



East County Transit Alliance (ECTA)

TDA Triennial Performance Audit for
FY2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25



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Chapter 1 | Executive Summary

In 2025, the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) selected Moore & Associates, Inc., to prepare Triennial Performance Audits of itself as the RTPA and the 10 transit operators to which it allocates TDA funding.

The California Public Utilities Code requires all recipients of Transit Development Act (TDA) Article 4 funding to undergo an independent performance audit on a three-year cycle in order to maintain funding eligibility. Audits of Article 8 recipients are encouraged.

The Triennial Performance Audit is designed to be an independent and objective evaluation of the East County Transit Alliance (ECTA) as a public transit operator, providing operator management with information on the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its programs across the prior three fiscal years. In addition to assuring legislative and governing bodies (as well as the public) that resources are being economically and efficiently utilized, the Triennial Performance Audit fulfills the requirement of PUC Section 99246(a) that the RTPA designate an entity other than itself to conduct a performance audit of the activities of each operator to which it allocates TDA funds.

This chapter summarizes key findings and recommendations developed during the Triennial Performance Audit (TPA) of the ECTA's public transit program for the period:

- Fiscal Year 2022/23,
- Fiscal Year 2023/24, and
- Fiscal Year 2024/25.

CONNECT InterCity Dial-A-Ride service is provided by the East County Transit Alliance, a cooperative agreement between the cities of Moorpark, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, and the County of Ventura. Seniors age 65 or older and ADA certified-individuals are eligible for the service. The program provides service to most locations in eastern Ventura County and connections with other transit providers such as Gold Coast Transit's GO ACCESS and Los Angeles County's Access Services. CONNECT operates Monday through Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

This performance audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that the audit team plans and performs the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for its findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. Moore & Associates, Inc. believes the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions.

This audit was also conducted in accordance with the processes established by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as outlined in the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*.

The Triennial Performance Audit includes five elements:

- Compliance requirements,
- Prior recommendations,
- Analysis of program data reporting,
- Performance Audit, and
- Functional review.

Test of Compliance

Based on discussions with City of Thousand Oaks staff, analysis of program performance, and an audit of program compliance and function, the audit team presents no compliance findings.

Status of Prior Recommendations

The prior audit – completed in April 2023 by Moore & Associates, Inc. for the three fiscal years ending June 30, 2022 – included one recommendation:

1. Continue to work with MV Transportation to fill the open operations positions and ensure sufficient Dial-A-Ride coverage.
Status: Implemented.

Findings and Recommendations

Based on discussions with City of Thousand Oaks staff, analysis of program performance, and an audit of program compliance and function, the audit team presents no findings related to compliance with the TDA.

Recommendations are intended to assist in bringing the operator into compliance with the requirements and standards of the TDA as well as address non-compliance-related issues, challenges, or opportunities observed during the site visit and functional review. The audit team presents no recommendations for the East County Transit Alliance.

Chapter 2 | Audit Scope and Methodology

The Triennial Performance Audit (TPA) of East County Transit Alliance’s public transit program covers the three-year period ending June 30, 2025. The California Public Utilities Code requires all recipients of Transit Development Act (TDA) funding to complete an independent review on a three-year cycle in order to maintain funding eligibility.

In 2025, the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) selected Moore & Associates, Inc., to prepare Triennial Performance Audits of itself as the RTPA and the 10 transit operators to which it allocates TDA funding. Moore & Associates, Inc. is a consulting firm specializing in public transportation, including audits of non-TDA Article 4 recipients. Selection of Moore & Associates, Inc. followed a competitive procurement process.

The Triennial Performance Audit is designed to be an independent and objective evaluation of the ECTA as a public transit operator. Direct benefits of a Triennial Performance Audit include providing operator management with information on the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its programs across the prior three years; helpful insight for use in future planning; and assuring legislative and governing bodies (as well as the public) that resources are being economically and efficiently utilized. Finally, the Triennial Performance Audit fulfills the requirement of PUC Section 99246(a) that the RTPA designate an entity other than itself to conduct a performance audit of the activities of each operator to whom it allocates funds.

This performance audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that the audit team plans and performs the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for its findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. The auditors believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions.

The audit was also conducted in accordance with the processes established by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as outlined in the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*, as well as *Government Auditing Standards* published by the U.S. Comptroller General.

Objectives

A Triennial Performance Audit (TPA) has four primary objectives:

1. Assess compliance with TDA regulations;
2. Review improvements subsequently implemented as well as progress toward adopted goals;
3. Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the transit operator; and
4. Provide sound, constructive recommendations for improving the efficiency and functionality of the transit operator.

Scope

The TPA is a systematic review of performance evaluating the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of the transit operator. The audit of East County Transit Alliance included six tasks:

1. A review of compliance with TDA requirements and regulations.
2. A review of the status of recommendations included in the prior Triennial Performance Audit.
3. A verification of the methodology for calculating performance indicators including the following activities:
 - Assessment of internal controls,
 - Test of data collection methods,
 - Calculation of performance indicators, and
 - Evaluation of performance.
4. Comparison of data reporting practices:
 - Internal reports,
 - State Controller Reports, and
 - National Transit Database.
5. Examination of the following functions:
 - General management and organization;
 - Service planning;
 - Administration;
 - Marketing and public information;
 - Scheduling, dispatching, and operations;
 - Personnel management and training; and
 - Maintenance.
6. Conclusions and recommendations to address opportunities for improvement based upon analysis of the information collected and the audit of the transit operator's major functions.

Methodology

The methodology for the Triennial Performance Audit of East County Transit Alliance included thorough review of documents relevant to the scope of the audit, as well as information contained on the City of Thousand Oaks' ECTA webpage. The documents reviewed included the following (spanning the full three-year period):

- Monthly performance reports;
- State Controller Reports;
- Annual budgets;
- TDA fiscal audits;
- Transit marketing collateral;
- TDA claims;
- Fleet inventory;
- Preventive maintenance schedules and forms;
- California Highway Patrol Terminal Inspection reports;

- National Transit Database reports;
- Accident/road call logs; and
- Organizational chart.

The methodology for this review included a virtual site visit with the City of Thousand Oaks (as the fiscal agent and operator of the ECTA) on February 20, 2026. The audit team met with Tyler Nestved (Assistant Transit Planner) and Alina Chalas (Transit Analyst), and reviewed materials germane to the triennial audit.

This report is comprised of eight chapters divided into three sections:

1. Executive Summary: A summary of the key findings and recommendations developed during the Triennial Performance Audit process.
2. TPA Scope and Methodology: Methodology of the review and pertinent background information.
3. TPA Results: In-depth discussion of findings surrounding each of the subsequent elements of the audit:
 - Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements,
 - Status of prior recommendations,
 - Consistency among reported data,
 - Performance measures and trends,
 - Functional audit, and
 - Findings and recommendations.

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Chapter 3 | Program Compliance

This section examines the East County Transit Alliance’s compliance with the Transportation Development Act as well as relevant sections of the California Code of Regulations. An annual certified fiscal audit confirms TDA funds were apportioned in conformance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. The ECTA considers full use of funds under California Code of Regulations (CCR) 6754(a) as referring to operating funds but not capital funds. The TPA findings and related comments are delineated in Exhibit 3.1.

