

Meeting of May 24, 2021

Board Recognizes May Employees of the Month

The Orange County Transportation Authority's board of directors recognized three employees of the month for May.

The honors went to:

- Alex Pacheco, a coach operator working out of the Santa Ana base, who started his driving career with OCTA in March 2014. In April, Alex achieved seven years of safe driving.
- Phung Mai, an electronics technician at the Irvine Sand Canyon base. Phung recently identified an issue with Wi-Fi on the buses, which was causing problems with the timely downloading of ridership data. He took it upon himself to find the cause and determined there was a problem with the Wi-Fi antenna at the base, which once replaced, solved the issue.
- Vicente Aldana, a bus operations supervisor at the Santa Ana base. Vicente started his career with OCTA in 2009 as a coach operator and after six years was promoted to his current position. He is also a licensed vocational nurse and has been volunteering at Soka University and the Anaheim Convention Center to vaccinate Orange County residents and workers.

OCTA Allocates Low Carbon Transit Operations Program Funds

The OCTA board approved the use of \$6.3 million from the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program to be used toward three programs aimed at encouraging OC Bus usage and improving the environment.

The Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, funded by Caltrans and part of the state's cap-and-trade program, supports projects that promote transit ridership and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The funding recommendations include:

- \$3.7 million for "Welcome Back" reduced OC Bus fares
- \$1.9 million for OCTA's 10 battery-electric bus pilot program
- \$716,000 to expand the college pass program to Orange Coast College

Caltrans is expected to release the funds for approved transit projects by June 30.

Board Approves Bus Service Change for June 13

The OCTA board approved the OC Bus service change that will take effect on June 13 and will restore bus service back to about 74 percent of what it was prior to the pandemic.

OCTA implements schedule and route revisions to selected OC Bus routes three times a year, in February, June and October. In March of last year, an emergency service change was needed to balance a sharp decline in ridership due to the state's stay-at-home order to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The most recent bus service change in February provided an enhanced Saturday service schedule on weekdays and a regular schedule on Saturdays and Sundays. The June service change will continue to deliver this service and will improve on-time performance and strategically add bus trips during certain times of the day in response to public input. A public outreach campaign, which concluded with a public hearing on April 26, solicited feedback that has helped guide the development of the June service change.

OC Bus ridership is expected to remain steady throughout the summer, but additional buses can be deployed if needed to allow for social distancing or increased ridership.

OCTA Board Participates in Future of Transit Workshop

The OCTA board participated in a workshop looking at the future of transit in Orange County.

The workshop included information about ridership trends and an analysis of the current transportation system and ways to improve it.

Highlights of the presentation include:

- While current OC Bus ridership is about 55 percent lower than the previous year, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis, service is only down 27 percent to allow for social distancing.
- Ridership declines on OC Bus are similar to declines experienced by other nearby transit agencies.
- Most riders do not have access to a car and household incomes are very low.
- Nearly 80 percent of travel on OC Bus in the morning is related to work or school.
- Existing ridership is concentrated in North and Central Orange County, near Santa Ana.
- Improving bus service may increase ridership and access to jobs, schools and activity centers.
- Of riders surveyed, most would like to see more frequent bus service, followed by reduced travel time.

- Travel time from origin to destination averages 47 minutes.

The next Future of Transit Workshop is scheduled to be held this summer and will discuss ways to improve service along the busiest routes, along with potential priorities and pilot projects.