

FY 18-19 Transit Needs Assessment

Ventura County
Transportation Commission



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Chapter 1: Introduction – What is the Ventura County Transportation Commission?

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) is the State-designated regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) for Ventura County. In this role, VCTC is responsible for overseeing how federal and state monies for transportation are spent and VCTC is responsible for developing various transportation plans that identify the region’s mobility options and priorities. VCTC is also the State-designated County Transportation Commission, carrying the responsibility of designating how local sales taxes are used for transportation. In addition, VCTC provides intercity bus service throughout the County and VCTC Intercity Transit is the second largest transit operator in the County after the Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD).

Chapter 2: What is the Unmet Transit Needs Process?

The California State Transportation Development Act (TDA), which was passed in 1971, provides a major source of funding for local transit, bicycle/pedestrian and street projects. The legislation, as amended, authorizes the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) to administer the local TDA process and oversee regulatory and fiscal compliance.

The California TDA provides two major sources of annual funding for public transportation—the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) and the State Transit Assistance fund (STA). The Ventura County Transportation Commission, as the RTPA for the Ventura region, administers the TDA within the region, allocating TDA funds to eligible claimants (the cities, the County, and transit operators) within its jurisdiction.

Each year, VCTC staff facilitates an annual transit needs assessment to determine if there are any areas in the County where populations of less than 100,000 are not served by public transit to meet their daily transportation needs. The areas in Ventura County with populations under the aforementioned threshold include City of Camarillo, City of Moorpark, City of Fillmore, and City of Santa Paula. To complete this process, VCTC adopts definitions of an “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” criteria to determine if service requests collected during this process can be met by local transit operators or not.

What is an Unmet Transit Need?

The Commission approved a definition of unmet transit needs in 2014 which was expanded to give specific examples of what are or are not transit needs under the TDA, which is admittedly a narrower definition than might be assumed by the general public. Also, the definition quantifies what the threshold is for “substantial” community support, (i.e., 15 requests from the general public and/or 10 requests for service for transit-challenged persons). The Definition is as follows:

UNMET TRANSIT NEED

Public transportation services identified by the public with sufficient broad-based community support that have not been funded or implemented.

Unmet transit needs identified in a government-approved plan that meet the definition of an unmet transit need.

Sufficient broad-based community support means that persons who will likely use the service on a routine basis demonstrate support: at least 15 requests for general public service and 10 requests for disabled service.

An Unmet Transit Need Includes:

- *Public transit services not currently provided to reach employment, medical assistance, shop for food or clothing, to obtain social services such as health care, county welfare programs and education programs. Service must be needed by and benefit the general public.*
- *Service expansions including new routes, significant modifications to existing routes, and major increases in service hours and frequency*

An Unmet Transit Need Excludes:

- *Operational changes such as minor route changes, bus stop changes, or changes in schedule*
- *Requests for extended hours or days of service*
- *Service for groups or individuals that is not needed by or will not benefit the general public*
- *Comments about vehicles, facilities, driver performance and transit organizational structure*
- *Requests for better coordination*
- *Requests for reduced fares and changes to fare restrictions*
- *Improvements funded or scheduled for implementation in the following year*
- *Future transportation needs*
- *Duplication or replacement of existing service*

What is “Reasonable to Meet”?

Once a service request is received, it is further evaluated to determine how feasible it is for the transit operator to expand service. Figure 1 illustrates the criteria adopted by the Commission to evaluate the feasibility of requests to expand or significantly change service.

