

Orange County Transportation Authority

Public Involvement Plan



Strategies and Methods for Promoting Public Involvement

External Affairs Division
Office of Civil Rights

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OCTA Public Involvement Plan

Purpose

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Public Involvement Plan (PIP) establishes procedures that allow for, encourage, and monitor participation of all direct stakeholders in the OCTA service area including, but not limited to, low-income, hard-to-reach, diverse individuals and those with limited English proficiency (LEP)¹. This document describes proactive strategies, procedures, and desired outcomes to seek out and consider the needs and input of the general public, and to engage them in planning and decision-making activities at OCTA.

In developing the PIP, OCTA analyzed the demographic population for diverse, low-income, and LEP segments, as well as the steps required to incorporate these often underserved segments. Hard copies of the PIP will be available at the OCTA main office upon request. Electronic versions of the document will be available on the OCTA.net website.

Goals and Objectives of the Public Involvement Plan

The goal of the PIP is to offer a variety of opportunities for the general public to engage in the planning and decision-making activities at OCTA in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) circular C 4702.1B Chapter III-5 *Promoting Inclusive Public Involvement* and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 710 *Practical Approaches for Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations in Transportation Decision making*.

Objectives:

- To determine what non-English languages and other cultural barriers may exist to public participation within the Orange County area;
- To provide a general notification of meetings, particularly forums for public input, in a manner that is understandable to all populations in the area;
- To hold meetings in locations which are accessible and reasonably welcoming to all area residents, including, but not limited to, low-income, hard-to-reach and diverse members of the public;
- To provide avenues for two-way flow of information and input from populations which are typically not likely to attend such meetings;
- To provide a framework of actions appropriate to various types of plans and programs, as well as amendments or alterations to any such plan or program;
- To use various illustrative visualization techniques to convey the information, including, but not limited to, charts, graphs, photos, maps, and the OCTA website.

Identification of Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who are either directly or indirectly affected by a plan, project or the recommendations of that plan or project. Those who may be adversely affected or who may be denied benefit of a plan's recommendation(s) are of particular interest in the identification of specific stakeholders. Stakeholders are broken down into several

¹ OCTA defines an LEP person as those individuals limited by the ability to speak English less than "not very well" or "not at all" as reported by the U.S Census Bureau.

groups: general publics, diverse, low- income, public agencies, non-profit organizations and businesses.

Direct Stakeholders

General: According to the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau population estimates, there are 3,175,692 residents in the Orange County Area. Over 70 percent of the population consider themselves to be solely of the white race. Over 99 percent of the households have somebody over the age of 14 who speaks English, with 54 percent speaking only English in the home.

Some of the techniques that can be used to engage the general population are public notices of meetings in the local newspapers and open house format public information meetings. While these techniques will continue, staff is making a greater effort to engage the general public, possibly with techniques such as nominal group exercises, surveys, participation in community events, and use of local and ethnic news media, etc.

Diverse Populations: According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 population estimates, diverse populations comprise almost half of the percentage of the population in the Orange County area (See Table 1). Hispanics are the largest diverse, with nearly 34 percent of the total population of Orange County. Black and Asian persons account for 2.1 percent and 21.7 percent of the population, respectively. There are also a small number of American Indian/Alaska natives and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander individuals, accounting for less than 1 percent each. Persons who consider themselves to be of more than one race account for slightly over 3.6 percent of the population.

