



August 27, 2004

Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Orange County Grand Jurors:

On behalf of the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Board of Directors, thank you for your recent report reviewing "Senior Transportation in Orange County." We appreciate the observations you shared and the suggestions you offered. The report has been incorporated into the public record and will further assist us in planning and implementing transportation options to serve the needs of senior citizens in Orange County.

OCTA recognizes that Orange County's population not only continues to grow, but continues to age. To keep pace with the needs of our residents, OCTA constantly evaluates current transportation services to plan for the future. As a public transportation operator, OCTA seeks to improve the mobility of all individuals, regardless of trip purpose.

Below, as required by law, please find our response to Findings 1 through 7, 9 and 10, as well as our response to Recommendations 1 through 7 and 9. Should you have any questions or require any additional follow up, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Emi Labrado at (714) 560-5725.

Findings

- 1. Transportation available to the senior citizens of Orange County has improved over the last three years in both the public and private sectors.**

OCTA agrees with this finding. In the past three years, OCTA and the Office on Aging have implemented several new locally-based transportation programs to serve seniors.

- 2. Predicted increases in the senior population will need to be accommodated with expanded transportation services and additional funding.**

OCTA agrees with this finding. OCTA is proactive in preparing for the increase in the County's senior population. In 2000, OCTA commissioned the Senior Transportation Analysis which led to the OCTA Board's adoption of a community action plan which outlines a broad scope of community-based actions to address growth in this area.

- 3. Orange County Transportation Authority's ACCESS program currently fills the needs of its qualified subscribers.**

OCTA agrees with this finding. Since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990, there has been a gradual change in the court interpretation of ADA regulations concerning capacity. As a result, transit agencies are no longer permitted to maintain that they are making a "good faith" effort to meet all ADA demand, and cannot cite "financial hardship" associated with meeting all of the demand for ADA trips. As a result, in 2001, the OCTA Board directed staff to comply with "zero denials" for all ADA trips requested. Since then, virtually all requests for ACCESS trips have been provided. ACCESS is only available to individuals who complete the eligibility process which determines whether or not the individual has the functional ability to use the fixed route program.

- 4. The County has awarded six contracts for Senior Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Services. These contracts are funded by Tobacco Settlement Revenue. Two more of these pilot programs are in development.**

OCTA defers to the Office on Aging to respond to this finding. OCTA supports the implementation of Senior Non-Emergency Medical Transportation/Tobacco Settlement Revenue (SNEMT/TSR) services by the Office on Aging, by providing sample scopes of work for specialized paratransit services and participating in competitive procurements when requested.

5. The Senior Mobility Program has been implemented by 16 member cities and two non-profit agencies.

OCTA disagrees with this finding. As of May 31, 2004, a 17th city has been added to the Senior Mobility Program roster, Rancho Santa Margarita, for a total of 19 SMPs now operating within the county.

6. Senior Mobility Program member cities and non-profit agencies have varying ridership eligibility requirements.

OCTA agrees with this finding. Under the Senior Mobility Program, with the exception of a minimum age requirement of 60, ridership eligibility requirements are decided locally.

7. Tobacco Settlement Revenue-funded programs reduce the demand placed on ACCESS and Senior Mobility Program providers and allow them to make more services available within existing resources.

OCTA disagrees with this finding. It is doubtful that Tobacco Settlement Revenue-funded (TSR) programs reduce the demand for ACCESS and the Senior Mobility Program (SMP). Individuals who use TSR-funded programs tend to not qualify for ACCESS service. In addition, the demand for ACCESS has continued to increase during the implementation of these other programs.

As far as the impact TSR-funded programs have on reducing the demand for SMP services, this is difficult to prove. Users of SMP services need only to meet the age minimum of 60, any other eligibility requirements are determined locally. Similarly to ACCESS, the SMP also continues to grow with additional cities and organizations demonstrating interest.

9. Medical transportation programs do not fulfill the social needs of senior citizens for shopping, visiting and entertainment.

This finding does not apply to OCTA. ACCESS is a public transportation program, not a medical, nutrition, or recreational transportation service.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), OCTA does not request the purpose of a rider's trip and all ACCESS trip requests are met without any regard to the purpose of the trip.

10. The Orange County Transportation Authority's Outreach Program makes seniors aware of existing transportation services and changes their views about "public" transportation.

OCTA agrees with this finding. OCTA has implemented a proactive senior marketing program to educate seniors about the transportation options available to them in Orange County. To this end, presentations have been conducted at the majority of senior citizen centers in Orange County, as well as at Leisure World in Seal Beach and Laguna Woods. These presentations are on-going and have been taking place for the past nine months with more than 2,000 attendees. OCTA presents a PowerPoint demonstration that gives an overview of the OCTA bus service, including statistics on maintenance and cleanliness, coach operator training, security features, as well as bus fare and pass information. The program is interactive and seniors win prizes for answering questions from the presentation. In addition, a bus is brought to each of these events and once the presentation is completed, all attendees are given the opportunity to take a short bus ride to give them a feel for riding the bus and to alleviate their fears and misconceptions about public transportation. Once the ride is complete, all attendees are given a one-day bus pass and an OCTA pass holder as an incentive to start using public transportation.

