



DATE: March 8, 2018

MEMO TO: TRANSIT OPERATORS COMMITTEE

FROM: AARON BONFILIO, PROGRAM MANAGER

SUBJECT: FY 2017/18 LOW CARBON TRANSIT OPERATIONS PROGRAM (LCTOP) ALLOCATION

RECOMMENDATION:

- Recommend the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) to program the FY2017/18 VCTC Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) apportionment of \$1,051,875 as follows:
 - Program \$550,000 for the Oxnard-Camarillo Employment Connector Service
 - Program \$501,875 for the College Easy Ride Fare Promotion

BACKGROUND:

The Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) is one of several programs that are part of the Transit, Affordable Housing, and Sustainable Communities Program established by the California Legislature in 2014 by Senate Bill 862. All of the programs are competitive grant programs with the exception of LCTOP which provides ongoing apportionments based on the State Transit Assistance formula. The LCTOP was created to provide operating and capital assistance for transit agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve mobility, with a priority on serving disadvantaged communities.

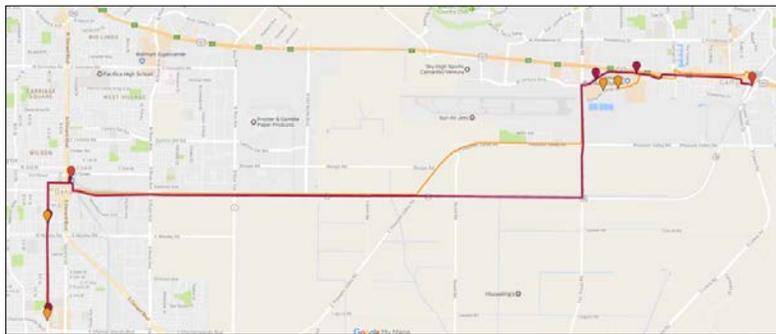
Projects eligible for LCTOP funds include new or expanded bus or rail services, expansion of intermodal transit facilities, operational expenditures that increase transit mode share and expenditures related to the purchase of zero-emission buses. For agencies whose service area includes disadvantaged communities such as VCTC, at least 50 percent of the total funds received must be expended on projects that benefit designated disadvantaged communities. Additionally, five percent of the funds must be allocated to projects that benefit low-income households/communities and five percent of the funds must be allocated to projects that benefit low-income households/communities outside of but within one-half mile of the designated disadvantaged community.

The amount of FY 17/18 LCTOP funds to be programmed at VCTC's discretion, not including Metrolink's revenue formula amount, is \$1,051,875. It should be noted that the City of Camarillo's LCTOP allocation for FY 17/18 is \$9,560, Gold Coast Transit's is \$45,987, City of Simi Valley's is \$6,736, the City of Thousand Oaks' is \$6,813, and the Southern California Regional Rail Authority direct allocation for the portion of the service within Ventura County is \$108,562.

DISCUSSION:

Oxnard to Camarillo Employment Connector Service (\$550,000):

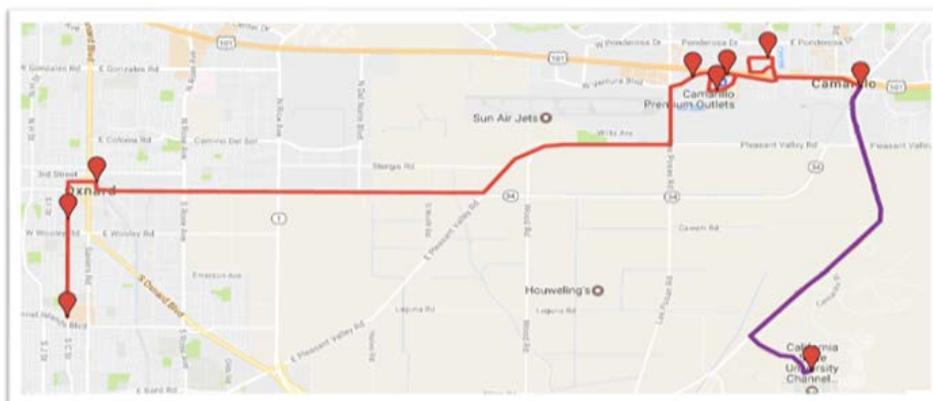
At prior VCTC Commission meetings, the Commission approved programing a total of \$1,090,041, of VCTC's apportionment for operation of the Oxnard/Camarillo Employment Connector Service. The service began operation in the fall of 2016. Initially this service provided 4 round trips a day, 7 days a week originating in South Oxnard (at the "C" Street Transfer Center) and the Oxnard Transportation Center (OTC), and then to the Camarillo Outlet mall. From there the service continued to the Camarillo Metrolink Station.



[Fall 2016]

Last spring, VCTC adjusted the route by increasing the frequency of the buses and added stops at Carmen Plaza (which is in a designated low-income community in accordance with AB1550). In addition, the route was extended to Cal State University Channel Islands. The extension of the route from Metrolink to the University is funded by Cal State Channel Islands (CSUCI). The service provides access from the designated disadvantaged and low-income communities in South and East Oxnard to the Camarillo area. Growth on the route has been steady.

