

Orange County Transportation Authority

Darrell E. Johnson, OCTA Chief Executive Officer
Transit Transformation Task Force • August 26, 2025

What is OCTA?



Transit

- OC Bus and paratransit
- OC Streetcar
- Community-based transit
- Metrolink
- Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) managing agency



Sustainability

- Zero-emission buses
- Air quality initiatives
- Innovative wildlife and habitat mitigation and preservation
- Water-quality grants
- Climate resiliency planning



Highways

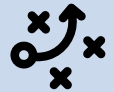
- Measure M projects
- High-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes
- General-purpose lanes
- Tolled express lanes
- Motorist services



Complete Streets

- Active transportation
- Signal synchronization
- OC Bridges
- City formula funding
- Local competitive grants funding

Strategic Transit Service Planning



Data-Driven Service Planning

Aligning service with changing travel patterns to improve efficiency and grow ridership.



Targeted Investments

Focus on high-ridership, high-dependency areas.



Long-Range Vision

Align plans with demographic trends and mobility needs.

Prudent Financial Management



Reserve Fund

Created in 2022 to protect transit service during potential future economic downturns.



Service Restoration Plan

Gradual, demand-based return of service during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure long-term sustainability.



Comprehensive Business Plan

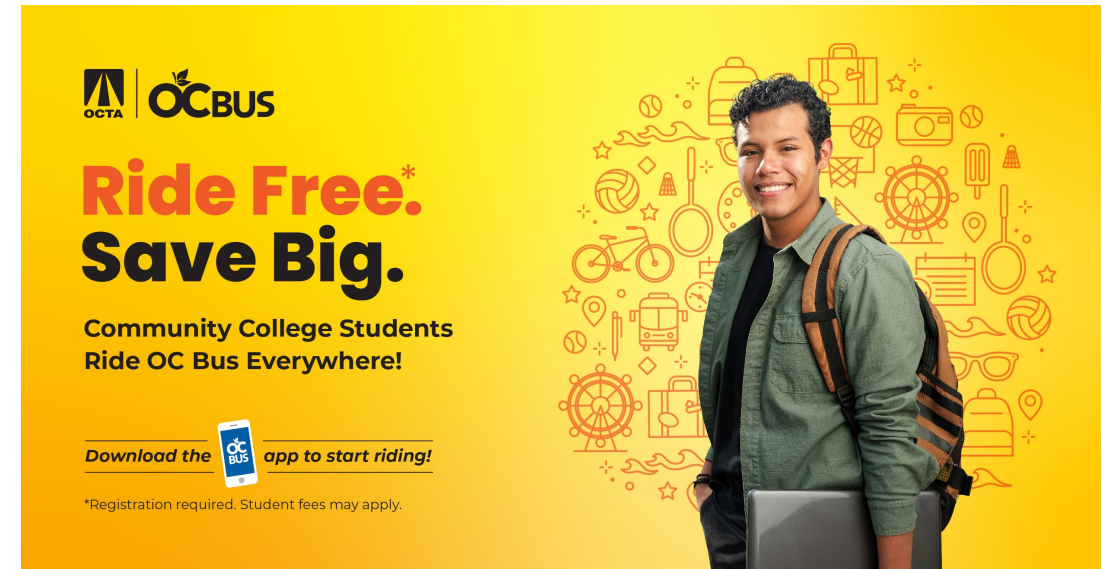
Updated annually to guide long-term financial planning and ensure programs and services remain feasible over 20 years.

Building the Next Generation of Riders



Youth Ride Free

- First large transit agency in the region to offer ongoing free rides for all youth.
- Builds early familiarity and lifelong riders.



Community College Pass

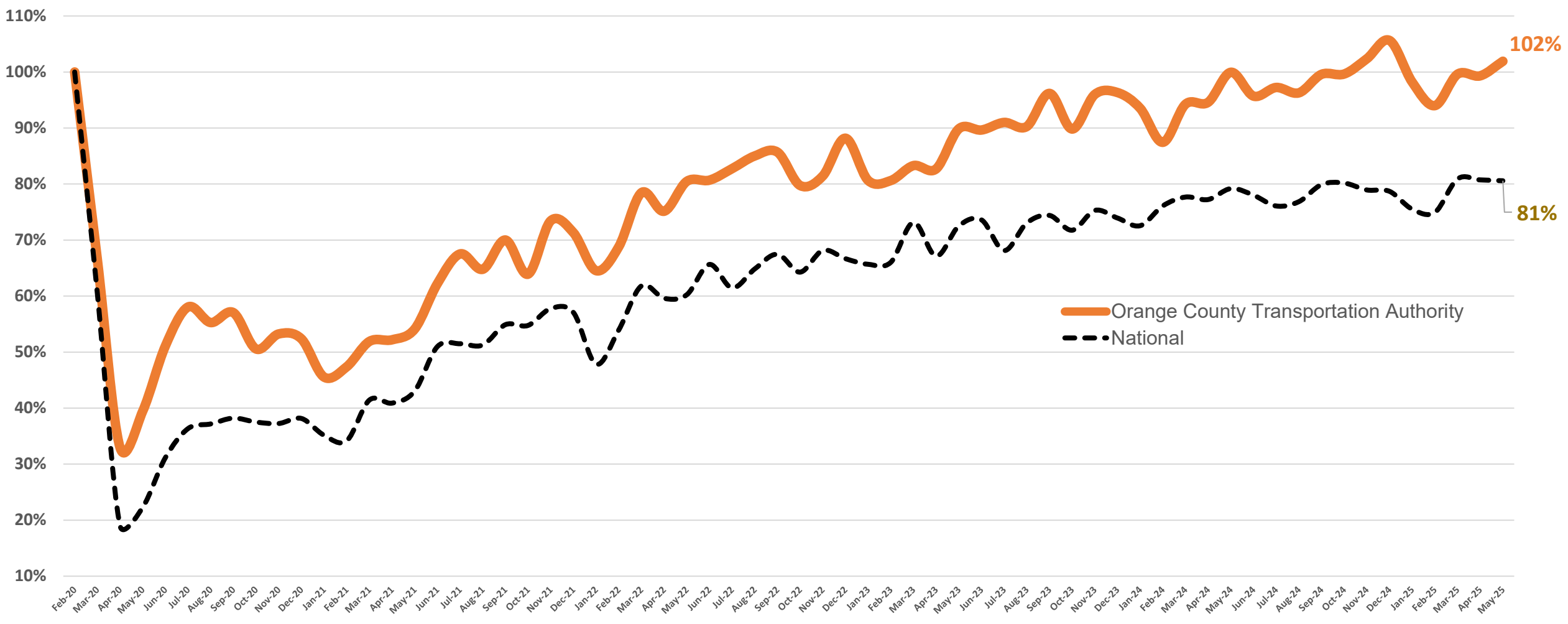
- Free rides for all Orange County community college students
- Expands educational access, reduces transportation costs and introduces new riders to public transit

These two programs accounted for 16.3% of systemwide ridership in 2024.

OC Bus: Recovering Ridership



Ridership Changes Bus System (February 2020 to May 2025, Unlinked Passenger Trips)



Source: American Public Transportation Association and National Transit Database

Investing in the Future of Transit



Wave Card

- New rider validation system launching October 2025.
- Features include fare capping, free two-hour transfers and balance protection.



OC Streetcar

- Orange County's first modern, electric streetcar.
- