

DESIGNING TOMORROW

2018 LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
PUBLIC OUTREACH REPORT, SEPTEMBER 2018

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Public Outreach Report

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority is updating its Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP or Plan), looking ahead to the year 2040. As part of the process, a comprehensive public outreach program was designed to elicit public comment from a variety of sources, including the general public, elected officials, local jurisdictions, business leaders, transportation professionals, and diversity leaders.

The goals of the LRTP are to assess the performance of the transportation system over a 20+ year horizon, and to identify the projects that best address the needs of the system based on expected population growth, housing, and employment growth, while taking forecast financial assumptions into account at the same time. The LRTP provides both a financially constrained plan, which considers funding limitations and an unconstrained plan, which contains a vast array of potential improvements should additional funding sources become available.

Phase One – Provide Context and Identify Priorities

Public Outreach Objectives

The key objectives of Phase One included informing and educating key audiences about evolving demographics and transportation options, key issues and challenges while obtaining input to shape the draft transportation plan that reflected the public's feedback and priorities.

Outreach Tactics

Phase One included a variety of activities designed to solicit public input from a broad spectrum of people including: focus groups, website/online survey, social media campaign, stakeholder meetings/workshops, and leadership meetings.

Outreach Audiences

The LRTP impacts all of Orange County, therefore, targeted audiences were both broad and comprehensive including general public, transportation professionals/organizations, business and community leaders, elected officials, city/county officials, diverse community leaders, influential Orange County leaders, transit/rideshare users, OCTA's public committees, students, and environmental community.

More than 11,000 people provided direct feedback via the online survey and through participation in outreach meetings.

Phase One Key Findings

Generally, there was acknowledgement by key stakeholders there is a need to address the current key issues that will likely affect travel demand, services and infrastructure needs moving forward. In addition, it is vital to identify new and emerging innovative and technological trends.

Key Themes

Following are the key themes that came out of the stakeholder meetings, focus groups, leadership meetings and online survey responses:

- Keep Orange County Moving – The public and stakeholders are looking for congestion relief on local streets and freeways
- Expand Transit Options – Although public input indicates cars continue to be the number one choice of travel, there is growing interest in offering expanded transit options in Orange County
- Be Innovative – It's important that OCTA effectively monitors and engages in the implementation of emerging technologies

Phase One Summary

The Phase One outreach efforts met the goal of informing and educating the public about the LRTP's key issues and challenges OCTA is facing when planning for the future of transportation. The overall feedback indicated the public and stakeholders want to see further improvements to relieve congestion on freeways and local streets. There is growing interest in offering expanded transit options and the feedback further indicates that monitoring and engaging in the implementation of emerging technologies is vital.

Phase Two – Educate the Public and Seek Feedback on the Plan

Public Outreach Objectives

Moving into Phase Two, momentum was built upon the outreach conducted in Phase One and the input received from stakeholders. The objectives of Phase Two were:

- Inform and educate key audiences about the transportation options and key issues and challenges
- Gather input from target audiences on key Plan elements

Outreach Tactics

Phase Two included a variety of activities designed to solicit public input from a broad spectrum of people including: website/online survey, telephone town hall, quantitative survey, social media campaign, pop-up events, video, art and photo contest, and public open house.

Outreach Audiences

The LRTP affects all of Orange County, therefore, targeted audiences were both broad and comprehensive including general public, transportation professionals/organizations, business and community leaders, elected officials, city/county officials, diverse community leaders, influential Orange County leaders, transit/rideshare users, OCTA's public committees, students, and environmental community. The OCTA Citizens Advisory Committee served as the Stakeholder Working Group and provided input on a regular basis. The following is a list of stakeholders that were invited to provide feedback on the plan. The majority of them also helped notify the public about the release of the Draft LRTP.

External Stakeholders

- All 34 Orange County cities
- Association of California Cities – Orange County
- Board of Supervisors
- California Coastal Commission
- California Department of Transportation – District 12
- County of Orange
- Environmental/Conservation Groups
- John Wayne Airport
- League of California Cities
- Metrolink
- Mobility 21
- Orange County Business Council
- Orange County chambers of commerce
- Orange County libraries
- South Coast Metro
- Spectrumotion
- Universities
- Women in Transportation Seminar – Orange County

Internal Stakeholders

- OC Bus Customers
- Interstate 405 Improvement Project Database
- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Taxpayer Oversight Committee
- Diverse Community Leaders Group
- Environmental Cleanup Allocation Committee
- Environmental Oversight Committee
- Special Needs Advisory Committee
- Teen Council
- Rideshare and Vanpool Programs Employers

Partner agencies:

- California Department of Transportation
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Riverside County Transportation Commission
- San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
- San Diego Association of Governments
- Southern California Association of Governments
- Transportation Corridor Agencies

Key Themes

During Phase Two, the public was able to provide direct input via two surveys, a telephone town hall (two sessions) and the public open house. Throughout all platforms, participants acknowledge the importance of reducing congestion and improving travel conditions.

