

Outline for Senate Transportation and Housing Committee Special Hearing
November 27, 2012

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, on behalf of the 17 member Ventura County Transportation Commission, welcome to Ventura County and thank you for convening this special hearing. I am Darren Kettle, Executive Director of VCTC. Winston Churchill said “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

1. VCTC implementation of the Transportation Development Act
 - a. Since its creation in 1989, VCTC has complied with the Transportation Development Act and Unmet Transit Needs Process
 - b. In 1995 VCTC’s Unmet Needs process was challenged by the Planning and Conservation League on a Commuter rail related matter and VCTC prevailed.
 - c. Since the 1995 legal challenge, if anything VCTC has expanded its efforts to outreach to the transit dependant community. This year we held two public hearings of VCTC, two public hearings of the Unmet Transit Needs Hearing Board and two evening “listening sessions” one in Moorpark and one in Oxnard, and all notices indicated that comments provided by phone, email, and letters would be considered by VCTC.
 - d. VCTC takes the “reasonable to meet” analysis very seriously and used such analysis to start the VISTA intercity bus service and expand hours of service for some local operators and initiate new routes in the Gold Coast Transit service area.
2. VCTC’s position toward SB 716 (Wolk)

- a. Along with other counties affected by SB 716 VCTC opposed the bill when the provision was added to mandate use of TDA funds for transit in counties with population over 500K as of the year 2000.
- b. VCTC worked with the author to negotiate an arrangement to allow VCTC time analyze options for improvements to transit services. VCTC was not in a position to consider the under 100K population street and road option afforded to the counties in California's San Joaquin Valley.

3. VCTC's Process for Complying with SB 716

- a. In 2010, VCTC initiated a countywide transit study in response to Senate Bill 716 AND because the Commission had become more aware that its own VISTA Intercity bus services could be better structured to be more efficient and turn those inefficiencies into more service for Ventura County transit users. The Commission adopted guiding principles for this countywide transit study. Those guiding principles are:
 - i. Foster open dialogue among communities, system users, operators and agencies
 - ii. Transition to a user-focused system that goes beyond individual operator boundaries
 - iii. Gain consensus on the approach from elected officials and city management
 - iv. Incorporate applicable Federal, State, regional and local livability, sustainability and greenhouse gas reduction goals
- b. The Process

- i. To guide the study from a policy perspective the Commission appointed a Steering Committee. Commissioners on Steering Committee represented the diverse geography and interests in Ventura County, including:
 1. East and West County
 2. Rural areas of Heritage Valley and Ojai
 3. Smaller and larger cities
 4. Commissioners also sitting on the Gold Coast Board of Directors
- ii. The Steering Committee met a number of times over the course of a roughly 18-month period:
 1. Reviewed potential organizational models and narrowed the focus to four key directions thought to be most appropriate to Ventura County – keeping communities whole from a funding and service perspective; increased connectivity; improvement of local service and maintaining a level of local influence and control.
 2. The Committee transmitted a report to the full Commission on alternatives for further exploration – Full Consolidation and a “Hybrid” approach of Moderate Consolidation with one or two bus operators. The Commission directed staff to work with the consultants on further analysis and to do community, city and operator consultations based on these potential models.

3. It was through this consultations process that the “Operators Proposal” was developed
 4. Finally the committee met management representatives of the operators and provided consensus endorsement for the “Operators Proposal” which was found to be consistent with the objectives of the Commission.
- c. The actions approved by the Commission at its April 2012 meeting were:
- i. WEST County - Support creation of a Gold Coast Transit District (GCTD) to assume the responsibilities for West County public transportation services. Cities and communities in West County (including Heritage Valley) would be provided with the opportunity to join the District.
 - ii. And transition VISTA services in West County to the new District.
 - iii. EAST County - Support creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in East County between the cities of Camarillo, Moorpark, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks and the County of Ventura for unincorporated East County, to further coordination of individual services.
 - iv. And transition a VISTA East service to the East County MOU.
 - v. Support legislation to allow the use of TDA funds for Article 8 purposes, including streets and roads, for all local jurisdictions. In the time since 2009 local governments have had to deal with tremendous financial challenges. The loss of

redevelopment, one of the few revenue streams that local government used to maintain local roads, has severely impacted local government's ability to maintain a state of good repair of streets in our community's most blighted areas. It was this, among other concerns that arose from local governments during this study.

- vi. Use VCTC discretionary transit funds to deliver sustainable levels of transit service.
 - vii. Support the objective of further consolidation over time as needed to improve connectivity and customer service.
- d. These actions were transmitted in The Executive Summary and Report to the Legislature submitted to the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee and the Assembly Transportation Committee in April of this year.
- e. Since the approval by the Commission, VCTC has been working with local operators in the East County and Gold Coast Transit to implement the adopted actions.
- f. The Commission opposed Assembly Member Williams AB 1778, first, because of the opinion that it was introduced prematurely given the nearly completed VCTC Transit Study. VCTC adopted the Transit Study and requested that Assembly Members Williams accept amendments to his bill to implement the statutory changes required to implement the VCTC Transit Study. Assembly member Williams declined that request and for that reason the Commission maintained its opposition to AB 1778. The Commission has also

made informal attempts to find an author to carry legislation to allow use of TDA funds for streets and roads by all local jurisdictions following the legally required Unmet Transit Needs Hearing process.

4. VISTA Intercity Service – A Public Transit Success Story

- a. Based on comment received through the unmet transit needs process in the early 1990s VCTC examined the feasibility of creating a commuter bus service connecting communities and close gaps in intercommunity service.
- b. In 1994, VCTC Initiated VISTA Intercity Service:
 - i. Four Routes - East County, Highway 101, Central County, and Highway 126
 - ii. No weekend service.
 - iii. Separate funding and cooperative agreements with cities for each VISTA Route
 - iv. The service was funded with Federal CMAQ funds at the time
 - v. No equipment purchased. Contract Operation with minimal VCTC staff management.
 - vi. Over the last 15 years service changes have occurred with the addition of the Conejo Connection into LA County in 1998, the Cal State Univ Channel Islands shuttle from the Camarillo Metrolink Station and Oxnard College in 1999 and the launch of VISTA Coastal Express connecting Ventura County to the south Coast of Santa Barbara County in 2001.
- c. Base fare of \$1 intra-county and \$2 to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles County remained unchanged from service start-up until 2009 when

VCTC increased fares on inter-county service from \$2 to \$3 over two years and an intra-county fare increase from \$1 to \$1.25 in 2011.

- d. 63% percent farebox recovery for all VISTA intercity services this past year. Over the last 5 years we have seen annual average ridership increase of 11%. In fiscal year 1994/95 VISTA Intercity had 150k annually boardings. This fiscal year VISTA Intercity is on track to exceed 1.1 million annual boardings.
 - e. Most recently VCTC's VISTA Intercity service was tested with the short notice by our VISTA contractor that due to bankruptcy they would no longer honor their contract. VCTC acted nimbly and approved a sole-source contract with the locally based Roadrunner Management Services to keep VISTA intercity buses rolling in Ventura County and with no interruption in service to VISTA riders.
 - f. We do still have our work ahead for us. The public transit industry is seeing an increase in costs for operating and acquiring large over the road coaches. Additionally, this year VCTC will have used up carry-over federal transit grants that have been supporting the VISTA intercity services for the last several years. However, it is not all gloom and doom, thanks to voters approval of Proposition 22 making State Transit Assistance funds more reliable and the new federal transportation authorizing act – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century – I believe that a funding solution can be developed to maintain VISTA intercity services.
5. Thank You Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee for your time. I'm at your disposal for questions.