

# FY 2026-27 Transit Needs Assessment

Ventura County  
Transportation Commission



## Contents

### List of

Appendices.....	1
Chapter 1: What is the Ventura County Transportation Commission? .....	2
Chapter 2: What is the Unmet Transit Needs Process? .....	3
What is an Unmet Transit Need? .....	4
What is ‘Reasonable to Meet’? .....	5
Chapter 3: Description of TDA-Funded Transit Providers Included in the Unmet Needs Process. 7	
Camarillo Area Transit.....	7
Moorpark City Transit .....	7
Thousand Oaks Transit .....	7
Valley Express Bus & Dial-A-Ride .....	7
VCTC Intercity.....	8
Metrolink Commuter Rail.....	8
Chapter 4: Public Input .....	9
Chapter 5: Transit Needs Assessment & Findings .....	10
Unmet Transit Needs Analysis .....	10
Conclusion .....	13

## Appendices

Appendix A – Passenger Fare Ratio

Appendix B – Public Comments Received for FY 26-27 – Unmet Transit Needs

Appendix C – Public Comments Received for FY 26-27 – All Other Comments

## **Chapter 1: What is the Ventura County Transportation Commission?**

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) is the State-designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Ventura County. In this role, VCTC is responsible for overseeing how federal and state monies for transportation are spent and is responsible for developing transportation plans that identify the region's mobility options and priorities. VCTC is also the State-designated County Transportation Commission, carrying the responsibility of designating how local sales taxes are used for transportation. In addition, VCTC provides intercity bus service throughout Ventura County and VCTC Intercity is the second largest transit operator in the county after the Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD).

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## **Chapter 2: What is the Unmet Transit Needs Process?**

The California State Transportation Development Act (TDA), passed in 1971, provides a major source of funding for local transit, bicycle/pedestrian, and street projects. The legislation, as amended, authorizes the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) to administer the local TDA process and oversee regulatory and fiscal compliance.

The California TDA provides two major sources of annual funding for public transportation: the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) and the State Transit Assistance fund (STA). As the RTPA for the Ventura region, VCTC administers the TDA within the region, allocating TDA funds to eligible claimants (the Cities, the County, and transit operators) within its jurisdiction.

Each year, pursuant to Senate Bill 203, VCTC staff facilitates an annual transit needs assessment to determine if there are any areas in the county where populations of less than 100,000 are not served by public transit to meet their daily transportation needs. The areas in Ventura County with populations under the threshold include City of Camarillo, City of Moorpark, City of Fillmore, and City of Santa Paula. Additionally, on June 11, 2018, legislation allowed Thousand Oaks to spend TDA funds on streets and roads and therefore they now participate in the process as well. To complete this process, VCTC adopts definitions of an “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” criteria to determine if service requests collected during this process can be met by local transit operators or not.

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## What is an Unmet Transit Need?

In 2014, the Commission established a definition for Unmet Transit Needs, with explicit examples to align with the Transportation Development Act (TDA) guidelines, which are more specific than the broader public perception. This definition includes a clear benchmark for "substantial" community support, with 15 requests needed for general public service and 10 for services aimed at the disabled community.

Building on this foundation, in 2023, the Commission refined the definition of Unmet Transit Need to bolster our dedication to advancing the UTN process, particularly for those in disadvantaged areas. By adopting the Median Household Income (MHI) standard for a low-income threshold, the Commission aims to not just maintain the 10 and 15 comment thresholds but to prioritize improvements that meet these criteria while giving special attention to requests from low-income areas that might fall below this threshold. Additionally, for comments that meet the 10 or 15 comment threshold but are considered "Unreasonable to Meet," the agency tasked will pledge to evaluate the proposed service and explore funding for a pilot. Furthermore, the timeline for assessing passenger per hour performance has been increased from 36 to 60 months, endorsing a more comprehensive approach to evaluating new service efficacy over an extended period.

