

# 1 PLAN PURPOSE

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC), functioning as the regional transportation planning agency in Ventura County, has commissioned the 2022 update of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (or Coordinated Plan). This plan is an update of the Coordinated Plan from fiscal year 2016/2017 and will examine changes in Ventura County's demographic and mobility landscape.

## BACKGROUND

Federal transit law requires projects selected to receive funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program are "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan," and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representations of the public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human service providers and other members of the public" utilizing transportation services.

The 2022 update to the Coordinated Plan depended on the participation from numerous organizations and individuals throughout the County. Highlights of the planning process included:

- **Input from nearly 100 representatives of transportation, health, and human services organizations** reached through interviews, affinity group discussions, and a stakeholder survey distributed online
- **Review of all relevant plans and studies since 2015**, including the FY 2016/2017 Coordinated Plan
- **Gaps and needs analysis particular to the critical Ventura County populations served by this Plan** (people with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes)

The planning process for the Coordinated Plan began in the latter half of 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic and when Governor Newsom's stay-at-home order was still in effect. Although public transit use continued to decline and people traveled less except for the most essential trips, the types of needs highlighted in this plan and the relative

urgency of these needs remained consistent throughout the planning process. It is still to be determined how these significant changes in travel patterns will impact transportation systems and transit use in the long-term. The region's priorities as reflected in the proposed strategies may shift as transportation providers begin to restore service.

## ABOUT VENTURA COUNTY

Ventura County is bounded by Los Angeles County to the southeast, Kern County to the north, Santa Barbara County to the northwest, and the Pacific Ocean to the southeast (Figure 1). It covers an area of over 1,800 square miles, approximately 53% of which is national forest land. Of the land area that is not national forest, more than half is agricultural. Most of the population lives in the southern portion of the county.

Figure 1 Ventura County



Ventura County is divided into east and west sides by the Conejo Grade, a segment of the U.S. 101 freeway that, along with State Route 118, connects cities within the Conejo Valley to Camarillo and cities on the Oxnard Plain. Cities in the Santa Clara River Valley in West Ventura County have lower median incomes than those in East Ventura County,

which are generally viewed as an extension of western Los Angeles County suburbs given its proximity.

Ventura County also includes four federally designated Urbanized Areas (UAs). Oxnard/Ventura and Thousand Oaks/Moorpark are categorized as large urban, with populations of over 200,000 people each. Simi Valley and Camarillo are categorized as small urban with populations of 50,000 to 200,000 people each. These locations are eligible for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula funding. The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) is the designated recipient of FTA section 5310 and Section 5307 apportionments for these four UAs.

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## 2 REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The following sections highlight the local characteristics and changes to Ventura County's demographic profile since the previous Coordinated Plan. Changing demographics change the transportation system—they can influence ridership, the provision of services and programs, and how future investments are made. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and other relevant planning documents, these sections focus on key population groups that are at the core of Coordinated Planning: older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, veterans, and youth.

### VENTURA COUNTY POPULATION FACTORS

Since the last Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, which was adopted in 2017, the County's population has increased by 1%—from 835,790 residents in 2014 to 847,263 residents in 2019. As shown in Figure 2, this trend is reflected across several of Ventura County's resident groups. Using U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015 to 2019 five-year estimate data as well as regional and statewide population and employment projection data, this Coordinated Plan focuses on the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.<sup>1</sup> As for an update to the 2017 Coordinated Plan, this Coordinated Plan also examines the needs of veterans and youth.

Today, a large portion of seniors (adults aged 65 and older) and people with disabilities live within Ventura County. Since the last plan, the portion of youth (aged 17 and under), people with low incomes (100% below the Federal Poverty Level), and veterans have decreased.

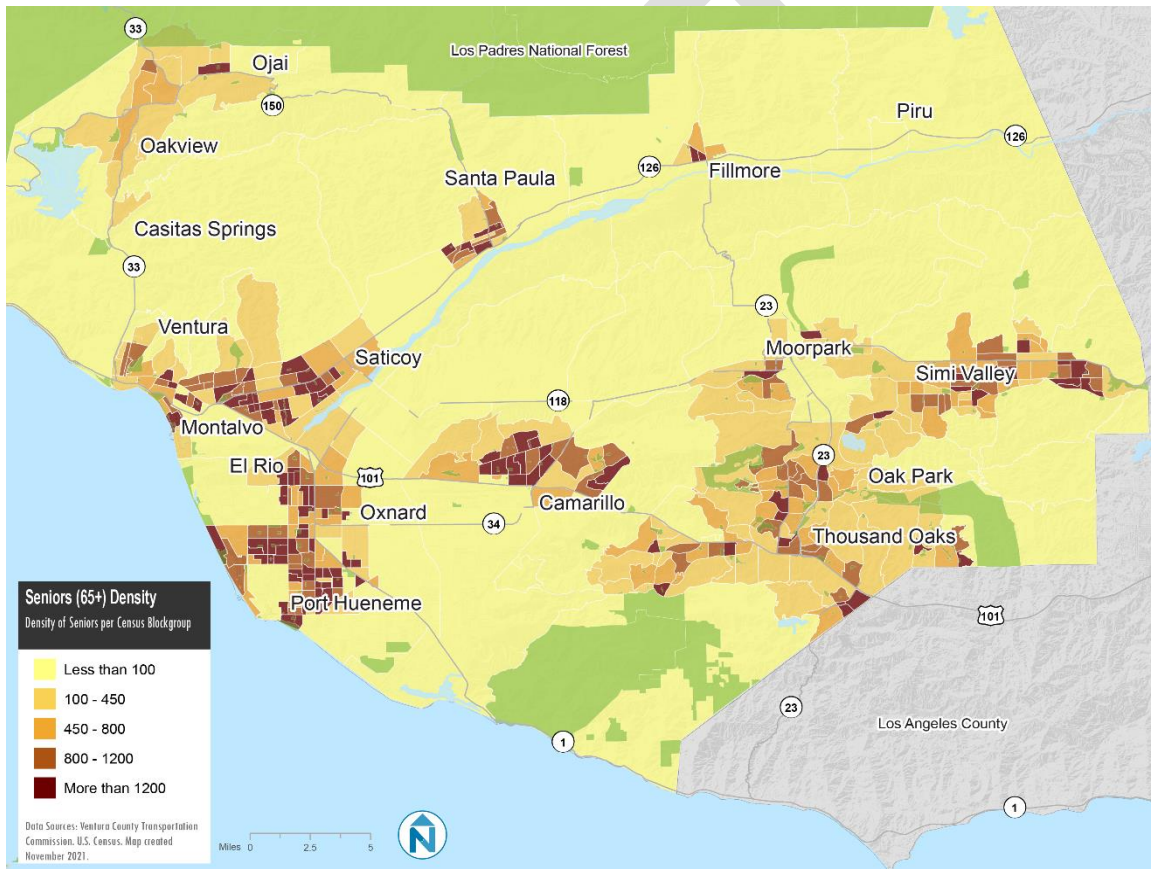
Figure 2 Ventura County Population Factors

Factors	2014	Percent of Total Population (2014)	2019	Percent of Total Population (2019)	Percent Change 2014 to 2019
Total Population	835,790	--	847,263	--	+1%
Persons age 65+	105,599	13%	127,628	15%	+21%
Persons age <17	208,063	25%	196,787	23%	-5%

<sup>1</sup> While estimates for 2020 are available, the five-year estimate data for an area is the most reliable Census data set because they have larger samples and small margins of error.

Factors	2014	Percent of Total Population (2014)	2019	Percent of Total Population (2019)	Percent Change 2014 to 2019
Low-Income (100% FPL)	91,912	11%	74,645	9%	-23%
Persons with Disabilities	83,872	10%	91,637	11%	+9%
Veterans	46,464	6%	39,781	5%	-14%

Figure 3 Density of Older Adults 65 and Over



## OLDER ADULTS

The median age of Ventura County's population in 2019 was 38.1, more than a year older than the county's median age in 2014 (36.9).<sup>2</sup> In comparison, the median age in Los Angeles County in 2019 was 36.5. Population projections, however, suggest Los Angeles County is aging at a faster rate than Ventura County.<sup>3</sup> As of 2019, adults over

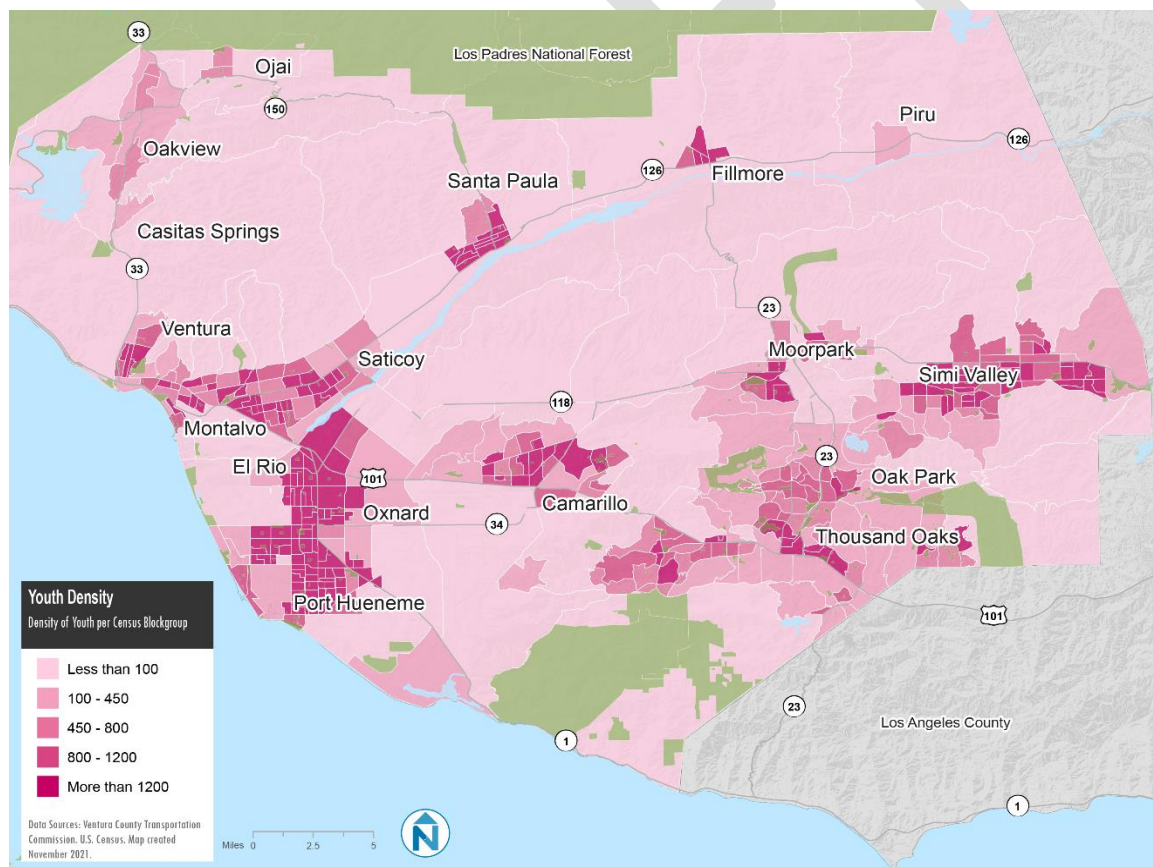
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table B01002: Median Age by Sex, 2019 5-Year Estimates

<sup>3</sup> California Department of Aging, *Facts About California's Elderly*, Accessed via [https://aging.cva.gov/Data\\_and\\_Reports/Facts\\_About\\_California's\\_Elderly/](https://aging.cva.gov/Data_and_Reports/Facts_About_California's_Elderly/)



65 make up 15% of the county's population, which is slightly above the percentage of senior residents within California as a whole (14%). Of those Ventura County residents over 65, 34% are over 70 years old. In addition, the proportion of seniors living with an independent living, ambulatory, or self-care difficulty (7%) has increased by 1% since the last plan.<sup>4</sup> As shown in (Figure 3), the highest densities of older adults are in west Ventura County in the Juanamaria, Serra, and Thille neighborhoods of Ventura; the Via Marina, Redwood, Bryce Canyon, and Blackstock neighborhoods of Oxnard; and in Camarillo between Las Posas Road and the U.S. 101 Freeway. Mobility will continue to be a challenge for seniors and transportation providers as a far greater proportion of the population loses their ability to drive. Studies have shown nearly 80% of older adults reside in suburban and rural communities and that nearly half of non-driving seniors stay home on any given day due to the lack of public transit options.<sup>5</sup> To support aging in place, services for seniors will need to increase at or ahead of the rate at which the senior population is growing in Ventura County.

**Figure 4 Density of Youth**



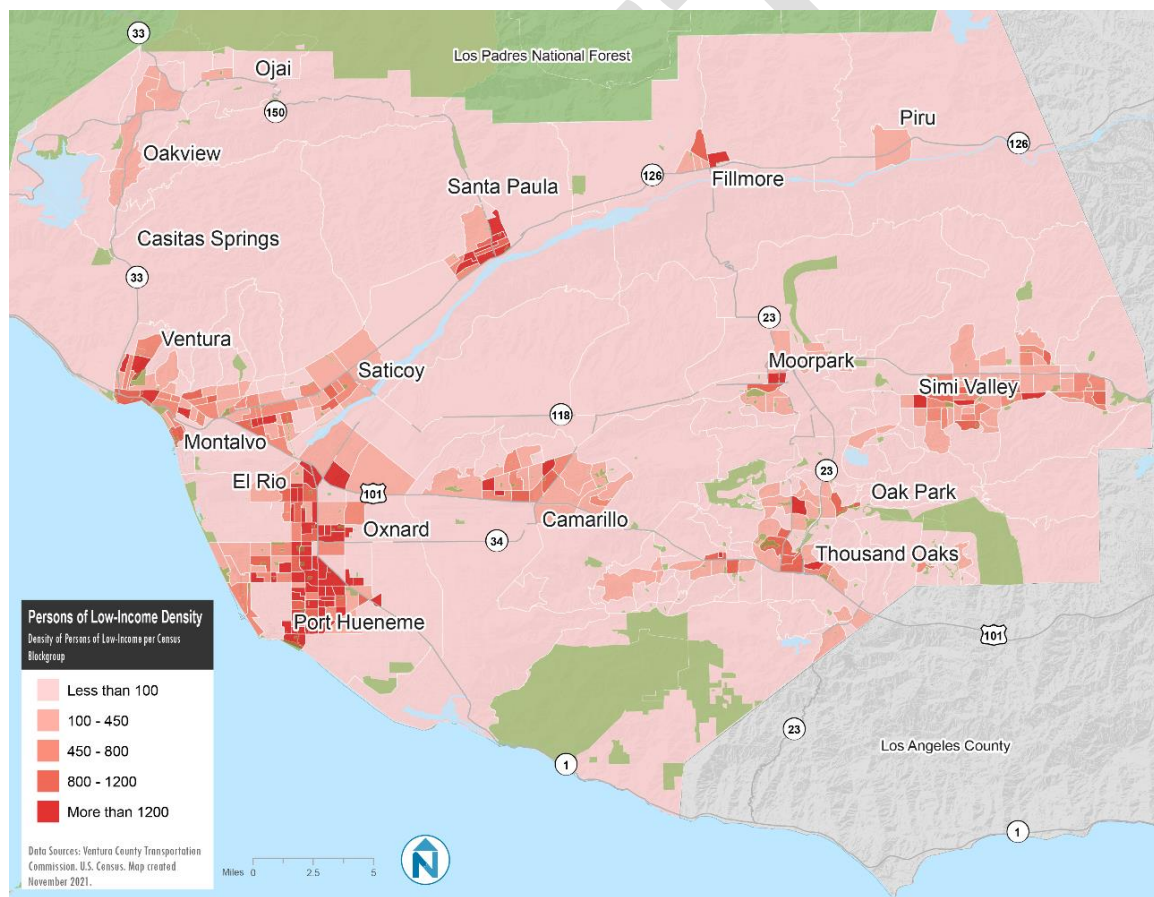
<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1810: Disability Characteristics, 2019 5-Year Estimates

<sup>5</sup> NRDC. *Stranded Seniors Need Public Transportation*. November 2012.

## YOUTH

Youth are defined in this plan as individuals aged 17 and younger. The youth population accounts for 23% of Ventura County's overall population but has decreased by 5% since the previous plan.<sup>6</sup> Youth living below the federal poverty line account for nearly 3% of the County's overall population, a slight decrease from the previous plan. Like older adults, high densities of youth in Ventura County reside throughout Central and Northwest Oxnard; south of U.S. 101 in the Arundell and Thille neighborhoods; and central Camarillo and neighborhoods east of State Route 34. Many youths also reside in Santa Paula, Fillmore, and east Simi Valley west of Santa Susana Pass State Park (Figure 4).

