



2012 Update to the Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Ventura County

Prepared for:



Ventura County Transportation

**950 County Square Drive, Suite 207
Ventura, CA 93003**

Commission

Prepared by:



Riverside, CA

July 3, 2012

This page intentionally left blank.



2012 Update to the Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Ventura County

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	v
I. Introduction – This Update’s Purposes	1
About Federal Statute and Requirement	1
Ventura County’s Coordinated Plan Response	1
This Update's Purposes and Approach	2
II. Context – What’s Happened Since 2007’s Coordinated Plan?	5
Recommendations of the <i>2007 Human Services Transportation and Transit Services Coordination Study</i>	5
Changes in Population	8
Ventura County Work Area Profile	12
III. Resources – What Transportation Exists?	16
Available Public Transportation	16
Ventura County JARC and New Freedom Projects	33
IV. Needs and Gaps – What is Reported Now?	39
Summary of Unmet Transit Needs Hearing Process	39
Callers’ Responses: 2-1-1 Ventura County Transportation Survey	42
Agency Responses Regarding Unmet Needs and Service Gaps	45
V. Updating Coordination Priorities	49
About Responses to Needs and Service Gaps	49
Priorities Moving Forward for Ventura County Target Populations	50
Administrative Direction and Recommendations	53
Appendices	56
Appendix A: Coordinated Plan Flyer/ Initial Announcement	57
Appendix B: Summary of Unmet Transit Needs Comments – 2010, 2011, 2012	58
Appendix C: Project Steering Committee Participants	67
Appendix D: Agency E-Survey Summary	68
Appendix E: Summary of <i>Ventura County Together</i> Discussion	72
Appendix F: Selected Agency Interview Summaries	74
Appendix G: Historical JARC and New Freedom Grant Awards by Project Category	79



This page intentionally left blank.

2012 Update to the Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Ventura County

Executive Summary

Plan Update Requirement

This document brings current the *2007 Public Transit-Human Services Coordination Plan for Ventura County*. Required for update every four years, this augments but doesn't replace the extensive work done for Ventura County's first coordinated plan. These Coordinated Plans are intended to promote mobility by identifying needs and transportation service gaps of three targeted populations:

- older persons
- persons with disabilities
- persons of limited means

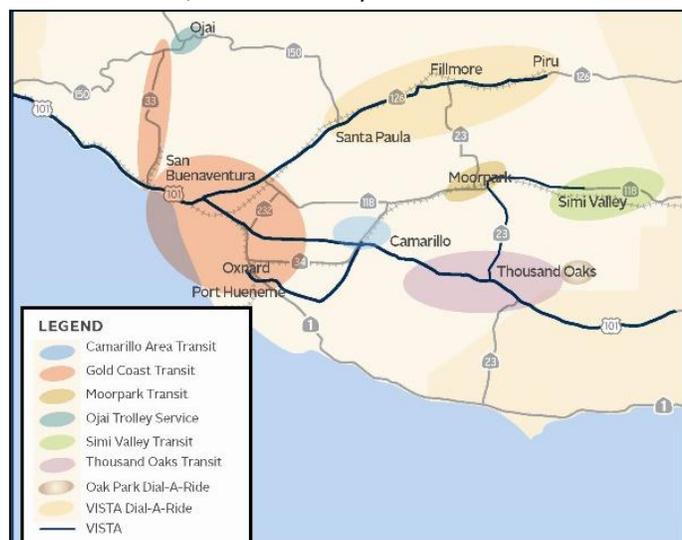
The Coordinated Plan does not provide for funding but helps to guide funding decisions, specifically those related to FTA 5316-*Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)*, 5317-*New Freedom* program and the 5310 *Capital Program for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities*. Projects funded from these programs must be "derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan." This plan can also help support and provide rationale for additional funding requests, both by public transit providers and by its human services partners.

Activities Since the 2007 Coordinated Plan

Section II of this Update reports on two principal recommendations brought forward from the 2007-2008 coordinated planning process that have guided the implementation activities undertaken since. These recommendations included:

1. Implementing a standard eligibility policy for older adults of 65 years of age for publicly-operated paratransit systems across the county; and
2. Implementing a coordinated approach to automated dispatching and scheduling of trips for public paratransit systems.

