

VENTURA COUNTY

Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES)

Presentation to Ventura County Transportation Commission
February 3, 2023

FEHR & PEERS



Why Study Transit Integration?

- TIES was initiated by Commission discussion in summer 2020
 - Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on transit ridership and finance
 - Underscored race and equity issues nationwide, and challenges for 'essential workers' and general public to access jobs and services without a car
 - Ridership nationally has been falling despite growing population and strong economy
- Challenges facing transit have only increased
 - Inflation and escalating costs, fewer contractor bids
 - Increased congestion and more competition with transit

TIES Background

- Similar study previously in 2010-2012
- Some changes followed, including formation of GCTD and ECTA
- Current study began in 2021
 - Examined data about every transit service in Ventura County
 - Held six “operator working group” sessions
 - Interviewed Commissioners
 - Interviewed staff and city managers
 - Collaborated with “Coordinated Services Plan”
 - Focus group outreach for critical rider groups

Consultant Role in the Study

- Help all project partners **understand the big picture**
- Identify **potential strategies** that are contextually appropriate
- Evaluate likely outcomes of **three different alternatives**
- Advise on **next steps** towards selection and implementation

**What processes, practices and policies
can be better coordinated or
integrated to improve outcomes for
riders and/or free up limited resources
to expand our capacity?**

Can Integration Improve Transit Service and Rider Experience in Ventura County?

What are the Issues?

- Except in Gold Coast's district, each community has a self-administered local service, plus VCTC intercity service
- Together these services do not form a strong regional network
- Highly local focus on service delivery limits interest in improving regional connectivity

What are the Issues?

- Paratransit, dial-a-ride, and microtransit are growing
- Interagency agreements improving passenger experience
- Still barriers to providing interagency service
- Difficult to achieve greater efficiency without integration

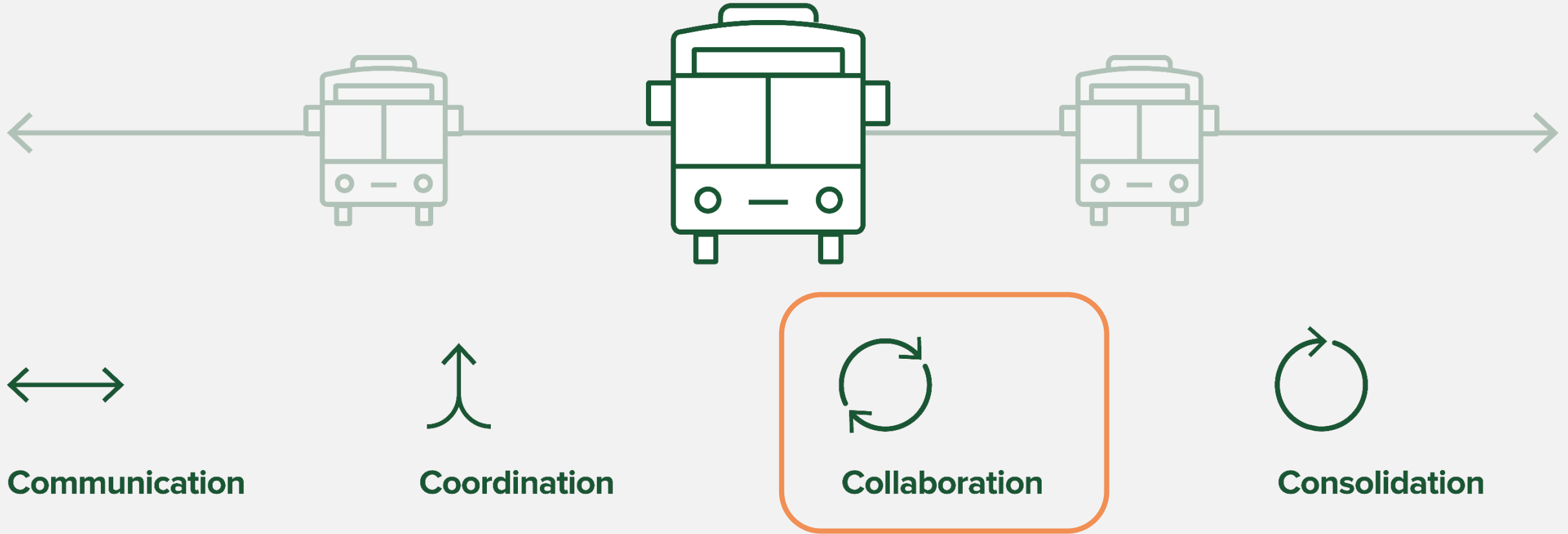
What are the Issues?

