



MEMORANDUM

July 13, 2020

To: Members of the Board of Directors  
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer  
Subject: **Item 2 – Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update**

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) continues to take proactive and appropriate measures to safely provide essential transportation services and deliver capital projects while promoting practices to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

With the health and safety of the public and OCTA employees as the top priority, we continue following guidance issued by the Governor's Office, California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Orange County Health Care Agency, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The following is an update on OCTA's efforts to proactively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic since the report presented to the Board of Directors (Board) at the June 22, 2020 meeting.

**Ridership**

OC Bus continues to see an increase in boardings since the implementation of the service change on June 14, 2020. The June service change elements include: increased daily OC Bus service to Saturday service levels on most routes Monday through Saturday, added bus trips on the busiest routes to help allow for social distancing, and restored regular weekday service on 14 routes. The change to enhanced Saturday service restored daily service levels to about 60 percent of the service that was offered before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, 517 additional trips were added back into the OC Bus system. OC ACCESS paratransit, for eligible riders with physical or cognitive limitations, remains operating at full-service levels.

The week ending July 3, 2020, there were approximately 57,000 average weekday boardings. This remains a more than 50 percent decrease in the total number of boardings recorded prior to the pandemic.

Based on guidance from the Federal Transit Administration and in line with best practices, OCTA is limiting the number of passengers on board 40-foot buses to 15 passengers and to 20 passengers on 60-foot buses. This is in an effort to allow for social distancing onboard and to help protect the health of passengers and coach operators. To help address the diminished capacity available for passengers, OCTA is dispatching additional buses (trippers) on busier routes. The week ending July 3, 2020, there was an average of 107 trippers dispatched each weekday.

Staff will continue to monitor ridership at both the system and route level on a daily basis and make adjustments where necessary to try to ensure passenger loads can remain at a level where social distancing is possible.

Additional updates related to OCTA's activities and responses are provided below:

### **Maintenance**

- Maintenance staff has been working over the past several weeks to develop and test plexiglass shields that can be installed to help protect coach operators while allowing all passengers to begin boarding again through the front doors. A configuration has been finalized and staff will begin procuring the shields. Because of the high demand for plexiglass, lead times vary and staff is making every effort to expedite the process.

### **Finance**

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funding grant has been executed providing \$160.5 million for OCTA operations.
- COVID-19-related costs are being carefully tracked for reimbursement. To date, \$8 million has been incurred.
- 91 Express Lanes rate increases have been deferred and toll decreases went into effect July 1, 2020, for multiple hours because of declines in traffic.

### **Human Resources and Organizational Development**

- Remote working for professional and administrative employees has been extended at this time until September 8, 2020, and progress on the Return to the Workplace plan continues to be tracked;

- As part of the Return to the Workplace plan, new training on COVID-19 safety mitigations has begun for employees that are required to be at OCTA locations, delivered by the Learning and Development staff.
- An employee pulse survey will be launched this month to professional and administrative employees to gauge feedback on OCTA as a great place to work, the pandemic response, implementation of health and safety practices and planning efforts for a gradual return to the workplace.

### **Capital Projects**

- ROW acquisition activities on the State Route 55 (SR-55) widening and Anaheim Canyon Metrolink Station expansion projects have been impacted because of owner and tenant availability for discussion of property needs, offers, and negotiations.
- The South County Rail Corridor Climate Change Impact Study is slightly delayed while OCTA staff works with the California Department of Transportation Division of Rail to amend the project's public outreach requirements due to COVID-19. The outreach process will change from physical meeting locations to online surveys.

### **Government Relations**

- Government Relations staff continues to work with transportation agencies statewide to inform legislative proposals in both Sacramento and Washington, D.C. that will provide assistance to transportation services and projects to both respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and help generate economic activity. A full update will be provided to the Legislative and Communications Committee on July 16, 2020.
- Staff is also helping to inform an advocacy effort led by the California Transit Association to seek further financial aid for transit agencies from Congress and the State Legislature. Highlighting the importance of transit in not only providing an essential service during the pandemic, but also as key to a balanced transportation system moving forward, the effort details a continued need of at least \$3.1 billion statewide.
- The Grant Compliance Office is currently implementing an aggressive two-year workplan to ensure OCTA's compliance with federal requirements. The first of three phases is underway, which conducts reviews for OCTA's 11 active subrecipients. To ensure the health and safety of the participants, all activities are conducted electronically with all requests for deadline extensions granted in light of the challenges associated with the pandemic.