Following are the key themes that came out of the surveys, telephone town hall and public open house:

- Keep Orange County Moving – Respondents are looking for congestion relief on local streets and freeways. Signal synchronization and maintenance/repair concerns continue to be a top priority. Respondents at the public open house voiced the need for freeway improvements.
- Expand Transit Options – Although public input indicates cars continue to be the number one choice of travel, there is growing interest in offering expanded transit options in Orange County
- Do Everything – Respondents were provided the opportunity to share input on a variety of transportation options. Many indicated support for more transit options, more rail service, increased bus service, more bike paths and more technology enhancements to improve the transportation experience.

Outreach Strategies

Phase Two included a variety of activities and strategies to educate the public about transportation options, key issues and challenges, gather input on plan elements and measure support for the Plan. Coordinated messaging to the public focused on “Four Ways to Participate:” an online survey, telephone town halls, community open house, and art and photo contest. Other outreach strategies are also identified in this section.

Four Ways to Participate

MetroQuest Survey - The MetroQuest online survey was launched by OCTA on August 13 and was open for public comment for seven (7) weeks closing on September 28, 2018. The survey was an online platform for Orange County residents to provide their feedback on potential transportation improvements and to let OCTA know how they get around Orange County. 1,230 surveys were completed with a 67% completion rate. 55% of the surveys were completed via the web platform and 45% were completed via the mobile platform. The complete MetroQuest survey results are included as *Appendix A*.

Telephone Town Hall - A forum was conducted via telephone on September 12 allowing participants to call-in and learn about the Plan from OCTA executive leaders and ask questions in a live, one-hour format. Two calls were conducted: one in north county and one in south county and both included a Spanish simulcast.

Community Open House - As a project finale to showcase the LRTP, a community open house was held at OCTA headquarters on September 22, 2018 with 70 people in attendance. This event served not only as a countywide open invitation for the public to learn about the plan but was also an opportunity to raise awareness and share information about other ongoing projects, including OC Streetcar and OC Active. The event was advertised with a focus on being family-friendly, and included train rides, treats, face painting and other fun activities available to guests. The Plan was summarized in a presentation format on electronic smartboards. Team members shared details about the Plan while reviewing screens, videos and other attachments on the smartboard. The public was able to provide comments via the MetroQuest survey and comment cards at the open house. Details about the event and participating agencies and organizations are included in *Appendix B*.

Art and Photo Contest - An Art and Photo contest was designed to encourage Orange County students to showcase their talents with the themes explored in the Plan. The contest was open to all Orange County schools from kindergarten to college/university in four age categories. The contest themes include:

- The Future of Transportation
- A Smooth Ride Ahead (highway or road improvements)
- All Aboard (rail technologies)
- Blue Skies Ahead (air quality)
- People Power or Human Power (bicycles, walking and skateboards)
- The Wheels on the Bus (transit)

Public online voting of 12 entries was encouraged with final voting at the public open house. First, second, and third place winners were selected in the categories and awarded gift cards. The entries were also displayed at the public open house. The entries and the Art and Photo contest flyer promoting the contest is included in *Appendix C*.

Additional Outreach Strategies

- Attitudinal and Awareness Survey – OCTA's 2018 survey included questions to help inform OCTA's development of the 2018 Plan. The survey was conducted in June 2018 and included 2,525 randomly selected Orange County adult residents. The survey followed a mixed-method design that employed multiple recruiting methods (telephone and email) and multiple data collection methods (telephone and online). The interviews averaged 18 minutes in length and were conducted in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The survey results focusing on the Plan are included as *Appendix D*.
- Informational Video – A two-minute information video was created to clearly explain the purpose and need for the plan while highlighting ways for the public to provide input. A shorter 20-second version was created for social media sharing.
- Pop-Up Events - To promote the online survey, the project team staffed seven (7) project booths at large community events and Metrolink stations throughout the county. At each event, the project team provided an overview of the project, informed the public about the Art and Photo Contest, and promoted the community open house. The primary objective was encouraging participation in the MetroQuest survey. Participants had the option of taking the survey online on a tablet provided or by hard copy. The project team displayed OCTA branded giveaways to attract more visitors to the booth and incentivize survey completion. For a complete list of survey locations, please see *Appendix E*.
- Social Media Campaign/Notification – A social media campaign accompanied by more traditional notification efforts were key elements in seeking public comment on the Plan. Both social media and traditional tactics were employed to ensure far-reaching communication efforts. The following is an overview of all tactics implemented.