Figure 5 Density of Persons with Low Incomes



## PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOMES

The median household income in 2019 in Ventura County was \$88,131—higher than the overall statewide figure (\$75,235). Roughly 9% of Ventura County households have

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S0101: Age and Sex, 2019 5-Year Estimates

incomes below \$26,500,<sup>7</sup> which is lower than the 13% statewide rate. Of all workers in Ventura County at least 16 years old and whose incomes are 100% below the Federal Poverty Level, more than 70% drive alone to work. Although 43% of public transit commutes are taken by people with low incomes,<sup>8</sup> the majority still drive alone.<sup>9</sup> Public transit, however, continues to be a critical service to those with few travel options. The trend is reflective of what is observed across California cities—as more people across the income spectrum purchase and drive their own vehicles, transit use declines such that the average transit rider is poorer over time relative to a city's population as a whole.<sup>10</sup> People with low incomes live all throughout Ventura County, with many residing in Oxnard, Ventura, towns along the Santa Clara Valley, Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, and Simi Valley (Figure 5).

Since the previous plan, the number of low-income individuals in Ventura County decreased by 23%. This trend reflects changes observed in neighboring Los Angeles County, Santa Barbara County, and the state at large—across the same time span, the proportion of low-income residents in Los Angeles County decreased by 18% and in Santa Barbara County by 17%.<sup>11</sup> These reductions are likely attributed to expanded employment and wage growth in the past decade, as well as out-migration of people with low incomes due to high housing costs.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 100% of the 2021 Federal Poverty Level

<sup>8</sup> This plan defines low-income as 100% below the 2021 Federal Poverty Level.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S0802: Means of Transportation to Work by Selected Characteristics, 2019 5-Year Estimates. Of all workers in Ventura County at least 16 years old and whose incomes are 100% below the Federal Poverty Level, more than 70% drive alone to work.

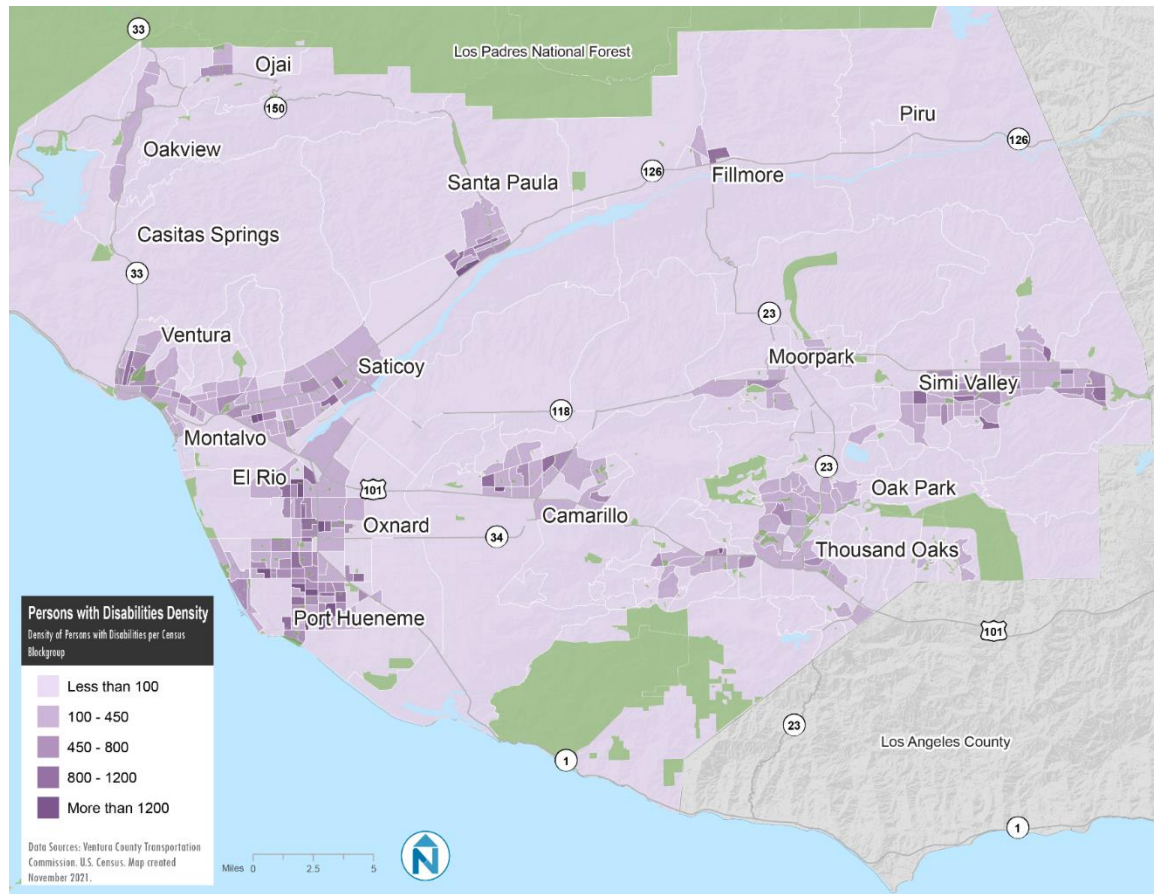
<sup>10</sup> Julene Paul and Brian D. Taylor, *Who lives in transit-friendly neighborhoods? An analysis of California neighborhoods over time*. June 2021.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table C17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months, 2019 and 2014 5-Year Estimates

<sup>12</sup> Los Angeles Times, *Capitol Journal: High taxes be damned, the rich keep moving to California*, March 2019



Figure 6 Density of Persons with Disabilities



## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The number of people living with a disability increased by 9% between 2014 and 2019. According to the U.S. Census, the most reported disability types in Ventura County include ambulatory difficult, followed by independent living and cognitive difficulties. High densities of persons with disabilities are in the Bryce Canyon and Blackstock neighborhoods of Oxnard, areas north of State Route 126 in Santa Paula, and east of Central Avenue in Fillmore (Figure 6).

## VETERANS

Like what was observed in the previous plan, the number of reported veterans in Ventura County continues to decline—between 2014 and 2019, the veteran population decreased by 14%. This downward trend is reflective of what is observed nationwide—between 2000 and 2018, the number of veterans in the United States declined by about a third, from around 26 million to 18 million.<sup>13</sup> As of 2019, there were an estimated

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census Bureau Releases New Report on Veterans, June 2020.

39,781 veterans living in Ventura County, 5% of which are living below the Federal Poverty Level and 28% are living with a disability.<sup>14</sup>

## POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

To begin understanding how demographic shifts impact the provision of transit services, this Coordinated Plan analyzed a variety of statewide and regional population and employment data projections.<sup>15</sup> Ventura County's population is projected to increase by 4.5% by 2040 to 885,628 residents<sup>16</sup> (Figure 12). This upward trajectory mirrors anticipated growth at the state level. Projections from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) suggests a 15% population increase by 2040 in unincorporated areas of the County.<sup>17</sup>

Older adults are expected to comprise an increasing share of the County's total population as Baby Boomers continue to age.<sup>18</sup> This is reflective of nationwide trends—in 2011, the oldest Baby Boomers turned 65 and every day, 10,000 more will cross that threshold, with steep increases expected until 2029. This significant shift is expected to level off over time, but not decline.<sup>19</sup>

The rise in older adults may have significant implications for the provision of public transit in the region. In addition, older adults with difficulties walking and those who are unable to drive are less likely to receive regular health check-ups, are less civically engaged, and more socially isolated compared to those who do not experience these mobility challenges.

Figure 7 Population Projections for Ventura County<sup>20</sup>

Factors	2014	2019	Percent Change 2014 to 2019	2030	Percent Change 2019 to 2030	2040	Percent Change 2019 to 2040
Total Population	835,790	847,263	+1%	872,856	+3%	885,628.	+4.5%

Employment projections and the magnitude of change vary by source: however, all sources suggest future job growth in the region. According to Applied Development Economics, employment projections in Ventura County estimate 412,300 jobs by 2040,

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S2101: Veteran Status, 2019 5-Year Estimates

<sup>15</sup> All data sources were published before the COVID-19 pandemic and do not reflect any possible effects on demographic trends.

<sup>16</sup> The State of California Department of Finance, P-2: County Population Projections (2010-2060), 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Ventura County 2040 General Plan, Ventura County, September 2020.

<sup>18</sup> The State of California Department of Finance, P-2: County Population Projections (2010-2060), 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Pew Research Center, *Baby Boomers Approach 65—Glumly*, December 20, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

a 31% increase from 2015.<sup>21</sup> Sectors with expected growth include education, health care, and other services. SCAG's projections estimate jobs in unincorporated areas will increase by 12% by 2045, with anticipated modest growth in leisure and hospitality and agriculture sectors (Figure 8).

Figure 8 2045 Population Projections by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	2016	2045	Percent Change 2016 to 2045	2045 Countywide Share
Camarillo city	32,700	37,500	+15%	+12%
Fillmore city	3,000	4,800	+60%	+2%
Moorpark city	11,300	15,000	+33%	+5%
Ojai city	5,600	5,800	+4%	+2%
Port Hueneme city	3,800	4,000	+5%	+1%
San Buenaventura (Ventura) city	60,800	64,500	+6%	+21%
Santa Paula city	7,800	11,000	+41%	+4%
Simi Valley city	46,700	53,800	+15%	+17%
Thousand Oaks city	70,100	80,000	+14%	+26%
Unincorporated Ventura County	31,800	36,900	+16%	+12%

Source: SCAG, Final Connect SoCal Demographics and Growth Forecast (2020)

Note: Jurisdictional-level population figures are rounded to the nearest 100.

## TRAVEL-TO-WORK CHARACTERISTICS

In 2019, Ventura County's population of working age adults over the age of 16 was 407,902, a 5% increase from 2014.<sup>22</sup> Most Ventura County's working age adults (79%) travel to work by car, truck, or van, a notable drop from 2014 estimates (89%) and greater than statewide estimates (73%). Ventura County workers carpool to work at a rate of 11%, which is slightly higher than state rates (10%).

Like the 2017 Coordinated Plan, the percentage of those taking public transportation to work in Ventura County is significantly lower when comparing to statewide rates. Around 1% of working age adults commute by public transit in Ventura County compared to 5% of working age adults in the state. While the overall number of public transportation commuters for Ventura County increased since the previous plan, the proportion of workers commuting by public transit decreased.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S0802: Means of Transportation to Work by Selected Characteristics, 2019 5-Year Estimates

## TRANSIT PROPENSITY AND ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

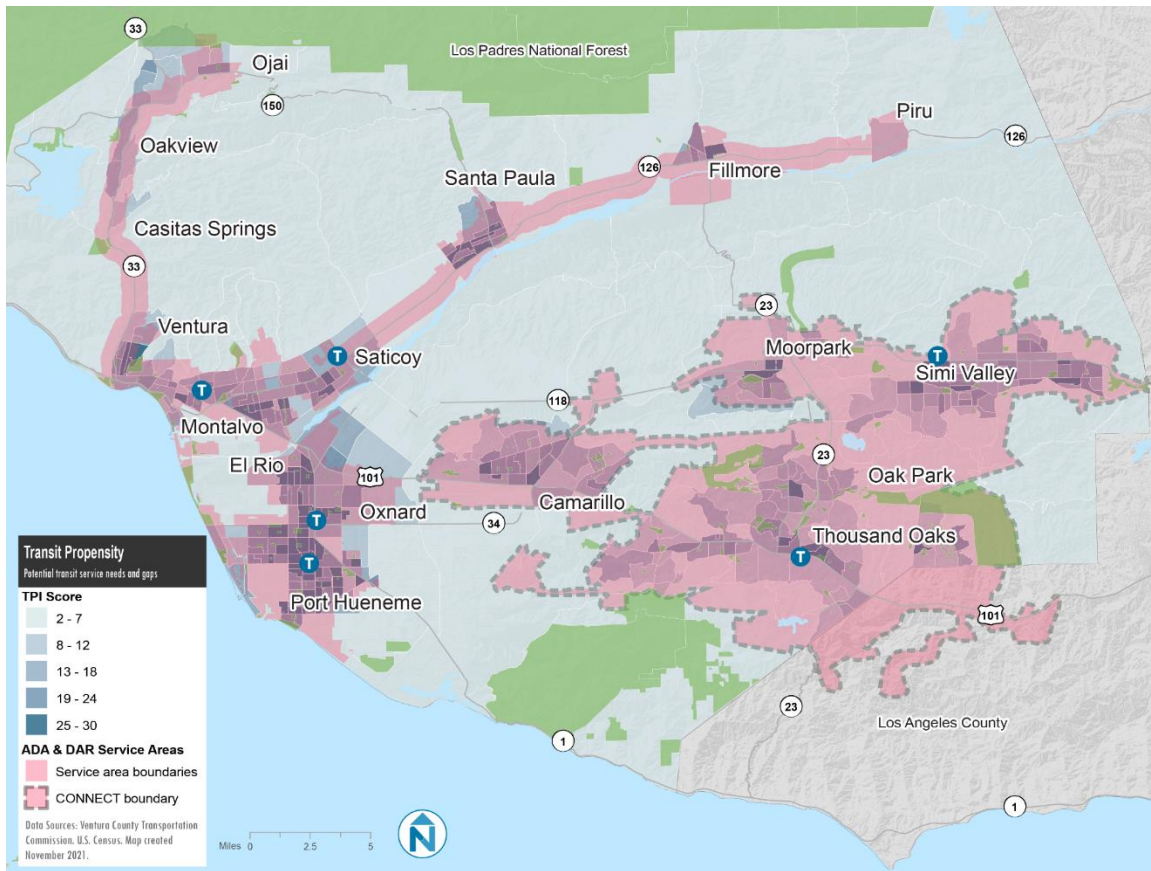
The following section identifies where Ventura County's transit coverage gaps and underserved areas are for older adults, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, veterans, and youth. It provides an overall view of areas in Ventura County where individuals who are likely to utilize public transit services live, while also highlighting where fixed-route and dial-a-ride services are provided. These findings are based on analysis of demographic data.

### Transit Propensity and Service

Figure 9 illustrates transit propensity for various population groups in specific parts of Ventura County. Transit propensity is a composite measure of the highest concentrations of potential riders for public transportation in the area. Areas in dark blue represent census block groups with higher transit propensity index scores, which indicate where high transit propensity groups tend to live. Areas where colors are blended illustrate where transit service is provided (pink overlay) in high transit propensity block groups. If a block group is dark blue and falls outside of where the transit service is provided, it means residents of that block group who have a high propensity for transit use are not being served by transit. Often, densely populated communities with people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), have low incomes, live with a disability, do not speak English as their primary language, and do not own a personal vehicle have a higher propensity for transit use and thus are more likely to ride the bus, use dial-a-ride, or use ADA paratransit.



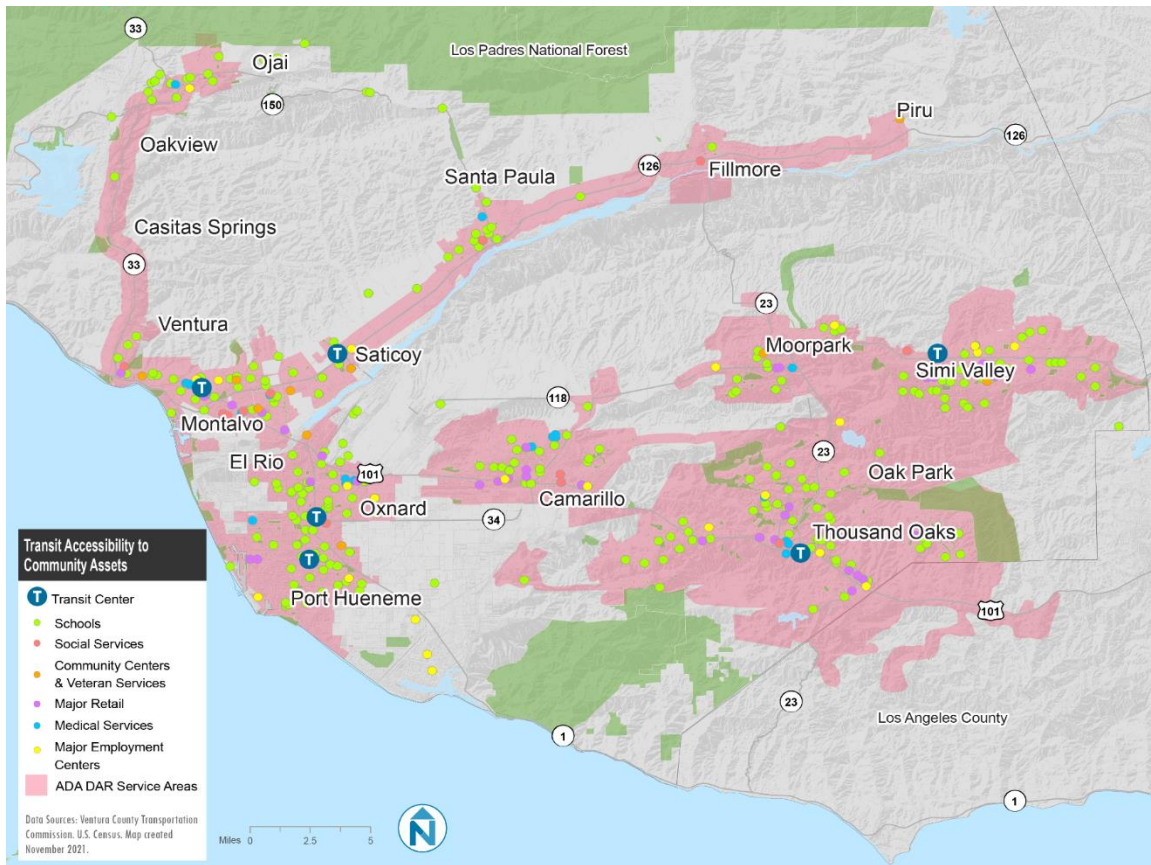
Figure 9 Transit Propensity



In Ventura County, people who are more likely to use transit live in more populated areas like the City of Ventura and the west side of Oxnard. High transit propensity groups in more isolated parts of the county are located between State Route 126 and West Santa Paula Street and along the railroad tracks and Highway 150 in Santa Paula. In Simi Valley, these populations are found along East Los Angeles Avenue.

