a transit hub in downtown Ventura that ties Metrolink, Amtrak, Greyhound, VISTA and future rail service.
5. **Regional bus service-** Combine existing transit services into one regional bus service managed by a regional authority. Respondents said this would increase the effectiveness of funding and service throughout Ventura County.
6. **Expansion-** Work to expand Gold Coast in the west and work on a regional system for the east County; integrate services with VISTA.
7. **VCOG/VCTC-** Merge VCOG and VCTC into a true regional planning and transportation agency; give the new agency power to create the Sustainable Communities Strategy required under SB 375.

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 - b. Currently, unincorporated areas outside of Ojai city limits do not have sufficient public transit options.
 - c. Northwest Port Hueneme and Hueneme Bay do not have mass transit especially for seniors who reside in that region.

- d. Improve transit west of Victoria Avenue, beach communities, and Oxnard Transportation Center.
 - e. No public transit from Simi Valley to Oxnard.
 - f. Bus service is lacking in Port Hueneme, Thousand Oaks, and Camarillo.
 - g. Cal State Channel Islands buses are too large and limited to only a few of the campus roadways.
 - h. VISTA is the only option from Ventura to Santa Barbara.
 - i. Increased daytime/evening and night connections with VISTA Coastal Express.
2. **Dial-A-Ride programs-** Protect transportation options for the aging and disabled population who depend on dial-a-ride and paratransit programs to travel throughout Ventura County.
 3. **Metrolink-** Expand Metrolink service in Ventura County by providing a station in downtown Ventura and Thousand Oaks.
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Funding

The general consensus is that there is not enough funding on both the local and regional levels and there is an ongoing struggle to find resources to fund projects. Cities are faced with difficult challenges when prioritizing projects based on limited federal financial support. Furthermore, Ventura County lacks funding for both capital projects and ongoing maintenance and operations.

Potential Tax Measure

While more than half of those that responded at the VCOG meeting said that their constituents would not support a tax measure devoted to transportation infrastructure, more than 60% of the attendees from the community workshops said they would support a tax measure.

V. Key Findings from Elected Officials

One-on-one interviews were conducted with 16 elected officials about their perspectives on the transportation needs of the County. The most important issues with regard to the current and future transportation needs for Ventura County were (in order of prevalence):

1. Frequency of transit thereby reducing headways.
2. Connectivity between east and west Ventura County.
3. Accessibility to transit via more strategically based bus stops and increasing weekend/evening service.
4. Service deficiencies throughout Ventura County especially in Santa Paula, Fillmore and Ojai.
5. Lack of funding throughout Ventura County creating transportation challenges on both the local and regional level; however, participants largely agreeing that constituents would not support a tax measure to increase funding.