Exhibit ES-1, Ventura County Public Transit Service





Directly relevant to this Coordinated Plan, VCTC and the County’s paratransit providers worked towards coordinated dispatching and scheduling, with VCTC-sponsored project funding and the initial set-up and installation of Trapeze trip scheduling software. Installation of Trapeze took place between 2008 and 2009 with eight agencies initially participating. While several agencies no longer use Trapeze due to concerns that included budget issues or their individual program needs, six agencies continue: five public paratransit operators and one human service organization. Trip scheduling coordination opportunities remain largely informal, with this software technology horsepower infrequently utilized between systems.

Changes in Population and Demographics

Population changes impact the coordination environment. Ventura County has grown by 8.3% in the past decade, adding another 63,000 new residents. Reported on in Section II are the important changes within this growth among the target group populations:

- **Low-income adults**, ages 18 to 64, are a growing sub-group, increasing by 30% over the past decade and now representing almost 50,000 individuals.
- **Adults with disabilities**, ages 18 to 64, represent almost 8% of the adult population or almost 40,000 persons.
- **Older adults**, ages 65 and older, are now almost 12% of the County’s total population, or 94,000 persons. This population has seen nearly a 25% growth in the past decade.
- **Low-income older adults** are the fastest growing sub-group, increasing by almost 60% since 2000.

Analysis of work area profiles from 2010 Census information reported a Ventura County total of 285,670 jobs, with a heavy concentration of employment in the urbanized areas of the county and along major thoroughfares. The majority (57%) of these jobs are held by individuals between 30 and 54 years old. Notably, 19% of these jobs are held by individuals 55 years old and older. The remaining 24% of jobs are held by individuals under 30 years old.

Updated Transportation Resources

Section III provides a detailed inventory of the various modes of transit and transportation available to the public in Ventura County. An overview of the local fixed-route, regional fixed-route, rail, and dial-a-ride services available to Ventura County residents includes:

1. **Local Fixed-Route** - Bus services are provided by Camarillo Area Transit within the city of Camarillo. Moorpark Transit services the city of Moorpark. The Ojai Trolley travels throughout Ojai, Meiners Oaks, and Mira Monte. Simi Valley Transit services are in and around the city of Simi Valley. Thousand Oaks Transit provides fixed route services in and around the city of Thousand Oaks. Gold Coast Transit provides fixed route services within cities of Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura and the unincorporated areas between these cities. Greyhound services



are available for long distance trips. Connections to Los Angeles County based Metro Bus and L.A. DOT's Commuter Express can be made at various locations near the eastern borders of Ventura County.

2. **Regional Fixed-Route** - VISTA services are largely between communities: the Coastal Express operating between Ventura, Oxnard, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Goleta; on Highway 101 between the west county, Camarillo, and Thousand Oaks; along Highway 126 connecting Santa Paula and Fillmore to Ventura; Cal State University Channel Islands routes serving Oxnard, Camarillo and CSUCI riders; in the east county between Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, and Simi Valley; and a route along the 101 corridor to Warner Center in Los Angeles County.
3. **Rail Transportation** - Commuter rail services are provided by Metrolink and can be accessed at stations in Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Moorpark and Simi Valley. Connections can be made to locations in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. Amtrak provides transportation for long distance trips nation-wide, and can be accessed in Ventura County at the same locations as Metrolink, with the exception of Ventura where Amtrak stations are separate.
4. **Demand Response** - Between nine providers, there are thirteen demand response programs available throughout the County and serving various population groups. The age threshold for seniors' eligibility varies from 60 to 65 years of age across the various demand response systems. Demand response services include: Camarillo Area Transit Dial-A-Ride (DAR), Camarillo Health Care District, Gold Coast Transit, HELP of Ojai, Moorpark Transit, Oak Park DAR, Oxnard Harbors and Beaches DAR, Simi Valley Transit DAR, Thousand Oaks Transit DAR, VISTA DAR.

The County also offers a transit transfer system that provides free transfers between systems for two buses in a single direction and transfers to Vista's Conejo Connection and Coastal Express, Camarillo Dial-A-Ride and Heritage Valley Dial-A-Ride. These transfers range from \$0.50 to \$1.50.

JARC and New Freedom Projects

Other resources reported in Section III included transportation projects funded through the Federal Transit Administration's *Job Access and Reverse Commute* (JARC) and *New Freedom* programs. Successful projects are selected through a competitive process that is administered by the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). The JARC program funds transportation-related job access services for low-income individuals. The New Freedom Program seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). VCTC has administered five calls for projects for these funds, in the urbanized areas and for the rural portions of the County.

