



TRANSFORMING TRANSPORTATION IN VENTURA COUNTY

Ventura County Regional Transit Study

REPORT TO THE VENTURA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION:
STEERING COMMITTEE DIRECTION AND POLICY ISSUES FOR FURTHER
CONSIDERATION

Prepared for:
Ventura County Transportation Commission

February 3, 2012 Meeting

Prepared by:
MIG, Inc.
Wendel

Introduction

Beginning in the Fall of 2010 the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) embarked on a Regional Transit Study designed to consider options for reorganizing public transportation services in Ventura County. This study was initiated in response to SB716, which requires that all Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds in Ventura County be used solely for public transit purposes beginning in July, 2014. In accordance with this legislation, the Commission was also afforded the opportunity to prepare a report on options for organizing public transportation in Ventura County.

While the current study was initiated in order to assist VCTC in its response to provisions of SB716, policymakers had recognized for a long time that the present system of ten different agencies providing a mix of services was neither coordinated nor efficient. Reflecting this need, the guiding principles established by Commissioners for the current study called for "...a network of sustainable services that meet the diverse needs of the customers..." and a transition to "...a user-focused system that goes beyond individual boundaries..."

Process and Accomplishments to Date

A Steering Committee of Commissioners was established to guide the study. This Steering Committee has met five times over the course of the study. In between times, the Commission and study consultants have conducted community outreach and consultation as part of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan process, held briefings with Transcom and consulted with individual city, county and agency officials. Steering Committee and Commission milestones and accomplishments have included:

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|----------------|--|
| September 2010 | Study initiation, background review and development of initial vision |
| December 2010 | Steering Committee review of existing conditions, issues and options; direction to consider a full range of models |

March 2011	Steering Committee consideration of organizational models and direction on options for further study (Full Consolidation and Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid alternatives)
May 2011	Consultant report to the full Commission on alternatives recommended by Steering Committee to be carried forward for further study
August 2011	Report to Steering Committee on consultations with city managers and operators and request from city managers that Coordination Alternative be added back for further consideration and that top management-level representatives of the operators be included in a follow-up meeting with Steering Committee
December 2011	Steering Committee meeting with management representatives of the operators and request from Steering Committee for these operators to present a specific operator-authored proposal outlining their alternative concept
January 2012	Steering Committee meeting with management representatives of the operators on their proposal and consensus on recommending operator structural proposal to the full Commission

Regional Transit Study Steering Committee Report and Recommendations

On January 13, 2012 members of the Steering Committee met to hear and discuss the operator proposal and provide direction for further consideration by the full Commission. The presentation of this proposal was preceded by a brief consultant recap of study background, including alternatives considered, Steering Committee milestones and policy issues that had been raised during the course of the study and subsequent discussion. A brief review of these policy issues and potential response is included in Attachment 1.

Art Bauer, staff to the Senate Transportation Committee along with the staff of SB716 author Senator Wolk provided clarification on the intent of SB 716. Mr. Bauer reiterated that "Ventura County is an urban county..." and the staff of Senator Wolk stated that the intent of the author was that TDA be used for transit in urban areas. She agreed to clarify the intent of excluding cities with less than

100,000 population but in urban counties from this requirement, with the exception of Ventura County cities. This clarification is pending.

The operators presented as a consensus proposal signed by management representatives. Signatories included the city managers of cities responsible for operating transit systems. The Gold Coast Transit General Manager signed the proposal on behalf of communities served by Gold Coast Transit. VISTA operator VCTC and the County of Ventura did not sign the proposal. As explained by the operators, this proposal was intended as a framework and would require further development and resolution of specific details. The full text of the operator proposal (including the Guiding Principles) is presented in the letter in Attachment 2. Essential concepts include:

- **Separate West County and East County Models:** A Gold Coast Transit District would be created to serve West County, including Heritage Valley, and a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be established in East County for operation and coordination of bus and ADA services, fares and hours of service.
- **VISTA Service Transition:** VISTA service (with the exception of VISTA-East) would be transitioned to the new Gold Coast Transit District. VISTA East and East County unincorporated area transit services would be transitioned to the jurisdiction of the East County MOU.
- **TDA Allocation:** TDA would be apportioned to the Gold Coast Transit District in West County. TDA would be returned to individual jurisdictions in East County (until such time as individual jurisdictions choose to join the District).
- **Certain Exclusions from SB 716 Requirements:** Cities outside the Gold Coast Transit District (initially all East County cities) would be allowed to continue to file claims for Article 8 purposes (use TDA for streets and roads as long as there are not unmet transit needs that are determined to be reasonable to be met under the existing TDA Article 8 process).