The ECTA uses a combination of TDA Article 4 and TDA Article 8 funding claimed by the MOU members. In prior years, the ECTA was not audited separately, but as part of the services provided by the City of Thousand Oaks. However, the Ventura County Transportation Commission, as the RTPA, requested the ECTA be audited separately beginning with the prior audit cycle to support a comprehensive and objective review to provide beneficial insights into program performance. This is ECTA’s second Triennial Performance Audit.

Status of compliance items was determined through discussions with ECTA staff as well as an inspection of relevant documents including the fiscal audits for each year of the triennium, State Controller annual filings, California Highway Patrol terminal inspections, annual program budgets, year-end performance reports, and other compliance-related documentation.

No compliance issues were identified for East County Transit Alliance.

Developments Occurring During the Audit Period

For many transit operators in California, recent years have reflected both the acute impacts of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of FY 2024/25 – even earlier in some cases – most operators had exhausted federal relief funds, even though penalties for non-compliance with farebox recovery ratios continued to be waived. However, the receipt of federal relief funds complicated matters, as they impacted the amount of TDA funding operators were eligible to receive and, in some cases, resulted in over-payments that had to be resolved after the funds were spent. Many operators, even more than five years after the onset of the pandemic, still struggle with ridership that has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

California Assembly Bill 90, signed into law on June 29, 2020, provided temporary regulatory relief for transit operators required to conform with Transportation Development Act (TDA) farebox recovery ratio thresholds in FY 2019/20 and FY 2020/21. California Assembly Bill 149, signed into law on July 16, 2021, provided additional regulatory relief by extending the provisions of AB 90 through FY 2022/23 and adjusting definitions of eligible revenues and operating costs. Most recently, California Senate Bill 125, signed into law on July 10, 2023, extended protections provided via earlier legislation through FY 2025/26. While this means the audit period covered by this audit is fully exempt from penalties for non-compliance with the farebox recovery ratio, for example, it also means that transit operators may need to be in compliance by the second year of the next audit period.

While the ability to maintain state mandates and performance measures is important, these measures enabled transit operators to adjust to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to receive their full allocations of funding under the TDA.

Together, these three pieces of legislation include the following additional provisions specific to transit operator TDA funding under Article 4:

- Prohibits the imposition of the TDA revenue penalty on an operator that did not maintain the required ratio of fare revenues to operating cost from FY 2019/20 through FY 2025/26.
- Expands the definition of “local funds” to enable the use of federal funding to supplement fare revenues and allows operators to calculate free and reduced fares at their actual value.
- Adjusts the definition of operating cost to exclude the cost of ADA paratransit services, demand-response and micro-transit services designed to extend access to service, ticketing/payment systems, security, some pension costs, and some planning costs.
- Allows operators to use STA funds as needed to keep transit service levels from being reduced or eliminated through FY 2025/26.

SB 125 also called for the establishment of the Transit Transformation Task Force to develop policy recommendations aimed at increasing transit ridership and improving the customer experience statewide. In the more than 50 years since the adoption of the Transportation Development Act (TDA), California’s public transportation landscape has evolved significantly. Many transit operators have struggled to meet the farebox recovery ratio requirement, raising questions about whether it remains an appropriate or effective measure of TDA compliance.

In 2018, the chairs of California’s legislative transportation committees asked the California Transit Association to convene a policy task force to examine the TDA. That effort produced a draft framework for reform in early 2020, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Transit Transformation Task Force released its report in December 2025. While the report includes several recommendations to modernize the TDA - including identifying the farebox recovery ratio and operating cost per hour requirements as outdated and recommending that farebox recovery and cost-inflation penalties be replaced - these proposals represent an initial step rather than immediate policy changes. Achieving the necessary funding and statutory reforms will require sustained advocacy over the coming years.

Exhibit 3.1 Transit Development Act Compliance Requirements

Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
State Controller Reports submitted on time.	PUC 99243	In compliance	FY 2022/23: January 29, 2024 FY 2023/24: January 29, 2025 FY 2024/25: January 27, 2026
Fiscal and compliance audits submitted within 180 days following the end of the fiscal year (or with up to 90-day extension).	PUC 99245	In compliance	FY 2022/23: December 12, 2023 FY 2023/24: December 3, 2024 FY 2024/25: November 17, 2025
Operator’s terminal rated as satisfactory by CHP within the 13 months prior to each TDA claim.	PUC 99251 B	In compliance	<i>City of Thousand Oaks:</i> April 14, 2022 April 12, 2023 May 2, 2024 May 7, 2025
Operator’s claim for TDA funds submitted in compliance with rules and regulations adopted by the RTPA.	PUC 99261	In compliance	
If operator serves urbanized and non-urbanized areas, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating costs at least equal to the ratio determined by the rules and regulations adopted by the RTPA.	PUC 99270.1	Not applicable	
Except as otherwise provided, the allocation for any purpose specified under Article 8 may in no year exceed 50% of the amount required to meet the total planning expenditures for that purpose.	PUC 99405	Not applicable	
An operator receiving allocations under Article 8(c) may be subject to regional, countywide, or subarea performance criteria, local match requirements, or fare recovery ratios adopted by resolution of the RTPA.	PUC 99405	Not applicable	
The operator’s definitions of performance measures are consistent with the Public Utilities Code Section 99247.	PUC 99247	In compliance	
The operator does not routinely staff with two or more persons a vehicle for public transportation purposes designed to be operated by one person.	PUC 99264	In compliance	
The operator’s operating budget has not increased by more than 15% over the preceding year, nor is there a substantial increase or decrease in the scope of operations or capital budget provisions for major new fixed facilities unless the operator has reasonably supported and substantiated the change(s).	PUC 99266	In compliance	FY 2022/23: +36.15% FY 2023/24: -19.15% FY 2024/25: +0.00% <i>Source: City of Thousand Oaks program budgets. The FY 2023 increase was due to contractor cost increases.</i>

Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
The expenditure of funds received under Article 4 may not exceed 50 percent of the amount required to meet operating, maintenance, and capital and debt service requirements after the deduction of federal funds and amounts allocated under PUC 99314.5 (STA).	PUC 99268	In compliance	
If the operator serves an urbanized area, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating cost at least equal to one-fifth (20 percent).	PUC 99268.2, 99268.4, 99268.1	Not applicable	
If the operator serves a rural area, it has maintained a ratio of fare revenues to operating cost at least equal to one-tenth (10 percent).	PUC 99268.2, 99268.4, 99268.5	Not applicable	
For a claimant that provides only services to elderly and handicapped persons, the ratio of fare revenues to operating cost shall be at least 10 percent.	PUC 99268.5, CCR 6633.5	In compliance	FY 2022/23: 20.63% FY 2023/24: 20.46% FY 2024/25: 26.29% <i>Source: TDA fiscal audits</i>
If the operator has utilized the exemption from the farebox recovery requirement for extension of services, it shall submit a report on the service to the RTPA within 90 days of the end of the first year of implementation.	PUC 99268.8, CCR 6633.8	Not applicable	
The current cost of the operator's retirement system is fully funded with respect to the officers and employees of its public transportation system, or the operator is implementing a plan approved by the RTPA, which will fully fund the retirement system for 40 years.	PUC 99271	In compliance	City of Thousand Oaks employees are eligible for retirement benefits through CalPERS. Operations personnel are employed by a third party.
An operator claiming funds under Article 4.5 (CTSA) is in compliance with PUC 99268.3, 99268.4, 99268.5, or 99268.9, or regional, countywide, or county subarea performance criteria, local match requirements, or fare recovery ratios adopted by the RTPA.	PUC 99275.5	Not applicable	
If the operator receives State Transit Assistance funds, the operator makes full use of funds available to it under the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 before TDA claims are granted.	CCR 6754 (a) (3)	Not applicable	ECTA does not utilize STA funds.

Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
In order to use State Transit Assistance funds for operating assistance, the operator’s total operating cost per revenue hour does not exceed the sum of the preceding year’s total plus an amount equal to the product of the percentage change in the CPI for the same period multiplied by the preceding year’s total operating cost per revenue hour. An operator may qualify based on the preceding year’s operating cost per revenue hour or the average of the three prior years. If an operator does not meet these qualifying tests, the operator may only use STA funds for operating purposes according to a sliding scale.	PUC 99314.6	Not applicable	ECTA does not utilize STA funds. This requirement was waived during the audit period under AB 149 and SB 125.
For an operator qualifying under PUC 99268.1, the funds received from the local transportation fund under Article 4 shall not exceed 50 percent of the amount that is the sum of the operator’s operating cost, capital requirements, and debt service requirements less the sum of the operator’s revenues from federal grants and the state transit assistance fund. The operator may receive from the local transportation fund up to 100 percent, rather than 50 percent, of the amount representing the operating cost of an extension of its public transportation system if the extension is within the definition of Section 6619.1 and if all the conditions of Section 6633.8 are met.	CCR 6633.1	Not applicable	
A transit claimant is precluded from receiving monies from the Local Transportation Fund and the State Transit Assistance Fund in an amount which exceeds the claimant’s capital and operating costs less the actual amount of fares received, the amount of local support required to meet the fare ratio, the amount of federal operating assistance, and the amount received during the year from a city or county to which the operator has provided services beyond its boundaries.	CCR 6634	In compliance	



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Chapter 4 | Prior Recommendations

This section reviews and evaluates the implementation of prior Triennial Performance Audit recommendations. This objective assessment provides assurance East County Transit Alliance has made quantifiable progress toward improving both the efficiency and effectiveness of its public transit program.

The prior audit – completed in April 2023 by Moore & Associates, Inc. for the three fiscal years ending June 30, 2022 – included one recommendation:

1. Continue to work with MV Transportation to fill the open operations positions and ensure sufficient Dial-A-Ride coverage.

Discussion: While the contractor had improved its general management staffing during the prior audit period, it had been unable to provide sufficient staff to meet the demand for service, primarily with respect to Dial-A-Ride services. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the contractor was deploying 18 to 19 vehicles per day to serve its combined Dial-A-Ride programs. At the time of the previous site visit, only seven vehicles were being deployed each day. This severely impacted Dial-A-Ride reservations. Only about a half of those who called were able to get their requested ride time. One quarter of callers were able to accept a different ride time, while another quarter did not get a ride.

Both the City and MV worked to recruit additional staff. During the prior audit, City staff estimated MV needed to fill approximately 20 operational positions (drivers, dispatchers, and customer service). MV had a recruiter located in Thousand Oaks, while the City and MV worked together to increase the contract cost and raise wages in order to attract qualified candidates.

There were two primary causes of the staffing shortage: Recovery from the reduced demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and lower wages that left the City’s transit operation less competitive within the county. As a result, it was more difficult to recruit operations personnel.

This finding and recommendation was also included in the City of Thousand Oaks’ Triennial Performance Audit. It was repeated in the ECTA audit given the impact the finding has on Dial-A-Ride services provided by the City.

The prior auditor recommended the City continue to work with MV Transportation to fill the open operations positions and ensure sufficient Dial-A-Ride coverage.

Progress: Wage increases were implemented in 2023 to support employee retention. The City of Thousand Oaks has worked with MV to ensure the transit program is fully staffed and maintains sufficient backup drivers. MV has also committed to fully staffing the program and has increased its focus on retention and strengthening relationships with employees.

Status: Implemented



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Chapter 5 | Data Reporting Analysis

An important aspect of the Triennial Performance Audit process is assessing how effectively and consistently the transit operator reports performance statistics to local, state, and federal agencies. Often as a condition of receipt of funding, an operator must collect, manage, and report data to different entities. Ensuring such data are consistent can be challenging given the differing definitions employed by different agencies as well as the varying reporting timeframes. Normally, this chapter would examine the consistency of performance data reported by the East County Transit Alliance internally as well as to outside entities during the audit period. However, given the way the ECTA is reported by the City of Thousand Oaks, all reporting to external entities is comingled with other City demand-response programs. As such, only data included in the internal performance summaries can be reviewed in this section.

MV Transportation compiles data for the ECTA and submits this data to the City of Thousand Oaks monthly in its invoices. The ECTA is invoiced separately from the other programs the City operates. As such, performance data for the ECTA (from this single source) is provided in Chapter 6 as part of the Performance Analysis.



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Chapter 6 | Performance Analysis

Performance indicators are typically employed to quantify and assess the efficiency of a transit operator's activities. Such indicators provide insight into current operations as well as trend analysis of operator performance. Through a review of indicators, relative performance as well as possible inter-relationships between major functions is revealed.

The Transportation Development Act (TDA) requires recipients of TDA funding to track and report five performance indicators:

- Operating Cost/Passenger,
- Operating Cost/Vehicle Service Hour,
- Passengers/Vehicle Service Hour,
- Passengers/Vehicle Service Mile, and
- Vehicle Service Hours/Employee.

To assess the validity and use of performance indicators, the audit team performed the following activities:

- Assessed internal controls in place for the collection of performance-related information,
- Validated collection methods of key data,
- Calculated performance indicators, and
- Evaluated performance indicators.

The procedures used to calculate TDA-required performance measures for the current triennium were verified and compared with indicators included in similar reports to external entities (i.e., State Controller and Federal Transit Administration).

Operating Cost

The Transportation Development Act requires an operator to track and report transit-related costs reflective of the Uniform System of Accounts and Records developed by the State Controller and the California Department of Transportation. The most common method for ensuring this occurs is through a compliance audit report prepared by an independent auditor in accordance with California Code of Regulations Section 6667¹. The annual independent financial audit should confirm the use of the Uniform System of Accounts and Records. *Operating cost* – as defined by PUC Section 99247(a) – excluded the following during the audit period²:

¹ CCR Section 6667 outlines the minimum tasks which must be performed by an independent auditor in conducting the annual fiscal and compliance audit of the transit operator.

² Given the passage of AB 149, the list of excluded costs will be expanded beginning with FY 2021/22.

- Cost in the depreciation and amortization expense object class adopted by the State Controller pursuant to PUC Section 99243,
- Subsidies for commuter rail services operated under the jurisdiction of the Interstate Commerce Commission,
- Direct costs of providing charter service, and
- Vehicle lease costs.

Vehicle Service Hours and Miles

Vehicle Service Hours (VSH) and *Miles* (VSM) are defined as the time/distance during which a revenue vehicle is available to carry fare-paying passengers, and which includes only those times/miles between the time or scheduled time of the first passenger pickup and the time or scheduled time of the last passenger drop-off during a period of the vehicle's continuous availability.³ For example, demand-response service hours include those hours when a vehicle has dropped off a passenger and is traveling to pick up another passenger, but not those hours when the vehicle is unavailable for service due to driver breaks or lunch. For both demand-response and fixed-route services, service hours will exclude hours of "deadhead" travel to the first scheduled pick-up, and will also exclude hours of "deadhead" travel from the last scheduled drop-off back to the terminal. For fixed-route service, a vehicle is in service from first scheduled stop to last scheduled stop, whether or not passengers board or exit at those points (i.e., subtracting driver lunch and breaks but including scheduled layovers).