Currently, eleven projects have been awarded and are providing service or preparing to start. These projects may receive operating, capital assistance, or operating funds. They provide or will provide:

- Capacity building through taxi vouchers and ride home support



- Non-emergency medical trips for home-bound adults with disabilities
- Transportation to employment and training sites
- Reverse commute on VISTA buses
- Purchase of accessible taxicabs
- Employee shared ride program for staff of the City of Thousand Oaks
- Travel training materials
- Quality transportation service for individuals transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing
- Continuation or expansion of fixed-route services or new routes

Updated Mobility Needs

For this Coordinated Plan the process to define current mobility needs, as reported in Section IV involved: a review of three years of VCTC’s Unmet Transit Needs testimony; a one-week survey of 2-1-1 callers of whom 25% reported transportation need; an agency survey representing 25,000 person constituency; input from VCTC’s project steering committee; and stakeholder focus group discussions.

Section VI presents a discussion that compiles the needs identified by these various strategies, presented by sub-areas of the County, by trip-type and within the target populations. Summaries of key mobility need identified in through four needs assessment activities follow.

1. **General Public Input from Unmet Transit Needs Hearings** VCTC is required by law to conduct an annual unmet transportation needs public hearing process to invite comment from the general public. This process results in determinations of unmet transportation needs that are “reasonable to meet.” Most needs may well represent unmet transportation needs but are difficult to meet for a variety of reasons, including the high subsidy per rider that might be required or insufficient demonstrated demand for a new service.

Among the transportation needs identified through this process, a summary of the past two years of unmet needs testimonies identified three most commonly heard key areas of need:

- **Expanded days and hours of service** – Many comments focused on needing earlier morning service, later evening service or weekend service. These often included educational destinations, employment that began earlier or ended later than available transit and Sunday religious destinations.
- **Intra-county connections among cities and transit systems** – Many comments expressed a need for more transit between cities and communities within Ventura County and more connections between transit services. Improved connections between communities included requests for between Oxnard and Camarillo, to Ojai and between Fillmore and Piru, between Somis and Camarillo and various improved connections between bus services and between transit and Metrolink.



- **Inter-community connections** – Many comments expressed need for more direct service from various parts of Ventura County to destinations in both Santa Barbara County and Los Angeles County. Destinations sited included medical facilities in adjacent counties and work locations.

A variety of other types of need were expressed including more rail, increased frequency of bus service, transit fares too high to be affordable by commenters, improved reliability and safety, increased capacity on certain lines, at certain times, and various improvements to the County's public paratransit programs.

2. **2-1-1 Callers Transportation Survey** Information about mobility needs was brought forward from a new source, a survey conducted by 2-1-1 Ventura County, a program of Interface Children & Family Services in partnership with United Way of Ventura County and First 5 Ventura County. Undertaken in early March 2012, the survey effort was conducted by 2-1-1 Ventura County to inform this Plan Update and VCTC of transportation needs. Almost one-quarter (24%) of 406 callers during one five-day period reported difficulty with transportation. Transportation difficulties were most likely to be with medical trips, reported in 4 out of 10 cases (38.9%). This was followed most closely by work trips (30.8%). Local trips, including grocery and personal business, were difficult for a quarter of these callers, 24.2%. Education trip difficulties were least likely to present difficulty, doing so for 13.7% of callers.

Reasons for transportation difficulties reported by these 2-1-1 callers most commonly included reporting no car (41%), while another 13% couldn't afford the gasoline and 4% couldn't use their car when they wished, were decreasing driving or no longer driving at night. Of those reporting difficulty with public transportation, the most frequent complaint was that they couldn't afford the bus fare (17.9%), followed by difficulties with the particular bus schedule or routing.

This 2-1-1 call population reporting transportation difficulty was generally non-senior adults: 82% were between the ages of 18 and 62, while just 4% were over age 62. More than one-third reported some type of disability (35%), reportedly a much higher proportion than for 2-1-1 callers overall.

3. **Agency Responses through Surveys and Interviews** -- Several mechanisms were undertaken to secure input from human service agencies and organizations working with the Coordinated Plan's target populations. These included establishing a Project Steering Committee of interested parties, undertaking a short agency survey, selected interviews and an extended discussion with Ventura County Together members.

