



AGENDA

CITIZEN'S TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE/ SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (CTAC/SSTAC)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2021 -- 1:30 PM

The meeting will be held via conference call
(712) 775-7270, Access code 636565#

In light of Governor Newsom's State of Emergency declaration regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and in accordance with Executive Order N-29-20 and the Guidance for Gatherings issued by the California Department of Public Health commissioners will participate in the meeting from individual remote locations, which is in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting remotely.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**
- 4. APPROVAL OF 9/8/20 MEETING SUMMARY – PG. 3**
- 5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**
- 6. TRANSIT RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**
 - **Receive an update on the Response of Public Transit in Ventura County to the COVID-19 pandemic. Martin R. Erickson, Director of Public Transit**
- 7. UPDATE ON UNMET NEEDS PROCESS (Verbal Update)**
- 8. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**
- 9. COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS**
- 10. ADJOURN TO APRIL 12, 2021**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Government Code Section 54954.2, if special assistance is needed to participate in a Commission meeting, please contact the Clerk of the Board at (805) 642-1591 ext 101. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to meeting time will assist staff in assuring that reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility at the meeting.



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MEETING SUMMARY

**CITIZEN'S TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE/
SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (CTAC/SSTAC)**

Tuesday, September 8, 2020 -- 1:30 PM

Conference Call

(712) 775-7270, Access code 636565#

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. SELF INTRODUCTIONS

Members Present:

Miranda Patton
Marissa Rodriguez
Chera Minkler
Susan Leech
Todd Oberson
Chaise Rasheed
Victor Kamhi
Scott Farrenkopf
Mike Culver
Sandra Aldana

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA - None

4. APPROVAL OF 1/14/20 MEETING SUMMARY – PG. 3

Mike Culver made a motion to approve the summary. The motion was seconded by Vic Kamhi and passed, with Scott Farrenkopf abstaining.

5. FISCAL YEAR 2021-22 TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT ACT (TDA) UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS (UTN) SCHEDULE, PROCEDURES AND DEFINITIONS

Jeni Eddington presented the FY 2020-2021 calendar and definitions to the committee. Mike Culver made a motion to approve the summary. The motion was seconded by Vic Kamhi and passed.

6. UPDATE ON COVID-19 EFFECTS ON TRANSIT



January 12, 2021

**MEMO TO: CITIZEN'S TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE/SOCIAL SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (CTAC/SSTAC)**

FROM: MARTIN R. ERICKSON, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

SUBJECT: TRANSIT RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

RECOMMENDATION:

- Receive a presentation on the Response of Public Transit in Ventura County to the COVID-19 pandemic

BACKGROUND:

COVID-19 has created an unparalleled worldwide impact on public transit operations, finances, and ridership. Nationally, transit operations in our largest metropolitan areas are facing significant challenges to keeping their systems functioning, despite the unprecedented federal operating assistance through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. In a medium-sized transit community like Ventura County, transit has also been significantly affected. All of Ventura County's nine transit operators experienced significant drops in ridership when the pandemic began in March, ranging from 60% to 85%. Now, some ten months later, ridership has recovered slightly but is nowhere close to the pre-pandemic levels. The drop in rail ridership (on Metrolink and Amtrak) has been even more acute and sustained.

DISCUSSION:

Ventura County's transit response to the pandemic has centered on the safety of the transit customer and employees. VCTC took steps to ensure operators and passengers wore masks and every effort was taken to ensure as safe a transit trip as possible for those who needed to make the "essential" trip. At the outset of the pandemic in March 2020, VCTC assumed a coordinating role in the pandemic response. Serving on the Emergency Operations (EOC) Transportation seat, VCTC has played a coordinating role in the recent fires and other emergency events. Our actions are also guided by the recently adopted Ventura County Transportation Emergency Preparedness Plan (TEPP).

In March VCTC initiated daily COVID-19 operations calls with all the transit operators which lasted throughout the month, and then became weekly calls (which are still on-going) since April. Looking back on the last ten months, these operations calls have played an important role keeping each operator informed on the pandemic development and facilitating the implementation of consistent mask policies, barrier installation, and the collective decision to suspend fare payment to reduce "touch points" and allow rear door boarding on most buses, and on VCTC buses, boardings which occurred once the driver exited the bus first. VCTC made a decision early on to provide masks to passengers who did not have one, even

before the State mask mandate. While there is no way of knowing for certain, it seems these collective actions helped minimize the spread of the virus among the transit operations staff to very low levels. As of this writing, only five staff members from VCTC's contract operators RATP Dev and MV have tested positive. A confirmation of the efficacy of these policies and procedures to reduce transmission of the virus was confirmed through VCTC's inclusion in the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Health and Safety Commitments Program Seal which recognized a series of activities to reduce the transmission of the virus in public transit. VCTC was one of the first agencies to participate in the program and utilize the four core categories of responsibilities from APTA which are:

