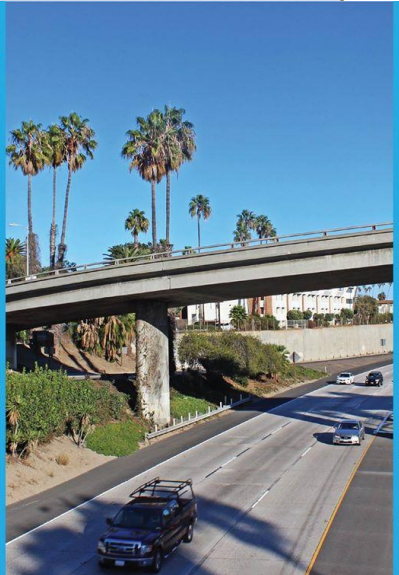


FY 21-22 Transit Needs Assessment

Ventura County
Transportation Commission



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Chapter 1: 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 is responsible for developing 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 Ventura County and VCTC Intercity is the second largest transit operator in the county after the Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD).

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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). As the RTPA for the Ventura region, VCTC administers the TDA within the region, allocating TDA funds to eligible claimants (the Cities, the County, and transit operators) within its jurisdiction.

Each year, pursuant to Senate Bill 203, 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 threshold include City of Camarillo, City of Moorpark, City of Fillmore, and City of Santa Paula. Additionally, on June 11, 2018, legislation allowed Thousand Oaks to spend TDA fund on streets and roads and they therefore now participate in the process as well. 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.

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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 and has broad-based support (meeting the 15 or 10 comment threshold), 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.

Figure 1 – ‘Reasonable to Meet’ Criteria

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
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 and 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: See 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 and Thousand Oaks

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.

Moorpark City Transit

Moorpark City Transit (MCT) 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.

Thousand Oaks Transit

Thousand Oaks Transit (TOT) operates four fixed routes with service Monday through Saturday. The routes are within the city and run approximately every hour to an hour and ten minutes. Thousand Oaks Transit also provides senior Dial-A-Ride and ADA paratransit service seven days a week.

Valley Express Bus & Dial-A-Ride

Valley Express Bus & Dial-A-Ride serves the communities of Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru and the unincorporated areas that make up the Heritage Valley. Fixed-route service consists of two community circulators, within the cities of Santa Paula and Fillmore, and a shuttle service connecting the community of Piru with the city of Fillmore. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Valley Express operated an additional tripper service. This service was suspended when local schools transitioned to a Distance Learning platform and will be reinstated as the need arises. The Valley Express Bus & Dial-A-Ride service was implemented in March 2015 with service modifications taking effect January 2016. Each route is scheduled to make timed connections with the VCTC Intercity Highway 126 line (Routes 60-62).

General Public Dial-A-Ride service is available within Fillmore, Santa Paula, Piru, and other unincorporated areas of the Heritage Valley. Seniors and ADA certified riders may use Dial-A-Ride to travel between Fillmore, Santa Paula, and Saticoy.

VCTC Intercity

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 five fixed lines that provide inter-city service between Los Angeles, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, Oxnard, California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI), Fillmore, Santa Paula, Ventura, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and Goleta.

Metrolink Commuter Rail

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Metrolink operated 16 weekday trains through Ventura County. However, the line is currently operating twelve trains on weekdays with two trains anticipated to begin running on Saturdays in June 2021. 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.

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Chapter 4: Public Input

The public comment period for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Unmet Transit Needs process was held between December 11, 2020 and February 12, 2021 with comments received prior to December 11th being included in this report.

Each year, VCTC uses a variety of channels to promote and solicit public comment for the Unmet Transit Needs process including an online survey, social media advertising, eblasts, community meetings, and the GOVCbus app. Public notices were also printed in the Ventura County Star and VIDA News.

This year, sixty-eight surveys were received which is comparable to previous years¹. VCTC hosted two county-wide virtual community meetings and a virtual public hearing where almost a dozen comments were received. Additional comments were received via email. Overall, 126 respondents provided 166 comments.

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¹ The FY21 response rate was .17% and the response rate for FY22 was .20% when comparing the number of surveys completed with the monthly ridership for the months of December and January.

Chapter 5: Transit Needs Assessment & Findings

Unmet Transit Needs Analysis

Throughout the year and during the public comment period, VCTC received 166 comments through the online survey, social media posts, email, and as public comments that were received at the virtual community meetings and Public Hearing. Many of the comments received were general comments/complaints about existing bus service, or operational in nature (ex., 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.

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 Transit Need using the Commission's adopted criteria. None of the requests met the 15-comment threshold for fixed route or the 10-comment threshold for dial-a-ride service and therefore were not further screened to determine if the need was reasonable to meet.

The 20-21 Unmet Needs process had two requests that met the 15-comment threshold; service to Santa Clarita from Fillmore and Santa Paula, and service between Fillmore and Moorpark. Service to Santa Clarita is not technically an Unmet Need as the request is for service into LA County. However, as this has been the most requested service improvement over the last several years, VCTC staff has endeavored to plan for a scenario to bring the service forward as a potential partnership with Santa Clarita Transit and the cities in the Heritage Valley. Fleet capacity and needs, route costs and route configuration are issues to be addressed as part of the planning process.

Additionally, there has been repeat demand expressed for several years regarding connectivity between the cities of Fillmore and Moorpark, including this year where it was the most frequent comment received during the public participation process. As with service to Santa Clarita, issues of fleet capacity and needs, route costs and route configuration will need to be addressed as part of the planning process. Planning for these service improvements have been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has resulted in significant service reductions and uncertain funding for transit. As transit agencies work to recover from the reduced ridership and revenue brought on by COVID-19, the priority is to reinstate service. VCTC staff intends to restart planning efforts for these routes after reduced transit service has been reinstated and the funding picture is clearer.

The most frequent comments that are not applicable to the Unmet Transit Needs process this year but are valuable for the operators are as follows:

- Expanded service to multiple Los Angeles County locations.
- Expanded service and increased service hours into Santa Barbara county.
- The reinstatement of pre-Coronavirus routes that were suspended.
- Countywide Sunday Service

All comments are essential to improving public transit in Ventura County. Comments that have decent support and have been brought up over the years are taken into consideration for future planning

purposes. All comments submitted are included in Appendices B and C. Appendix B includes all comments received that could potentially be considered an Unmet Transit Need if support is increased and Appendix C 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. This year, no requests met the 15-comment threshold, therefore there are no Unmet Needs.

All comments received through this process were forwarded to the operators, who take it into consideration for future planning purposes. VCTC and the operators continue to coordinate to work towards improved transit service including connectivity and transferability for cross-county travel, especially regarding service to Santa Clarita and between Fillmore and Moorpark.

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.