The proposal was accompanied by the Guiding Principles for a Regional Transit Plan:

1. It is the fundamental right of local agencies to determine how to provide local services.

2. Existing TDA farebox requirements do not adequately account for the impacts of federal regulations and a lower farebox ratio should be proposed.
3. Transit funds locally generated (such as TDA and FTA funds) must be distributed to and controlled by the local agency.
4. Consolidation of local ADA and DAR operations into no more than two regions is a desirable outcome.

After the presentation, there was discussion of how the operator proposal compared to the alternatives (Full Consolidation and Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid Alternatives) that the Steering Committee had asked the consultant team to study further in the Spring of 2011. The attached chart (Attachment 3) presents a brief comparison of those alternatives.

Steering Committee Direction

After discussion with the operators, VCTC staff and the consultant team, the Steering Committee agreed to the following:

- Include Customer Focus as a top priority in any Guiding Principles
- Express consensus support for the operators' structural proposal
- Further consolidation would be pursued in the future

An open question remains on the operators' proposal for use of TDA, especially as it relates to a Commission position on appealing SB716's directive that TDA is to be used exclusively for public transit in Ventura County starting in July 2014.

The Steering Committee further agreed with the operators that a follow-up meeting of the operators' staff with the consultants and VCTC staff would be helpful in clarifying certain details of the operator proposal in addition to open questions requiring further study, discussion and analysis. This meeting took place on January 18, 2012.

Issues for Further Consideration

Comparison of Operator Alternative with Original Alternatives

As illustrated in Attachment 3, and as discussed at the January 13, 2012 Steering Committee, there are core similarities between one of the original alternatives considered for further study at the April/May Steering Committee and Commission meetings (the Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid Alternative) and the operator proposal presented at the Steering Committee's January 13 meeting. There are also some key variances. Many of these are attributable to specifics that have been worked out among the operators:

- **Planning** - In both alternatives, VCTC would continue as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA). Both assume that some joint planning will occur at the countywide level. Under the Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid Alternative each of up to two entities will do its own detailed route and schedule planning; under the operator proposal the MOU will direct the level of integrated planning.

- **Customer Services** -- Under both alternatives, VCTC would play a central role in countywide information, ADA eligibility, fare media and marketing. However, the proposed MOU for East County also references these functions. The specifics are to be determined.
- **Operations** -- The Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid Alternative envisions one or two operating entities and a countywide funding and planning agency. The operators' proposal specifies that there will be a District in West County and an MOU (but continued separate city operations) in East County.
- **TDA** -- The Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid Alternative envisions (assuming SB 716 directs all TDA to go to public transit) that TDA will be aggregated in both East County and West County. Under the operator proposal, TDA would be aggregated under the district in West County and continue to be allocated to each jurisdiction in East County based on population.

Areas of General Consensus

Based on Steering Committee discussion with the operators at the January 13, 2012 meeting and informal discussions between the consultants, VCTC and the operators at the follow-up meeting, the following areas of general consensus have been identified:

1. The first and major consideration of any organization (including the proposed alternative) will be service to the customer.
2. Move forward with the proposed east-west county structure including creation of a West County transit district and an East County memorandum of understanding. This structure would be considered an interim step to longer-term consolidation (have the "capacity for evolution").
3. VISTA operation will be transitioned over time so that it is primarily managed by the new District with operation of VISTA East integrated into East County transit operations.
4. There will be a strong centralized role for VCTC. Details will be further discussed, but examples include:

- a. Perform all functions of a Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA);
- b. Coordinate and provide policy and planning direction for transit, with operating agencies having responsibility for operational and route planning, including scheduling;
- c. Provide coordinated information, marketing, and facilities planning;
- d. Receive and program Federal, State and other discretionary funding and grants and consider incentive- and-or performance-based distribution;
- e. Perform legislative and other advocacy on behalf of the operators and
- f. Oversee inter-county and Metrolink service issues.

Issues Requiring Short-term VCTC Action

So that a draft report can be prepared for the Legislature as soon as possible, the following issues have been identified for short-term action by the Commission:

1. Commission position on the structure proposed by the operators (creating a Transit District for West County operations and a Memorandum of Understanding to govern East County service coordination) and whether this includes the ultimate goal of creating a countywide operation.
2. Commission position on use of TDA to be presented in the report to the Legislature:
 - a. Shall the Commission include the option of using TDA for Article 8 (streets and roads) in all jurisdictions or only those jurisdictions outside the District. Mention was also made by a Commissioner at the January 13 Steering Committee meeting that perhaps some exception could be made for cities under 100,000 in Ventura County? OR

- b. Shall the Commission recommend that all TDA funds be used for public transit and not for streets and roads (current provisions of SB 716)?