Passenger Counts

According to the Transportation Development Act, *total passengers* is equal to the total number of unlinked trips (i.e., those trips that are made by a passenger that involve a single boarding and departure), whether revenue-producing or not.

Employees

Employee hours is defined as the total number of hours (regular or overtime) which all employees have worked, and for which they have been paid a wage or salary. The hours must include transportation system-related hours worked by persons employed in connection with the system (whether or not the person is employed directly by the operator). Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) is calculated by dividing the number of person-hours by 2,000.

Fare Revenue

Fare revenue is defined by California Code of Regulations Section 6611.2 as revenue collected from the farebox plus sales of fare media. Given other revenues may be added to fare revenue for the calculation of the farebox recovery ratio, the Farebox Recovery cited within this section is not necessarily consistent with the farebox recovery ratio used for compliance determination in Chapter 4.

³ A vehicle is considered to be in revenue service despite a no-show or late cancellation if the vehicle remains available for passenger use.

TDA Required Indicators

To calculate the TDA indicators for East County Transit Alliance, the following sources were employed:

- Operating Cost was not independently calculated as part of this audit. Operating Cost data were obtained via the ECTA's audited financial reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. Operating Cost from the reports was compared against annual budgets and appeared to be consistent with TDA guidelines. In accordance with PUC Section 99247(a), the reported costs excluded depreciation and other allowable expenses.
- Fare Revenue was not independently calculated as part of this audit. Fare revenue data were obtained via the ECTA's audited financial reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. This appears to be consistent with TDA guidelines as well as the uniform system of accounts.
- Vehicle Service Hours (VSH) data were obtained via monthly performance reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. The ECTA's calculation methodology is consistent with PUC guidelines.
- Vehicle Service Miles (VSM) data were obtained via monthly performance reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. The ECTA's calculation methodology is consistent with PUC guidelines.
- Unlinked trip data were obtained via monthly performance reports for each fiscal year covered by this audit. The ECTA's calculation methodology is consistent with PUC guidelines.
- Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) data were provided by the City of Thousand Oaks. Use of the TDA definition regarding FTE calculation was confirmed.

System Performance Trends

Operating cost experienced a net 4.2 percent increase during the audit period, and a net 6.9 percent increase across the six-year period. Fare revenue fluctuated across the six-year period. This resulted in a net 71.8 percent increase during the audit period and a 3.4 percent net decrease over six years.

Vehicle service hours (VSH) experienced a one percent net decrease during the audit period and a 34.3 percent net decrease since FY 2019/20. Vehicle service miles (VSM) increased by 10.5 percent during the audit period and a 34.1 percent net decrease since FY 2019/20. (Neither VSH or VSM were recorded separately for the ECTA during FY 2020/21 due to trips being provided on Thousand Oaks Transit Dial-A-Ride vehicles.) Ridership steadily increased beginning in FY 2021/22, resulting in a net decrease of 19.4 percent across the six-year period but an increase of 55.3 percent during the audit period.

Cost-related metrics typically provide an indicator of a system's efficiency, while passenger-related metrics offer insight into its productivity. Improvements are characterized by increases in passenger-related metrics and decreases in cost-related metrics. Cost-related metrics were mixed during the audit period. Operating cost per passenger and operating cost per VSM both improved, decreasing by a net 32.9 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively. However, operating cost per VSH increased by a net 5.3 percent. Productivity improved as passengers/VSH and passengers/VSM both increased, by 57 percent and 40.5 percent, respectively.

Exhibit 6.1 System Performance Indicators

Performance Measure	System-wide					
	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24	FY 2024/25
Operating Cost (Actual \$)	\$1,013,919	\$363,698	\$682,719	\$1,039,906	\$926,471	\$1,083,435
Annual Change		-64.1%	87.7%	52.3%	-10.9%	16.9%
Fare Revenue (Actual \$)	\$77,178	\$0	\$18,984	\$43,392	\$10,020	\$74,526
Annual Change		-100.0%		128.6%	-76.9%	643.8%
Vehicle Service Hours (VSH)	8,967	Not reported	5,071	5,955	6,308	5,893
Annual Change				17.4%	5.9%	-6.6%
Vehicle Service Miles (VSM)	217,069	Not reported	117,404	129,514	134,961	143,151
Annual Change				10.3%	4.2%	6.1%
Passengers	15,511	3,893	7,031	8,051	9,775	12,506
Annual Change		-74.9%	80.6%	14.5%	21.4%	27.9%
Employees	Not provided	Not provided	5	5	6	9
Annual Change				0.4%	15.1%	59.7%
Performance Indicators						
Operating Cost/VSH (Actual \$)	\$113.07		\$134.63	\$174.63	\$146.87	\$183.85
Annual Change				29.7%	-15.9%	25.2%
Operating Cost/Passenger (Actual \$)	\$65.37	\$93.42	\$97.10	\$129.16	\$94.78	\$86.63
Annual Change		42.9%	3.9%	33.0%	-26.6%	-8.6%
Passengers/VSH	1.73		1.39	1.35	1.55	2.12
Annual Change				-2.5%	14.6%	36.9%
Passengers/VSM	0.07		0.06	0.06	0.07	0.09
Annual Change				3.8%	16.5%	20.6%
Farebox Recovery	7.6%	0.0%	2.8%	4.2%	1.1%	6.9%
Annual Change		-100.0%		50.1%	-74.1%	536.0%
Hours/Employee			1,014.2	1,186.3	1,091.3	638.5
Annual Change				17.0%	-8.0%	-41.5%
TDA Non-Required Indicators						
Operating Cost/VSM	\$4.67		\$5.82	\$8.03	\$6.86	\$7.57
Annual Change				38.1%	-14.5%	10.3%
VSM/VSH	24.21		23.15	21.75	21.40	24.29
Annual Change				-6.1%	-1.6%	13.5%
Fare/Passenger	\$4.98	\$0.00	\$2.70	\$5.39	\$1.03	\$5.96
Annual Change		-100.0%		99.6%	-81.0%	481.4%

Source: FY 2019/20 – FY 2021/22 data from prior Triennial Performance Audit.

FY 2022/23 – FY 2024/25 financial information from TDA fiscal audits.

FY 2022/23 – FY 2024/25 performance data from monthly performance reports and contractor invoices.