The Definition is as follows:

### **UNMET TRANSIT NEED**

***Public transportation services identified by the public with sufficient broad-based community support that have not been funded or implemented.***

***Unmet transit needs identified in a government-approved plan that meet the definition of an Unmet Transit Need.***

*Sufficient broad-based community support means that persons who will likely use the service on a routine basis demonstrate support: at least 15 requests for general public service and 10 requests for disabled service.*

#### **An Unmet Transit Need Includes:**

- *Public transit services not currently provided to reach employment, medical assistance, shop for food or clothing, to obtain social services such as health care, county welfare programs and education programs. Service must be needed by and benefit the general public.*
- *Service expansions including new routes, significant modifications to existing routes, and major increases in service hours and frequency*

#### **An Unmet Transit Need Excludes:**

- *Operational changes such as minor route changes, bus stop changes, or changes in schedule*
- *Requests for extended hours or days of service*
- *Service for groups or individuals that is not needed by or will not benefit the general public*
- *Comments about vehicles, facilities, driver performance and transit organizational structure*
- *Requests for better coordination*
- *Requests for reduced fares and changes to fare restrictions*
- *Improvements funded or scheduled for implementation in the following year*
- *Future transportation needs*
- *Duplication or replacement of existing service*

## What is 'Reasonable to Meet'?

Once a service request is received and has broad-based support (meeting the 15 or 10 comment threshold), it is further evaluated to determine how feasible it is for the transit operator to expand service. Figure 1 illustrates the criteria adopted by the Commission to evaluate the feasibility of requests to expand or significantly change service.

**Figure 1 – 'Reasonable to Meet' Criteria**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Measures &amp; Criteria</b>
<b>Equity</b>	The proposed service will not cause reductions in existing transit services that have an equal or higher priority	<b>Measures:</b> Vehicle revenue service hours and revenue service miles. <b>Criteria:</b> Transit vehicle service hours and miles will not be reduced on existing routes to fund the proposed service
<b>Timing</b>	The proposed service is in response to an existing rather than future transit need	<b>Criteria: Proposed</b> service is in response to an existing rather than future transit need; based on public input
<b>Feasibility</b>	The proposed service can be provided with the existing fleet or under contract to a private provider	<b>Measure:</b> Vehicle spare ratio: Transit system must be able to maintain FTA's spare ratio requirement of 20% (buses in peak service divided by the total bus fleet cannot fall below 20%). If less than 20%, can additional buses be obtained (purchased or leased) or can service be provided under contract to a private provider?
<b>Feasibility</b>	There are adequate roadways to safely accommodate transit vehicles	<b>Measure &amp; Criteria:</b> Route inspection to determine adequacy of infrastructure to accommodate transit vehicles and passengers.
<b>Cost Effectiveness</b>	The proposed service will not unduly affect the operator's ability to maintain the required passenger fare ratio for its system as a whole	<b>Measure:</b> Total estimate annual passenger fare revenue divided by total annual operating cost (the entire service including the proposed service) <b>Criteria:</b> Fare revenue/ operating cost cannot fall below the operator's required passenger fare ratio.
<b>Cost Effectiveness</b>	The proposed service will meet the scheduled passenger fare ratio	<b>Measures and criteria</b> described below.

Outcome	Definitions	Measures & Criteria
	standards described in Attachment A	
<b>Service Effectiveness</b>	Estimated passengers per hour for the proposed service will not be less than the system-wide average after five years.	<b>Measure:</b> Passengers per hour. <b>Criteria:</b> Projected passengers per hour for the proposed service is not less than 70% of the system-wide average (without the proposed service) at the end of 12 month of service, 85% at the end of 24 months of service, and 100% at the end of 60 months of service.