In addition,

- c. Shall the Commission propose a waiver and/or re-interpretation of TDA farebox recovery requirements (currently at 20% for general public and 10% for senior/ADA services)?

Issues to be Addressed Based on Further Discussion or Study

There are several issues that will need further discussion and/or study but a Commission policy position may only be able to be determined after a report is submitted to the Legislature and the Legislature makes its determination on the application of SB716. These include but are not limited to:

1. The distribution of TDA transit funding: Assuming that the SB 716 mandate to use TDA only for transit beginning July 2014 stays in force and a District is created, should TDA continue to be distributed on a population-share basis to cities outside of the District or should some re-distribution be made based on demand or need, or for countywide connections?
2. ADA and Senior Services: If some or all of the ADA and Senior services are to be centralized, what is the extent of that centralization, how are varying eligibility criteria reconciled and how is service provided to areas such as Ojai and the Heritage Valley?
3. Fares and Schedules: What is the specific mechanism for coordinating fares and schedules and to what extent does the Commission have a role?
4. VISTA service and agreements: How would VISTA service and agreements be transitioned so as to maintain existing cooperative funding agreements with CSUCI and others if the service is split between two entities?
5. Performance Incentives: What incentives are provided for performance through the use of discretionary funds?

Next Steps

The next steps, as discussed with the Steering Committee are:

1. February 3, 2012 Commission Meeting: Present the Steering Committee consensus position and the consultant's report and receive direction from the Commission
2. Mid-February, 2012: Re-convene the Steering Committee to consider the content of report to the Legislature
3. March: Commission takes final action on the report to the Legislature
4. Late March/Early April 2012: Report submitted to the Legislature

Attachment 1: Policy Issues and Responses

Following is a brief review of policy issues and potential responses that have been raised during the course of the study and subsequent discussion.

Feasibility

- Feasibility of full or partial consolidation given Ventura County geography and demographics
 - *Ventura County has similarities with other counties; the primary goal is to have intercity connectors, local/neighborhood and specialized services work together.*
- Potential for cost savings and other efficiencies
 - *Numerous business models are available; substantial savings have been realized in other jurisdictions.*
- Continued ability to meet TDA farebox recovery requirements
 - *Farebox recovery requirement would be spread over the system; achieving an acceptable rate is probable.*

Authority

- Role and responsiveness of consolidated agency/agencies and board to citizens and communities
 - *Clearer lines of authority should increase access. VCTC Board consists of local elected officials.*
- Provisions for regional, subregional and local advisory committee structures
 - *Alternatives include local and sub-regional input structures, and cities can maintain local advisory bodies.*
- Local jurisdiction engagement and role in service decisions

- *Decisions will be made at the regional level, but still tailored to local needs with local input.*

Impact

- Potential for mandates on local jurisdictions – funding, level of service or other
 - *Local enhancements will be encouraged, but there will be no required local participation or funding.*
- Effect on and transition plans for represented employees, including role of unions
 - *Numerous rules and regulations to be followed; transitions have been successfully implemented in many other jurisdictions.*
- Balance of service and funding levels
 - *The track record of county-wide balance should not change with new organization.*

Funding

- Impact on funding sources
 - *Streets and roads – SB 716, local discretion: SB 716 will require all TDA used for transit so streets and roads funding will be from other sources; local and regional S&R decision processes will not change.*
 - *Federal funding eligibility and competitiveness: Restructuring will have no impact on eligibility for Federal funds but should make the region more competitive.*
- Effect on Metrolink funding and policy decisions
 - *Metrolink funding policy and decisions will remain with VCTC as the RTPA.*

Attachment 2: Operators' Proposal

January 11, 2012



Darren Kettle, Executive Director
Ventura County Transportation Commission
950 County Square Drive, Suite 207
Ventura, CA 93003

Dear Mr. Kettle:



On October 6, 2011, the City Managers and County Executive Officer met with VCTC staff and the Regional Transit Plan consultants to discuss the consultants' Progress Report, which included a fully consolidated County transit system or a possible two-district option. At that meeting, the City Managers raised several concerns about the Regional Transit Study. These concerns included the need to incorporate the following:



- Increased input from those currently operating transit services;
- A viable alternative to allow jurisdictions who wish to continue operating their own transit services to do so with increased coordination with other operators; and,
- Flexibility to allow cities who currently utilize TDA funds for streets and roads and who have no unmet transit needs, to continue to do so.