Outcome	Definitions	Measures & Criteria
Equity	The proposed service will not cause reductions in existing transit services that have an equal or higher priority	Measures: Vehicle revenue service hours and revenue service miles. Criteria: Transit vehicle service hours and miles will not be reduced on existing routes to fund the proposed service

Outcome	Definitions	Measures & Criteria
Timing	The proposed service is in response to an existing rather than future transit need	Criteria: Same as definition that proposed service is in response to an existing rather than future transit need; based on public input
Feasibility	The proposed service can be provided with the existing fleet or under contract to a private provider	Measure: Vehicle spare ratio: Transit system must be able to maintain FTA's spare ratio requirement of 20% (buses in peak service divided by the total bus fleet cannot fall below 20%). If less than 20%, can additional buses be obtained (purchased or leased) or can service be provided under contract to a private provider?
Feasibility	There are adequate roadways to safely accommodate transit vehicles	Measure & Criteria: Route inspection to determine adequacy of infrastructure to accommodate transit vehicles and passengers.
Cost Effectiveness	The proposed service will not unduly affect the operator's ability to maintain the required passenger fare ratio for its system as a whole	Measure: Total estimate annual passenger fare revenue divided by total annual operating cost (the entire service including the proposed service) Criteria: fare revenue/operating cost cannot fall below the operator's required passenger fare ratio.
Cost Effectiveness	The proposed service will meet the scheduled passenger fare ratio standards described in Appendix A	Measures and criteria in Appendix A.
Service Effectiveness	Estimated passengers per hour for the proposed service will not be less than the system-wide average after three years.	Measure: Passengers per hour. Criteria: Projected passengers per hour for the proposed service is not less than 70% of the system-wide average (without the proposed service) at the end of 12 month of service, 85% at the end of 24 months of service, and 100% at the end of 36 months of service.

Chapter 3: Description of TDA-Funded Transit Providers Serving Populations Less than 100,000

VCTC Intercity Transit

The Ventura County Transportation Commission operates VCTC Intercity, an inter-city bus network that operates primarily within Ventura County, with service also extending into Santa Barbara and Los Angeles Counties. VCTC Intercity currently operates eight fixed routes that provide inter-city service between Los Angeles, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, Oxnard, California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI), Piru, Fillmore, Santa Paula, Ventura, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and Goleta.

Valley Express Transit

Valley Express Transit serves the City of Santa Paula, City of Fillmore, and the unincorporated area of Piru. Valley Express consists of two community circulators, within the cities of Santa Paula and Fillmore, as well as a shuttle service connecting the community of Piru with the city of Fillmore. During the school year, Valley Express also operates additional tripper service. The Valley Express fixed route service was implemented in March 2015 with service modifications implemented in January 2016. Each route is scheduled to make timed connections with VCTC Intercity Route 126.

Valley Express also provides demand-response service for the general public anywhere in the Valley Express service area and intercity trips are available via transfer. Valley Express service is managed and administered by VCTC.

Moorpark City Transit

Moorpark City Transit operates two fixed routes with service Monday through Friday. The routes are within the city and run approximately every hour. Moorpark City Transit also provides senior DAR and ADA paratransit service Monday through Friday. The City of Moorpark contracts with Thousand Oaks to provide DAR services.

Camarillo Area Transit

Camarillo Area Transit (CAT) operates one fixed route and one trolley within the City of Camarillo. The fixed route runs hourly Monday through Friday and the trolley runs seven days a week with service every half an hour. CAT also offers general public DAR service every day of the week, but it does not include school trips.

Metrolink Commuter Rail

Metrolink operates 16 weekday trains through Ventura County. Although Metrolink is a regional commuter rail service provider serving the five-county Southern California region including Ventura County, VCTC is a member agency which contributes TDA LTF funding to operate the Ventura County line. The Ventura County Line serves five stations including East Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Moorpark, and Simi Valley; plus seven stations in Los Angeles County. Requests for expanded Metrolink service were included in this analysis because of its service to cities with populations of less than 100,000.

Chapter 4: Public Input

For FY 18-19, the public comment period for the annual process was held from December 21 – February 28, 2018, though any comments received throughout the year (before the public comment period) were included.

VCTC collected public input online, over the phone and in person. VCTC hosted an online survey where nearly 160 surveys were collected. A social media campaign was conducted that reached over 20,000 people, including over 8,000 Spanish speaking individuals. Leading to a significant number of comments received through Facebook, email/website, Instagram and over the phone and a 140% increase in public comments since social media advertising was introduced. VCTC also conducted three community meetings (in Santa Paula, Camarillo and Moorpark) and held two public hearings. Articles and/or public notices were printed in the VC Star, Acorn, Santa Paula Times and Vida.