Most high transit propensity groups in Ventura County have access to dial-a-ride services. Areas that fall outside of a dial-a-ride service area include the El Rio and Nyland Acres neighborhoods in Oxnard and along Ventura Avenue, where much of the neighborhood is agricultural. Residents with a high propensity for transit use in neighborhoods along State Route 126 are served by Valley Express ADA and paratransit.

Figure 10 Transit Accessibility to Social Services – Dial-a-Ride



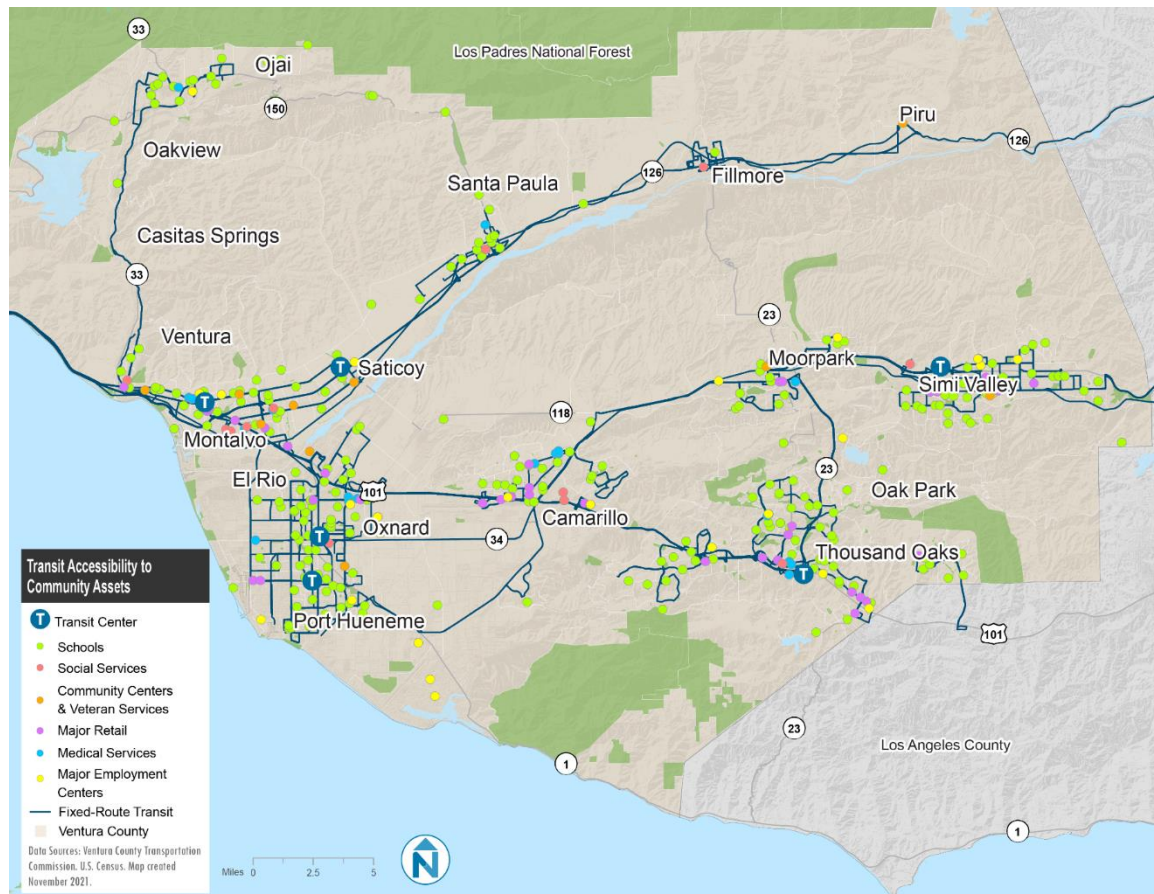
The county's accessibility to community amenities via dial-a-ride is illustrated in (Figure 10). Community amenities include the following:

- **Schools:** K-12 schools and colleges
- **Social Services:** County human services agencies, social service agencies, children and family services, and non-profit organizations providing social services and family health services
- **Community Centers and Veteran Services:** Local community centers and veteran service offices
- **Major Retail:** Large retail centers that include shopping centers, plazas, malls, and town squares
- **Medical Services:** Hospitals, medical centers, dialysis centers, and Kaiser Permanente facilities
- **Major Employment Centers:** Major employment centers as identified by the State of California's Employment Development Department

People can access human and social service agencies, community centers, Veteran services, major retail, and medical centers throughout the county via dial-a-ride services as many of these services are centrally located. Several schools located in more remote,

agricultural areas near Ojai, in Santa Paula along State Route 150, and in Saticoy north of State Route 126, as well as major employment centers near Port Hueneme (Naval Air Station Point Mugu) fall outside of the coverage area for dial-a-ride services.

**Figure 11 Transit Accessibility to Social Services – Fixed-Route Transit**



Several K-12 schools in the northern and central areas of Ventura County in Ojai, in Santa Paula along State Route 150 and north of State Route 126, in northwest Camarillo, and in Oak Park east of State Route 23 are not well-served by fixed-route transit service (Figure 11). Some major employment centers<sup>23</sup> near Port Hueneme, Oxnard, and Oak Park are also not easily accessible by fixed-route transit service.

<sup>23</sup> Source: The State of California's Employment Development Department (2021).



### 3 INVENTORY OF TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

Important to the Coordinated Plan is cataloging and assessing available transportation resources (services, providers, and funding). The intent of this inventory is to increase awareness of transportation resources available in Ventura County and to identify duplicative services, existing coordination efforts, and opportunities to expand coordination.

#### PUBLIC SYSTEMS

Ventura County's public transit systems include fixed-route bus service, demand response dial-a-ride, and regional rail.

#### Public Fixed-Route Services

Public transit agencies providing fixed-route service operate according to published scheduled routes. There are nine fixed-route transit operators based in Ventura County, which are described below (Figure 12 and Figure 12). Detailed information on fares and ADA paratransit eligibility requirements are provided in the Appendix.

Figure 12 Summary Table of Fixed-Route Public Transit Service

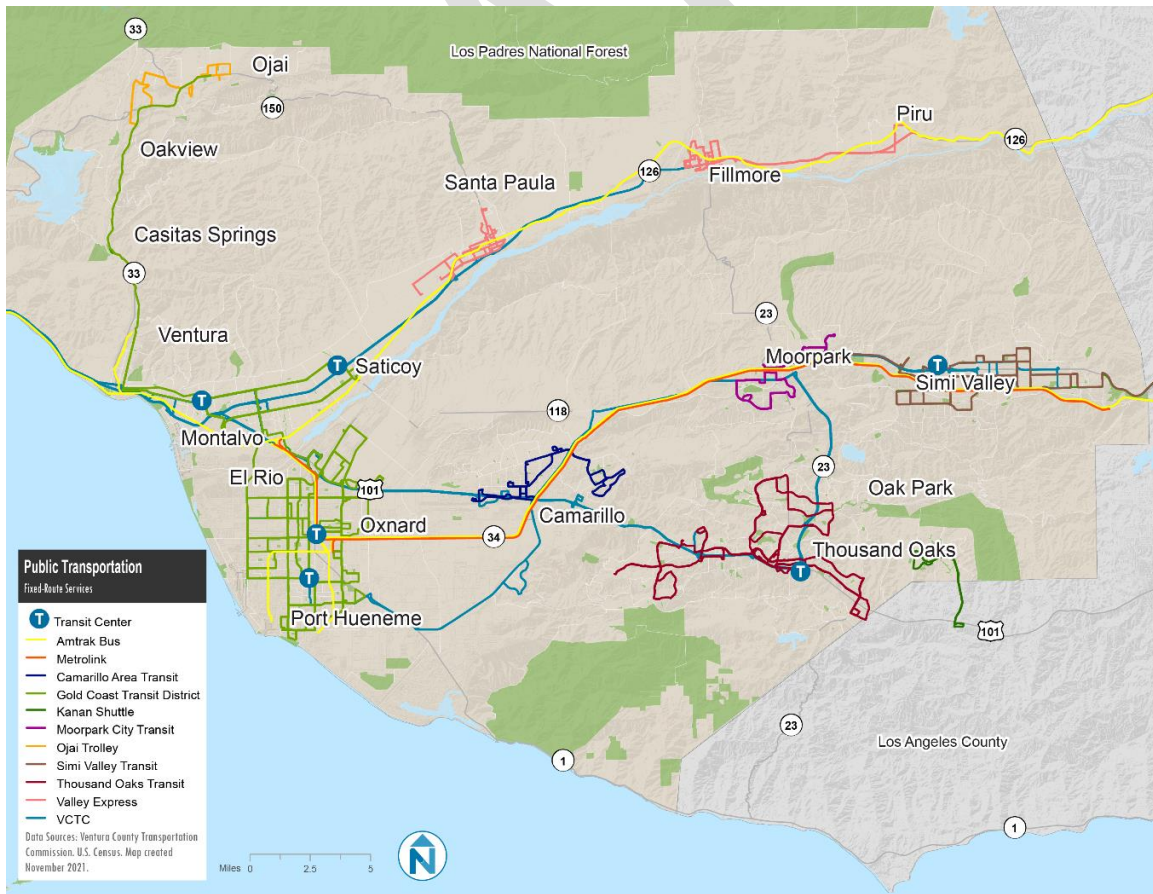
Providers	Hours of Operation	Service Area
<b>Camarillo Area Transit (CAT) Fixed-route Service</b>	Weekdays: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Leisure Village, the Camarillo Library, Pleasant Valley Hospital, and the Camarillo Community Center
<b>Camarillo Area Transit (CAT) Trolley Service</b>	Sun–Thurs: 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Fri–Sat: 10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.	Metrolink, Camarillo Plaza, Premium Outlets Promenade, Old Town, and Dizdar Park
<b>Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD) Fixed-route Service</b>	Weekdays: 4:45 a.m. - 10:14 p.m. Weekends: 5:21 a.m. - 10:01 p.m.	Oxnard, Ojai, Port Hueneme, Ventura, and unincorporated areas of Ventura County
<b>Kanan Shuttle</b>	Weekdays: 7:00 a.m. - 5:40 p.m.	Agoura Hills and Oak Park, serving schools and residential neighborhoods near Kanan Road
<b>Moorpark City Transit</b>	Weekdays: 6:15 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Moorpark City Hall and the Library, the Metrolink Station, Moorpark College, and the Career Education Center



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Ventura County Transportation Commission

Providers	Hours of Operation	Service Area
<b>Ojai Trolley</b>	Weekdays: 6:36 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. Weekends: 7:00 a.m. - 5:57 p.m.	Minors Oaks, Mira Monte, and the City of Ojai
<b>Simi Valley Transit (SVT) Fixed-route Service</b>	Weekdays: 5:00 a.m. - 8:09 p.m. Saturdays: 5:30 a.m. - 8:16 p.m.	Simi Valley Hospital, Royal High School, and Simi Valley Metrolink
<b>Thousand Oaks Transit (TOT) Fixed-route Service</b>	Weekdays: 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Saturdays: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Thousand Oaks, Newbury Park, and surrounding areas. Seasonal route to Zuma Beach in Malibu also provided.
<b>Valley Express Transit Fixed-route Service</b>	Weekdays: 6:15 a.m. - 7:45 p.m. Weekends: 8:00 a.m. - 5:45 p.m.	Heritage Valley
<b>VCTC Intercity Transit Fixed-route Service</b>	Weekdays: 4:30 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. Weekends: 6:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Locations throughout and within neighboring areas of Ventura County

**Figure 13 Ventura County Fixed-Route Services**



## Camarillo Area Transit (CAT)

The City of Camarillo operates CAT, which provides fixed-route and general purpose and paratransit dial-a-ride service in the city of Camarillo. Fixed-route service operates between 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays with one-hour headways. Destinations include Leisure Village, the Camarillo Library, Pleasant Valley Hospital, and the Camarillo Community Center. The city also operates a trolley service connecting Metrolink to restaurants and retail destinations. The trolley operates Sunday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., departing every half hour. Trolley destinations include Metrolink, Camarillo Plaza, Premium Outlets Promenade, Old Town, and Dizdar Park.

## Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD)

Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD) provides fixed-route and paratransit service in Oxnard, Ojai, Port Hueneme, Ventura, and unincorporated areas of Ventura County. GCTD is the largest provider of public transit in the county, with a fleet of 56 fixed-route buses and 24 paratransit buses and vans. GCTD's fixed-route network is comprised of 16 routes, with service hours ranging from 4:45 a.m. to 10:14 p.m. on weekdays, and from 5:21 a.m. to 10:01 p.m. on weekends.

## Kanan Shuttle

The Kanan Shuttle operates in Agoura Hills and Oak Park, serving schools and residential neighborhoods near Kanan Road. Other destinations include Oak Park Community Center, Oak Park Library, and retail centers along Kanan Road and Thousand Oaks Boulevard. Riders can transfer to LA Metro Route 161 and LADOT Commuter Express buses at Roadside Drive, Canwood Road, and Thousand Oaks Boulevard. All buses are ADA compliant and provide bus racks. Service is offered on weekdays between 7:00 a.m. and 5:40 p.m., free of cost, with 10- to 30-minute headways during morning service and 1-hour headways during evening peak hours.



Source: Gold Coast Transit District

## Moorpark City Transit

Moorpark City Transit operates two routes from 6:15 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, with 60- to 70-minute headways during peak hours. Destinations include Moorpark City Hall and the Library, the Metrolink Station, Moorpark College, and the Career Education Center.

## Ojai Trolley

The Ojai Trolley operates fixed-route service in Minors Oaks, Mira Monte, and the City of Ojai. Route A operates from 6:36 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on weekdays and from 7:00 a.m. to 5:57 p.m. on weekends. Destinations include Nordhoff High School, the Ojai Valley Community Hospital, the Ojai Avenue park-and-ride, and the Arcade Shopping Plaza.

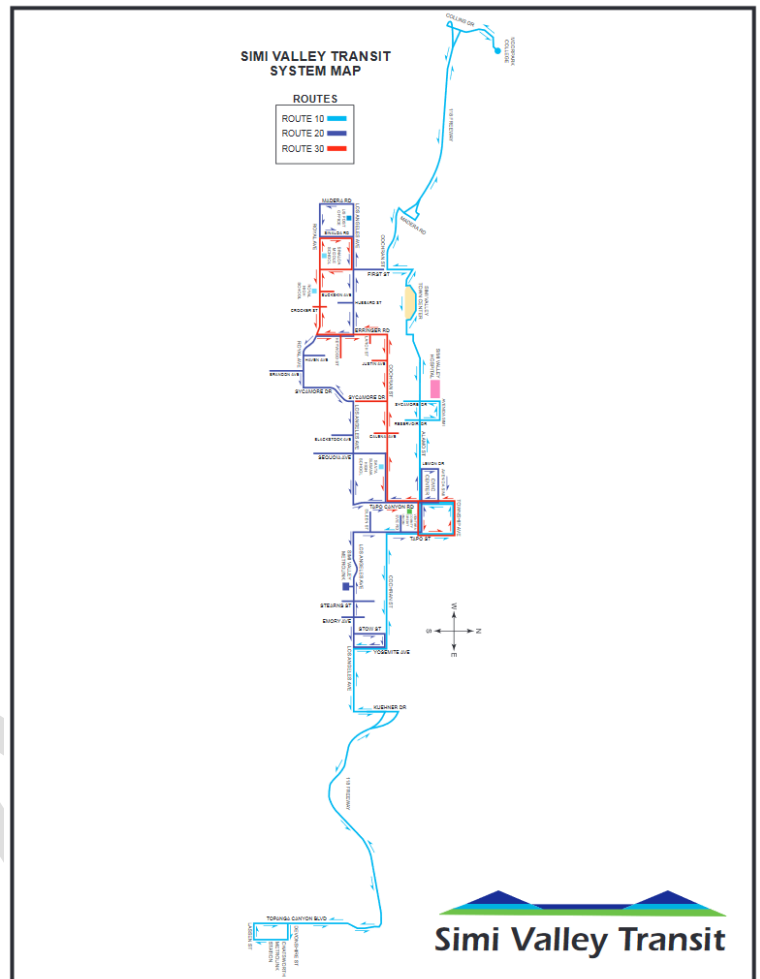


Source: Ojai Visitors

## Simi Valley Transit (SVT)

Simi Valley Transit (SVT) provides fixed-route and ADA/dial-a-ride services throughout Simi Valley. The City of Simi Valley also participates in CONNECT InterCity, an intercity regional ADA/dial-a-ride service.