Currently the Oxnard/Camarillo Employment Connector transports the second highest number of passengers on Saturdays, surpassing VCTC's Hwy101, Hwy126 and East County routes, and is one of only three VCTC routes to operate on Sundays. As well, the route provides an expanded (seven day a week) service between the Oxnard Transportation Center and Camarillo, whereas the previous route, the Conejo Connection, operated one-way and at limited times.



[May 2017]

The Oxnard/Camarillo bus route meets all three of the LCTOP guideline’s expenditure requirements: including that 50% of the expenditures be for Disadvantaged Communities or “DAC” (as it serves the Oxnard Transit Center), 5% for use in designated low-income area (as it serves Carmen Plaza), and 5% for use in an area within ½ mile of the DAC (it serves the C-Street Transfer Center).

The anticipated demonstration period is three years, beginning October 2016. Funding for the route has thus far provided for the purchase of the bus needed to operate the route, as well as approximately 20 months of operating funds. Staff recommends programming \$550,000 of FY 17/18 funds to continue operation of the Oxnard-Camarillo Employment Connector Service for next fiscal year. If approved approximately \$130,000 – 150,000 of additional funding is anticipated from CSUCI for continuation of the route’s extension to CSUCI.

“College Easy Ride” Transit Fare Promotion (\$501,875)

In addition to new or expanded transit service, eligible LCTOP projects include promotional activities including those which may increase transit utilization with free or reduced transit fare incentive programs. The funding associated with such potential programs can be counted towards fare revenue, i.e. a fare “buy-down”.

Over the years VCTC has received regular requests for free or reduced fares for college students. Such transit fare programs are common in many “college towns”, including for the students at UCSB (using MTD). However, no such program currently exists for college and university students in Ventura County, e.g. free transit for the approximate 48,000 students which attend the Ventura County Community College District schools (VCCD), California Lutheran University (CLU), and CSUCI.

The proposed “College Easy Ride” fare promotion allocates the remaining balance of the LCTOP apportionment, \$501,875 to provide free transit fares to eligible (enrolled) college/university students. The project goal is to increase the transit mode share of this growing, but financially impacted, demographic.

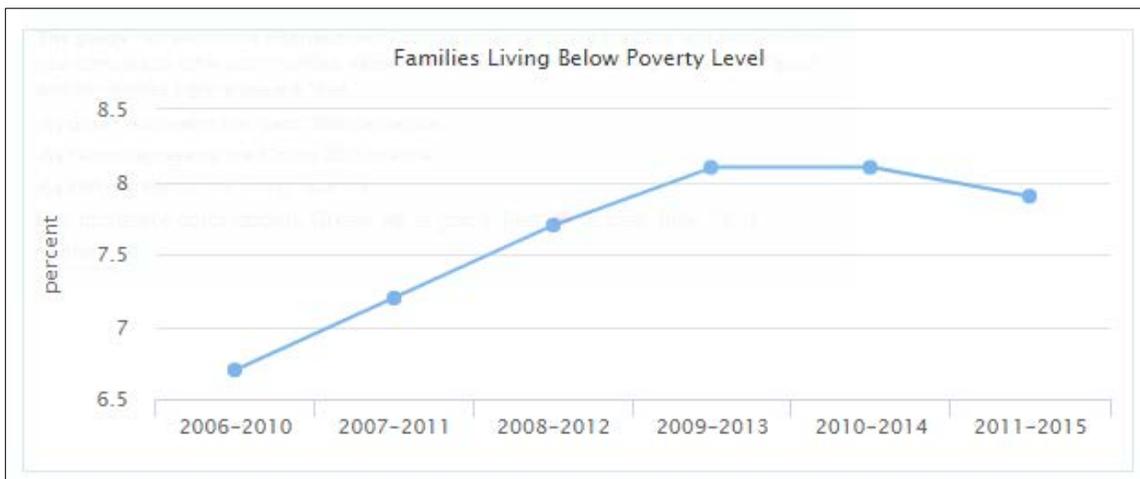
The following tables reflect existing ridership trends at the local colleges and universities.

Boardings by School		Enrollment by School		Transit Share
Ventura Coll.	250	Ventura Coll.	13,711	1.8%
Oxnard Coll.	175	Oxnard Coll.	7,961	2.2%
Moorpark Coll.	120	Moorpark Coll.	15,479	0.8%
CSU Channel Islands	400	CSU Channel Islands	6,611	6.1%
Cal. Lutheran	20	Cal Lutheran	4,236	0.5%
Total Boardings	965	Total Students	47,998	2.0%

The Need

While the cost of tuition continues to rise annually, the rate of families living below the poverty line in Ventura County has remained relatively steady over the past decade and only recently has started to decline. While the goal of the proposed program is to increase ridership, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it alleviates some of the financial burden associated with transportation expenses and thereby improves access to education. The following chart reflects the change in the poverty rate for families living in Ventura County.