A summary of the public feedback collected about transit needs is discussed in following chapter.

Following the public hearing, the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee and Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC/SSTAC) and reviewed the public feedback and draft findings during their regular March meeting. As no requests reached the 15 comment threshold for general public service or 10 requests for disabled service, the recommendation was that there were no Unmet Transit Needs which was approved by the CTAC/SSTAC .

Chapter 5: Transportation Needs Assessment & Findings

Unmet Transit Needs Analysis

Throughout the year and during the public comment period, VCTC received about 180 comments through emails, letters, and phone calls in addition to the surveys and public comments that were submitted at the transportation forums. Many of the comments received were general comments/complaints about existing bus service, or operational in nature (ex. need for additional frequency or later service, route modifications, additional bus stops, etc). Comments of this nature and ones regarding service areas that are not applicable to the Unmet Transit Needs process were not considered but were forwarded to the appropriate transit operator for a response.

Comments regarding an expressed demand for new service in the applicable cities were screened to determine if the request for service met the definition of an unmet need using the Commission's adopted criteria. The number of comments on any one issue did not meet or exceed the 15-comment threshold for fixed route service or 10-comment threshold for dial-a-ride service and therefore were not further screened to determine if the need was reasonable to meet.

However, as these and all comments are essential to improving public transit in Ventura County, comments that had decent support and have been brought up over the years taken into consideration for future planning purposes. While not at a level to be defined as an Unmet Transit Need, the most frequent comments received were in the following areas:

- Connectivity between the Ventura and the Heritage Valley area to Santa Clarita/Valencia
- Service to the Camarillo Airport area
- Additional service and routes in Camarillo
- Connectivity between Fillmore – Moorpark

Demand expressed for some of these service expansions has been limited and in this case staff is recommending continued monitoring of the ridership demand before pursuing extensive analysis of cost-effectiveness. There has been repetitive demand expressed over the last few years regarding service to, from, and throughout Camarillo, Fillmore-Moorpark, and Ventura-Heritage Valley-Santa Clarita, therefore staff recommends that these services in particular are analyzed for feasibility in the future.

The most frequent comments that are not applicable to the Unmet Transit Needs process but are nonetheless valuable for the operators are the following:

- More frequency on numerous routes and services
- Schedule adjustments

- Later service
- Improved service to LA county
- Additional service in the GCTD service area

All comments submitted are included in Appendix A, which has all comments received that could potentially be considered an Unmet Transit Need if support is increased and Appendix B, which includes all other comments received through the process.

Conclusion

There were a number of comments received that VCTC evaluated under the definition of an Unmet Transit Need in terms of public service not provided or service that currently exists but would require significant route or frequency expansion. However, the service requests received did not meet the criteria for sufficient broad-based community support (at least 15 requests for general public service and 10 requests for disabled service). Additionally, due to operational constraints on bus fleet size, spare ratio, and operational cost effectiveness it would not be feasible to expand beyond the existing service. VCTC continues to coordinate with the transit operators and partners to work towards improved transit service including connectivity and transferability for cross-county travel.

The Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD), City of Ojai, City of Simi Valley, and the City of Thousand Oaks do not utilize or claim TDA Article 8 funds for non-transit purposes and their service is not subject to the Unmet Transit Needs process. However, these transit providers receive comments about their service through this process and staff takes all feedback received into consideration for future planning purposes. All comments VCTC records through this process that relate to these service areas are forwarded to their staff for review.

Although the comments received may not meet the “Unmet Transit Needs” and “reasonable to meet definitions,” VCTC and other transit operators in Ventura County, take these comments and all public input received into consideration in their regional transit planning efforts. VCTC and the County’s transit operators thank the public for their participation in this process.