SVT operates three bus routes with weekday service running from 5:00 a.m. to 8:09 p.m. Weekday headways during peak hours range from 30 to 100 minutes. Saturday service runs from 5:30 a.m. to 8:16 p.m. Destinations served include Simi Valley Hospital, Royal High School, and Simi Valley Metrolink.



Source: Simi Valley Transit

## Thousand Oaks Transit (TOT)

Thousand Oaks Transit (TOT) operates five local fixed-route buses in Thousand Oaks, Newbury Park, and surrounding areas as well as one seasonal route to Zuma Beach in Malibu. Weekday service operates from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday service operates from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Average headways are one hour across all routes. Key destinations served include the Civic Arts Plaza, Ventura County Health Care Agency, Los Robles Hospital, Grant R. Brimhall Library, and the Goebel Adult Community Center.

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## Valley Express Transit Service

Valley Express operates fixed-route, ADA paratransit, and general public dial-a-ride throughout Heritage Valley. The service is provided by a cooperative agreement between VCTC, the County of Ventura, and the cities of Fillmore and Santa Paula. VCTC manages and administers the service.

Valley Express operates four fixed routes operating between 6:15 a.m. to 7:45 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. on weekends. Weekday headways during peak hours range from 25 minutes to two hours, depending on the route. Connections to key destinations in Santa Paula include the Santa Paula Medical Center and Hospital, the senior center, the Boys & Girls Club, Blanchard Community Library, and City Hall. Destinations served by the Fillmore route include City Hall, the library, Mercado La



Plaza, the Fillmore Active Adult Center, and the Fillmore Terminal. Destinations along the Piru route include Fillmore High School, Piru Square, Valle Naranjal, and Rancho Sespe Apartments.

## VCTC Intercity Transit

VCTC Intercity Transit operates fixed-route service that connects various locations throughout and within neighboring areas of Ventura County. Hours of operation are between 4:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. on weekdays, and from 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends.

## Public Demand Response Services

Transit agencies receiving federal funds must adhere to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires providing complementary paratransit service to individuals who are unable to use fixed-route service because of a disability. Public transit agencies also provide demand response transportation services, where customers must reserve trips in advance and meet certain eligibility requirements. Demand response services vary, with some delivering riders to the nearest curb (curb-to-curb), building entrance (door-to-door), or even within the building (door-through-door) (Figure 14). Demand response services also vary in price with fares that may exceed that of fixed-route service. Pricing and eligibility requirements across providers are reflected in the Appendix.

**Figure 14 Summary Table of Demand Response Services**

Providers	Service Type	Hours of Operation	Service Area
<b>Camarillo Area Transit Dial-a-Ride</b>	Dial-a-ride (available for the general public)	Weekdays: 6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Saturday: 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Sunday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  *Reservations should be made at least 24 hours in advance	Anywhere within Camarillo limits for any trip, except for school trips
<b>CONNECT InterCity Regional ADA/Dial-a-Ride Service</b>	ADA/dial-a-ride	Weekdays: 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. (last pick-up at 5:30 p.m.) Saturday: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. (last pick-up at 5:30 p.m.)	Throughout most of eastern Ventura County with connections to Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Camarillo, and nearby unincorporated places
<b>Gold Coast Transit District GO ACCESS</b>	Origin-to-destination transportation	Weekdays: 5:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. Saturday: 5:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. Sunday: 7:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura, and unincorporated areas between these cities

Providers	Service Type	Hours of Operation	Service Area
<b>Moorpark City Transit ADA Paratransit &amp; Senior Dial-a-Ride</b>	Senior dial-a-ride	Weekdays: 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Saturday: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Agoura Hills, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Oak Park, and West Village, with transfers to Ventura and Oxnard
<b>Moorpark City Transit ADA Paratransit &amp; Senior Dial-a-Ride</b>	Disabled Paratransit	Weekdays: 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Saturday: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Moorpark and the cities served by Senior Dial-a-Ride with transfers to Los Angeles County
<b>Simi Valley Transit Dial-a-Ride</b>	Origin-to-destination, shared ADA/dial-a-ride rides. ADA-certified individuals can request door-to-door service.	Weekdays: 5:15 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. Saturday: 5:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Within Simi Valley city limits
<b>Thousand Oaks Transit Dial-a-Ride</b>	Door-to-door dial-a-ride program for seniors 65 and older. ADA paratransit service for disabled passengers unable to use public transportation.	Weekdays: 6:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Weekends: 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Thousand Oaks, Westlake Village, and unincorporated areas of Newbury Park, Oak Park, Ventu Park, Lynn Ranch, Rolling Oaks, Hidden Valley, and Lake Sherwood
<b>Valley Express Dial-a-Ride/ADA Paratransit</b>	Shared bus service available to the general public with priority given to seniors 65 and older and ADA-certified individuals	Weekdays: 5:45 a.m. - 7:45 p.m. Weekends: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru, and the unincorporated areas that make up Heritage Valley

### **Camarillo Area Transit Dial-A-Ride**

CAT dial-a-ride is available for the general public, with service offered anywhere within city limits for any trip, except for school trips. Weekday hours of operation are between 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Reservations should be made at least 24 hours in advance.

### **CONNECT InterCity Regional ADA/Dial-A-Ride Service**

CONNECT InterCity Regional ADA/dial-a-ride service allows seniors 65 and older and passengers who are ADA certified to travel throughout most of eastern Ventura County without having to transfer between transit providers. The service is provided by members of the East County Transit Alliance as an agreement between Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Moorpark, and Ventura County. The service offers connections to Moorpark,

Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Camarillo, and nearby unincorporated places such as Newbury Park and Santa Susana Knolls. Riders can connect to western Ventura County by transferring to GCTD and to Chatsworth through SVT. CONNECT also assists with transfers to the Los Angeles ACCESS area (ADA only) Monday to Friday.

## **Gold Coast Transit District GO ACCESS**

GO ACCESS is GCTD's paratransit service, providing origin-to-destination transportation for people with disabilities who cannot use existing fixed-route service. Reservations must be made one day in advance, although same-day trips might be provided based on availability. All vehicles provided wheelchair access, and personal care assistants can ride at no cost.

## **Moorpark City Transit ADA Paratransit & Senior Dial-A-Ride**

The City of Moorpark offers Senior Dial-a-Ride to individuals aged 65 and older. The service connects riders to Agoura Hills, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Oak Park, and West Village, with transfers to Ventura and Oxnard.

Moorpark also provides Disabled Paratransit service. Like Senior Dial-A-Ride, this service is available to anybody qualified with a disability, no matter the age. It provides origin-to-destination transportation across Moorpark and the cities served by Senior Dial-a-Ride. Transfers to LA County are also available.

Both services require advanced reservations for individuals traveling outside of Moorpark (or for those traveling with a scooter or wheelchair for Paratransit service). Those travelling within Moorpark can make same-day reservations at least two hours in advance. Service is available from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Trip fares are higher for trips outside of Moorpark, with additional fares required for transfers to LA or GCTD's GO ACCESS.

## **Simi Valley Transit Dial-A-Ride**

Simi Valley Transit provides origin-to-destination, shared ADA/dial-a-ride rides to seniors 65 and older and individuals with special needs who are ADA certified. ADA-certified individuals can request door-to-door service. Personal care attendants are not charged an additional fee for individuals who receive approval to travel with one. Simi Valley also participates in CONNECT InterCity Regional ADA/dial-a-Ride Service (see CONNECT InterCity Regional ADA/dial-a-ride Service section for more information).

## **Thousand Oaks Transit Dial-A-Ride**

The City of Thousand Oaks' door-to-door dial-a-ride program serves passengers aged 65 and older and individuals holding an ADA card. Customers can use the service for medical appointments and shopping trips, or to run errands. The service is provided by the City of Thousand Oaks, Westlake Village, and the county's unincorporated areas of Oak Park, Newbury Park, Ventu Park, Rolling Oaks, Lynn Ranch, Hidden Valley, and

Lake Sherwood. Service is provided from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekends.

### **Valley Express Dial-A-Ride**

The Valley Express Dial-a-Ride service is a shared bus service taking passengers to Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru, and the unincorporated areas that make up Heritage Valley. The service is available to everyone, with priority given to riders with ADA certification and seniors 65 and older. Same-day reservations are available and can be reserved up to a week in advance, however, service is provided based on space availability. Same-day reservations are exempt from ADA paratransit regulations. ADA paratransit trips are also guaranteed when reserved at least one day in advance.

### **Regional Rail and Commercial Intercity Bus**

Several regional rail and commercial intercity bus operators provide service that connects Ventura County to neighboring counties in the Southern California region.

#### **Metrolink**

The Metrolink Ventura County Line includes stations in East Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Moorpark, and Simi Valley. Metrolink provides access to key destinations in Los Angeles County, including Van Nuys, the Burbank Airport, Glendale, and LA's Union Station.

Seven inbound and seven outbound lines operate from 5:02 a.m. to 7:07 p.m. on weekdays. On Saturdays, the inbound route from East Ventura to Union Station runs from 8:52 a.m. to 10:07 a.m. and the outbound route from 4:28 p.m. to 6:16 p.m. Pricing varies by origin and destination.



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Ventura County Transportation Commission



Source: Metrolink

## Amtrak

Amtrak is a nation-wide rail service operating in 46 states, Washington D.C., and Canada. Amtrak operates two routes in Ventura County: The Pacific Surfliner, which provides 11 daily round trips between San Diego and San Luis Obispo with stops in Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Moorpark, and Simi Valley; and the Coast Starlight, which provides one trip a day between Los Angeles and Seattle with stops located in Oxnard and Simi Valley.

## Greyhound

Greyhound is the largest provider of intercity bus transportation, with more than 2,400 destinations in North America. Amtrak passengers also use Greyhound to connect to cities on Amtrak Thruway service (bus tickets are purchased with rail fares). In Ventura County, passengers on Greyhound can also connect to other local and regional transit networks at the Oxnard Transit Center, including VCTC Intercity and Gold Coast Transit.

## FlixBus

FlixBus is a European intercity bus company with service offered through the U.S. FlixBus has a stop in Ventura on Harbor Boulevard, which connects to destinations throughout California, including the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Bernadino.

## **International Bus Lines**

Formerly known as Transportes Intercalifornias, International Bus Lines has been operating for more than 25 years, serving destinations across California and the state of Baja California. International Bus Lines makes stops at the Oxnard Transit Center.

## **Mobility Management Services**

Mobility management services focus on meeting individual customer needs through a range of transportation options and service providers. Mobility management services coordinate services and providers to promote a more efficient transportation service delivery system. This often involves managing, providing support for, and helping to coordinate transportation services to customers.

### **Mobility Management Partners, Inc.**

Under contract with VCTC, Mobility Management Partners is a non-profit organization that provides travel training to help individuals safely use public and alternative transportation options, education on ADA certification and eligibility requirements, a Mobility Management Call Center, and Mobility Management services. Based in Camarillo, Mobility Management Partners provide ADA certification to determine if persons with disabilities can use public transportation and to assess their eligibility for paratransit services.

## **Specialized Transportation**

In addition to publicly provided services, there are numerous transportation services available through non-profit organizations and private transportation providers. Some of these services are available to the general public while others are exclusive to registered clients.

### **All Transport Care**

All Transport Care provides non-emergency medical transportation services and services for individuals with limited body flexibility, who are bed-bound, and/or who use wheelchairs. Service is provided to active patients in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

### **A to B Transport, LLC**

Serving Ventura and neighboring counties, A to B Transport provides non-emergency medical transportation services to individuals with mobility limitations, focusing on ambulatory, wheelchair, gurney, and specialty services.

### **Ventura Transit System (VTS)**

Ventura Transit System (VTS) provides general transportation services serving corporate accounts, schools, and airports. VTS is handicapped accessible and provides senior and student discounts.

## **Camarillo Health Care District**

Camarillo Health Care District provides door-through-door transportation for daily living activities and for non-emergency medical appointments. Vehicles can accommodate wheelchairs, oxygen canisters, and other mobility devices. Services are provided throughout Ventura County and to Kaiser Hospital in Woodland Hills between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Rides must originate within District boundaries or sphere of influence, which includes the Greater Camarillo Area, Somis, and parts of the Santa Rosa and Las Posadas Valleys.

## **Caregivers Volunteers Assisting the Elderly**

Caregivers is a non-profit organization serving seniors throughout Ventura County. In addition to providing a variety of non-professional services, volunteer caregivers provide transportation to medical appointments or for local errands. Service is available in Camarillo, Conejo Valley/Thousand Oaks, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, and Ventura.

## **Conejo Valley Village**

The Conejo Valley Village is a non-profit providing members access to a network of trained and vetted local volunteers. Memberships cover two-way or one-way trips for shopping, errands, and appointments. Volunteers can make multiple stops and offer assistance at destinations. Memberships cost \$50.00 per month for individuals, and \$75.00 for households of up to three people. The service area includes Thousand Oaks, Westlake Village, Newbury Park, Oak Park, and surrounding communities.

## **HELP of Ojai**

HELP of Ojai is a full-time, basic needs provider, operating nine separate programs ranging from senior nutrition to homeless services. HELP of Ojai also provides transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities to access grocery stores and medical services within the Ojai Valley.

## **Gold Coast Health Plan**

Gold Coast Health Plan (GCHP) provides non-emergency medical transportation via ambulance vehicles, litter vans<sup>24</sup>, wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs), and air transportation. Service is available for medical appointments covered by GCHP and will not be provided if the service is not covered by Medi-Cal. Individuals request non-emergency medical transportation through their provider. Once approved, Ventura Transit Systems schedules the ride. GCHP can reimburse mileage for trips taken with friends.

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<sup>24</sup> Litter vans are vehicles that have been modified, equipped, and used for the purpose of providing non-emergency medical transportation for passengers with stable medical conditions and who require the use of a litter or gurney.

## VC Area Agency on Aging

The Ventura County Area Agency on Aging runs the ElderHelp Transportation program for seniors<sup>25</sup> and individuals with disabilities. The program is free and provides dial-a-ride and fixed-route transit passes for non-emergency medical appointments, trips to visit families, shopping, and other purposes. Limited free transportation to medical appointments for people with low incomes, seniors, and adults with disabilities who are unable to use transit is also provided.

People with disabilities and older adults living in assisted living facilities may be eligible for door-through-door transportation to medical appointments via ElderHelp Medi-Rides. This program is intended for individuals who are not able to use transit or dial-a-ride services, and who have no alternative way to travel to medical appointments. Medi-Rides are limited to two rides per month. Individuals must not already be receiving similar services from other agencies like Gold Coast Health Plan.

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<sup>25</sup> The ElderHelp Transportation program defines seniors as being aged 60 and older.

## 4 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND GAPS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This chapter draws on conversations key stakeholders and the different agencies who serve them to reveal high-level gaps in Ventura County's transportation system as experienced by the region's older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, veterans, and youth. The gaps and needs identified from community involvement and a review of recent planning initiatives inform the recommended strategies of the Coordinated Plan.

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Project Team engaged with stakeholders, transit agencies, non-profit organizations, and health and human service agencies across Ventura County to understand the access and mobility needs of older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, veterans, and youth. The Project Team conducted outreach between July 2021 and May 2022 using a variety of engagement methods including interviews, affinity group discussions, and surveys, to address potential barriers to public participation.

### CTAC/SSTAC Engagement

Core to the coordinated planning effort are the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee (SSTAC) and the Citizen's Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC). Across three quarterly meetings, policy partners and organizational representatives from across the county shared their feedback throughout the planning process. Members of the committee represented the following organizations:

- Area Agency on Aging
- Caregivers
- City of Camarillo
- Fillmore
- City of Moorpark
- City of Ojai
- City of Oxnard
- City of Port Hueneme
- City of Santa Paula



- City of Simi Valley
- City of Thousand Oaks
- City of Ventura
- Mobility Management Partners
- The ARC
- Independent Living Resource Center
- Ventura County Healthcare Agency
- VCTC

The project team engaged with the CTAC/SSTAC during major project milestones, including the existing conditions analysis, the development of plan goals and findings from the gaps and needs assessment, and preliminary strategies.

