



April 8, 2010

To: Transit Committee

From: Will Kempton, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: 2010 Long-Range Transportation Plan - Draft Transit Strategy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Kempton", is written over the "From:" line. A horizontal line extends from the end of the signature to the right.

Overview

Staff has prepared a draft transit strategy as part of the 2010 Long-Range Transportation Plan development process. This draft transit strategy will provide the future transit system assumptions for the 2010 Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Orange County Sustainable Communities Strategy, and the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan.

Recommendation

Direct staff to present the draft long-range transit strategy to local jurisdictions to begin planning efforts for the 2010 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Orange County Sustainable Communities Strategy, and 2012 Regional Transportation Plan.

Background

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is developed every four years, and serves as the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) blueprint for transportation system investments over the next 20+ years. In addition, the LRTP serves as OCTA's input into the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), as well as the transportation element within the Orange County Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The last LRTP was adopted by the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) in 2006. Staff is currently developing the 2010 LRTP, which is anticipated to be completed by December 2010.

The OCTA bus system has been severely impacted by recent decreases in funding and revenues, resulting in a reduction of 390,000 annual hours of bus service. While OCTA strives to manage these recent financial impacts on the transit system, staff has also been looking forward to identify opportunities for restoring transit service levels through the horizon year of the plan (2035).

The LRTP draft transit strategy should be distinguished from the more detailed system-wide transit study that will begin later this year. These separate but coordinated efforts follow different timelines, with the 2010 LRTP being driven by the 2012 RTP and the Orange County SCS development schedules. Furthermore, the LRTP draft transit strategy is intended to identify general assumptions for use within the 2010 LRTP, and the system-wide transit study will provide detailed, route-level strategies for optimizing the effectiveness and efficiency of the transit system after the March 2010 service reductions. In addition, the LRTP draft transit strategy will be coordinated with future OCTA strategic planning efforts to provide the necessary organizational direction for the implementation of the plan.

Discussion

The LRTP draft transit strategy identifies broad objectives for prioritizing future transit improvements to meet future demand as effectively and efficiently as possible. Objectives were developed as a cooperative effort between the affected divisions within OCTA and in consultation with the Citizens Advisory Committee. These objectives will serve to meet as much of the forecast transit demand as financially feasible and support OCTA's existing transit goals:

- Target high-demand corridors for improvements to fixed-route frequencies and hours of operations;
- Initiate bus rapid transit (BRT) services;
- Invest in California high-speed rail, Metrolink, and Go Local feeders;
- Explore express bus opportunities;
- Improve access to regional bus service and local destinations with community circulators and rideshare programs;
- Coordinate service planning with land-uses; and,
- Seek funding and savings for transit operations.

Target High-Demand Corridors and Initiate BRT Service

The high-demand corridors are identified as corridors that received 15-minute or better peak period headway service, on aggregate, during OCTA's peak level of service observed in June 2008. Staff anticipates that these corridors will show enough future demand to support the 15-minute or better peak period headway service in the future (by 2035). This assumption is based on historic transit ridership within these corridors that is anticipated to continue in the future due to the proximity of many Orange County employment centers and

higher-density residential areas. This objective is represented in Attachment A, which highlights future high-frequency corridors, including proposed BRT routes. As resources become available over the next 25 years, these core service areas will be prioritized for fixed-route service expansion.

Invest in California High-Speed Rail, Metrolink, and Go Local Feeders

OCTA is implementing the Metrolink Service Expansion Program and coordinating with the state on the California high-speed rail project. To support these future rail services, regional gateway station improvements such as the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center are also underway. These efforts will strengthen the backbone of Orange County's transit system.

The Measure M2 Go Local Program is intended to address increases in demand induced by the rail improvements noted above. Go Local provides a competitive opportunity for local jurisdictions to develop feeder services between rail stations and key destinations. Attachment B displays the coordinated efforts between rail service expansion and feeder service. The California high-speed rail corridor and Metrolink service improvements are highlighted, along with the proposed Go Local projects.

Explore Express Bus Opportunities

Staff is considering intercounty and intracounty bus corridors which serve major destination areas and improve regional connectivity. Attachment C identifies some potential express bus corridors that will be further studied to determine if these are viable. Refinements will be made to these routes through the consultation process with local agencies.

Improve Access to Regional Bus Service and Local Destinations

Measure M2 provides another competitive opportunity to local jurisdictions to develop community circulator shuttles that will provide access to and from regional bus service and local destinations. These services could greatly improve the effectiveness of some major regional services such as BRT and express bus.

The 2010 LRTP will also include rideshare strategies and the need to consider the safe accommodation of all travelers, including bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit patrons. These efforts can help to address a portion of unmet transit demand by providing vanpool, carpool, carsharing, and non-motorized opportunities. The 2009 OCTA Commuter Bikeways Strategic Plan works toward this objective by encouraging the prioritization of bikeways that are linked to employment centers, transit hubs, colleges, and universities (Attachment D).

Coordinate Service Planning with Land-Uses

Senate Bill 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes 2008) offers California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining for certain land-use developments located within a half-mile of major transit stops or high-quality transit corridors (California Public Resources Code §21155). A major transit stop can include sites containing a rail station or at the intersection of two or more bus routes with 15-minute or better peak headway service. A high-quality transit corridor refers to fixed-route corridors with 15-minute or better peak headway service.

This legislation provides local jurisdictions with the opportunity to link the LRTP draft transit strategy's high-demand corridors and major transit stops with qualifying development projects within the Orange County SCS. This will assist in making the land-use developments eligible for the associated CEQA streamlining benefits. Therefore, with Board approval, staff will distribute and discuss the LRTP transit strategy with the local jurisdictions. This will primarily be communicated through the Orange County Council of Governments Technical Advisory Committee. As a result of this process, local jurisdictions may suggest additional corridors that service locations that could benefit from transit. At a minimum, these proposals will be considered for inclusion in the LRTP strategic corridors section.

Seek Funding and Savings for Transit Operations

Funding is a major challenge for restoring bus service levels as well as planning new services for the 2010 LRTP. As part of this effort, staff will explore funding opportunities that will support transit expansion that is sustainable and cost-effective. Financial constraints will ultimately limit expansion opportunities, and these constraints will be included in the draft 2010 LRTP.

Summary

Staff has prepared a draft LRTP transit strategy, a set of broad strategies that work toward improving transit and service levels over the life of the 2010 LRTP (through 2035). The draft transit strategy identifies the transit assumptions that will be used within the 2010 LRTP. Furthermore, it defines the transit network that will be incorporated into the Orange County SCS and the 2012 RTP. With Board direction, staff will share the transit strategy with local jurisdictions to coordinate planning efforts in anticipation of the Orange County SCS. The results of this process will be incorporated into the draft 2010 LRTP, which will be presented to the Board by fall 2010.

Attachments

- A. Future High-Frequency Bus Corridors and Planned BRT Routes
- B. Future Rail and Go Local Network
- C. Proposed Intracounty and Intercounty Express Corridors
- D. Regional Commuter Bikeway Priority Zones

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