- Social Media Toolkit – A toolkit with a menu of graphics and accompanying content for use on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, eblast and newsletters was created for use by cities, government agencies, non-profits and other organizations. The toolkit also included a link to the project video with content to promote the video. The social media tool kit is included as *Appendix F*.
- Website – The project website, www.OCTA.net/LRTP provided an overview of the Plan as well as the project video to provide viewers with an easy-to-understand overview of the project. The website received 20,136 views. Also included on the page were details and links on the “Four Ways to Participate:”
 - Online survey – link to the MetroQuest survey
 - Telephone Town Hall – details on participating and then following the town halls, recordings of both town halls in north and south county.
 - Community Open House – details on the September 22 Community Open House including a PDF link with event details.
 - Art and Photo Contest – details on the contest including a link to vote online.
- Facebook – Four advertisements and one post were developed to share and promote the Plan and participation. One post highlighted the four ways to participate, while four paid advertisements highlighted each of the “Four Ways to Participate:” online survey, telephone town hall, community open house, and art and photo contest. All posts were boosted to ensure further reach. The paid advertisements began the week of August 20 and the four elements were timed to coincide with the element milestones. The advertisement and posts are included as *Appendix G*.
- Eblast – Three eblasts were created and distributed to the Plan stakeholder database as well as other appropriate external and internal stakeholders as previously identified reaching nearly 7,000 stakeholders each time. The first eblast identified the “Four Ways to Participate,” the second eblast promoted the telephone town halls and the third eblast promoted the community open house. The three eblasts are included as *Appendix H*.
- On the Move Blogs – OCTA publishes a blog with brief articles highlighting key initiatives. For the Plan, five separate announcements were published highlighting “Four Ways to Participate.” The announcements/articles included in the blog are in *Appendix I*.
- Orange County Register Online Advertisement – An online advertisement on the Orange County Register’s website promoting the community open house event was published from Saturday, September 15 through Saturday, September 22 with over 50,000 impressions during the one-week advertising run. The online advertisement is included as *Appendix J*.
- Postcard – A hard-copy postcard was designed to inform the public on the “Four Ways to Participate.” The postcard was distributed at pop-up events and copies provided to area businesses and libraries throughout Orange County.

As part of the extended outreach, public access venue locations were identified to assist with supplemental outreach and included senior and community centers in every city throughout the county. Bundles of post cards were mailed to these locations with requested placement in areas of high traffic volume for public viewing. The postcard is included as *Appendix K*.

Results

MetroQuest Survey

The qualitative survey was launched by OCTA to create an online platform for Orange County residents to provide their feedback on potential transportation improvements and let OCTA know how they travel around Orange County. The survey is included as *Appendix L*. The survey research utilizes a nonprobability sample, which means that results cannot be considered representative of the total population of interest. Informal research methods such as this are useful to explore a group's opinions and views, allowing for the collection of rich and verifiable data. This data can reveal information that may warrant further study and is often a cornerstone for the generation of new ideas.

Based on survey results, the majority of the 1,230 survey respondents (66%) drive a car alone as their main mode of transportation, followed by carpooling (14%). Expanding bus/train services was the highest ranked transportation improvement priority for respondents which shows an increasing interest for transit services in the County. Rail options, including commuter and light rail, are the most popular transit options. Strong support for signal synchronization and connecting signals with cars were among other noteworthy results of the survey. The following are the survey key findings:

Transportation Priorities:

Survey respondents were asked to pick the top three strategies to be included in the LRTP. Expanding bus and train services is both the most popular and the most important priority for the respondents. This is followed up by signal synchronization and better maintenance/repair of the freeways and arterial roads.

1. Expand bus/train service
2. Signal synchronization
3. Better maintenance/repair

Technology:

Survey respondents were asked if they would or would not support connecting traffic signals to cars so drivers could be alerted of traffic ahead of time. A total of 78% supported the idea.

When survey respondents were also asked if they would or would not support a mileage-based fee to help manage growth in trips and congestion, there was minimal support. Only 29% supported the idea.

Transit Priorities:

Survey respondents were asked to pick their top transit options. Commuter train and streetcar/light rail were the highest transit priorities for respondents followed by bus rapid transit.

