

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan examines Ventura County's demographics and transportation environment with the aim of identifying the mobility needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes, and veterans. This plan is an update of the FY 2016/2017 Coordinated Plan and was developed with input from individuals representing transportation, health, and human services organizations from across the county, as well as the public. The plan includes the following components:

- Overview of regional demographics
- Inventory of transportation providers
- Summary of identified needs and gaps
- Proposed goals and strategies, as well as implementation guidance



Figure 1 Ventura County



Changing Demographics

Since the adoption of the previous Coordinated Plan, the total population of Ventura County increased by 1% (from 835,790 residents in 2014 to 847,263 in 2019). The share of older adults (65 or older) has increased even faster than the overall population during that same period, with a 21% increase (as shown on Figure 2). It is estimated that older adults will comprise an increasing share of Ventura County's population as Baby Boomers continue to age. Similarly, the share of individuals living with a disability increased by 9% from 2014 to 2019. These trends will have significant implications on the demand for transit services in the region, as an increasing share of the population loses their ability to drive and the necessity to provide services to support aging in place increases.

The share of youth population (17 and younger) stands at 23% of the total population, but it decreased by 5% since 2014. The veteran population decreased by 14%, following a downward trend also observed nationwide. Additionally, the share of people with low

incomes decreased by 23%, a trend also observed in nearby Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties, which is likely attributable to increases in employment during the past decade and to the out-migration of low-income individuals in the region.

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%
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%

Regarding longer-term population and employment projections, the California DoF estimates that Ventura County’s total population is expected to increase (although with declining annual growth rates) until the year 2040, after which it will experience declines annually until 2060. Similarly, job growth is expected in the near-term, but with gradual declines in the following decades.

Gaps and Needs

This section 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.



Trips involving multiple demand-response systems are too complicated.

There are seven different public agencies providing demand-response dial-a-ride service in Ventura County, each with its own eligibility requirements, fares, and hours of operation. With these existing variations and the need to arrange for transfers, demand-response services are prone to longer trip planning requirements and travel times than fixed-route services.

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

In some locations, access to transit stops is challenging for older adults and people with disabilities. Stops may lack complete sidewalks for safe access and/or shelter from the elements, and the distances people must walk to access transit can also prove difficult to overcome. Making fixed transit options more accessible can entice paratransit-certified riders to utilize fixed-route transit (which cost less to operate per passenger) more often.

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

There are few on-demand and non-emergency medical transportation options for people traveling to and from Ventura to Thousand Oaks or from Ventura County to Los Angeles County. The limited number of same-day options is a challenge for individuals requiring more immediate medical attention and for discharged patients (often on a short notice) at healthcare facilities.

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

Often, actions such as providing assistance to passengers are made at the discretion of the providers and drivers of demand-response services. Seniors and people with disabilities could be better served with demand-response door-through-door or door-to-door service tailored to meet their particular needs.

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

Specialized transit services in Ventura County tend to be concentrated in larger cities, such as Oxnard, Ventura, and Thousand Oaks. Gaps exist for trips from more populated areas to outlying cities or unincorporated parts of the county. Additionally, options for trips between Ventura County and neighboring Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties are very limited, and not always covered for paratransit services.

Summary of Goals

Since the adoption of the previous Coordinated Plan, there have been multiple developments that have changed the present circumstances of public transit in Ventura County (for example, the lifting of spending restrictions on certain Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allocations with the CARES ACT, and Camarillo Area Transit (CAT) and Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD) providing direct service between Oxnard and Camarillo). The goals of the current Coordinated Plan focus on the needs of target communities while also taking into account the changes that have taken place in the transportation landscape of the county. Goals for this Coordinated Plan were also informed by stakeholder feedback received throughout the planning process.

The proposed goals are the following:

- **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

Summary of Strategies

Strategies for the Coordinated Plan were developed through a defined process that included the development of draft strategies based on community input as well as on the identification of needs and gaps by the project team. The revised and prioritized strategies were obtained with the aid of votes and comments from the public and stakeholders. A ranking of each strategy's score (accounting for factors such as cost-effectiveness, ridership, and equity) was combined with an additional ranking based on votes obtained from the public during various pop-up meetings. The combined ranking was utilized to categorize strategies into "high" and "medium" priorities. The resulting strategies are shown in Figure 3.

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Figure 3 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
Implement 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