On November 4, 2011, several transit operators including the cities of Camarillo, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, and Simi Valley, Gold Coast Transit, and the County of Ventura, attended VCTC's Regional Transit Study Steering Committee meeting to again express their concerns that the draft VCTC Regional Transit Study reports to date did not adequately include input from, or address many of the issues and concerns that have been raised by local cities and operators. As a result, the VCTC Steering Committee and the full Commission at its December 2, 2011 meeting, directed VCTC staff and the VCTC Regional Transit Study consultants to meet with County transit operators to develop an alternative Regional Transit proposal that would represent the needs and concerns of operators in both the West and East County.

Ventura County transit operators representing the cities of Camarillo, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, Port Hueneme, Ojai, Oxnard, and Simi Valley, Gold Coast Transit, Ventura County, and VISTA conducted three meetings (beginning October 19, 2011) to discuss their ideas for establishing improved public transit in Ventura County. Through their efforts, the operators were able to develop and unanimously agree upon a proposed regional transit plan and operational concept for Ventura County that addresses West County, East County and Heritage Valley transit needs. This document is attached and is being forwarded to the VCTC as the alternative being recommended by Gold Coast Transit and the seven other Ventura County jurisdictions that operate transit services. The transit operators also adopted four Guiding Principles, which are attached to this letter. The Guiding Principles were used to create a proposed Operational Concept for public transit in Ventura County as well as some of the proposed language to amend the Transportation Development Act, in response to SB 716. The Guiding Principles are not necessarily requirements to be implemented but are rather items that all transit operators agreed were factors to be considered when establishing the Operational Concept.

In summary, the operator's proposal would create, by legislative action, a Gold Coast Transit District encompassing the current communities served by Gold Coast Transit and the Heritage Valley communities of Santa Paula and Fillmore. The cities of Camarillo, Moorpark, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks would continue to operate their municipal services with a Memorandum of Understanding for increased coordination of services and service delivery. The proposed Gold Coast Transit District would file Article 4 TDA Claims with the intent that all TDA funds would be used for transit purposes. The cities outside of the proposed Gold Coast Transit District would seek authorization to file claims under Article 8 subject to Public Utilities Code Section 99401.5.

As it relates to pursuing the flexibility for Ventura County cities to continue to use TDA funds for streets and roads, there are several current examples in the California Public Utilities Code where the State legislature has granted local jurisdictions the ability to file Article 8 Claims. Included are Sacramento County, the Sacramento Regional Transit District, and cities in Sacramento County, which are outside the Transit District, all of which have legislative authority to file Article 8 Claims for streets and roads funding. In addition, the counties of San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Stanislaus, Monterey and Los Angeles all have special legislative provisions related to TDA funding, covering streets and roads, HOV Lanes, and/or various other special needs unique to their own counties.

On December 14, 2011, representatives of the local transit operators, including the City Managers (or their designated representatives) from Camarillo, Moorpark, Ojai, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Oxnard, Gold Coast Transit's General Manager, and the Senior Transportation Analyst for the County of Ventura met with you and the VCTC's Regional Transit Study consultants to discuss the transit operators' proposal. During the meeting it was discussed that in order to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the operators' proposal, the transit operators would provide the VCTC Steering Committee and all VCTC Commissioners a written proposal, which is attached herein.

The transit operators would like to emphasize that this document was developed with the active participation of all the transit operators and agreed upon. Gold Coast Transit, in addition to representing the agencies that they serve, is currently taking steps to meet with the cities of

Fillmore and Santa Paula to explain how Gold Coast Transit can serve the Heritage Valley. The transit operators also discussed potential VISTA service improvements and consolidation, but felt that out of respect for the many details that should be considered (such as VISTA's current farebox recovery ratios and its dependency upon Federal and local funding), further study and discussions with VCTC staff is warranted before any proposal would be made.

The local transit operators would like to recognize the VCTC staff, Steering Committee, and the Commission as a whole for the initiatives that have been underway for the past two years to improve transit and general transportation services as a whole in Ventura County through the Regional Transit Study and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide to you this proposal, which represents the support of the undersigned operators and agencies. Should you, the VCTC staff or Commissioners have additional questions about the transit operators' proposal, please feel free to contact Shaun Kroes, Moorpark Senior Management Analyst, at 805-517-6257. He will either be able to provide information directly, or as the Chair of Transcom when this document was prepared, confer with the transit agency members who helped to develop the proposal.