*\*The fact that an identified transit need cannot be fully met based on available resources shall not be the sole reason for finding that a transit need is not reasonable to meet. Comparing unmet transit needs with the needs for streets and roads is not allowable in determining transit needs that are reasonable to meet.*

## **Chapter 3: Description of TDA-Funded Transit Providers Included in the Unmet Needs Process**

VCTC Intercity service does not utilize TDA Article 8 funds for non-transit purposes; however, service requests for the regional service it provides are included in the process. The GCTD, City of Ojai and the City of Simi Valley do not utilize or claim TDA Article 8 funds for non-transit purposes and their service is not subject to the Unmet Transit Needs process.

### **Camarillo Area Transit**

Camarillo Area Transit (CAT) operates two fixed routes. One route runs seven days a week approximately every thirty minutes. The second route runs five days a week, approximately every hour. The routes are within the city and run approximately every half an hour. CAT also offers general public DAR service every day of the week, but it does not include school trips.

### **Moorpark City Transit**

Moorpark City Transit (MCT) operates one fixed route with service Monday through Friday. The route is within the city and run approximately every hour. In addition, MCT provides senior DAR and ADA paratransit service Monday through Friday. The City of Moorpark contracts with Thousand Oaks to provide DAR services. MCT also operates an on demand microtransit program available Monday through Friday.

### **Thousand Oaks Transit**

Thousand Oaks Transit (TOT) operates six fixed routes, with service Monday through Saturday. The routes are within the city and run a loop pattern every hour. Thousand Oaks Transit also provides senior Dial-A-Ride and ADA paratransit service seven days a week. In addition, a seasonal service to Zuma Beach and Ventura Harbor is provided during the Summer.

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

Valley Express Bus & Dial-A-Ride serves the communities of Santa Paula, Fillmore, Piru and the unincorporated areas that make up the Heritage Valley. Fixed-route service consists of two community circulators, within the cities of Santa Paula and Fillmore, a route connecting the community of Piru with the city of Fillmore, and another connecting the cities of Fillmore and Moorpark. Each route is scheduled to make timed connections with the VCTC Intercity Highway 126 line (Routes 60).

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

### **VCTC Intercity**

The Ventura County Transportation Commission operates VCTC Intercity, an intercity bus network that operates primarily within Ventura County, with service also extending into Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties. VCTC Intercity currently operates six fixed routes that provide intercity service between, Woodland Hills, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, Oxnard, California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI), Fillmore, Santa Paula, Ventura, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and Goleta.

### **Metrolink Regional Rail**

Metrolink is now operating eight round-trip weekday trains from Los Angeles Union Station to Moorpark, three of which extend to East Ventura, and two round-trip Saturday and Sunday trains between Union Station and East Ventura. Additionally, through the codeshare program an additional five round-trip trains are available to Metrolink ticket holders. Although Metrolink is a regional commuter rail service provider serving the five-county Southern California region including Ventura County, VCTC is a member agency which contributes TDA LTF funding to operate the Ventura County Line. The Ventura County Line serves six stations including Ventura Downtown/Beach, East Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Moorpark, and Simi Valley, plus seven stations in Los Angeles County. Requests for expanded Metrolink service were included in this analysis because of its service to cities with populations of less than 100,000.

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## **Chapter 4: Public Input**

The public comment period for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Unmet Transit Needs process was held between December 15, 2025 and February 15, 2026 with all comments collected throughout the year also included in this report.

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

A total of 166 comments were received, primarily through surveys (135). Additional comments came via community meetings (11), email (8), social media (7) and phone (5), Individual respondents provided multiple comments within a single submission.

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## Chapter 5: Transit Needs Assessment & Findings

### Unmet Transit Needs Analysis

Throughout the year and during the public comment period, VCTC received a total of 166 comments through the online survey, social media posts, email, phone calls, and public comments that were received at the community meetings and Public Hearing. Many of the comments received this year focused on general requests for increased service frequency, expanded service hours, and improved connectivity between transit operators. Additional comments included general concerns about existing bus service, requests related to bus stop locations or infrastructure, and broader city planning or transit operations matters. Several comments also requested service to destinations outside Ventura County, including Santa Barbara County and Los Angeles County which are not applicable to the Unmet Transit Needs process.