Exhibit 6.2 System Ridership

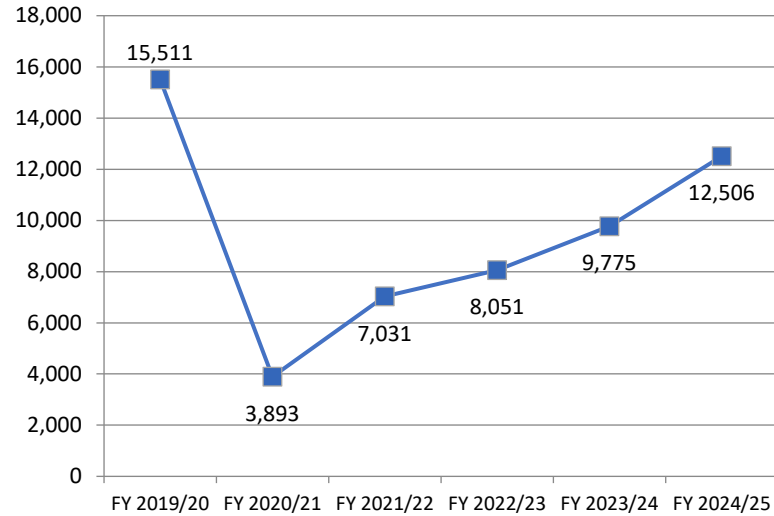


Exhibit 6.3 System Operating Cost/VSH

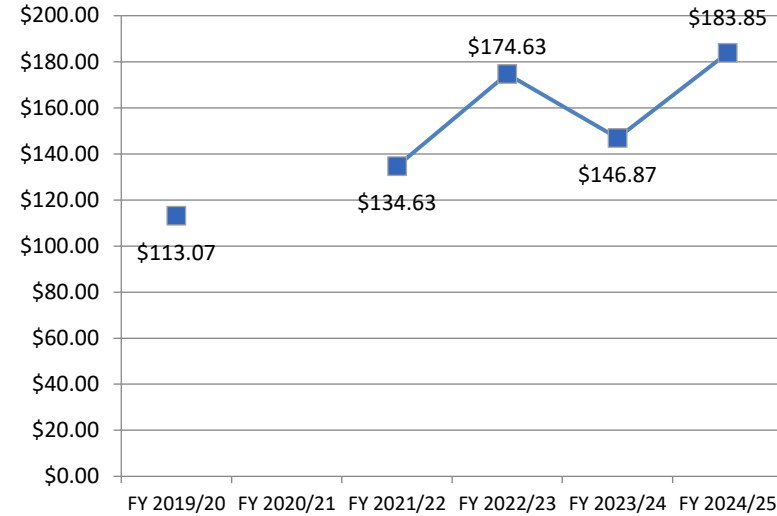


Exhibit 6.4 System Operating Cost/VSM

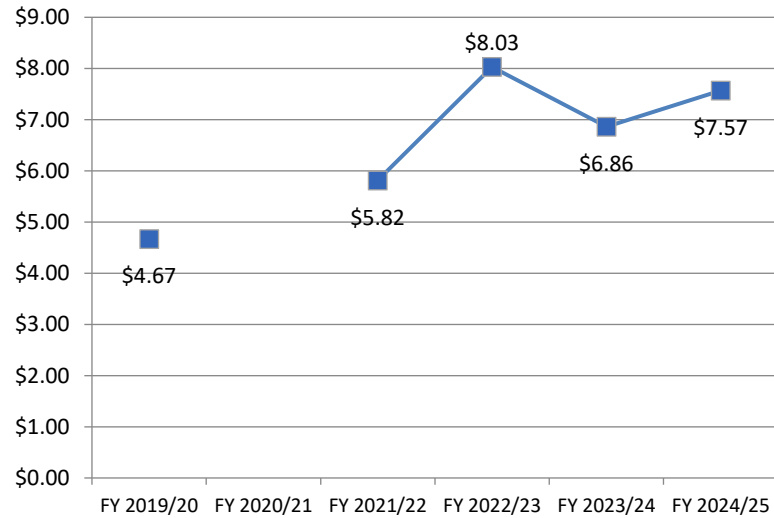


Exhibit 6.5 System VSM/VSH

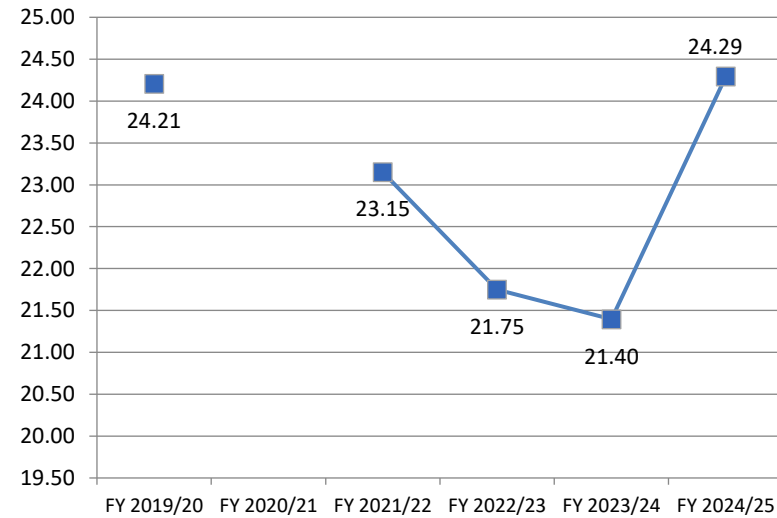


Exhibit 6.6 System Operating Cost/Passenger

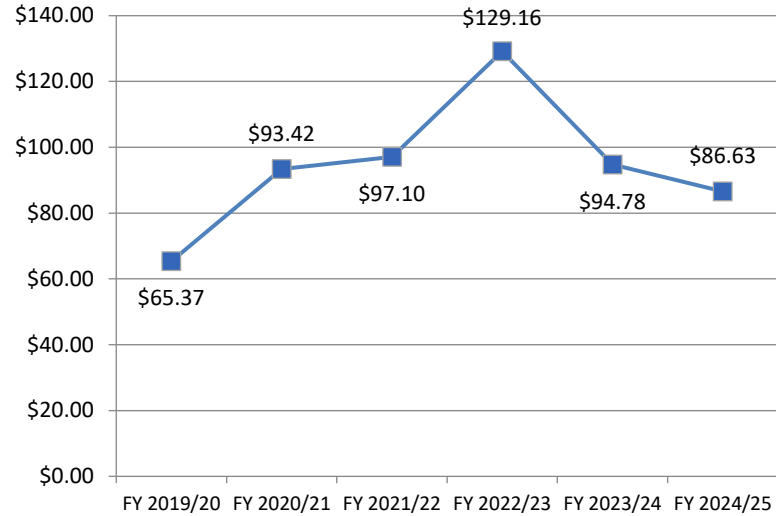


Exhibit 6.7 System Passengers/VSH

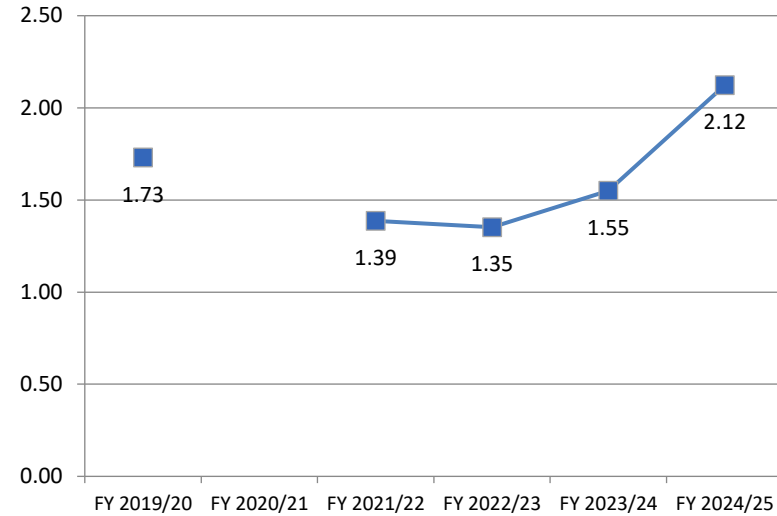


Exhibit 6.8 System Passengers/VSM

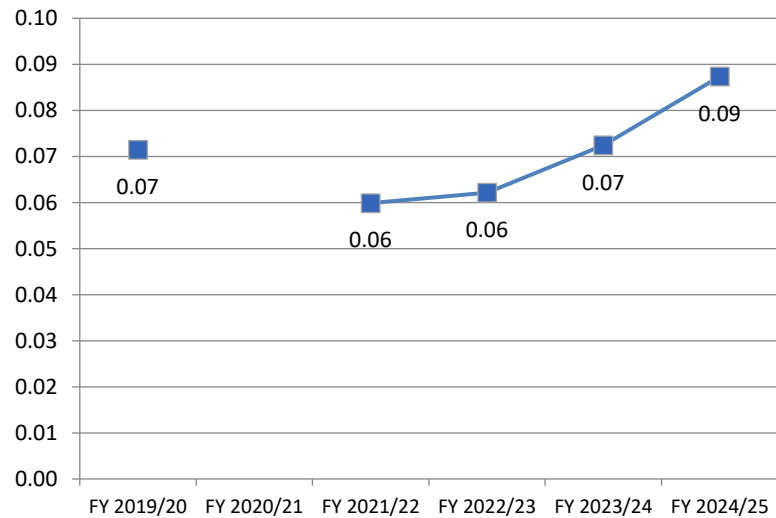


Exhibit 6.9 System Farebox Recovery

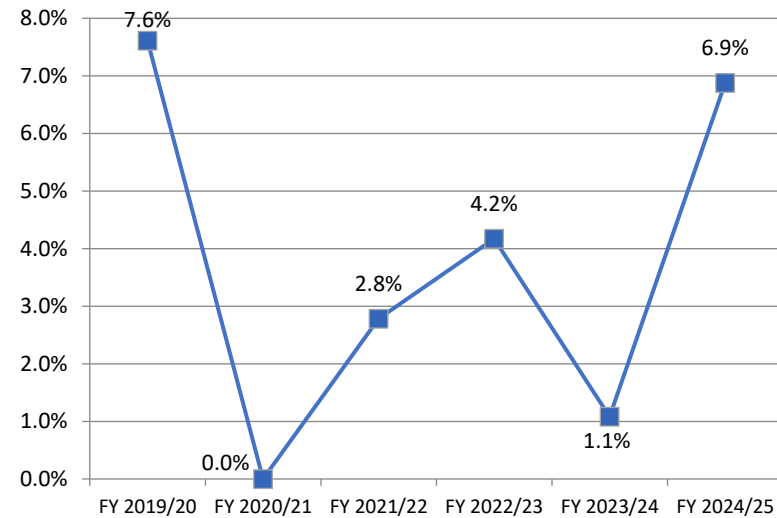


Exhibit 6.10 System Fare/Passenger

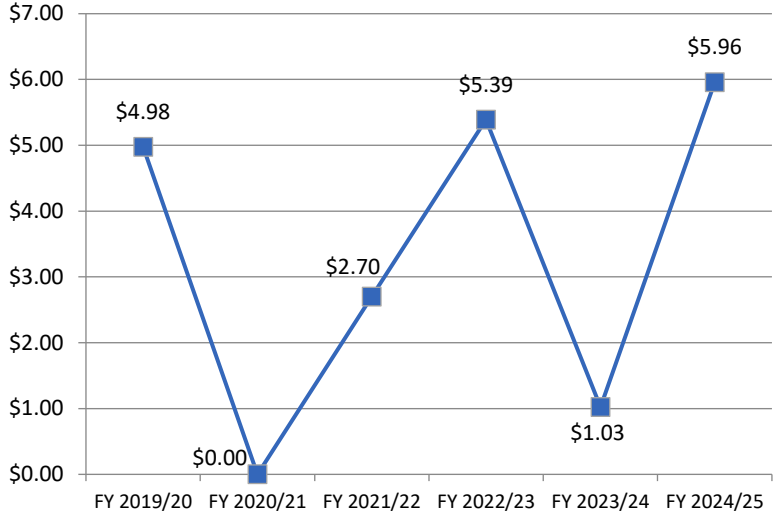
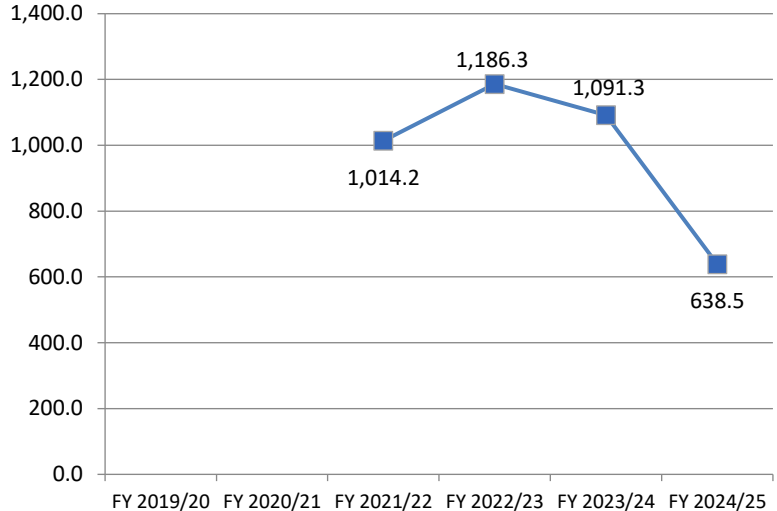


Exhibit 6.11 System FTE/VSH





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Chapter 7 | Functional Review

A functional review of the East County Transit Alliance’s public transit program is intended to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the operator. Following a general summary of the transit program, this chapter addresses seven functional areas. The list, taken from Section III of the *Performance Audit Guidebook* published by Caltrans, reflects those transit services provided by the ECTA through its transit program:

- General management and organization;
- Service planning;
- Administration;
- Marketing and public information;
- Scheduling, dispatch, and operations;
- Personnel management and training; and
- Maintenance.

Service Overview

CONNECT InterCity Dial-A-Ride service is provided by the East County Transit Alliance, a cooperative agreement between the cities of Moorpark, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, and the County of Ventura. Camarillo is not a funding member of the ECTA; it and the City of Agoura Hills are considered to be part of the extended service area. Only residents of the primary