Sincerely,




Steve Brown, General Manager
Gold Coast Transit



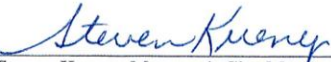
Edmund Sotelo, Oxnard City Manager
Oxnard Harbor and Beaches DAR



Mike Sedell, Simi Valley City Manager
Simi Valley Transit



Scott Mitnick, Thousand Oaks City Manager
Thousand Oaks Transit



Steven Kueny, Moorpark City Manager
Moorpark City Transit



Bruce Feng, Camarillo City Manager
Camarillo Area Transit



Robert Clark, Ojai City Manager
Ojai Trolley

Attachments

cc: VCTC Regional Transit Study Steering Committee
VCTC Board Members

**PROPOSED OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS FOR A WEST COUNTY TRANSIT
DISTRICT AND AN EAST COUNTY OPERATIONAL MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING, AND POSSIBLE LANGUAGE TO AMEND THE
TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT ACT**

West County Model: Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD) to plan and operate and/or contract for all bus and ADA services within the district boundaries including existing Heritage Valley services (VISTA-126, Santa Paula & Fillmore Dial-a-Rides), Ojai Trolley, Oxnard Harbor & Beaches Dial-a-Ride, Coastal Express, VISTA-CSUCI and VISTA-101. GCTD will also coordinate oversight of member agency rail stations, transit/transfer centers and bus stop amenities. Existing GCT Board will expand to include new members with appropriate representation to be determined.

East County Model: Simi Valley/Moorpark/Thousand Oaks/Camarillo to develop a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). East County MOU to operate and coordinate all bus and ADA services, fares and hours of service including VISTA-EAST and east county unincorporated area transit services. East County MOU to coordinate oversight of member agency rail stations, transit/transfer centers and bus stop amenities.

Transportation Development Act (TDA) definition of "area" apportionments with reference to Ventura County: the entire area stated in the proposed GCTD enabling legislation excluding cities within Ventura County that may choose to join the district or form a separate district at a later time.

TDA apportionment restriction definition: Cities within Ventura County which are outside the boundaries of the proposed GCTD, but which provide transit service or which contract for transit service, may also file claims under Article 8 subject to Public Utilities Code Section 99401.5. The County of Ventura may file claims under Article 8 only for unincorporated area transit needs in those areas not served by GCTD.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN
DEVELOPED BY THE TRANSIT OPERATORS IN VENTURA COUNTY**

1. It is the fundamental right of local agencies to determine how to provide local services.
2. Existing TDA farebox requirements do not adequately account for the impacts of federal regulations and a lower farebox ratio should be proposed.
3. Transit funds locally generated (such as TDA and FTA funds) must be distributed to and controlled by the local agency.
4. Consolidation of local ADA and DAR operations into no more than two regions is a desirable outcome.

Attachment 3: Organizational Alternatives Considerations

Features	January 13, 2012 Operator Proposal	Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid	Full Consolidation
Governance	<p>VCTC to continue as RTPA .</p> <p>Create Gold Coast Transit District to oversee current Gold Coast Transit plus Heritage Valley services</p> <p>Separate MOU to coordinate East County services with continued municipal operations governed by individual cities</p>	<p>Managing board and one or two operating boards/entities (potential for separate East County and West County operations)</p>	<p>Single entity governs planning, funding and operations countywide</p>
TDA Distribution and Use	<p>District files Article 4 TDA claims for West County District members</p> <p>TDA continues to flow to East County cities based on population.</p> <p>Cities outside the District (East County) can file Article 8 claims for streets/roads</p>	<p>Different types of funds controlled by each entity</p> <p>Some collaboration of funding requests likely for larger projects</p> <p>Each entity can pursue financial opportunities (e.g. bonding, tax levies)</p> <p>All TDA for transit beginning 2014</p>	<p>Receives and manages all funding for public transportation</p> <p>All TDA for transit beginning 2014</p>

Features	January 13, 2012 Operator Proposal	Moderate Consolidation/Hybrid	Full Consolidation
Planning	<p>VCTC continues in countywide planning role</p> <p>Transit District and East County municipal operations do own operational and route planning</p> <p>Some collaborative planning based on regional plans and other joint efforts (e.g. inter-agency transfers, VCTC programs)</p>	<p>Some joint planning occurs (e.g. overall long-range planning responsibility of planning agency), but each operating agency does own planning</p>	<p>Conducts all long-range, short-range and operational planning</p>
Customer Service Functions	<p>To be determined but envision central role for VCTC in countywide information, ADA eligibility, fare media and marketing</p> <p>Individual operations may continue own individualized efforts coordinated through District (West County) or MOU (East County)</p>	<p>Broader information, fare media, marketing responsibilities coordinated between managing entity and District(s)</p>	<p>Countywide entity has all communications and marketing responsibilities</p>