Comments of this nature, as well as those that did not meet the definition of an Unmet Transit Need, were not included in the formal Unmet Transit Needs evaluation but were forwarded to the appropriate transit operators for consideration as part of ongoing service planning efforts.

Comments regarding an expressed demand for new service in the applicable cities were assessed to determine if the request for service met the definition of an Unmet Transit Need using the Commission's adopted criteria. None of the requests met the 15-comment threshold for fixed route or the 10-comment threshold for dial-a-ride service and therefore were not further screened to determine if the need was reasonable to meet.

The majority of transit improvement requests received this year emphasize improving connectivity between transit lines and operators, increasing service frequency, and expanding service hours across Ventura County. Comments most frequently identified the need for expanded service hours, representing the single largest comment category with 52 responses, followed by requests for better coordination between transit providers, more direct travel options between cities, and improved travel times to support work, school, and medical trips. Though there were 52 comments in this general category, no one particular request for increased service in a certain location had more than 15 comments. A notable number of comments also raised operational concerns, including unreliable arrivals, missed transfers, scheduling gaps, and capacity issues that affect the dependability of existing service. Operator review clarified that some perceived service issues were related to rider preferences rather than capacity constraints. In some cases, service adjustments have been made to address these operational challenges. For example, service to Dos Vientos and portions of the Newbury Park High School route were modified or discontinued due to consistently low ridership and their disproportionate impact on route mileage and on-time performance.

Several comments also highlighted regional connectivity needs beyond Ventura County. Overall, these requests reflect continued community interest in reliable, coordinated, and frequent transit service to better support everyday mobility needs.

A particularly notable trend this year is the continued and high volume of requests for expanded evening and Sunday service. Community members across multiple cities including Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Ventura, Simi Valley, and Oxnard identified limited evening hours and the absence of Sunday service as significant barriers to accessing work, shopping centers, medical appointments, religious services, and leisure destinations. In Camarillo, Dial-A-Ride service is available to the general public seven days a week, which addresses some comments received regarding local service availability. These requests reinforce that evening and weekend mobility remains a vital and growing component of public transit across Ventura County.

Requests for transit connections to Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria continue to reflect strong commuter interest in enhanced rail connectivity from Ventura County. Comments emphasized the need for restored pre-pandemic service levels, improved schedules tailored to work-related commuting, and expanded frequency along the Ventura–Santa Barbara corridor. In response to recent rider feedback, schedule adjustments were implemented on the Coastal Express route in February 2026 to address timing concerns, with additional adjustments planned for May 2026 to further improve reliability. Additionally, a new daily Amtrak Pacific Surfliner commuter service is scheduled to launch on May 4, 2026, providing morning northbound and afternoon southbound trips with stops throughout Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. Although this service extends beyond Ventura County and does not qualify formally as an unmet transit need, its launch directly responds to one of the most persistently requested improvements identified through this process over multiple years.

The Fillmore–Moorpark route, launched in August 2024 as a joint service between VCTC and Valley Express, has demonstrated strong ridership growth and continued community support in its first full year of operation. Comments received this year continue to reflect community interest in improved connectivity along this corridor. While these comments do not individually meet the threshold to qualify as an unmet transit need, they support continued attention to service enhancements as the route continues to grow.

Requests for transit connections between the Heritage Valley including Piru, Fillmore, Santa Paula and Santa Clarita continue to appear regularly, reflecting sustained community interest in regional connectivity along the Route 126 corridor. Eight comments this year specifically highlighted the need for direct transit links to Santa Clarita and Valencia for employment, medical, school, and shopping purposes, with several noting that current service only connects Piru to Fillmore and leaves riders without an onward connection. While these requests are

outside Ventura County and thus not formally classified as Unmet Transit Needs, the recurring nature of these comments indicates strong and consistent community interest. VCTC staff continues to plan for a potential partnership with Santa Clarita Transit to bring this service forward and has been working with them and a developer to pursue a grant to support this service.