**TABLE 1
Orange County Area
Population**

Category	Number	Percentage of
Total	3,175,692	100%
Hispanic/Latino	1,079,735	34%
White	1,263,925	39.8%
African American	66,690	2.1%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	31,757	1%
Asian	689,125	21.7%
Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	12,702	0.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census,
2019 Population estimates

Less than 3.6% of population is equal to persons of two or more
races

Limited English Proficiency: Engaging LEP populations can initially appear to be challenging. Language and cultural differences may not be compatible with the more traditional means of engaging the public in the planning process. OCTA will make reasonable efforts to engage LEP populations using techniques such as including notations in public notices in appropriate non-English languages that will provide contact where individuals can be informed of the process/project and will have the opportunity to give input. Focus groups may also be established for the purpose of gaining input from a particular defined portion of the community. Also, non-profit organizations and

advocacy groups can be a good resource for contacts and dissemination of information to LEP populations. Such non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, or agencies can have insight into the needs of the under-represented populations, as well as providing valuable contacts for arenas for input.

Low-Income: According to the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates, low-income households are classified as below poverty “if their total family income or unrelated individual income was less than the poverty threshold specified for the applicable family size, age of householder, and number of related children under 18 present.” Low-income households account for 10 percent of all households in the Orange County area, while 10.7 percent of the population is actually below the poverty level. To ensure low-income segments are not under-served, OCTA has identified the service area segments with a per capita income of 80 percent or less of the national average in order to establish low-income thresholds. Low-income population in the Orange County area should be given every reasonable opportunity to provide input on transportation plans and programs to avoid disproportionate harm, or lack of benefit, of transportation programs and projects. Consideration should be given to the correlation between low-income and illiteracy when developing effective means of communication.

While low-income, hard-to-reach individuals may have access to all of the traditional means of public involvement, discussed under "general public," they may be less likely to become involved or offer input. Some methods of gaining input either directly or indirectly from this portion of the population include focus groups, informal interviews, and agency/advocacy group contacts.

Indirect Stakeholders

Non-Profit Organizations/Public Agencies: Non-profit organizations and public agencies can provide valuable input to the planning process in addition to assisting in gaining participation from traditionally under-represented populations². Pertinent public agencies include those that have clients who fall into under-represented populations, including, but not limited to minorities, low-income, hard-to-reach and LEP households. These agencies have great insight into the needs of their clients and are useful partners in overcoming difficult barriers that may not be understood by professionals dealing more distinctly with the provision of proposed program or project services.

Private Organizations and Businesses: Private organizations and businesses offer a number of perspectives that are valuable to the planning process. Often transportation for employees is of critical concern to private sector employers. For that reason, representation of private business interests will be welcomed in the planning process.

Public Involvement Plan

This document will serve as the PIP for the OCTA. Availability of the policy for review will be advertised in a manner reasonably expected to reach the general public, as well as diverse populations, low-income persons, and other traditionally under-served and hard-to-reach populations before the document goes into effect. This could occur through contacts mentioned earlier in this document, with notification of contacts available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Braille and other languages upon request, in addition to traditional public notices in local newspapers.

Public involvement is important at all stages of plan development. Opportunities for participation for both users and non-users of the OCTA programs, service, projects and activities will be available. Members of the public can obtain information about the process from or submit input to OCTA at:

Title VI Process - PIP, Room 734
Orange County Transportation Authority
550 S. Main Street
P.O. Box 14184
Orange, CA 92863-1584

Other stages of the planning process, such as reviewing draft documents and mapping, are more conducive to other techniques. Documents will be available for review at the OCTA administrative offices, located at 550 S. Main Street in Orange, California, and on OCTA webpage, www.octa.net. If materials are requested in other languages, large type, and/or Braille, staff will make a reasonable attempt to accommodate those needs.

Other techniques may also be determined useful at other stages of the process, and new and different techniques will be utilized, as deemed appropriate, to engage public participation.

Outreach Efforts

In addition to the outreach efforts identified earlier in this plan, OCTA's External Affairs Division staff will use the following public engagement techniques for its capital projects, planning studies, and public committees as deemed appropriate by OCTA External Affairs Division staff and the Orange County Transportation Authority:

Capital Projects:

Some or all of the following procedures, strategies, techniques, and media will be utilized to engage the public in the decision-making and planning process for all capital programs:

Presentations to professional, civic, student, community and faith-based organizations, as well as local agencies.