### **Identified Gaps & Needs**

- One CTAC/SSTAC member noted the previous plan did not have specific programs and projects, which made it difficult to apply for Section 5310 funding.
- CTAC/SSTAC members identified limited access to technology and the need for interpretation services to assist Spanish-speaking households as major barriers in reaching community members.
- When asked about their vision for transportation in the next five years, the most common response amongst CTAC/SSTAC members was a convenient transportation system. Others also noted interest in a system that has better connections and has more transportation options for people to choose from.

### **Community Stakeholder Interviews**

Meeting with transit and human service agency transportation providers is critical to understanding existing capacity concerns, operational issues, expansion plans, and short-term goals. As such, one of the initial steps of the engagement process was meeting with local and regional human service providers, nonprofit organizations, and public transit agencies to better understand their services, concerns, and objectives for the Coordinated Plan.

The project team met with representatives for hour-long interviews between July to November 2021 (Figure 15). Stakeholders were asked to indicate the level of support received by transportation services in Ventura County and to share feedback commonly heard from the people they serve regarding their transportation experiences. The project team also requested feedback to help identify potential improvements to the gaps and needs noted from the existing conditions analysis as well as critical markets and locations not currently served.

**Figure 15 Summary of Stakeholder Interviews**

Agency/Organization	Date(s) of Meetings
Area Agency on Aging	July 23, 2021
Thousand Oaks Transit	July 28, 2021
Senior Concerns	July 29, 2021
The Arc	August 2, 2021
Ventura County Human Services Agency	August 2, 2021
Gold Coast Transit District	August 6, 2021
Mobility Management Partners	August 24, 2021
211	November 4, 2021
Point Mugu Naval Base	March 15, 2022

### Identified Gaps & Needs

- Some seniors and individuals with disabilities need additional assistance beyond what is currently offered by some providers. Many participants reported their clients need door-to-door assistance more so than the curb-to-curb assistance currently offered by most dial-a-ride programs.
- Moving seamlessly across the county is a challenge for many. Infrequent service, long wait times, and concerns over safety and reliability deter would-be riders from using public transit for long trips across Ventura.
- Budget constraints and farebox attainment issues continue.

### Affinity Group Discussions

To gain a deeper understanding of the mobility and access challenges certain population groups experience while using transit services in Ventura County, the project team organized and facilitated discussions with several affinity groups. The affinity groups primarily consisted of key stakeholders who work closely with seniors, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, youth, and veterans and who did not participate in the initial round of stakeholder interviews. Affinity groups were comprised of staff from non-profit organizations, human and social service agencies, the Point Mugu Naval Base, and ACCESS operators.

Affinity group discussions were held between October 2021 and March 2022 (Figure 16). Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and local mask guidance limiting in-person engagement activities, four affinity group discussions were held virtually via Microsoft Teams. Only the operator affinity group was held in person at the MV Transit facility in Oxnard following the County's easing of mask requirements. The project team asked questions to help identify barriers, priorities for future transportation investments, and opportunities to improve regional paratransit or demand response trips.

**Figure 16 Summary Table of Affinity Group Discussions**

Affinity Group	Agencies/Organizations	Date(s) of Meetings
Veterans	Gold Coast Veterans Foundation	October 10, 2021
Health and Human Services	MMP, Ventura County HSA, Ventura County Medical Center and Santa Paula Hospitals	October 13, 2021
Education	CSU Channel Islands, Ventura Adult and Continuing Education	November 5, 2021
Family Services & Caregivers	Independent Living Resource Center, Caregivers	March 3, 2022
Transit Operators	MV Transit (operations of GCTD ACCESS)	March 24, 2022

### Identified Gaps & Needs

- More can be done to improve the dissemination of transit service information. Several organizations noted they regularly receive inquiries regarding the ADA certification process from older adults, people with disabilities, social workers, and family members of those needing dial-a-ride service.
- Traveling to remote parts of Ventura County on transit can be tedious, time consuming, and expensive.
- There is interest in more on-demand options to give people the flexibility to make appointments and travel to where they need to at their own convenience.
- Rightsizing the vehicle and service with the customer's needs makes a difference in their experience.

### Virtual Open House

The project team hosted virtual office hours geared towards stakeholders and project partners who are already familiar with the plan and the issues it tackles (e.g., CTAC/SSTAC members, interviewed stakeholders, and affinity group participants). This format gave participants more time to review the content, provide feedback, and ask targeted questions about the preliminary strategies and their prioritization. Participants also had the opportunity to prioritize strategies, suggest new strategies, and submit detailed feedback on strategies.

### Identified Gaps & Needs

- Transit agencies currently pride themselves on providing a robust level of local transit service, and they are looking to VCTC to make leadership and programming decisions which would help support countywide connections and serving the countywide interest. There was concern about whether VCTC would assume costs of additional service or if that responsibility would be passed onto transit agencies.

- The finding that “older and disabled passengers have limited options for additional assistance to the front door of their destination” was reiterated as a key need.

## Community Pop-up Events

While stakeholder meetings and survey allowed for robust participation by organizations with a stake in transportation, the community pop-up events allowed members of the public to understand the outcomes of these stakeholder consensus-building meetings and recommended actions in the Coordinated Plan. The purpose of these pop-up events was to share findings, propose outcomes, solicit input, and get buy-in on strategies and approaches from older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and people who are unlikely to have access to the high-speed internet necessary for attending a virtual meeting.

The project team attended recurring community events across Ventura County in January and April 2022 (Figure 20). When determining the location for pop-ups, the team factored geographic diversity to ensure representation from both east and west county, as well as opportunities to engage with multiple communities that are the focus of this plan. Community members had the opportunity to vote for their preferred strategies and to develop new strategies. Results from this interactive activity informed strategy prioritization and the design of programs and policies. The language used to convey strategies were simplified and translated into Spanish.

Figure 17 Summary Table of Community Pop-up Events

Event	Date	Community of Interest
Unmet Transit Needs (Virtual)	January 25, 2022 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.	General public
Ventura College Foundation Weekend Marketplace	Saturday, April 9, 2022 7:00 to 1:00 p.m.	General public
Oxnard Transit Center	Thursday, April 28, 2022 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.	Fixed-route transit riders, older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes
Simi Valley Senior Center	Thursday, April 28, 2022 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Demand-response transit riders, older adults, and people with disabilities

## Identified Gaps & Needs

- People are generally satisfied with their local dial-a-ride service, but there are opportunities for improvement. Several seniors expressed frustrations around indirect routing, scheduling, long wait times, and challenges with fitting their mobility device into the vehicle. Other individuals felt the process for scheduling rides is inflexible and time consuming.



- People are generally satisfied with their local fixed-route transit service but wanted to see improved bus stop and station conditions, including more amenities at bus stops and transit stations, real-time arrival information, benches, and shelters.
- People are unaware of the full range of transportation options offered in Ventura County. Many individuals the project team spoke with were unaware of demand-response options and programs for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.
- Navigating the different service offerings can be made easier with the presence of a volunteer or travel training.

## Surveys and Other Commentary

With a goal of updating an inventory of existing services and publicizing the Coordinated Plan, the project team developed an online-based survey targeted towards agencies and organizations that provide transportation services to individuals in Ventura County, such as travel training, vouchers, shuttle operations, and fixed-route and demand response services. The survey collected information on service areas, eligibility and intake, hours of operation, fares, funding, and scheduling processes.

Between May to August 2021, a total of 41 respondents completed the survey. The largest share of survey participants represents nonprofit human service agencies, though a variety of organizations are also represented, including advocacy organizations, public transit agencies, human service agencies, and nonprofit transportation providers.

## Identified Gaps & Needs

When asked about transportation challenges experienced by customers or clients, the highest average ranked responses from the survey include:

- Bus stops are not close enough to residences and/or destinations
- Information on local transit service is not always available or easy to understand
- Important destinations are not served by public transit

## GAPS AND NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN RECENT PLANNING EFFORTS

The following is a summary of recent plans, studies, and reports completed since the adoption of the previous Coordinated Plan that consider specialized transportation services in Ventura County. In each plan, the relevant strategies specific to transit or demand response service as well as identified needs, gaps, and barriers are listed out for reference.

## **Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (2022)**

VCTC's Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES) seeks to examine system efficiencies and opportunities that will most effectively improve passenger experience, reduce operating and capital costs, and better integrate the existing operating systems in Ventura County. The study, which is currently underway, will review and assess assets, finances, technology systems, fixed-route and paratransit services, governance, and existing coordination efforts.

## **Connect SoCal: 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2021)**

SCAG's 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan proposed a path towards a more mobile and sustainable future for the Southern California region. Its Core Vision "centers on maintaining and better managing the transportation network we have for moving people and goods, while expanding mobility choices by locating housing, jobs, and transit closer together and increasing investment in transit and complete streets."

Goals and strategies related to transit and improved regional connectivity include:

- Increase person and goods movement and travel choices within the transportation system
- Support healthy and equitable communities
- Leverage new transportation technologies and data-driven solutions
- Focus growth near destinations and mobility options
- Increase resources for bus service and close gaps in the fixed guideway system<sup>26</sup>

## **Ventura County 2040 General Plan (2020)**

The Ventura County 2040 General Plan is a long-term plan that establishes standards for and guides future development in the county. The plan was developed through extensive community involvement, with input gathered through a variety of methods including workshops, surveys, and presentations.

Relevant transit strategies and opportunities for regional coordination highlighted in the plan include:

- Eliminate gaps in roadways, bikeways, and pedestrian networks by planning for and finding funding to construct improvements to remove barriers, improve system connectivity, and support first- and last-mile access to and from transit (CTM-2.13);

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<sup>26</sup> The plan calls for investments in transit: \$66.8 billion towards transit capital projects and \$173.9 billion for transit operations and maintenance.

- Collaborate with VCTC, Naval Base Ventura County, and local public transportation regional bus service providers to promote the expansion of safe, convenient, integrated, and cost-effective intercommunity and countywide public transportation and bus service (CTM-2.23);
- Encourage bicycling, walking, public transportation, and other alternative forms of transportation to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), congestion, and greenhouse gas emissions (CTM-4.2);
- Encourage mobility-as-a-service providers to coordinate with public transportation providers to increase the attractiveness of transit through the provision of free or subsidized public transportation and supporting first- and last-mile connections within unincorporated communities (CTM-6.10)

## **Unmet Transit Needs Studies**

VCTC conducts Unmet Transit Needs assessments every fiscal year to determine if areas of Ventura County with a population under 100,000 are not being served by transit to meet their daily transportation needs. Areas that fall below that threshold include the Cities of Santa Paula, Fillmore, Moorpark, and Camarillo. The City of Thousand Oaks is also included due to 2018 legislation. According to VCTC's definition of unmet transit need, the threshold for "substantial" community support is 15 requests from the general public and/or 10 requests for dial-a-ride service. Service requests that exceed these thresholds are further evaluated to determine the feasibility for expanding service. VCTC will review and reassess current Unmet Transit Need definitions in 2022.

### **FY 2021/2022 Study**

The 2021-2022 Unmet Transit Needs Study received 166 comments from 126 respondents. Comments expressing desires for new service in the eligible cities were screened and were determined to not meet the unmet transit need definition and the 15-comment threshold for fixed-route or the 10-comment threshold for dial-a-ride service. Requests for service from Fillmore and Santa Paula to Santa Clarita and between Moorpark and Fillmore, which were not considered an unmet need by this study, did not meet the 15-comment threshold but did the prior year and have been the most requested services for several years. VCTC staff will begin investigating feasibility and planning for potential implementation of these services after countywide service has been restored and the landscape for transit funding becomes clearer.

Additional service requests relevant to the Coordinated Plan include:

- Expand service to multiple Los Angeles County locations
- Expand service and increase operating hours into Santa Barbara County
- Reinstate routes suspended during the Coronavirus pandemic
- Countywide Sunday service

Since VCTC published the FY 2021/2022 Study, VCTC InterCity reinstated its service to pre-pandemic service levels in August 2021. Service was again reduced in November 2021 as a result of driver shortages and declining ridership.

## **FY 2020/2021 Study**

Around 500 comments were received from the 2020-2021 Unmet Transit Needs Study. Requests for service to Santa Clarita and between Fillmore and Moorpark met the 15-comment threshold but is not reasonable to meet due to the significant projected loss of LTF funds and fare revenue, as well as not being able to be accommodated with the existing fleet. The most common requests from this study include:

- Service from Fillmore to Santa Clarita and between Moorpark and Fillmore
- Direct service between Fillmore and Oxnard
- Weekend and increased Metrolink service
- Expanded service on the East West Connector
- Later evening service

## **FY 2019/2020 Study**

Only one request met the 15-comment threshold for the 2019/2020 Study, however, it was deemed not reasonable to meet as it cannot be accommodated with the existing fleet. The request was for service to Santa Clarita. Other common requests include:

- Connections between Fillmore and Moorpark
- Expanded service on the East West Connector (now called Cross County Limited)
- Weekend and increased Metrolink service
- Later or extended service on the Highway 126 route
- Later evening service

## **East County Regional Transit Planning (2019)**

The East County Regional Transit Planning plan highlighted and assessed the challenges transit providers face in east Ventura County and provided a blueprint for moving the region forward. The plan also described existing transit operations within east Ventura County, state legislation and its impacts to transit in the region, and challenges experienced by East County Transit Alliance and operators in the area.

Identified needs, gaps, and barriers include:

- All five agencies in the area still operate separate local transit services.
- City of Westlake Village and City of Agoura Hills are across the county line which presents challenges for coordination.

The plan also reviewed the 2018 Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) Municipal Service Review (MSR) Transit Recommendations, which highlighted the following recommendations that promote improved regional coordination:

- Identify one agency as the regional transportation authority to oversee and implement the majority of public transit within the County.



- Encourage cities that are not currently members of the Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD) to request to join, or contract with GCTD.
- Establish a new transit district that would complement the GCTD's service area and provide service within areas not currently served by the GCTD.

## Origin/Destination, Transfer, and Customer Satisfaction Surveys (2019)

In Spring 2019, VCTC conducted an origin/destination survey, a transfer survey, and a customer satisfaction survey to better understand travel patterns and behavior, customer perceptions, and demand for public transit service. Strengths and weaknesses identified through the surveys informed strategies for enhancing service and improving mobility for residents, visitors, and employees. The origin/destination survey, which received 1,267 responses, covered 18 routes across six operators: VCTC, GCTD, Thousand Oaks Transit, Simi Valley Transit, Moorpark City Transit, and the Valley Express. VCTC Intercity and Valley Express conducted the customer satisfaction surveys.

Key findings from the surveys include:

- Most respondents use transit to travel between work or school and home.
- Top origins and destinations include CSU Channel Islands, Ventura College, and Moorpark College.
- The average rider typically walks to the bus stop.
- The majority of transfers were GCTD internal transfers.
- The most preferred service improvement is more frequent service.

## VCTC Transit Asset Management Plan (2018)

The VCTC Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan outlined the policies, processes, and procedures for improving asset management practices. Required for all Federal Transit Administration grantees, the plan assessed the current condition of capital assets and informed funding priorities over the next four years based on the condition of transit assets. The comprehensive Ventura County Group TAM Plan List of Capital Investments noted the following projects as high priorities (Figure 18).

Figure 18 Ventura County Group TAM Plan List of Capital Improvements (2019-2023)

Project Year	Project Name	Asset/Asset Class	Cost
2019	VCTC Intercity Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$2,151,000
	Simi Valley Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$880,000
	Camarillo Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$67,725
	TOT Replacement CNG Bus Purchase	Revenue Vehicles	\$2,300,000

Project Year	Project Name	Asset/Asset Class	Cost
	TOT Replacement Demand Response Purchase	Revenue Vehicles/Cutaway Buses	\$750,000
<b>2020</b>	Valley Express Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$807,000
<b>2021</b>	TOT EV Bus Purchase	Revenue Vehicles/Bus	\$2,000,000
<b>2022</b>	Moorpark Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$1,412,775
	VTS Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$248,500
	Valley Express Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$735,000
	HELP of Ojai Vehicle Replacement	Revenue Vehicles	\$64,000

## SUMMARY OF GAPS AND NEEDS RELATED TO SPECIALIZED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The following section highlights gaps and needs specifically facing Ventura County's vulnerable populations which are not currently being met by the existing mass transportation system. Based on existing conditions research, mapping analysis, and observations from stakeholder engagement, and a review of documents from recent planning efforts, these gaps and needs help shape the Coordinated Plan goals and strategies.