(CONTINUED)



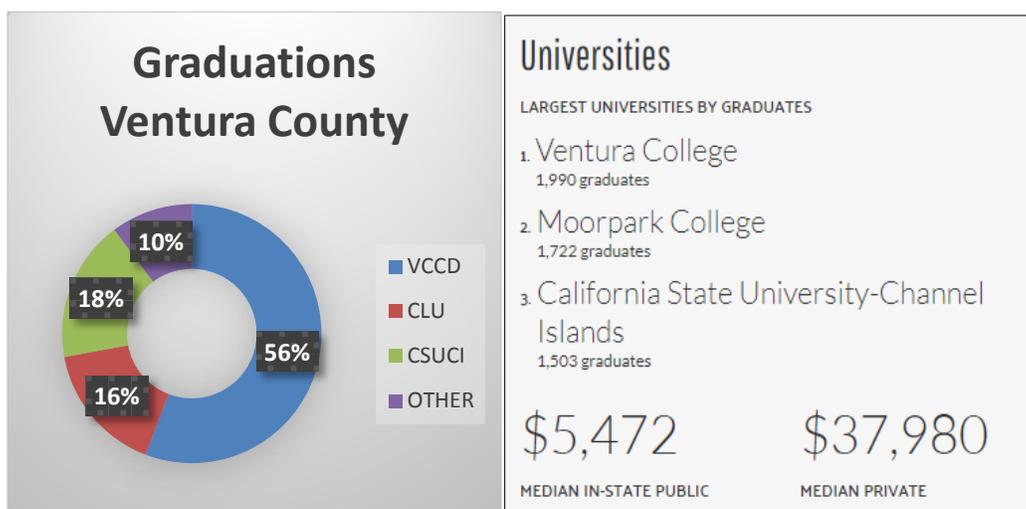
[Source: ACS, Ventura County Public Health]

Growth Projections

Results of “free-fare” transit programs have been mixed. **Using the “best-practice” Simpson-Curtin rule, the potential ridership increases would be approximately 33% when fares are eliminated.** However, larger increases may be realized at locations with more robust transit operations, constrained parking, and/or other variables which incentivize alternative modes of transportation, such as active transportation and car-sharing (such as CSUCI).

The Schools

Staff proposes that the program be contained to the largest and most-attended colleges and universities here in Ventura County: the entire Ventura Community College District, Cal. State Channel Islands and Cal. Lutheran University.



[Source ACS, dataus.io]

Current average daily total ridership to and from these college campuses is approximately 1,330 passengers per weekday. While transit service to/from colleges in Ventura County has not changed dramatically over the years, new and adjusted routes are now serving colleges, including from Thousand Oaks Transit, Moorpark City Transit and VCTC. Considering the range for potential growth, the VCTC proposes a program budget of \$501,875 to support a potential 33% increase in ridership from 1,330 to 1,769 daily passenger trips, for a two semester period.

This allocation supports the fare buy-down or reimbursement of fares on Ventura's fixed route transit fleets, and the two general-public dial-a-ride services.¹ Students would simply show their Student I.D. to the driver and board free of charge and the driver would then record the boarding. The fare payment (buy-down) would be processed similarly to the current process for other regional fare media programs managed by VCTC. **The proposed fare buy-down, i.e. reimbursement would be \$1.10 per eligible passenger boarding.**²

The proposed term of the program would begin August 20, 2018 through May 31, 2019, the duration of the traditional (non-Summer) academic year, i.e. the Fall and Spring Semesters.

From the allocation, staff anticipates that the marketing and promotion will be supported primarily by the participating transit agencies. However, a small amount of funding, estimated at \$5,000 – 7,000 will be set aside for outreach and promotional collateral. Pending quarterly review of fund balances, the program length or reimbursement rate may be adjusted if necessary.

RECOMMENDATION:

LCTOP was created to provide operating and capital assistance to transit agencies with the goal of funding new/expanded service or projects that improve mobility and increase mode share with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Both the Oxnard-Camarillo Employment Connector Service and the Fare Promotion Programs are eligible under the LCTOP guidelines and meet the LCTOP program requirements.

Staff recommends programming \$550,000 of VCTC's FY 2017/18 Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) apportionment to continue demonstration of the Oxnard/Camarillo Employment Connector Bus Service and to program \$501,875 to the College Easy Ride Transit Fare Promotion.

¹ Fixed route operators include*: VCTC, Gold Coast Transit, Thousand Oaks Transit, Moorpark City Transit, Simi Valley Transit, Camarillo Area Transit, Ojai Trolley, and Valley Express; General-public DAR operators include: Camarillo Area Transit and Valley Express. *Kanan Shuttle is not included as it is currently free.

² The current CSUCI fare reimbursement rate is \$1.00 per ride. This program would change it to \$1.10 and it would be paid from the LCTOP program.