



May 13, 2013

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Darrell Johnson
Chief Executive Officer

Honorable Thomas J. Borris
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Judge Borris:

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is pleased to respond to the findings and recommendations of the March 28, 2013, report issued by the Orange County Grand Jury entitled, "OCTA's ACCESS Service – The Way To Go."

OCTA takes very seriously our responsibility to Orange County taxpayers in all that we do to develop and deliver transportation solutions that enhance the quality of life and keep Orange County moving. Similarly, we appreciate the Orange County Grand Jury's responsibilities that include the examination of all aspects of county government, including special districts, to ensure the county is being governed honestly and efficiently and public funds are being handled appropriately. OCTA believes that any thoughtful review of how to handle the public's business can only provide for better outcomes.

While ACCESS is a complex program, the Grand Jury report was very thorough and provided concise conclusions. Many of the report's recommendations have or will be addressed over time through planned improvements as outlined in the attached response.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to this report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (714) 560-5343.

Sincerely,

Darrell Johnson
Chief Executive Officer

DJ:ds
Enclosure

Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA)

Proposed Responses to Findings and Recommendations to the March 28, 2013 report issued by the Orange County Grand Jury

“OCTA’s ACCESS Service – The Way To Go”

FINDINGS

Finding 1 -- ACCESS service fulfills the transportation needs of its qualified subscribers and ACCESS customers continue to be very satisfied with the quality of the ACCESS service.

OCTA agrees with this finding. OCTA strives to provide high-quality public transit service and to ensure the ACCESS program maintains compliance with all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Finding 2 -- Some of the ACCESS customers may be able to use the OCTA’s lower cost fixed-route service which may reduce ACCESS service costs.

OCTA agrees with this finding. OCTA encourages ACCESS customers to utilize fixed route service when possible and offers a significantly reduced fixed route fare for ACCESS customers. Information about fixed route service and the reduced fare program are included with materials mailed to all new ACCESS customers.

Finding 3 -- Standardizing the eligibility evaluation process has helped to accurately determine if a customer can use the fixed-route service for some trips, thereby, significantly reducing ACCESS service costs.

OCTA agrees with this finding. Standardizing the ACCESS eligibility process provides a fair and accurate assessment tool to help ensure the service is available to those who meet ADA paratransit eligibility criteria.

Finding 4 -- The current video “ACCESS Service” shown during the ACCESS eligibility certification process needs to be updated to meet ADA guidelines.

OCTA agrees with this finding. The video observed by the Grand Jury is several years old and is not available in closed caption. A new ACCESS

service video is currently in production and is expected to be complete in July 2013. The new video will be offered in closed caption.

Finding 5 -- A majority of ACCESS customers are not aware of either the Same-Day taxi service or the reduced fare program on a fixed-route bus.

OCTA agrees with this finding. A 2011 survey of ACCESS customers indicated 54 percent of survey respondents were not aware of the same-day taxi service and 75 percent of respondents were not aware of the fixed route reduced fare program. Information about the same-day taxi and fixed route reduced fare programs are frequently included in the ACCESS customer newsletter and a marketing program has been developed to encourage fixed route ridership by ACCESS customers.

Finding 6 -- The current ACCESS Rider's Guide (July 2009) is outdated and needs to be updated.

OCTA agrees with this finding. An update of the ACCESS Rider's Guide is currently in production and is expected to be complete in July 2013.

Finding 7 -- Cancelled rides and no-shows puts stress on dispatchers and reservationists to efficiently manage bus schedules.

OCTA agrees with this finding. All rides on ACCESS are reserved one-to-three days in advance and OCTA utilizes scheduling software to efficiently group and route trips. Customer no-shows and cancellations made less than one hour before a scheduled trip can negatively impact service efficiency. The ACCESS Rider's Guide informs customers of the need to cancel rides within required guidelines. Customers demonstrating a pattern and practice of late cancellations and no-shows may receive a service suspension.