Articles in community newsletters.

Participation in special events, such as community fairs, health care fairs, and cultural celebrations.

Press releases and meetings with local media representatives.

Informal conversations with individuals and small groups.

Interviews with people who are or could be affected by study recommendations.

Presentations by experts on various transit-related subjects.

²Traditionally under-represented populations include but are not limited to minorities, low-income, and LEP households.

User and non-user surveys.

Use of various visualization techniques to convey the information, including, but not limited to, charts, graphs, photos, and maps.

All materials will be multilingual, and translation services will be provided as needed during meetings.

A combination of in person and virtual meetings/briefings will be used to ensure the greatest possible reach. Virtual meetings will feature a phone in option for those without broadband internet access.

Planning Studies:

A variety of outreach methods and tools are used to inform, educate, and seek input from the public when conducting transportation planning studies. OCTA staff actively engages with diverse populations and develops multilingual outreach materials to encourage meaningful and inclusive engagement. Following are several engagement techniques:

- Public workshops (in-person and virtual), pop-ups, and neighborhood meetings
- Multilingual digital media (social media, ads, geofencing, eblasts, blogs, web)
- Multilingual traditional media (newspaper ads)
- Multilingual online surveys
- Multilingual telephone helpline
- Multilingual collateral materials (fact sheets, postcards, infographics, FAQ)
- Stakeholder/Community Based Organization Roundtables and 1:1 briefings

Public Committees:

Community participation is essential when planning transportation solutions. OCTA seeks citizen input on our programs, studies and projects throughout the year through public meetings, open houses and workshops, online surveys, newspaper ads and focus groups. In addition to these and other public participation opportunities, citizen committees advise the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) on a wide range of projects and programs, help identify opportunities for community input, and serve as a conduit for public participation. OCTA strongly encourages Orange County residents and community leaders to get involved and help improve the quality of life and mobility options for all Orange County residents. The Grand Jurors Association of Orange County (GJAOC) conducts an annual recruitment to fill vacancies on an additional committee, the Measure M Taxpayer Oversight Committee. This committee is independently selected by a third-party organization and its membership is directed by the Measure M ordinance.

- The Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC) advises OCTA about issues that relate to OCTA fixed-route transit and paratransit services for customers with special transportation needs. The Special Needs

Committee was originally formed in 1992 in response to the Americans with Disabilities Act and formalized the predecessor “504 Committee.”

- The committee meets quarterly and is composed of two appointees per each Director on the OCTA Board of Directors
- The SNAC is specifically engaged on issues relating access and senior services.
- Members often represent organizations that work closely with the disabled and senior communities.
- Members are asked to share OCTA information with their constituents.
- The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) actively participates in helping examine traffic solutions, providing input to OCTA’s transportation studies and communicating with their constituencies. During the year, committee members are asked to participate in roundtable discussions and hear special presentations on various transportation projects, programs and services.
 - The committee meets quarterly and is composed of two appointees per each Director on the OCTA Board of Directors
 - As an advisory body, members’ comments and suggestions help to shape OCTA’s services and communications to be responsive and user-friendly to the public.
 - The wide range of viewpoints and interests represented by the CAC membership also provides OCTA with an added sounding board for prospective programs and initiatives.
 - Members are asked to share OCTA information with their constituents.

Major Service & Fare Changes and Fixed Route Bus Initiatives

Major Service & Fare Change:

Public Hearing Process:

The Federal Transit Administration requires that transit agencies have policies that provide the public an opportunity to comment on proposed major service changes and fare increases or decreases, and policy changes. The following procedure provides for a public hearing in the event of a major service change or fare increase or decrease. The procedure for public review includes the following elements:

1. Public open house(s), workshop(s), focus group(s), community meeting(s), and/or virtual community meetings.
2. Publishing a notice describing the proposed major service change or fare increase or decrease in multiple language newspaper(s) of general circulation 30 days prior to the public hearing.