- Staff is closely monitoring local government agency meetings, as well as local and state press conferences, as it relates to any potential OCTA operational or business impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Planning**

- Planning staff is coordinating closely with operations to monitor and analyze OC Bus ridership and is working to make any necessary adjustments to help ensure service is meeting public demand and allowing for social distancing.
- Work is underway in developing OC Bus service change scenarios for potential implementation in October to respond to changing demand.
- Staff continues to work with local agencies related to Measure M2 and program guidelines that require adjustments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Multiple planning studies remain ongoing, and staff is coordinating with outreach staff to adjust efforts based on the requirements for social distancing and inability to host public gatherings.

### **Information Systems**

- Information Systems staff continues to facilitate remote work for professional and administrative employees by converting manual processes into electronic workflows while maintaining cybersecurity standards.
- More than 6,200 virtual meetings using collaboration software were held in June (less than 100 were held in February) allowing staff to continue its high level of productivity.
- Board and committee meetings, as well as the CEO Connection meetings are successfully conducted using virtual meeting technology.

### **Security and Emergency Preparedness**

- Security and Emergency Preparedness staff continues to coordinate and communicate with the County of Orange and other jurisdictional partners as it relates to COVID-19 emergency operations and response on an as-needed basis.
- The development of an after-action report is well underway, which will examine OCTA's emergency operations response to the COVID-19 pandemic to help inform any future updates to the Emergency Operations Plan.

## **External Affairs**

- Virtual meetings and teleconferences continue to be utilized to communicate with the public for OCTA's construction projects. Webinar technology has enabled nearly 1,600 stakeholders to view 11 webinars regarding the I-405 and I-5 South Improvement projects.
- Outreach efforts for the OC Streetcar continue to focus on promoting businesses open for curbside and outdoor dining and communication about ongoing utility work.
- OCTA continues to reinforce and update COVID-19 safety guidelines with customers through the website, bus signage, social media, and outreach to diverse communities.
- The Customer Information Center has received more than 2,900 calls to date in addition to more than 700 social media posts. Recent calls have focused on the June Service Change schedule and requests for additional enforcement of the onboard face covering requirement.
- To understand COVID-19 impact on transit, travel behaviors and needs, OCTA launched a countywide quantitative public survey, and qualitative transit-user and employer surveys.

## **Public Information Office**

- Public Information Office staff continues working with all OCTA departments and divisions to coordinate the agency's overall messaging and communications efforts responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Staff coordinated a second telephone townhall on Wednesday, June 24, 2020, where approximately 100 employees from the Operations Division were updated by the CEO. In addition, an eighth CEO Connection for professional and administrative staff is planned.
- Staff has organized and implemented seven CEO Connections for professional and administrative staff, with another planned in order to keep employees informed of response activities and actions.
- Staff has developed presentations for the CEO to communicate OCTA's pandemic response to community and industry organizations, most recently for the OC Forum.
- Staff continues to lead efforts and work collaboratively with Health, Safety and Environmental Compliance to communicate to employees and the Board if there are any positive for COVID-19 cases.

## **General Services**

- The OCTA Store has modified its hours to meet an increasing number of customers. The store is now open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- General Services staff remains on-site to provide employees supplies as needed, facilitate deliveries, printing and coordinating with building maintenance on any issues that arise.
- Staff is on the Return to the Workplace team and is implementing mitigations to ensure employees may safely occupy OCTA facilities.

## **Clerk of the Board**

- Clerk of the Board staff has continued to successfully conduct Board and committee meetings via teleconference as allowed under current state orders; to date 28 Board and committee meetings have been conducted via teleconference.
- Staff continues to prepare, post, and provide agendas to the Board and public.

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c: Executive Staff