Finding 8 -- The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) feature of the Trapeze system for automated phone reminders is not implemented.

OCTA disagrees with this finding. The full functionality of the Trapeze IVR feature has not been implemented. Currently, ACCESS customers can use the IVR system to confirm a previously scheduled trip or to cancel a trip. OCTA is in the process of implementing additional IVR features.

Finding 9 -- No-shows are detrimental to the productivity of the ACCESS system impacting efficiency and operating cost per vehicle mile.

OCTA agrees with this finding. As referenced in the response to Finding No. 7, customer no-shows negatively impact service efficiency. The ACCESS

Rider's Guide informs customers of OCTA's No Show guidelines and customers may receive a service suspension if they demonstrate a pattern and practice of excessive no-shows.

Finding 10 -- The system on ACCESS buses uses old technology and does not meet the Federal Communications Commission's narrow-banding mandate.

OCTA disagrees with this finding. The system in place during the time of the Grand Jury review met Federal Communications Commission requirements. Installation of a new radio system on all ACCESS vehicles was concluded in March 2013 and the new system meets all federal requirements.

Finding 11 -- ACCESS service is being influenced by the age and mileage of the ACCESS fleet vehicles, which impact maintenance reliability, increase vehicle downtime and maintenance costs, reduce vehicle availability, and diminish service quality.

OCTA disagrees with this finding. While the ACCESS fleet is aging, vehicles are meeting maintenance performance standards and service efficiency and quality have not been diminished as a result of vehicle age or mileage. Seventeen new ACCESS vehicles are currently in production and additional vehicles are proposed to be included in the fiscal year 2013-14 budget.

Finding 12 -- ACCESS service fare collection process is manually driven and inefficient.

OCTA disagrees with this finding. OCTA does not issue multiple fare media for ACCESS service and the ACCESS fare is a one set fare, so use and the expense of a more advanced, electronic fare collection system that tracks different types of fares being collected is not needed. ACCESS vehicles carry very few passengers when compared with fixed route vehicles and use of a manual fare collection process to collect cash fares and coupons is more than adequate. While OCTA is currently evaluating new fare collection systems for use on both fixed route and ACCESS which would allow the use of stored value cards or debit/credit cards for payment, at this time there are no plans to install electronic fare boxes on the ACCESS fleet to collect cash.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 -- Address the growth of ACCESS demand by using community partnerships, same-day taxi service, and emphasizing reduced fare fixed-route travel training during eligibility assessment process and outreach programs.

This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 2 -- Consider using new technologies for ACCESS fare system such as Smart Card or cell phone applications to reduce processing cost of fares collected, customer complaints, and customer service related operational costs, as well as to improve travel time.

This recommendation requires further analysis. OCTA is currently conducting a fare integration study to evaluate new fare collection systems.

Recommendation 3 -- Replace ACCESS buses that have reached the end of their useful life and have exceeded minimum FTA regulatory requirements for age and mileage to limit and/or decrease operational/maintenance costs, control service failures, and improve efficiency of the service.

This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 4 -- Update the training video "ACCESS Service" to meet ADA video guidelines (i.e., incorporate closed-captioning feature) and use the video during certification process to educate and encourage ACCESS applicants to consider other transportation options such as the "reduced fare fixed- route" service to help lower ACCESS service costs.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented upon completion of a new ACCESS service video in July 2013.

Recommendation 5 -- Upgrade or replace ACCESS bus radio communication systems to meet FCC narrow-band mandate. Improve efficiency by eliminating multiple system logons by bus operators.

This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 6 -- Incorporate IVR feature into the reservation process to alleviate demands placed upon reservationists and allow them to focus solely on scheduling trips, as well as to improve system efficiency and operating cost per vehicle mile.

This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 7 -- Update the ACCESS Rider's Guide.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented with the release of the new ACCESS Rider's Guide in July 2013.