Since the Senior Marketing program began, senior ridership on fixed route service has increased from 4% to 10% in the past two years.

Recommendations

- 1. The Orange County Transportation Authority and the Office on Aging continue to improve transportation options and their availability to the senior citizens of Orange County. (Finding 1)**

Recommendation is being implemented. In cooperation with the Office on Aging, OCTA implemented the Senior Mobility Program (SMP) in 2001 and supported implementation of the pilot programs

under the Senior Non-emergency Medical Transportation/TSR program in 2003. OCTA is committed to working to improve transportation options for all residents in Orange County.

2. The Orange County Transportation Authority and the Office on Aging identify funding sources, such as Measure M, to support future expansion of senior transportation services. (Finding 2)

Recommendation has been partially implemented. Recognizing the need for senior transportation, the OCTA board approved funds for the SMP through 2011. Under the current SMP funding allocation, monies remain available for the implementation of SMPs in 16 additional cities, as well as unincorporated areas of the County.

In addition, under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office on Aging, OCTA has committed up to \$250,000 per year through FY07 to match TSR funds for the provision of a volunteer-based SNEMT program. The program is under development, and OCTA remains committed to the implementation of a program that develops alternatives to leverage existing volunteer activities, expanding the capacity of current programs throughout the community.

Outside of the scope of transportation services currently provided for senior citizens in Orange County, further expansion will depend on the availability of funds. Future funding could become available to continue these programs and support additional senior transportation services should Orange County voters support the reauthorization of Measure M.

3. The Orange County Transportation Authority and the Office on Aging compare subscriber lists for ACCESS and non-emergency transportation services to stop dual-service usage by subscribers who do not qualify for an exemption. (Findings 3 and 4)

Recommendation has been implemented. OCTA supports the implementation of SNEMT/TSR services by the Office on Aging. Part of the coordination provided in support of these programs is the

monthly comparison of SNEMT subscriber lists to identify SNEMT participants who may have ACCESS eligibility.

4. The Orange County Transportation Authority works with Senior Mobility Program participants to standardize requirements for participation in the programs. (Findings 5 and 6)

Recommendation will not be implemented. The only eligibility conditions imposed upon the SMP program are that services be provided to seniors, 60 years of age or older. This requirement has been established to ensure that those cities and agencies receiving funds for nutrition transportation which is partially subsidized by monies from the Older Americans Act, comply with that funding source. No two SMP programs are the same and other requirements for participation are locally decided to ensure that SMP programs best meet the local needs of their residents/program participants.

5. The Orange County Transportation Authority and the Office on Aging continue to distribute information about senior transportation services in multiple languages. (Finding 8)

Recommendation has been implemented. All fixed route bus information is available in English and Spanish with some information generated in additional languages as needed for targeted marketing efforts. ACCESS information, including the eligibility application and Rider's Guide, are currently under revision and will be printed in English and Spanish upon completion.

6. The Orange County Transportation Authority and the Office on Aging publicize the availability of programs that fulfill the social transportation needs of senior citizens. (Findings 6 and 9)

Recommendation has been implemented. The OCTA provides public transportation in the form of fixed route bus service and paratransit service as required by the ADA via ACCESS service. In this capacity, OCTA seeks to publicize the availability of transportation options regardless of trip purpose. The SMP, as structured by OCTA only requires the minimum age of 60 as criteria for riders, any

additional criteria is left to the discretion of the operating city/agency to best meet the needs of its community.

7. The Orange County Transportation Authority provide marketing, outreach and training programs in multiple languages to assist seniors from all sectors of the population. (Finding 10)

Recommendation has been implemented. As part of the Senior Marketing and Outreach Program, all training materials were translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean. A minority outreach consultant was hired to support these efforts and provide multi-cultural, multi-lingual specialists to assist OCTA in conducting training sessions.

9. The Orange County Transportation Authority and the Office on Aging periodically schedule conferences with all senior transportation providers to discuss their programs and to exchange ideas for providing and improving senior transportation. (Finding 12)

Recommendation has been implemented. Staff from the OCTA and the Office on Aging meet on a regular basis to discuss coordination of senior transportation. Staff from the Office on Aging also sit on OCTA's Special Needs in Transportation Advisory Committee which meets monthly. In addition, staff from both agencies attend the quarterly SMP forums, the monthly Senior Citizens Advisory Council Transportation Committee meetings, and the monthly Interagency Committee on Aging meetings.

Sincerely,



Gregory T. Winterbottom
Chairman

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