### **Trips involving multiple demand-response systems are too complicated.**

Seven public agencies provide demand-response dial-a-ride service in Ventura County and each have their own fares, eligibility requirements, and hours of operation. Adjustments to these policies occur on the timeline of each transit agency. With the additional steps of verifying eligibility and arranging transfers, demand-response service is prone to both longer trip planning and travel times than an equivalent fixed-route service. For example, fares for care assistants accompanying riders differ across providers. Providers also have different standards determining who qualifies for discounted fares. These are among the multiple nuances in the paratransit experience that contribute to perceptions of confusion for new riders as well as existing riders needing to transfer between services to get to other parts of Ventura County.

### **Some fixed-route stops still remain difficult to access and unprotected from the elements.**

In some locations currently well-served by fixed-route transit, accessing the stop is a difficult experience for older adults and people with disabilities. Bus stops may lack complete sidewalk networks for safe and direct access and/or shelter from the elements, a problem particular to older adults taking medications that heighten sensitivity to sunlight and heat. The distances people must walk to access a bus stop can also be

difficult for seniors, particularly those who are living with an ambulatory disability. If fixed-route transit is less accessible or desirable to passengers who are also certified to ride ADA paratransit, they may regularly opt for using dial-a-ride service for travel, which is usually more expensive to operate on a per-passenger basis than fixed-route transit.

**There is a lack of on-demand transportation options for non-emergency medical transportation trips.**

There are few non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) options for people traveling to and from Ventura to Thousand Oaks or from Ventura County to Los Angeles County, let alone on-demand options. With limited same-day options, people must make reservations at least a day in advance. This can be especially challenging for seniors and people with disabilities experiencing severe illnesses that may require more immediate medical attention. The lack of on-demand options also presents challenges for case workers at healthcare facilities where patients are often discharged on short notice. Healthcare facilities have had some success arranging same-day trips involving vehicles equipped with gurneys and wheelchair ramps through public providers, but more on-demand options and a greater variety in vehicle types tailored to specialized transportation needs are still desired across the county.

**Older and disabled passengers have limited options for additional assistance to the front door of their destination.**

According to several human service agencies and non-profits, seniors and people with disabilities could be better served with demand-response door-through-door or door-to-door service tailored to their specific needs. While many demand-response services are offered by public and private providers in Ventura County, actions like assisting passengers are sometimes made at the discretion of the provider and driver. The challenge of meeting demand for passenger assistance is exacerbated by limitations in the supply of drivers and care workers.

**Cross-county and inter-county travel trips are hard to achieve, especially if outside of the larger population and transit centers.**

Coverage and access gaps exist for trips connecting to places outside of Ventura County's population centers. Existing local fixed-route and demand-response service coverage is generally good across the county. However, there are areas where transit propensity is high but are not well-served by transit, such as the unincorporated areas on the northern edge of Oxnard, and neighborhoods northwest of Central Ojai.

In addition, cross-county or inter-county trips between Ventura County and neighboring Los Angeles County are not always covered. Public transit options from more populated areas to outlying cities or unincorporated parts of the County are limited to a few routes. Some cross-county gaps (like the lack of a direct north-south connection between Moorpark and the Santa Clara valley towns) are due to topographic limitations, while others (like a direct trip from Camarillo to Port Hueneme) are due to jurisdictional silos. Outside of rail and express buses, few options exist for travel to and from Los Angeles

County. Available alternatives are mostly reserved for specific trip types, such as non-emergency medical transportation trips, and these can require reservations in advance.

The distribution of specialized services in Ventura County is generally concentrated in highly populated cities such as Ventura, Oxnard, and Thousand Oaks which are also relatively well-served in terms of fixed-route transit coverage. Several K-12 schools in the northern parts of the county as well as major employment centers near Thousand Oaks (like Amazon and other warehouses in the western outskirts) and Port Hueneme (like NAS Point Mugu), however, are not well served by fixed-route transit.

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## 5 GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter outlines projects, policies, and programs and services that are eligible for funding through federal funds distributed by VCTC to regional partners, as well as other funds from state and county agencies. Strategies build from recommendations from the previous Coordinated Plan and feedback received from public stakeholder outreach and engagement.

### REVISITING THE FY 16/17 COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The overarching goal for the previous plan update was to enhance the mobility of the target populations: individuals with disabilities, older adults, people with low incomes, and military populations. Extensive stakeholder and public feedback shaped strategies set in the prior plan.

Since 2017, many developments in access and mobility have transpired in the local, state, and national landscape. Some of these have challenged the status quo of public transportation. Major developments include:

- Lifting spending restrictions on certain FTA allocations with the CARES Act
- Additional Section 5310 funds, including just over \$51,000 in apportionments to the Oxnard Urbanized Area through the CRRSAA passed in December 2020
- GCTD and CAT provide direct service between Oxnard and Camarillo
- Creation of the New Wells Road Transfer Area for Seniors and ADA Paratransit
- GCTD launched its Late Night Safe Rides microtransit program, a curb-to-curb service operating from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- Creation of the grant-funded College Ride Program that allows college students to ride transit for free

This plan's goals will continue to focus on the needs of target communities while working within the changed transportation landscape.

### Strategies

The prior Coordinated Transportation Plan listed strategies in a single category and ranked against one another to establish prioritization for implementation. The implementation of some ongoing strategies may be delayed, postponed, or cancelled due to the unexpected impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Publicly available

information on strategies with an 'incomplete' status is not available and progress to date remains uncertain at the time of this writing.

As of 2021, VCTC and project partners have successfully implemented multiple strategies from the prior plan, including the establishment of a 211 One-Call/One-Click trip planning resource and a travel training program through Mobility Management Partners. Figure 19 provides a summary of strategies from the 2017 plan and the status or example of implementation actions taken as of 2021.

**Figure 19 2017 Coordinated Transportation Plan Strategies Status Summary**

2017 Coordinated Transportation Plan Strategy	Priority from 2017 Planning Process	Status and/or Example of Implementation as of 2021
<b>Information Gap</b>		
One-Call/One-Click with trip planning for demand response service, e.g., 211VetLink.org	Very High	Complete – 211Ride.org now live
Links to all transit services on each public operators' website	Very High	CAT, Ojai Trolley, VCTC have most links and GCTD and SVT are mostly complete
Interactive countywide web-based map showing routes	High	Regional map is complete and live
<b>Capacity building of human service transportation programs to fill gaps</b>		
Develop and support public transit and human service collaboratives and education	Very High	Ongoing
Support continued specialized transportation projects: taxi voucher, volunteer driver, etc.	Very High	Ongoing
Promote traditional human service transportation, vehicle-based projects	Medium	Ongoing
Annual mobility summit	Medium	Incomplete
<b>Fixed route schedule coordination and service levels</b>		
Travel training and education across all populations	Very High	MMP Travel Training program received 5310 funding, however, it has been discontinued due to limited funding
Increased transit service levels	High	Many providers reduced service due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, Gold Coast Transit District increased frequency on core routes and extended service hours as of July 2021.
Schedule Coordination Study	High	Operator coordination included as part of Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES)

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2017 Coordinated Transportation Plan Strategy	Priority from 2017 Planning Process	Status and/or Example of Implementation as of 2021
Countywide Long Range Transit Plan	Medium	Comprehensive Transportation Plan underway and Short-Range Transit Plan (S RTP) scheduled for 2022
Schedule coordination standards	Medium	Can be included as part of S RTP
<b>Transit Affordability</b>		
Promote existing discounted fare policies for target populations	Very High	Operators, agencies, and non-profits promote their own discounted fares.
Continue to pursue funding alternatives to maintain/reduce fares	High	VCAAA's ElderHelp Transportation program received 5310 funding that provides tickets to transportation services to people with disabilities and seniors (60+)
Facilitate/streamline procedures for human service agency bulk bus pass purchases	Medium	Incomplete
Explore potential for discounted intra-county Metrolink trips	Medium	Not currently feasible due to COVID-19 revenue reductions
<b>Capital and Infrastructure Investment</b>		
Prepare a capital funding plan to improve transit facilities	High	Will be included in S RTP
Identify substandard bus stops and develop bus stop improvement capital plan and implementation	High	City of Oxnard's 2019-2024 Capital Improvement Program includes bus stop enhancements and new bus stops at multiple locations along Route 23. <sup>27</sup> City of Thousand Oaks' FY21-23 budget allocates \$400,000 for citywide bus shelter enhancements. <sup>28</sup>
Continued accessible vehicle procurement for demand response program	High	Ongoing
Promote "share the road" policies for bicyclists and pedestrians and bike-and-bus programs to enhance safety, promote bike use	Medium	The SCAG implemented the Go Human campaign with the goal of encouraging people to walk/bike and reduce traffic collisions.
Promote street improvement countermeasures to improve pedestrian/bike safety	Medium	Ongoing

<sup>27</sup> City of Oxnard. *Preserving the City's Assets 2019-2024 City of Oxnard Five Year Capital Improvement Program*. 2019. Accessed via <https://www.oxnard.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CIP.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> City of Thousand Oaks. *Capital Improvement Program Budget FY2021-22 & 2022-2023*. Accessed via <https://www.toaks.org/home/showpublisheddocument?id=35892>

2017 Coordinated Transportation Plan Strategy	Priority from 2017 Planning Process	Status and/or Example of Implementation as of 2021
<b>Dial-a-Ride Service Coordination</b>		
Interactive web-based map showing service areas and connections	Very High	Incomplete
Standardized hours and days of service; alternatively, documenting where core service policies differ across transit systems	Medium	Reviewed as part of TIES
Inter-County shuttle/demand response non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) service to LA County destinations	Medium	Connective service from East County's dial-a-ride to LA County received 5310 funding
Improved reliability of demand responsive services—technology projects and additional revenue hours	Medium	Transitioned to Ecolane scheduling software

## PROPOSED COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN GOALS

The development of this plan's recommendations stem from multiple key goals, which were informed by stakeholder engagement throughout the planning process. Proposed goals of this plan are shown below:

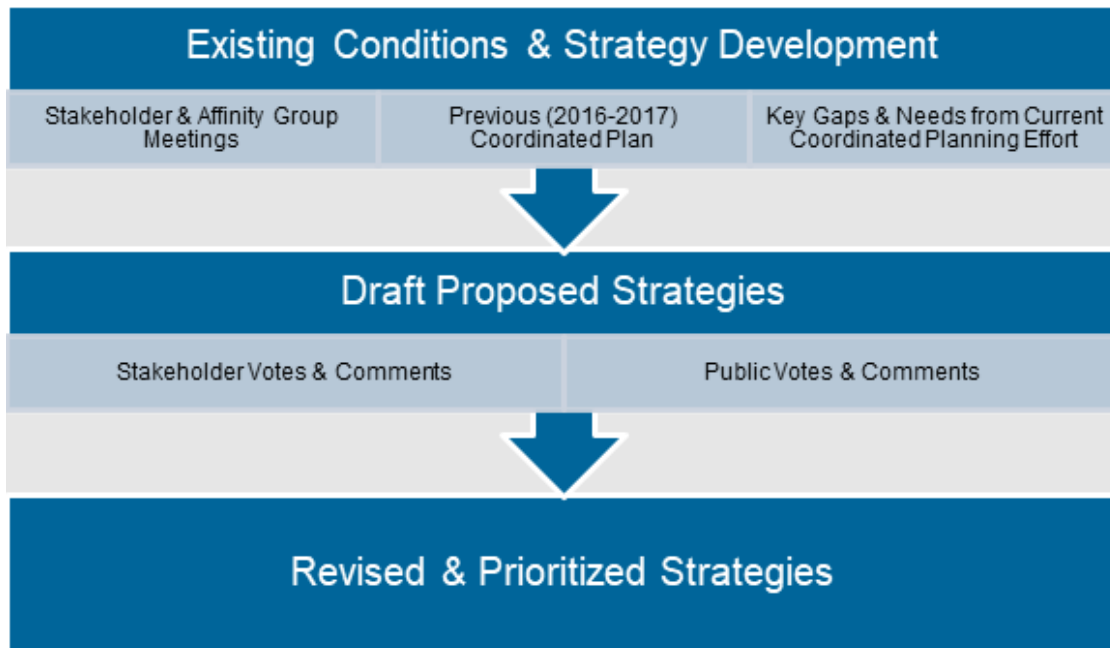
- **Goal 1:** Enhance mobility of key communities (e.g., individuals with disabilities, seniors, people with low incomes, and veterans)
- **Goal 2:** Improve connections and access to transit and services
- **Goal 3:** Expand transportation options
- **Goal 4:** Prioritize convenience

## PROPOSED STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GAPS AND NEEDS

### Strategy Development Process

A defined process for the development, drafting, revision, and prioritization of strategies helps ensure that the Coordinated Plan Update is a locally developed plan as required by Section 5310. This process, shown in (Figure 20), builds directly from community involvement (including both stakeholders and public), as well as key gaps and needs identified by the project team. Additional details on strategy development and strategy prioritization processes can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 20 Strategy Development and Prioritization Process



## Implementation Guidance

Stakeholders engaged throughout the planning process, which includes public transit agencies, non-profit organizations, and health and human service agencies, were asked to provide high-level assessments pertaining to cost-effectiveness, ridership, equity, and implementation feasibility for each strategy. A ranking of each strategy's composite score based on cost-effectiveness, ridership, and equity was combined with another ranking based on the total number of votes given by the general public across multiple pop-up meetings. The resulting combined ranking was used to categorize strategies into "high priority" and "medium priority" tiers.

- **HIGH PRIORITY** – To begin meeting the identified gaps and needs, VCTC should consider prioritizing these basic investments and programs in coordination with local and regional stakeholders. These are strategies which rose to the top based on enthusiasm and support from stakeholders and the public.
- **MEDIUM PRIORITY** – The impacts of these strategies are also consequential, but they are not the highest priority. Although the full rollout of these strategies may occur later in the 5-year timeframe, some Medium Priority strategies may benefit from initial steps taken in the short term.

A summary of Coordinated Plan Strategies, rank ordered and organized by prioritization tier, is included below (Figure 21). Should conditions change between the adoption of this Coordinated Plan and the next plan update, VCTC may reengage with stakeholder groups and the appropriate implementation partners to elevate Medium Priority strategies, such as the One-Seat Demand-Response strategy, which received



community support. Changing conditions can include the availability of new funding sources; expansion of staff capacity; the addition of stakeholder organizations; or the adoption of plans that include similar recommendations or strategies.

Figure 21 Coordinated Plan Strategies Rank Ordered and Organized by Category

Strategy	Priority	Category	Level of Implementation Effort
Document Accessibility of All Stations and Stops Countywide	High	Infrastructure	Medium
Continue Standardizing and Regularly Updating User Information on Existing Countywide Transportation Programs and Services	High	Policies	Medium
Continue Procuring Wheelchair-Accessible Vehicles	High	Infrastructure	Medium
Consolidate All ADA Paratransit Eligible Processes and Rider Databases	High	Policies	Medium
Expand Travel Training	High	Programs/Services	Medium
Pilot On-Demand Medical Rides	Medium	Programs/Services	Medium
Study Reduced/Free Fare Programs	Medium	Programs/Services	Low
Study Volunteer Driver Programs	Medium	Programs/Services	Low
One-Seat Demand-Response	Medium	Programs/Services	High
Feeder Services to Existing Regional and Inter-County Transit Hubs	Medium	Programs/Services	High

## Prioritized Strategies

### Document Accessibility of All Transit Stops and Stations Countywide (High Priority Infrastructure Strategy)

#### Overview

Accessing and waiting at the bus stop is a critical step along the transit riders' journey. A good bus stop is universally accessible, within walking distance, and offers protection from the elements. Someone walking to a stop should be able to identify what stops are served and when. These elements create an experience that is not only safer for regular

fixed-route transit riders, but also has implications for more efficient transit operations. If more paratransit/dial-a-ride riders can safely access cost-effective fixed-route services, there will be less strain on local and regional paratransit/dial-a-ride options.

Transit agencies, educational practitioners, and committee members identified fixed-route stops that remain difficult to access and unprotected from the elements as a key need in Ventura County. Bus stop upgrades have been an ongoing challenge, as evidenced by the 2016-17 Coordinated Plan's high-priority strategy to "identify substandard bus stops and develop bus stop improvement capital plan and implementation." Potential solutions appear siloed. Municipalities have authority over their streets and sidewalks and each transit agency has its own bus stop standards. However, leadership at the county level can approach this issue holistically and equitably. VCTC can also reference numerous guides across the country to establish standards for the universal design and efficient placement of bus stops.

#### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- Build partnerships with representatives of all municipalities and transit agencies responsible for bus stop installation and maintenance to share full existing data on stop locations and amenities.
- Develop countywide survey of all transit facilities and bus stops, including pedestrian access and other common standards.
- Create project and priority list using updated standards based on qualitative and quantitative standards such as land uses served, population within walking distance, current ridership, and proximity to essential services (e.g., government, schools, healthcare, grocery stores).

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- If future dedicated funding streams are made available to the county, consider a competitive grant program for transit agencies to request financing for capital improvements at high ridership stops.