1. Commuter Train (22%)
2. Streetcar/Light Rail (21%)
3. Bus Rapid Transit [less stops] (18%)
4. Special events express shuttles (16%)
5. On-demand shared ride community shuttles (14%)
6. Bus (9%)

Managed Lanes:

Survey respondents were asked which of the following three strategies they would support to keep carpool lanes flowing during peak periods. The majority of respondents support requiring at least 3 people in a vehicle to qualify for the carpool lane rather than adding more lanes.

- Require at least 3 people in a vehicle in order to qualify for the carpool lane, but also allow single or two-person vehicles the opportunity to use the carpool lane for a fee (39%)
- Require at least 3 people in a vehicle in order to qualify for the carpool lane (35%)
- Build additional carpool lanes on freeways, even if it is very expensive and may require purchasing private properties to widen the freeway (26%)

Bike Improvement Priorities:

Survey respondents were asked how to best improve bicycling in Orange County. The top three options were close to equally distributed as seen below:

1. Adding bike lanes (29%)
2. Improving street signage and pavement markings (28%)
3. Maintaining existing facilities (24%)
4. Developing bike-share programs (19%)

Travel Behavior:

Survey respondents were asked about their main mode of transportation. The majority of respondents drive alone, followed by carpooling/vanpooling and bus transit. Only 3% of respondents selected active transportation (biking and walking).

1. Drive alone (66%)
2. Carpool/Vanpool (15%)
3. Bus (8%)
4. Metrolink/Amtrak (4%)
5. Bike (2%)
6. On-demand service (2%)
7. Other (2%)
8. Walk (1%)
9. Paratransit (0.04%)

Public Comments

A total of 110 comments and eight letters were received during the public comment period. The comments were submitted via online comment forms, during the Telephone Town Hall and at the open house. All comments are included as *Appendix M*.

The majority of comments were related to:

- Expanding bus service throughout the County
- Adding more Metrolink service and possible light rail transit options
- Improving freeways to meet increased population demand
- Considering how autonomous vehicles can be incorporated into the system
- Incorporating more ride sharing services and technology into the plan
- Opposing additional toll roads

Telephone Town Hall

A live, one-hour telephone forum was conducted both in North County and South County and was presented in English and Spanish. The OCTA presenters included CEO Darrell Johnson, Executive Director of Planning Kia Mortazavi and Chairwoman Lisa Bartlett representing South County and Vice Chair Tim Shaw representing North County. The Telephone Town Hall was promoted via the OCTA website, media, OCTA blog, e blasts and social media. More than 20 questions were asked and ranged from topics related to streetcar expansion, signal synchronization, safety on busses and on the roads for EMTs, rail system improvements and bus service. The following is how many people participated in the two forums:

- A total reach of 6,558 callers listened for a least 1+ minutes.
- 956 callers listened for more than 5 minutes.
- A total of 385 callers participated for the entirety of the two calls.

Attitudinal and Awareness Survey

Every few years, OCTA conducts an Attitudinal & Awareness Survey to gather data on Orange County residents' awareness, perceptions, and priorities with respect to OCTA as well as the projects, programs, and services it provides. A portion of the 2018 survey was used to gather input about OCTA's development of the Plan. The survey included 2,525 respondents.

The survey results indicate that Orange County residents have clear preferences with respect to the projects they think should be prioritized in the Plan. At the top of the list were fixing potholes and repairing roadways (91% high or medium priority) and projects that had a direct connection to reducing traffic congestion, including fixing freeway bottlenecks at interchanges, merge areas, and on/off ramps (90%), synchronizing traffic signals on major roadways (87%), and widening freeways, where possible (80%).

Transit and rideshare improvements were also prioritized by residents, including increasing and expanding commuter rail service on Metrolink and Amtrak (74%), increasing and expanding bus services (70%), increasing carpool, vanpool, and rideshare programs (65%), adding faster express bus services (62%), adding streetcar services in areas with high potential ridership (60%), and creating on-demand shared ride community shuttles (57%).

Residents also prioritized projects that would support active transportation, including improving and repairing the network of sidewalks (65%) and improving the network of bike paths (52%).

When compared to the other projects tested, residents were less apt to prioritize improvements related to carpool lanes, toll roads, and autonomous vehicles. Specifically, less than 4-in-10 respondents rated as a high or medium priority adding carpool lanes to toll roads (36%), enhancing infrastructure to accommodate autonomous, driverless vehicles (35%), and adding toll lanes on existing highways (28%).

Phase Two Summary

The feedback received indicates an interest by the public and stakeholders to see further improvements to relieve congestion on freeways and local streets with a growing interest in providing more transit options as an additional means of helping travelers move throughout Orange County. The feedback further indicates it is important to prepare for current and emerging technologies as improvements are considered.