- Wide variation between communities in
 - Rider policies
 - Fares and passes
 - Program eligibility
 - Quality of published information
 - Online presence
- Variation can reflect “local community” but can also hamper interoperability and connectivity

What are the Issues?

- “Behind the scenes” issues
 - Increased expenses
 - Less competitive contracts
 - Driver retention and employer competition
 - Changing local priorities

Approaches to Integration



Adapted and modified from North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Statewide Regionalization Study Final Report, 2012.

Recommended Actions/Strategies

- Improve financial resilience by coordinating administrative functions
- Centralize demand-response call-taking and scheduling
- Align rider policies, fares, and eligibility
- Standardize surveying, marketing, and online presence

Alternatives Summary

Integrating recommended actions and strategies into delivery

Approach to Alternatives

- Created three scenarios ranging from
 - Mostly collaborative
 - Partial consolidation along functional boundaries
 - Full consolidation to a county-level agency
- Other variations and alternatives are possible
- Alternatives provide framework for stakeholders to respond to and adapt moving forward

Alternative 1

- Subregional consolidation of demand-response service
- Increased and formalized interagency coordination
 - Fixed-route service planning
 - Group procurements and operating contracts, where possible
 - Standardize rider policies
 - Regional marketing, surveying, institutional partnerships

Alternative 2

- Creation of a countywide demand-response agency
 - Includes all paratransit and dial-a-ride programs
 - Probably housed within another agency initially
- Subregional consolidation of fixed-route service into two agencies
 - Gold Coast Transit + Camarillo, Ojai, Valley Express, VCTC (bus)
 - Thousand Oaks + Kanan Shuttle, Moorpark, Simi Valley
- Three agencies simplifies coordination, focuses all staff on “transit” and subregional responsiveness
- VCTC remains as RTPA, transfers all bus operations to Gold Coast

Alternative 3

- All public transit services integrated into Gold Coast Transit District
- Board structure of GCTD changes to accommodate a more regional makeup
- Most operating bases (Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Ojai, Valley Express) would remain as operating divisions
- VCTC remains as RTPA, transfers all bus operations and transit planning to Gold Coast

Alternatives Comparison

- Alt 1 requires an action plan and voluntary commitment to develop improvements
- Alt 2 balances risk by relying on existing partnerships, creates subregional platform for change
- Alt 3 is ambitious with the greatest ability for the resulting agency to enact regional change, but the most difficult to execute

	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3
How it improves passenger experience	1	3	4
How it reduces operating and capital costs	1	3	4
How it integrates existing operating systems	1	3	4
How it enhances regional service coverage	1	2	4
How it provides more community-responsive and equitable transit service	0	2	3
Risks and challenges of this approach	3	1	0
Implementation Complexity	4	2	0

Alternatives Comparison

- Alt 1 likely has least benefit for cost efficiency, protects city revenues for transit and roads
- Alt 2 could be more expensive than existing initially due to creation of 1-2 new agencies, will likely take some time to realize cost efficiencies
- Alt 3 has greatest potential for administrative cost efficiency and increases revenue to transit through TDA, but has negative effect for some city budgets

Roadmap for the Future

- TIES defined the issues and practical strategies to improve
- Alternatives provide a roadmap for how to implement strategies
- Alternative 1 codifies actions mostly agreed-on already, sets the stage for future integration

Stakeholder Concerns

Key Concerns and Issues

Funding Funding Funding

- Partial or full consolidation should result in cost efficiency
- Significant loss of road maintenance funds for certain cities
- Increased TDA to a countywide agency benefits riders
- Uncertainty about outcomes, assumption that TIES will result in greater expense

Key Concerns and Issues

A regional agency will be unable or unwilling to maintain local/specialized service

- Camarillo Dial-a-Ride
- Ojai Trolley
- Moorpark Microtransit
- Most regional agencies operate specialized local services

Key Concerns and Issues

Consolidation will result in reduction or elimination of “underperforming” service in smaller communities

- “Do no harm” sentiment
- Regional agencies must balance different definitions of success for urban and suburban/rural areas
- Not recommending major service changes linked to TIES
- Resulting agency responsible for evaluating all local and regional service needs

Consultant Summary Following TIES

- “How to improve transit” is a broad subject
- Many strategies identified, but how to execute?
- These alternatives are not the only way to proceed
- In most cases, regions that have taken the “big swing” come out far better for it, and rarely do integrations fall apart
- However, many regions study “TIES” for years without acting

Next Steps

- Commission to develop position
- Solicit public input
- Collaborate with represented groups
- VCTC to conduct regional Short Range Transit Plan, which will include TIES strategies
- Staff begin implementing “low-hanging fruit” actions
- Stakeholders develop working groups (finance, operations, etc.) and legal counsel to proceed based on adopted alternative

Thank You
Questions?

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