#### Potential Challenges

The responsibility for bus shelter and street furniture maintenance and improvements within some municipalities may be beholden to existing contracts. In future solicitations for bus stop shelter maintenance, cities should prioritize regular maintenance and rider safety. VCTC is most suitable for leading the development of this database as a countywide entity, however, transit agencies and localities would still need to regularly participate by providing the full extent of their existing bus stop data, and reporting changes to each stop as conditions change.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1, 2, and 4
Estimated Cost	Low
Ridership Potential	High

Social Equity Potential	High
Level of Effort	Medium
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, public transit agencies, municipal governments, major employers / institutions

**Precedent**

- The *Toolkit for the Assessment of Bus Stop Accessibility and Safety* is a national resource developed by Easter Seals Project ACTION which includes examples of guidelines, terminology, and a comprehensive checklist for assessing each bus stop. Notably, the toolkit has been field-tested in cooperation with at least three California bus transit agencies (AC Transit, Marin Transit, and SunLine).
- The Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Safe Transit Stops (Project W) program is dedicated to funding improvements and adding amenities at the busiest stops across Orange County. Municipalities are informed which stops are eligible (based on whether a stop is in the top 100 of weekday ridership) and are asked to submit stop-specific requests, estimates, and designs for OCTA review and approval. Grants are funded by the Measure M countywide sales tax fund.

**Continue Standardizing and Regularly Updating Information on Existing Countywide Transportation Programs and Services (High Priority Policy Strategy)**

**Overview**

A key need highlighted from the existing conditions analysis pertains to the complexity of taking trips involving multiple services and locations. Part of this difficulty is attributed to limited user and broker awareness of all the available transit-supportive programs and services throughout Ventura County, as well as the numerous operators providing transit. A step towards greater awareness is ensuring all information related to transportation options is provided to a single, centralized source.

211 and Mobility Management Partners also suggested streamlining the process of gathering and sharing information. Although 211Ride currently offers online and phone-based trip planning for Ventura County users, the organizational focus is on meeting other critical human service needs—transportation makes up a relatively small amount of 211 calls. Additionally, with multiple providers operating in Ventura County, it is crucial to establish standards for when transportation information is regularly updated.

**Short-Term Implementation Steps**

Develop “Countywide Access Mobility Guide” — a clearinghouse directory of all specialized and fixed-route providers, along with existing fare policies and discount programs. Online versions of this guide should be prioritized, with easily identifiable links and messaging for target populations (including translated and ADA-compliant content), and links/integration into the home page of every transit agency web site and app.

- The guide should be publicized to travel trainers, social workers, senior centers, human services, and possibly offer a printed version.
- Require a mobility manager, specialist, planner, paid intern, or partnering organization to update the “Access Mobility Guide” on an annual basis.
- The database can also be used to help identify countywide core service hours in support of future Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES) recommendations and implementation efforts.
- Additional concepts which could improve the user experience with transit information (but may require more coordination and leadership from other agencies) include real-time location data of paratransit vehicles and memoranda of understanding amongst all transit agencies to commit to cross-compatible scheduling software.

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- Continue working with operators to streamline and coordinate policies.
- Continue monitoring resource usage and program awareness through user surveys.

#### Potential Challenges

The ongoing rollout of potential solutions from the TIES may occur on a different timeline from the Coordinated Plan. And although printed versions of a guide are inherently more useful to people with limited to no technology access, there is a risk of limited return on investment. Printed guides cannot be easily updated without a full replacement copy, which means it could become outdated the moment that one of the multiple transit agencies within Ventura County changes its schedules, fares, policies, or service offerings.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1 and 4
Estimated Cost	Low
Ridership Potential	Medium
Social Equity Potential	Medium
Level of Effort	Medium
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, consolidated transportation services agency, public transit agencies, municipal governments, human services, major employers / institutions

#### Precedent

The Arizona Transportation Resource Finder is a secure website designed to help older adults find information on transportation services. Visitors to the site are prompted to identify their service area, the type of transportation service needed, and their disability status or other accessibility needs (if applicable). Search results produce a list of government, non-profit, and private transportation providers and their contact

information. Providers needing to add or update their information can submit a form on the same website. 211Ride is similar to this resource, and they have been successful at keeping information up to date.

## **Continue Procuring Wheelchair-Accessible Vehicles (High Priority Infrastructure Strategy)**

### Overview

This recommendation was designated as a “high” priority strategy for the 2016-17 Coordinated Plan. Multiple non-profit and human service agencies also suggested this strategy during stakeholder engagement. Specifically, some transit operators shared concerns that some recently purchased vehicles were not necessarily accommodating all mobility devices. Vehicles funded by Section 5310 need to be compliant with the ADA, however, this is a minimum requirement that does not address universal design needs or passenger comfort if using certain mobility devices.

Additional factors must also be considered when justifying costly vehicle acquisitions. For organizations receiving public funds or partnering with VCTC to provide supplemental transit service, there will need to be measures in place to ensure applicants have first attempted to coordinate with an existing transportation provider that has a fleet with available WAVs.

### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- All agencies identify capital replacement needs.
- Newly purchased transit vehicle purchases would, at a minimum, be compliant with ADA, but steps would be taken to ensure vehicle purchases are worthwhile and necessary. Applicants for new vehicles would need to demonstrate due diligence in coordinating and pooling with other transportation providers within the county and adjacent communities.
- Applicants may also want to verify the vehicles can easily fit the range of mobility devices currently used by riders. An informal survey of DAR riders on vehicle options may be necessary.
- Operators of all WAVs should be trained in best practices for securing mobility devices. This training could be a condition for vehicle applicants.

### Long-Term Implementation Steps

Additional, though optional, considerations for the next five years include:

- Vehicle seating configurations with the 6-foot social distancing standard established as a preventative measure during the COVID-19 pandemic (or protective guards and multiple separate airflows within smaller vehicles)
- Supportive infrastructure and policy for zero-emission vehicles (such as charging stations and implementation plans) to work towards compliance with the 2040 Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) requirement of all agencies set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB)



### Potential Challenges

Several agencies might explore jointly purchasing multiple vehicles to save time, resources, and funding. Joint purchases should follow the latest ICT guidance. Small transit agencies in California, which are expected to submit a rollout plan for zero-emission fleets may also wish to consult the summary of large transit agency rollout plans provided by CALSTART.

### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1, 2, and 3
Estimated Cost	Medium
Ridership Potential	Medium
Social Equity Potential	High
Level of Effort	Medium
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, public transit agencies, human services

### Precedent

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority (SFMTA) instituted several financial incentives for taxi drivers participating in programs that supplement transit service. This program resulted from challenges experienced by taxi drivers in purchasing and operating accessible vehicles. Drivers receive a \$10 subsidy on every trip provided to a wheelchair user, which rises to \$15 if the trip is during nighttime hours or outlying areas. In addition, drivers receive a monthly \$600 subsidy towards purchasing WAVs.

## **Consolidate All ADA Paratransit Eligibility Policies and Rider Databases (High Priority Policy Strategy)**

### Overview

VCTC contracts with the non-profit agency Mobility Management Partners (MMP) to facilitate the ADA certification process. All operators utilize a paper application process where the applicant does not have to participate in an on-site personal evaluation but instead, relies on a medical professional to document the disability and the applicant's ability to ride transit.

Discrepancies between the county's multiple dial-a-ride systems include:

Riders booking through individual providers instead of a countywide system,

- Separate databases of certified riders due to the use of three scheduling systems (Trapeze, Ecolane, Roadsoft) across all DAR providers,
- Different eligibility requirements for DAR based on age as opposed to just ADA eligibility

Reconciling these discrepancies can help reduce administrative burdens and rider confusion while improving overall customer satisfaction. Implementation may depend on VCTC's leadership and/or a mobility manager operating at the county level.

This strategy aims to address a key issue raised by multiple stakeholders, which is that trips involving multiple demand-response systems are too complicated. Several health and human service agencies, including the ARC, 211, Area Agency on Aging, and MMP also suggested streamlining eligibility policies and rider databases.

#### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- Promote the existing ADA certification process across all agencies and communities serving the county. Confirm the process and ADA eligible cards are uniform and recognized by all providers. Establish common terms and definitions to simplify ADA paratransit service for riders.
- Develop a live eligible rider database across the entire county.
- Share database access – along with a recurring deadline for the rider database to be updated – to all providers.
- Work with operators to streamline and coordinate policies as necessary. Identify timelines and opportunities for joint procurement processes between transit agencies.
- If agencies continue having different fare policies, use the database to regularly remind certified riders of current fares depending on the trip and/or provider.

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- Develop routine check-ins (every few years) to see if rider's disability or mobility device has changed and update the database accordingly.
- Study options for rolling out uniform countywide fare media to all eligible riders. If all paratransit riders use the same fare media (VCbuspass), data could be harnessed to understand where paratransit and travel training needs exist throughout the county.
- Consider coordinating with all agencies for other unified rider policies, such as reservations, late cancellations, no-shows, and suspensions.

#### Potential Challenges

The ongoing rollout of potential solutions from the TIES may occur on a different timeline from the Coordinated Plan. Additionally, current DAR riders who are not ADA certified (e.g., older adults) will need access to other transit options if they are left out from the streamlining of future ADA paratransit policies.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	2 and 4
Estimated Cost	Low
Ridership Potential	Low
Social Equity Potential	Medium

Level of Effort	Medium
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission and public transit agencies

#### Precedent

Public transportation services in the Phoenix metropolitan region are operated through a combination of regional and local services. This structure reflects local taxing history, where following approval of a regional transportation and transit tax, several municipalities passed local taxes. A regional tax ultimately passed, which led to Valley Metro, a regional transportation service provider. Recognizing the opportunities to address fragmented service delivery and a confusing system, the region agreed on common elements of service delivery, including delivery of ADA paratransit services. Valley Metro evaluated, designed, and then implemented regionally consistent policies and used joint technical committees to support interagency coordination on regional issues that covered capital investments, funding, marketing, and service planning. Valley Metro eventually adopted regional service standards and integrated fare systems to promote consistency across the system and to improve the customer experience.

### **Expand Travel Training (High Priority Program and Service Strategy)**

#### Overview

Travel training programs are designed to teach older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, youth, veterans, and/or low-income populations to travel safely and independently on the range of transit services available within a given area. Training may include information on communicating with drivers, how to use relevant mobile apps and websites, and an overview of eligibility requirements for different services. Some guided trainings – which can occur over the course of a transit ride – can help dispel misconceptions and concerns about public transportation services and build confidence in using the system in the future.

The recommendation to expand travel training builds off the 2016-2017 Coordinated Plan’s recommendation for “travel training and education across all populations,” which was deemed a “Very High” priority. Although the 5310-supported travel training program has since been discontinued, many people who live, work, and visit Ventura County continue to lack a full understanding of all their transportation options. Expanding travel training was also suggested by multiple stakeholders, including 211, Thousand Oaks Transit, Gold Coast Transit District, and Mobility Management Partners. There was an added emphasis on ensuring travel trainings reach typically underrepresented demographics, such as non-English speakers. Although travel training at the countywide scale has occurred in the past and was suspended, it was a crucial opportunity for people transitioning out of car use.

#### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- A standardized module for organizations and agencies to register training sessions and report attendee demographics back to VCTC will be important for performance measurements.
- Travel training should be expanded to focus on youth, families, and caregivers, especially those with or tending to individuals with special needs, and people who speak languages other than English and trainers of similar demographics must also be recruited. This would maximize the potential social equity of this strategy.
- Training may also include assistance with utilizing the VCbuspass system, but it will also be important to focus on the needs and media preferences of people who lack access to smartphones and high-speed internet.
- Additional human services and adult education programs could host and provide training sessions and use these sessions to distribute free passes to students who currently lack access.

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- Develop a “train the trainer” curriculum in coordination with existing transit ambassadors to extend the work of travel trainers to other mobile sites.

#### Potential Challenges

It may be difficult to develop meaningful metrics to measure the impact of how travel training directly translates into increased fixed-route ridership. Further metrics and research may need to be studied to effectively develop such performance measures. There may also be limitations to the extent that education is accepted and accessible to target audiences. For example, some older adults may not want to learn technology and they may not be able to afford the necessary hardware. Also, some people may not have positive associations with transit.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1 and 2
Estimated Cost	Low
Ridership Potential	High
Social Equity Potential	High
Level of Effort	Medium
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, consolidated transportation services agency, public transit services, human service agencies

#### Precedent

- Nationwide research on effective mobility management and travel training programs is documented in the *TCRP Report 168 – Travel Training for Older Adults*.
- Based in Boulder County, Colorado, the Mobility for All program has developed a variety of approaches to getting people educated and comfortable with the multiple available transit options, including:

- Family game nights using transit infographics in the style of popular Lotería, hosted by businesses in predominantly Spanish-speaking communities
- Specialized education on accessing and using mobile apps related to transportation
- Programs specifically for empowering volunteer ambassadors (e.g., “train the trainer”)

### **Pilot On-Demand Medical Rides Program (Medium Priority Program and Service Strategy)**

#### Overview

Medical appointments are a significant destination for many transit riders with special needs. As activity across the country slowed during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were still people who needed to ride transit outside of the house not for work, rather for essential time-sensitive purposes, such as kidney dialysis. Not every specialty care is within a short trip for people living throughout Ventura County. Many outpatient clinics are located within the Gold Coast Transit District service area, and some patients may need to go to Los Angeles County. In Ventura County today, dedicated transportation with physical assistance to such sites require advanced reservations, which prevents many individuals from accepting appointments that come up on short notice.

A pilot medical rides program would be a step towards meeting multiple needs, including the lack of on-demand transportation options for non-emergency medical transportation trips and the limited options older adults have for additional assistance to the front door of their destination. The strategy was also suggested in meetings with Area Agency on Aging, along with groups centered around caregivers, human services, and veterans. In pop-up meetings with community members, the possibility of on-demand medical rides stood out as a unique opportunity that would improve the potential conveniences of aging in place. For many, an on-demand medical pilot was more popular than several high-priority strategies.

#### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- Confirm partners behind such a pilot program and necessary funding needs. The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) would be a potential provider for mass taxi/gurney transportation services for their senior and disability population, but there is a shortage of funding to do so.

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- An eligibility group (e.g., older adults, people with disabilities) would be established, with single trip tickets/vouchers given to patients upon discharge. These vouchers/tickets could also utilize the VCbuspass system.
- Tickets/vouchers would then be accepted by taxi and other demand-response providers. Voucher transportation could also be provided electronically through rides brokered by healthcare providers through a partnership transportation network company (TNC).



- In addition to inquiring about transportation needs, healthcare providers should also learn about digital literacy and home internet connections for individual patients. If possible, online telehealth appointments can continue be suggested for certain medical appointments and needs, and it will also help reduce the expenses and time spent on travel.

#### Potential Challenges

This strategy may be affected by ongoing driver labor supply challenges. The cost implications may also be affected by the need for specialized vehicles and staff.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1, 2, 3, and 4
Estimated Cost	High
Ridership Potential	Low
Social Equity Potential	High
Level of Effort	Medium
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, consolidated transportation services agency, public transit agencies, human service agencies, and major employers / institutions

#### Precedent

- In recent years, TNCs have begun providing an alternative to the traditional non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) offered by taxis and ambulance services under contract. Both Lyft and Uber, for example, now offer on-demand medical transportation services. On Lyft's website, the company operates under the premise of improving access to healthcare: "Reduce no-shows and provide more patients with care by offering them roundtrip rides — eliminating transportation barriers." One of the earliest pilot partnerships was between the Denver Health Foundation and Lyft in 2016. Through this program, which continues today, Denver area hospital employees may order Lyft rides for patients needing transportation from their home, as well as immediately upon their discharge. According to a profile by the American Hospital Association, this program "is a great benefit to patients for whom English is a second language. Navigating public transportation for these patients can be especially challenging and getting a ride from the clinic to their homes removes that stress."
- In 2017, residents of rural communities in and around Blythe, California began riding a new bus route to Coachella Valley medical facilities over 100 miles away. This lifeline connection began as a pilot funded through the FTA's Rides to Wellness demonstration grant program. In addition to a local funding match, there was in-kind support for a mobility manager position from the local transit agency and hospital. During the 18-month pilot, the Blythe Wellness Express (BWE) was reported to be the only way for many participants — including those with health insurance — to access healthcare. Of the pilot participants with available health statuses, 45% reported an improvement in their personal health.

The Riverside County Executive Office Air Quality program was able to provide bridge funding to carry the program beyond its initial pilot stage. Today, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) continues to fund the BWE, which offers service to the general public three days per week.