service area may travel to/from the extended service area. CONNECT operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Seniors age 65 or older and ADA certified-individuals are eligible for the service. Reservations are required at least one day in advance and may be made up to two weeks in advance. Subscriptions for reoccurring trips may be requested. There is no limit on the number of times per day, week, or month a rider utilizes the service. However, reservations must be at least one hour apart. Like other operators in Ventura County, rides may be booked online or via mobile device through the RideCo app.

Transfers must be booked at least 24 hours in advance by phone. Transfers to western Ventura County (GO ACCESS) are made Monday through Saturday at the Camarillo transfer point. Transfers to Los Angeles County (Access Services; ADA only) are made Monday through Friday at the Thousand Oaks Transportation Center. Additional fares may apply for transfers.

Fares increased from \$6.00 to \$8.00 effective January 1, 2025. Pre-paid tickets are available at Thousand Oaks City Hall or the Thousand Oaks Transportation Center.

Exhibit 7.1 ECTA CONNECT Fare Structure

Fare Category	Fare
One-way	\$8.00
Companion (one per passenger)	\$8.00
PCA (one per ADA cardholder with PCA endorsement)	Free

General Management and Organization

The ECTA is administered through the City of Thousand Oaks. City staffing is appropriate and supported by other City divisions and departments as required. City staff commitment is approximately 0.75 FTE in total, including time acting as the fiscal agent for the program. There is a clear chain of command within the program and those staff who substantially support the program (Administration, Finance, IT, Facilities, Fleet, and Streets).