- Following public health guidelines from official sources
- Protecting each other by requiring face coverings and other protection
- Keeping passengers informed and empowered to choose the safest times and routes to ride
- Putting health first by requiring riders and employees to avoid public transit if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or feel ill

From a financial perspective, the transit challenges are still significant in Ventura County, but the outlook has improved since March. There are two main sources of local transit funding: funding derived from the state sales tax generated in Ventura County (Local Transportation Fund, LTF), and from a formula share of the state sales tax on diesel fuel (State Transit Assistance, STA). Estimates in March pointed to a precipitous drop of up to 30% in sales tax revenue, and a drop in the estimated revenues from the tax on diesel fuel. More recent estimates indicate that the sales tax drop is within the 10% range, and revenue from the sales tax on diesel fuel is only estimated to be down slightly from prior year revenue. While this is still of concern, it is a generally positive piece of news coming out of the pandemic and points to underlying resilience in the economy.

In light of the foreseeable continuation for remote work at major employers and virtual attendance at colleges and universities, VCTC Intercity and Valley Express services projected fare revenues were preemptively adjusted for Fiscal Year 2020/2021 to be approximately one third and one half, respectively, of what farebox revenues would be in a "normal year" given the decline in ridership. VCTC also reduced VCTC Intercity service levels approximately 25% (after initially reducing service upwards of 35%), which has helped to contain costs while still providing services for essential trips and essential workers. Valley Express services were adjusted, including the suspension of school year "tripper routes". Critically, both services received additional funding through the CARES Act. VCTC Intercity has budgeted approximately \$4.2M in CARES Act revenues, and the Valley Express has approximately \$1.8M in CARES Act revenues.

At this time, VCTC Intercity is approximately 25% under budget. With current service levels, VCTC Intercity is trending to end the year 25-30% under budget. Similarly, the Valley Express bus service is trending below budget, with an approximate year-end savings of 15-20%. While, VCTC Intercity will utilize a mix of CARES Act, FTA 5307/5339 and STA, the Valley Express is primarily funded with CARES Act revenues, local revenues, and a small portion of FTA 5307. Fortunately, because of the CARES Act revenues and reduction in service costs, neither transit service is at risk of budgetary shortfalls due to the current or continued suspension of fare collection. Moreover, the following budget year (2021/2022) will likely benefit from funds originally programmed for Fiscal Year 2020/2021.

Even before the pandemic, transit in southern California was facing significant challenges with overall declining ridership and increasing costs. A 2018 Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) transportation study prepared by UCLA's Institute of Transportation Studies linked the significant growth in personal automobile ownership, facilitated by low-cost automobile financing, as a major reason why people were driving instead of taking the bus. To illustrate the point, the study noted that the from 1990 – 2000 the population of the six county Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region (which includes Ventura county) increased by 1.8M people, and 456,000 household vehicles (or roughly a 4-1 ratio of people to cars; however, from 2000 – 2015 the population grew by 2.3M people and 2.1M household vehicles (a nearly one to one ratio of people to cars).The study also indicated that Transportation Network

Companies (TNC's) such as Uber and Lyft also accounted for a smaller part of the shift. An equally concerning development for all of transit is the over-arching question of when transit riders will return to transit, and in what numbers they will return? There are significant impacts on overall mobility stemming from the pandemic ranging from the increase in tele-working (especially in certain industries) and its attendant impact on transit commuter travel, and also the effect that job losses have on transit riders.

The pandemic has also underscored systemic race and equity issues nationwide, and also for public transit which has historically served under-represented communities and communities of color. The initial infusion of CARES funding was critical in helping our transit operators weather the impacts of the pandemic. VCTC has broad discretion in determining how future federal funding is allocated. VCTC staff will continue to identify and advise the Commission on equity and access issues related to future federal public transit funding.

Moving forward VCTC and the County's transit operators will continue to focus on transit passenger and employee safety. VCTC will also continue its state advocacy toward making permanent the elimination of the financial penalty provisions of the state farebox recovery requirement for transit operators (currently in place for two years). The Commission is also undertaking a significant regional transit study, authorized by the Commission in September, the Transit Integration and Efficiency Study, which will build on previous efforts to make recommendations on how the delivery and quality of public transit can be improved in our region.