## **Study Reduced / Free Fare Programs (Medium Priority Policy Strategy)**

### Overview

Like many coastal California areas, Ventura County is facing an ongoing challenge related to rising housing costs and increasing costs of living. During the COVID-19 pandemic, fare collection across many transit providers was suspended. Although travel demand was understandably diminished, the free fares were an experience for many riders who have always continued to depend on transit for meeting their essential needs, such as employment and medical appointments. Paid fares support transit operations, but as a public service, transit does not exclusively depend on the farebox for balancing its budget. There may be opportunities, during this time of continued income inequality and returning traffic congestion, to understand the options for making reduced or free fare payments a permanent fixture throughout Ventura County.

The recommendation to study reduced or free fare programs builds off the 2017 Coordinated Plan's recommendation to "Continue to pursue funding alternatives to maintain/reduce fares" which was deemed a "High" priority. Multiple stakeholders, including Thousand Oaks Transit and attendees of the veterans affinity group meeting, also suggested the idea of studying reduced and free fares. Caregivers noted that "some seniors we serve have a hard time even paying the \$3 each way fare." However, there was relatively less enthusiasm for this strategy when shared with the general public, as it did not score in the top half of strategies.

### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- Document and confirm all existing discounted/free fare policies across all agencies serving Ventura County.
- Promote existing discounted fare policies to target populations.
- Coordinate with social service agencies serving eligible populations to provide free/reduced fare media products for both fixed-route and demand-response services.

### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- Working with local transit agencies, study the possibility of free local service.
- When any new fare policies are enacted, continue monitoring performance of transit, with a focus on ridership, but also dwell time at stops and overall travel time.

### Potential Challenges

Free transit carries the potential for more regular riders. With bus transit operations and frequency already strained by current limitations in the supply of drivers, some vehicles may become overcrowded to the detriment of the overall transit rider experience. Rolling out a reduced or free fare policy only for qualifying individuals would also incur additional costs, such as administrative processing and fraud protection. Furthermore, piloting free transit for a limited amount of time may deter ridership over the long run, leading to rider disappointment and mistrust. Therefore, it is important to secure a reliable and consistent source of funding to offset lost revenue.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1 and 4
Estimated Cost	Medium
Ridership Potential	High
Social Equity Potential	High
Level of Effort	Low
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission and public transit agencies

#### Precedent

- In January 2020, the University of California released a study on existing free or reduced transit fare programs in the state. Recommendations for future programs included simplified eligibility requirements
- In LA County, LA Metro and other agencies participate in the LIFE (or Low-Income Fare is Easy) fare discount program, which reduces the cost of public transportation for individuals with low incomes. For participating agencies, the program provides discounts to riders purchasing monthly and weekly passes, or 20 free rides. To apply, individuals can self-certify that they meet income requirements (ranging from \$41,400 or less for a one-person household to \$68,600 or less for a six-person household). Applications can be submitted online, by mail, or by dropping off in-person at select locations.

### **Study Volunteer Driver Programs (Medium Priority Program and Service Strategy)**

#### Overview

Volunteer driver programs connect riders to a network of volunteers that provide one-way, round-trip, and multi-stop rides. The cost of participation in these programs can be provided free of charge, on a donation basis, through membership dues, or at a minimal cost. VCTC — or a partnering non-profit organization — may also seek to assist sponsoring mileage reimbursements for volunteer drivers.

Volunteer drivers typically use their own vehicle, but insurance is provided by the program sponsor. Some volunteer driver programs may also have an escort component

where volunteers accompany riders with mobility devices on paratransit services, when they are unable to travel in a private vehicle.

As pandemic recovery continues, an option like volunteer driving may be more palatable to previously cautious riders. Additionally, volunteer driver programs can provide a needed transportation alternative to existing options in Ventura County.

In the 2016-2017 Coordinated Plan, the recommendation to “Support continued specialized transportation projects: taxi voucher, volunteer driver, etc.” was listed as a very high priority. The current Coordinated Plan notes that “cross-county and inter-county travel trips are hard to achieve, especially if outside of the larger population and transit centers,” and volunteer drivers may help fill this observed need. The idea of studying programs for volunteer drivers/carpoolers was also suggested in meetings with The Arc and individuals working at the Naval Base. Finally, this recommendation was supported by members of the public — particularly at the Simi Valley Senior Center. There, individuals expressed a need for more flexibility to reach destinations beyond the timing and scheduling limitations of current services.

#### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- Speak with representatives of California county transportation commissions about their experiences and suggestions in programming and establishing a volunteer driver reimbursement program.
- Identify key personnel tasked with the establishment and functioning of a volunteer driver program.

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- Identify partnering agencies to assist in recruiting volunteer drivers for a pilot program. Identify existing staff to help provide initial rides or to fill gaps when volunteers are unavailable.
- Establishing an appropriate driver screening process, along with an effective training and orientation system.
- Secure insurance for volunteer drivers.
- Set up an online platform to facilitate. Market the program, targeting special needs groups along with communities underserved by the existing transit network.

#### Potential Challenges

It is essential that volunteer drivers follow all necessary procedures to safely transport riders (especially older adults and/or individuals with disabilities). Volunteer participation may be affected by fluctuating costs for gas and repairs. Because a previous iteration of a driver reimbursement program stopped after running out of 5310 funding, a sustained and reliable funding source will be an important factor in restarting any future Ventura County program.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1 and 3
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Estimated Cost	High
Ridership Potential	Low
Social Equity Potential	Medium
Level of Effort	Medium
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, consolidated transportation services agency, human service agencies, and public transit agencies

**Precedent**

- TREP (Transportation Reimbursement Escort Program) is a self-directed, mileage reimbursement transportation service that complements public transportation in San Bernardino County. Volunteers such as friends and neighbors transport transit-dependent older adults, people with disabilities, and others to access medical and other services where no transit service exists. Participants receive funds to reimburse the driver. If qualified, participants must identify someone who is willing to be their driver. Participants keep track of their trips and miles and report them at the end of the month. Participants can then relay the reimbursement to their driver. Qualifying participants are unable to drive, unable to use other forms of transportations (such as buses), live in San Bernardino County's rural, mountain, or desert communities, and are not simultaneously using the complementary ADA paratransit service.
- The Washington State Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation published the Volunteer Drivers Guide: A Guide to Best Practices (2013), which provides a framework for volunteer driver programs. MassMobility also compiles sample materials and practice briefs sharing lessons and best practices from volunteer driver programs in Massachusetts.

**One-Seat (and / or On-Demand) Option for Cross-Jurisdictional Trips (Medium Priority Program and Service Strategy)**

**Overview**

A byproduct of nine different bus systems across the county is that fixed-route and demand-response trips involving multiple agencies are too complicated. This important gap means that a hypothetical trip from Ojai to Thousand Oaks (which a stakeholder raised as a real possibility based on their personal experience) can take a significant amount of time. Additional desired transit connections have surfaced from parallel planning efforts. For example, the most frequent comment received during the public participation process of 2022-2023 Unmet Transit Needs Study highlighted the "repeat demand expressed for several years regarding connectivity between the cities of Fillmore and Moorpark." The suggestion of expanded on-demand cross-jurisdictional services addressing this gap was raised in multiple Coordinated Plan meetings, including those with CTAC/SSTAC and the caregivers affinity group.



Offering one-seat rides across service areas is the most important attribute of this strategy. A second but beneficial attribute to consider would be same-day (or on-demand) demand-response transit, which offers users of traditional paratransit and other services the opportunity to have trip and booking flexibility. Such a service can also help meet same-day travel needs as they arise, such as unexpectedly late or early work shifts, responding to family emergencies, and last-minute openings of appointments. These trips are particularly important for people who do not have access to a personal vehicle. On-demand services offer a sense of autonomy and independence for customers but can also aid in lowering per/trip costs for the transit provider. Depending on how the program is defined, there is potential for this service to go to locations beyond minimum ADA paratransit service areas.

#### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- Consider engaging transportation network companies (TNCs) and local taxi companies to offer a pilot program, with the agency subsidizing trips for customers and/or serving as the centralized broker for such trips. In most cases, wheelchair accessible vehicles are not available through TNCs, and agencies have contracted with taxi companies to provide accessible service.
- An alternative option is to contract transit operators or a consolidated transportation services agency (CTSA) to provide the service. The administration and operation costs of such a service would have to be supported by additional funds, so an agency does not compromise any of their existing operations.

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- Continue to monitor operating costs per ride and other performance and usage metrics, especially when compared to the equivalent measurements for existing services like ADA paratransit.

#### Potential Challenges

Ongoing driver labor supply challenges may impact the feasibility of implementing this strategy. Additionally, the potential reduction in per-trip costs would need to be weighed against the increased costs of induced demand, especially for same-day service. Other challenges include that, depending on the area (particularly in more rural areas), the availability of taxis and fully accessible vehicles (via taxi or TNC) may be more limited in general. Throughout the state, there has been a history of strained relationships between some transit agencies and third-party operators and/or brokerages. These tensions can result from reduced overall transit ridership or a lack of regular communication, which can impact the efficacy and breadth of programs intended to serve an entire region. When implementing this strategy, agencies and partnering providers must also be mindful of service equivalencies for passengers with disabilities.

#### Implementation Summary

Goals Addressed	1, 2, 3, and 4
Estimated Cost	High

Ridership Potential	Low
Social Equity Potential	High
Level of Effort	High
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, consolidated transportation services agency, public transit agencies, and human service agencies

**Precedent**

- In San Diego County, a program for general purpose trips is managed by Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT), a nonprofit serving as the area's respective consolidated transportation services agency (CTSA). The program, RideFACT, serves people 60 years and older, as well as persons with disabilities throughout all 18 cities and many nonurban areas of San Diego County. When the program began in 2012, RideFACT helped establish FACT's countywide transportation brokerage. Brokerage members consist of private companies and nonprofits who offer transportation services. Members offer competitive rates as the brokerage operates on the lowest cost basis. Since then, FACT has expanded services to include a comprehensive referral database of transportation services operated by public transportation agencies, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, and specialized transportation services in San Diego County. Other services include special event transportation and vehicle sharing programs (which are also handled through the brokerage).
- Connexion Plus, the complementary paratransit system provided by the Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTA), was established to offer premium paratransit services for JTA's current Connexion customers. Connexion Plus allows customers to reserve and experience private, same-day, door-to-door paratransit services in Duval County, Florida. JTA partnered with UZURV to offer the Connexion Plus services. UZURV is an adaptive transportation network company that offers on-demand paratransit services and assisted mobility. Customers can call JTA customer service to request a ride a minimum of 2 hours in advance of the requested pick-up time. Fares are collected by credit card only, and the service costs \$6.00 for the primary passenger within a 15-mile range, with \$2.00 for additional 15 miles. Friends and family may ride with the passenger for a \$4.00 fare; with free fares for Personal Care Attendants (PCAs).

**Feeder Services to Existing Regional and Inter-County Transit Hubs (Medium Priority Program and Service Strategy)**

**Overview**

For some people who live or work in Ventura County, there is interest accessing longer-distance or commuter transit (such as Metrolink or VCTC Intercity services), but gaps remain between the locations where such services stop and the final origin/destination points for many potential riders. Additionally, with projected population growth in

unincorporated areas, Fillmore, Santa Paula, and Moorpark expected to outpace central cities like Ventura, there will be a growing need to alleviate pressures on the countywide transportation system through a comprehensive multimodal approach. By connecting outlying areas to the high-frequency/high-capacity trunk routes of the core transit network, a feeder service carries the potential for additional people to ride without depending on a personal vehicle or an expensive taxi/TNC trip to access the transit network. Feeder services can be demand-response or fixed-route, but their intent is to help improve the coverage of the overall network.

This strategy may help overcome barriers related to cross-county and inter-county trips, which was identified as a key Coordinated Plan need. It was also suggested in meetings with representatives of the Naval Base and educational institutions (CSUCI and Ventura Adult and Continuing Education).

After local transit service is restored by agencies to pre-pandemic levels, agencies may consider connections between outlying locations (e.g., Port Hueneme, Point Mugu, and CSU-Channel Islands) and transit centers providing connecting services to Los Angeles and Santa Barbara Counties. Although many cross-county and inter-county transit rides may be a relatively small portion of current trips from the perspective of local transit agencies, there is potential for adding new riders through feeder services and the strategy overlaps with the VCTC mission to improve countywide connectivity.

#### Short-Term Implementation Steps

- Stakeholders who voiced concerns in the Coordinated Plan providers survey that “information on local transit services is not always available or easy to understand” should be consulted for suggestions on where service needs to go.
- As an alternative to an entirely new service, it may be worth exploring more transfer opportunities akin to the transfer between local fixed-routes, ADA paratransit/Dial-a-Ride (DAR) services, express bus routes, and commuter rail at Camarillo. At that location, there are also opportunities for transferring between regional DAR service (CONNECT) and local DAR transit in Camarillo. Regardless of mode, coordinated transfers at transit centers — achieved through adjustments in scheduling and fare cross-honoring — are worth exploring for the purpose of reducing barriers to inter-county and cross-county transit travel.
- Identify potential funding sources, particularly from significant employers and developments.

#### Long-Term Implementation Steps

- A specialized pilot for ADA eligible patrons to take a specific number of round trips per month could be incorporated into a feeder service to transfer points.
- Trip pairs and corridors which continue to remain unserved may be proposed as part of a package of future multimodal transportation projects that would originate through an expansion of funding.

#### Challenges

This strategy may be affected by ongoing driver labor supply challenges. In addition, transferring between transit routes may be a challenging experience for older adults with limited stamina, even at a staffed station with restrooms.

Some transit routes connecting outlying locations, such as VCTC Intercity routes 97 and 99, are partially funded by serviced employers like CSUCI. These funding entities, already dependent on parking revenues and other streams which were unexpectedly limited during the pandemic, may be strained or hesitant to program any additional routes.

Past pilot connections, such as Metrolink to Thousand Oaks, have also been introduced with limited success. Deliberate involvement from current transit riders — paired with marketing to potential riders — are important for keeping such a service sustainable into the future.

Additional effort must also be made to interline services. The feeder route and driver shift schedules may need to revolve around arrival and departure times of the main connecting service. Otherwise, the amount of time riders spend waiting for a transfer may be unacceptably long.

**Implementation Summary**

Goals Addressed	1, 2, and 3
Estimated Cost	High
Ridership Potential	High
Social Equity Potential	Medium
Level of Effort	High
Responsible Organizations	County transportation commission, consolidated transportation services agency, and public transit agencies

**Precedent**

The Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) for the Boston region has a guidebook on best practices for the operations of a successful community shuttle program. Beyond examples of shuttle programming through Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), the guidebook also features critical questions to ask and stakeholders to involve throughout the entire process.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The Coordinated Plan is a reference for public, private, and non-profit transportation and human service organizations seeking an understanding of the transportation options for people with special needs throughout Ventura County. It also serves as a guide for government decision-makers and community leaders to enact strategic policies, programs, and infrastructure improvements that help meet the mobility needs of older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, veterans, and youth. It is now the responsibility of the State, Ventura County, local communities, and other partners to implement the strategies set by this plan.



## NEXT STEPS

In the past few years, Ventura County has experienced many of the same difficulties also facing the United States, including increased cost of living<sup>29</sup> and risks associated with climate change. Along with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that are still felt today, these challenges call greater attention to the longstanding disparities in access to affordable healthcare, economic and educational opportunities, and social services. The key population groups that are the focus of this Coordinated Plan may continue to be at risk of isolation, poverty, and other obstacles to living a long and dignified life.

Ventura County Transportation Commission can rise to the challenge of addressing these disparities by implementing the Coordinated Plan strategies. Additional steps can be taken in the near term by VCTC and its implementation partners to ensure implemented policies, programs and services, and infrastructure improvements directly respond to community-identified needs and gaps.

### **Expand Community Involvement**

The ongoing risk of contracting COVID-19 limited the availability for in-person engagement and the key populations that are the focus of the Coordinated Plan (particularly people with disabilities and people with low incomes) may not have had access to online resources. Between the adoption of this Coordinated Plan and its subsequent update, VCTC and its implementation partners should continue outreach and engagement efforts to communities that were isolated during the pandemic. This may involve deepening existing or establishing new relationships with community-based organizations and community leaders who are seen as trusted partners of the community to build inroads within hard-to-reach communities. This may also involve formalizing requirements to provide translated materials and interpretation services for all public outreach and engagement efforts so that non-English speaking households can participate in local and regional decision-making processes.

### **Coordinate with TIES**

In addition to the Coordinated Plan Update, VCTC has been leading an exploratory effort to identify potential efficiencies in the delivery of local and regional bus transit throughout Ventura County. Known as TIES, the Transit Integration and Efficiency Study will include specific recommendations that may impact the implementation of priorities in the near-term. With the TIES planning process still underway, VCTC should ensure the high priority strategies of this Coordinated Plan align with recommendations in the TIES.

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<sup>29</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, West Region – April 2022, Accessed via [https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex\\_west.htm](https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_west.htm)

## **7 APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A: DIRECTORY OF TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS**

**APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES**

**APPENDIX C: STRATEGY PRIORITIZATION METHODOLOGY**