Operation of the City’s transit program (including contracted programs such as ECTA), as well as maintenance of leased vehicles, has been contracted to MV Transportation for nearly 20 years. The current contract has a seven-year term, which expires June 30, 2027. The City has already issued a Request for Proposals for a new contract. City staff manage the program through bimonthly reporting from the contractor, reviewing monthly invoices with performance data, and monitoring performance through multiple software platforms.

The contract with MV spells out specific performance measures on a variety of measures, and the contractor reports on these measures on a monthly basis. The contract is performance-based, rather than penalty-based, with the contractor earning bonus payments for superior performance. Program information is received from the operations contractor on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. The City monitors performance through installed technologies. The City also utilizes qualified consultants to review and monitor data.

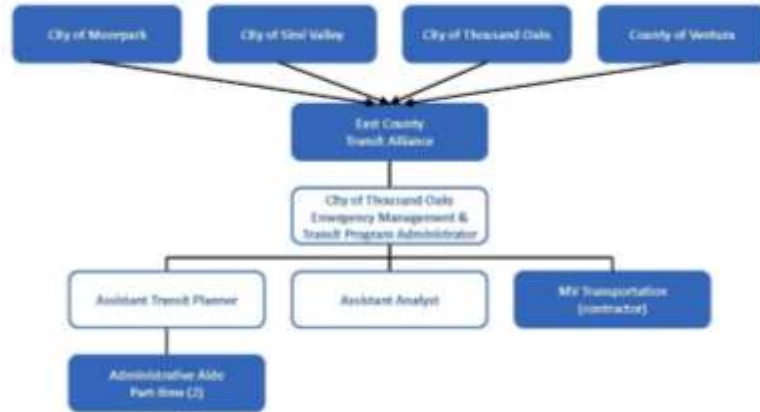
Team meetings with assigned program staff, support staff, and contractor management staff are scheduled on a biweekly basis. Additional meetings are scheduled on an as-needed basis and occur frequently.

The City has experienced several challenges related to recent leadership transitions, including the retirements of the former Public Works Director and the Transit Manager. The Public Works Director was succeeded by the City’s Deputy Public Works Director/City Engineer, who had been with the City for 19 years. The retirement of the long-time Transit Manager had greater impact. Transit was placed under the oversight of the Emergency Management and Transit Program Administrator, who has been on administrative leave since July 2025, leaving Transit with a temporary supervisor. The Assistant Transit Planner, who joined the City prior to the Transit Manager’s retirement, manages most of the day-to-day activities. One of the biggest hurdles has been trying to recreate some of the information and methodologies used by the prior Transit Manager, which required extra time to do but has not had a significant impact otherwise. The City has also added a second full-time staffer (Assistant Analyst) as well as several part-time Administrative Aides.

A Management Committee serves as the governing body for ECTA. In March 2025, ECTA partners extended the fiscal agent agreement with the City of Thousand Oaks through 2027.

Exhibit 7.3 illustrates the organizational structure of ECTA.

Exhibit 7.2 Organizational Chart



As a provider of services, the City has developed strong, cooperative relations with other local municipal entities in order to provide transit services under contract. The City serves as the lead agency and fiscal agent for the ECTA MOU. The City works cooperatively with the Gold Coast Transit District on joint procurements and VCTC on issues of regional concern including the rollout of new technologies and coordination of services, and participates in special programs and projects such as the College Free Ride Program. The Assistant Transit Planner and the Assistant Analyst serve as the intergovernmental liaisons with respect to transit.

Service Planning

At the time of this report, VCTC was in the process of adopting a county-wide Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP), which includes recommendations for the ECTA program. With respect to recommendations for Dial-A-Ride, City staff feel the SRTP focuses too much on full consolidation without appropriately considering both alternatives presented in VCTC’s Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES). There are concerns that jumping directly to full consolidation without further consideration of the two-provider option is not aligned with the recommendations of the TIES study. Specific to ECTA, the SRTP reflected ECTA’s concerns about being able to meet TDA farebox recovery ratio requirements and absorb the higher cost of the City of Simi Valley’s demand-response program if services were consolidated.

The City ensures all vehicles are accessible to persons with disabilities. The fleet is 100 percent accessible, as are all facilities. Wherever possible, the transit program exceeds federal minimums.

The ECTA does not conduct stand-alone public outreach and relies on its participating agencies to conduct public participation activities in conjunction with their local services. ECTA uses the City of Thousand Oaks’ Title VI Plan. The City has not conducted any surveys since program inception in 2015.

Administration

As the Fiscal Agent for the ECTA, the City of Thousand Oaks is responsible for developing the budget. The draft budget is developed annually in March and approved by the Management Committee in May. Individual agencies are responsible for pursuing budget appropriation for their portions of the services

through their customary methods. Budgeted and actual revenues are compared to expenses at least five times a year at scheduled Committee meetings. Financial data is tracked through MV reports, Excel, and Cognos/Naviline by Thousand Oaks' Finance staff.

The City of Thousand Oaks is also the Fiscal Agent for any grants awarded to the ECTA. Grants are managed by a combination of transit staff, primarily the Assistant Transit Planner and Finance staff assigned to support the transit program.

The City's Human Resources Department handles risk management, and has a procedure for processing claims. The City is a member of an Excess Liability pool (PRISM) that provides coverage up to \$25 million. The City has an adopted and compliant Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP). The safety of operating practices is reviewed by the City on an ongoing basis by the Transit Planner, while MV reviews its practices on a daily, monthly, and quarterly basis. The operations contractor is required to maintain a disaster preparedness plan, which is updated annually. The City and MV have Injury Prevention Plans in place and participate in monthly meetings with the PTASP committee.

All types of contracts pertaining to the ECTA must be approved by the Management Committee in advance, with exceptions given for urgent needs and small expenditures under \$1,000. At present, the operations contract with the City of Thousand Oaks is the only ECTA contract. The City then contracts with MV Transportation to provide operations and maintenance for the ECTA.

Marketing and Public Information

The ECTA publishes an informational brochure specific to the service and relies on advertising in conjunction with Thousand Oaks Transit operations for service changes and holiday hours updates. The brochure is also available online via the City's transit website.

Customer inquiries, concerns, and compliments are encouraged and can be received by phone, email, and other methods. All calls are initially recorded but not all are logged; only recordings of those identified as a complaint, compliment, or issue are saved. All customer contacts are entered into the TransTrack system, which documents investigations and resolutions. The contractor has 24 hours to respond to inquiries and begin an investigation, and one week for full resolution. Transit maintains a general email account and messages are retained for three years.

Scheduling, Dispatch, and Operations

The City of Thousand Oaks contracts with MV Transportation to provide vehicle operators and maintenance of leased vehicles for the City's transit services. MV's operators, dispatchers, road supervisors, and customer service representatives are represented by Teamsters Local #848. At present, MV only has full-time drivers, as it has had difficulty filling vacancies and the investment and expense of training staff does not warrant hiring part-time staff. The City feels this is an effective way to keep them more competitive by offering guaranteed full-time positions. As of the time of the site visit, MV's driver workforce was fully staffed with 38 full-time drivers.

All drivers are required to meet the same licensing and certification requirements. Road Supervisors, behind-the-wheel trainers, the Safety & Training Manager, and, in some cases, Dispatchers are licensed and qualified to drive revenue vehicles even though they are not regular drivers. This ensures the division maintains operational flexibility for road supervision, training, pull-outs, and service coverage.