3. Place public notice brochures and/or advertisements on board buses describing the proposed changes.
4. Conduct a public hearing.

The public must be notified of each major service change or fare increase or decrease proposal and their comments must be gathered, considered and presented to the Board of Directors (Board) prior to Board approval of the proposed changes. . Some or all of the following procedures, strategies, techniques, and media will be utilized to notify and engage the public in providing feedback prior to OCTA Board adoption of the proposed changes:

- Multilingual bus advertising and collateral: on-board brochures/flyers, with or without comment cards; bus interior and exterior advertisements.
- Multilingual informational signage, posters around major transit hubs.
- Multilingual digital Information: emails, social media, and dedicated web pages
- Multilingual telephone hotlines
- Multilingual advertisements: print, radio, and television advertisements
- Public open house(s), workshop(s), focus group(s), community meeting(s), and/or virtual community meetings held in multiple languages.
- Press releases and meetings with local media representatives.
- Multilingual information distribution through direct mailings and/or presentations to employers, schools, colleges and community-based organizations including those in disadvantaged and diverse communities.
- User and non-user survey instruments to gather feedback
- Multilingual information tool kits for Cities' use and distribution
- Use of various illustrative visualization techniques to convey the information, including, but not limited to, charts, graphs, photos, maps, and the Internet.

Community Board Recruitment:

Some or all of the following procedures, strategies, techniques, and media will be utilized to recruit membership for open positions for transit related decision-making and planning committees and boards:

Notifications to professional, public, and student organizations.

Articles in community newsletters.

Press releases to all local media

Informal conversations with individuals and small groups.

Stakeholder Working Group Recruitment

Some of or all of the following procedures, strategies, techniques, and media will be utilized to recruit membership for open positions for transit related decision-making and planning stakeholder working groups:

Notifications to professional, public, and student organizations.

Informal conversations with individuals and small groups.

Interviews with people who are or could be affected by study recommendations.

Presentations by experts on various transit-related subjects.

User and non-user surveys.

Use various illustrative visualization techniques to convey the information, including, but not limited to, charts, graphs, photos, maps, and the internet.

Other techniques will be examined to determine the best methods of involving greater participation from all segments of the service area population during the planning process.

Availability of Planning Documents: Hard copies of documents, upon completion, will be available at the OCTA main office upon request located at 550 South Main St., Orange, CA 92863. Electronic versions of the documents will be available on the OCTA.net website.

Response to Information Requests and Comments: Comments will be documented by the External Affairs Division, presented to decision-making bodies, modified in the content of the document, as necessary, and will be included in the appendices of planning products after they are approved and published. Comments received after studies and when other planning documents are completed and approved, will be documented and referenced when amending or updating planning projects in the future.

Public Involvement Plan Contact List: Information can be requested From External Affairs Division / Diversity Outreach staff in person and e-mail at U.S. mail at:

Title VI Process - PIP, Room 734
Orange County Transportation Authority
550 S. Main Street
P.O. Box 14184
Orange, CA 92863-1584

The PIP will be subject to public engagement and will be updated as appropriate based on public input received during the solicitation period, the changing needs of the demographics, and communication preferences once every five years.

OCTA will continually update the stakeholder list to reflect additional diverse and low-income organizations that are the most significant stakeholders for Title VI compliance.

Public Involvement Plan Stakeholders

- Senior Centers
- Community Centers
- Community events
- Cities
- Social Service Agencies
- Community Based Organizations
- Religious and Faith Based Organizations
- Colleges and Universities
- School Districts
- High Schools
- Middle Schools
- Middle-Elementary Schools
- Elementary Schools
- Adult Education
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Employer Transportation Coordinators/Employers
- Transportation Management Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Business Associations
- Home Owner Associations
- Ethnic media outlets
- OCTA Diverse Community Leaders' Group Network