Transit access to regional airports remains a consistent area of interest in the Unmet Transit Needs process. This year, eight comments requested direct or improved service to LAX, Santa Barbara Airport, and Burbank Airport, with trip origins primarily in Ventura, Camarillo, Ojai, and CSUCI. Riders emphasized the need for dependable, scheduled options that align with flight times, including both on-demand and fixed-route connections. As part of ongoing efforts to address this need, Coastal Express service was expanded to include service to the Santa Barbara Airport through a schedule change implemented in November. While these comments do not meet the threshold to qualify as an unmet transit need, they reflect a long-standing and recurring community request that warrants continued monitoring.

The most frequent comments this year are as follows:

- Requests for expanded evening and Sunday service across multiple operators and cities, including Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Ventura, Simi Valley, and Oxnard, to accommodate work, medical, shopping, religious, and leisure trips.
- Expanded service to Los Angeles County and Santa Barbara County, including increased Metrolink and Amtrak Pacific Surfliner frequency and restored pre-pandemic rail schedules into and out of Ventura County. Notably, a new commuter rail service launching May 4, 2026 directly addresses this longstanding request.
- Requests for expanded transit service within and between Ventura, Camarillo, Oxnard, Moorpark, and Thousand Oaks, emphasizing a strong need for improved intra-county connectivity.
- Persistent requests for improved frequency and better coordination of services across local transit operators to enhance transfer reliability and overall transit efficiency.
- Ongoing community interest in improved airport connections to LAX, Santa Barbara Airport, Burbank Airport, and Oxnard Airport, emphasizing the importance of first mile/last mile transit options for long-distance travel.
- The Fillmore–Moorpark route continues to generate positive community response, with comments reflecting interest in further service enhancements building on the route's strong ridership growth.
- Continued requests for service between Piru and Santa Clarita/Antelope Valley along the Route 126 corridor highlight strong and persistent regional interest.
- Varying improvements to GCTD service, including extended evening hours beyond 6:00 PM, new routes to underserved neighborhoods in Ventura and Oxnard, and improved weekend frequency to better serve work, medical, shopping, and recreational trips.

All comments are essential to improving public transit in Ventura County. Comments that have decent support and have been brought up over the years are taken into consideration for future planning purposes. All comments submitted are included in Appendices B and C. Appendix B includes all comments received that could potentially be considered an Unmet Transit Need if support is increased and Appendix C includes all other comments received through the process.

## **Conclusion**

Several comments received were evaluated by VCTC under the definition of an Unmet Transit Need in terms of public service not provided, or service that currently exists but requires significant route or frequency expansion. This year, no requests met the 15-comment threshold for fixed route service or the 10-comment threshold for dial-a-ride service, and therefore there are no Unmet Transit Needs.

All comments received through this process were forwarded to the operators, who take them into consideration for future planning purposes. VCTC and the operators continue to coordinate to work towards improved transit service including connectivity and transferability for cross-county travel. The comments highlight a community with a sustained need for transit services that are more frequent, reliable, accessible, and responsive to varied daily schedules and destinations. Among these, the demand for extended evening hours and Sunday service remains prominent, reflecting continued growth in transit use for leisure, essential trips, and non-traditional work schedules. This year also marks a significant milestone, as the launch of the new Amtrak Pacific Surfliner commuter service on May 4, 2026 directly responds to one of the most persistently requested improvements identified through this process, demonstrating the value of sustained community engagement.

Although the comments received may not meet the “Unmet Transit Needs” and “reasonable to meet definitions,” VCTC and other transit operators in Ventura County, take these comments and all public input received into consideration and they are critical for transit planning efforts. VCTC and the County’s transit operators thank the public for their participation in this process.