Drivers bid for their work assignments on a seniority basis twice annually. Many bid schedules have multiple route or service components, but not all. Some drivers may work for multiple agencies under contract with the City of Thousand Oaks on a single shift. All drivers are trained to operate all fixed-route and demand-response vehicles.

Scheduled absences are covered by extra board drivers, followed by calls to the seniority-based extra work list, and finally to off-duty drivers. Unscheduled absences (call-outs) require a one-hour notice. In these situations a similar approach is taken, with the opening escalated to management if it jeopardizes service.

Vehicles are assigned to routes daily by dispatchers on a rotation based on route design and vehicle type. Each program operated by MV has its own fleet, and buses branded for one fleet are not assigned to another service. Dispatch receives a list of down vehicles daily prior to pull-out. Vehicles available for service are then assigned for the day.

Cash fares and pre-paid trip tickets are collected by drivers and turned into dispatch at the end of each shift. Dispatchers deposits the funds into the safe nightly. MV management deposits cash receipts into MV's bank account. City staff reconciles MV farebox reporting against other data sets to ensure accuracy.

Personnel Management and Training

While the City's transit program is fully staffed, the contractor continues to actively recruit given its challenges in the past. Employee recruitment is conducted via multiple methodologies, including job fairs, workforce/job placements/outreach programs, ads on local hiring sites, veterans outreach, and County offices. New applicants are rapidly screened, with qualified candidates advanced into MV's training program in accordance with its operator staffing guidelines. MV does not have a dedicated local recruiter, but additional assistance can be provided by the regional and corporate human resources teams as needed.

Recruits are not required to possess a commercial license. MV provides full training through commercial licensing. All drivers must possess a commercial license with passenger and air brake endorsements as well as a Vehicle Transit Training (VTT) certificate by the end of their training.

MV strives to motivate its employees by holding employee appreciation events and luncheons, conducting customer service and safety contests, and selecting an Employee of the Month. All positive rider comments are passed along to drivers. Operator staff regularly receive risk assessments and road evaluations. A structured recognition and incentive program includes safety meeting recognition, Employee of the Month awards, DriveCam and customer service commendations, service milestones, safety bonuses, and engagement events. MV complements these efforts with programs such as a Safety Bonus for operators achieving 12 consecutive months without preventable incidents, along with additional performance-based recognition and reward initiatives.

MV has put in considerable effort to reduce turnover, particularly within the first 90 days of employment. This is typically due to schedule instability, competitive wage pressures, safety-related job stress, and low engagement. For several years, the City has worked on steadily increasing driver wages through adjustments to the contract, the most recent of which occurred in 2023. MV Transportation addresses clear expectations, strengthened onboarding, and active use of its turnover and engagement action

planning process to support workforce stability. There may be opportunities for MV to add management incentives to maintain more stability in those positions. Most managers cannot afford to live in Thousand Oaks, which contributes to the retention issues.

All operations staff receive regular, documented performance evaluations through a structured performance management framework. These include annual self-evaluations, manager evaluations, regular check-ins, and role-specific evaluations. Drivers receive a minimum of two on-board evaluations within each rolling 12-month period.

The Safety & Training Manager oversees all of MV's training programs. Certified Classroom Instructors and Behind-the-Wheel Trainers provide new-hire and refresher training. MV does not have a local in-house DMV tester; all commercial testing is done through the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Safety activities include monthly safety meetings, weekly safety stand-downs, ongoing operator training, DriveCam coaching programs, emergency preparedness, compliance training, and safety blitz campaign and recognition program. Minimum safety and training requirements are included in the transit operations operator's contract. All vehicles are equipped with safety equipment required by the Department of Transportation, state, and contract.

Discipline and attendance policies are outlined in an Employee Handbook which is provided to all employees upon the start of employment. These include a safety point system, attendance point system, coaching, and counseling. A progressive discipline program is also utilized. MV's drug and alcohol policy is monitored by the City of Thousand Oaks and the FTA.

MV Transportation provides comprehensive benefits to all full-time employees, including medical, dental, and vision insurance; retirement/401(k); paid time off; paid holidays, and a vacation cash-out program. Employees receive a package outlining available benefits on an annual basis.

Maintenance

The City of Thousand Oaks contracts with MV Transportation to maintain all contractor-owned and leased vehicles. All vehicles are leased from MV and budgeted for annually.

MV provides maintenance for the City's leased vehicle fleets at its Santa Paula location (918 Mission Rock Road E1). It uses Trapeze EAM to manage preventive maintenance scheduling, work orders, vehicle history, parts inventory, warranty tracking, and compliance reporting.

MV utilizes preventive and predictive maintenance practices. Preventive maintenance (PM) intervals conform to manufacturer service specifications and applicable FTA requirements, and the PM schedule is managed and tracked through the Trapeze EAM. MV's maintenance manager verifies compliance with preventive maintenance schedules through Trapeze EAM reporting, including scheduled PMs, soon-due assets, and PM/inspection reports that identify units due or overdue, along with days late by location.

While most work is done in-house, some work is sent out to local vendors or dealers. These include engine replacements, engine diagnostics, transmission diagnostics/repairs, windshields, and body repair, as well as warrant work.

The maintenance facility has sufficient space for the fleet (one bay, one lift) with ample outdoor work space. It is staffed with a Shop Foreman, Tech A, Tech B, and Utility Worker. The leased facility has sufficient space for administrative offices and records storage.

MV has said the most useful improvement that could be made to its facility would be electrical upgrades in preparation of electric vehicles. At present, even if they had one portable charger, the electrical network would not be able to handle it. Other improvements include additional storage space and equipment that can do diagnostics. MV primarily provides maintenance support for the Valley Express program at this facility.

MV's parts inventory is sufficient to minimize down time. The Trapeze EAM software monitors the minimum/maximum status of parts and notifies the maintenance manager when a part hits the minimum number in stock and needs to be reordered.

Repair priority is tracked via Trapeze EAM, supporting operational control. Out-of-service time is tracked from when the EAM work order is opened, and that this process is managed through EAM with a daily review of the vehicle down list. To prevent unsafe vehicles from entering service by placing them out of service (OOS) and controlling releases through Lockout (red tag/steering wheel cover) and Trapeze EAM work orders that mark vehicles out of service until repairs are completed and the work order is properly documented/closed. DVIs include mandatory downed defects, and the contract prohibits operating any vehicle tagged OOS. Safety-related defects must be repaired and signed off prior to return to service, with OOS status tracked via EAM/OOS reporting.

Exhibit 7.3 illustrates the ECTA's fleet inventory.

Exhibit 7.3 ECTA Transit Fleet

Make/Model	Year	Seating capacity	Fuel Type	Quantity
Starcraft Cutaway	2018	8/3 WC	Gasoline	4
Starcraft Cutaway	2019	8/3 WC	Gasoline	1

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Chapter 8 | Findings and Recommendations

Conclusions

The East County Transit Alliance is found to be in compliance with the Transportation Development Act (TDA).

Findings

Based on discussions with City of Thousand Oaks staff, analysis of program performance, and an audit of program compliance and function, the audit team presents no findings related to compliance with the TDA.

Program Recommendations

Recommendations are intended to assist in bringing the operator into compliance with the requirements and standards of the TDA as well as address non-compliance-related issues, challenges, or opportunities observed during the site visit and functional review. The audit team presents no recommendations for the ECTA.

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