Agency-input opportunities brought back diverse and extensive comment. Needs and service gaps identified three key areas, each somewhat differently reflected among the target groups:

- Expanded Transit Operating Days and Hours
- Improved Connectivity
- Trip-Purpose Based Needs and Other Needs



For individuals of low-income, most articulated needs related to fixed-route services. Very specific connections between communities that cannot now be made were detailed by agency representatives. Other connections relate to the days and time when existing transit operates. Traveling to work is difficult on the days and at the hours necessary for those attempting living wage employment and living in areas beyond the footprint of existing fixed-route service.

For persons with disabilities advocates reported concerns related both to fixed-route and to demand responsive services. Many issues mirrored those of low-income individuals, as many individuals with disabilities are working or seeking work and need transit to retail or other living wage positions that can require early morning, later evening and Sunday travel. Other needs focused on connectivity between dial-a-ride services and need for regional non-emergency medical transportation.

For older adults while some similar needs emerged, most frequently expressed needs involved additional personal assistance. Driver assistance at the curb or to the door was a need. Problems transferring between systems were raised. Concern for seats at bus stops, the difficulties of long waits and long travel times particularly during peak periods, and need for expanded evening and weekend service were among those identified. The cost of fares was reported as a difficulty.

Updated Coordination Priorities

This Update's analysis of public input from a variety of resources identified four themes related to mobility needs and service gaps of the target groups – older persons, persons with disabilities and individuals of low-income. Section IV details the common themes heard from Ventura County's many stakeholders:

1. Regional and inter-city travel.

Coordination of transit services that promotes smooth connections between cities and seeks to increase and speed public transportation between jurisdictions will provide significant benefit to the three target populations.

2. Transit capacity building.

Protecting existing public transportation and growing its capacity wherever possible will provide significant benefit to the three populations.

3. Individualized transit information and assistance.

Defining appropriate ways to provide individualized information and rider assistance will continue to be important in enabling older adults, persons with disabilities and persons of low-income to utilize existing public transportation and to access available specialized transportation.



4. Coordination leadership and administration.

Coordination outcomes that are well-reported within the county and to various constituents’ agency representatives will help to expand the mobility of the three target populations.

These themes suggest a framework for prioritizing service solutions, which is the larger purpose of the Coordinated Plan. These priorities must be sufficiently defined as to provide direction around funding decisions, particularly as resources will always exceed available funds. These priorities must also be sufficiently flexible and broad-gauged so as to invite new coordinated partnerships. New partnerships and service innovations can help to address identified needs and service gaps.

Section V of this Coordinated Plan Update presents four prioritized transportation goals and fifteen implementing objectives by which to move these goals forward. Also highlighted are over two dozen implementing strategies that suggest possible coordinated projects and opportunities. Exhibit ES-2 presents this Update’s priorities for improving mobility of the Coordinated Plan’s target populations.

Exhibit ES-2, Ventura County Coordinated Plan Prioritized Goals and Objectives
to Improve the Mobility of Three Target Populations

PRIORITIZED TRANSPORTATION GOALS	IMPLEMENTING OBJECTIVES
Goal 1 – Regional and Intercity Travel	1.1 Improve fixed-route connections 1.2 Purpose-specific regional services 1.3 Improve inter-county connectivity
Goal 2 – Transit Capacity Building	2.1 Expand fixed-route service 2.2 Enhance demand responsive services 2.3 Support capital outlays for accessible vehicles new and replacement 2.4 Promote transit path-of-travel access and bus stop safety
Goal 3 – Individualized Transit Information and Assistance	3.1 Promote information portals 3.2 Promote travel training projects 3.3 Promote Mobility Manager projects 3.4 Individualized transit assistance projects
Goal 4 – Coordination Leadership and Administration	4.1 Promote coordination between public transit and human services organizations 4.2 Maintain key stakeholder contacts 4.3 Conduct Call for projects inviting responses to Coordinated Plan priority areas 4.4 Report on outcomes and success



Direction is offered to two audiences on administrative actions in support of the Plan’s goals for mobility improvement. To VCTC it is recommended that:

- County’s call for projects parallel the CalTrans JARC/ New Freedom grant process;
- Awards be made with attention to the category of projects, providing priority in areas of: 1) Provision of Trips, 2) Information and Travel Training, and 3) Infrastructure/Capital;
- Regular reporting of outcomes be required of grantees.

For agencies and organizations working with the target populations, the Coordinated Plan encourages action in three areas by which to improve the mobility of their client groups:

- On-going documentation of mobility needs;
- Supporting coordination and information exchange about resources, including pursuing possible JARC or New Freedom projects;
- Using the Coordinated Plan to inform agency strategic planning around constituents’ mobility needs.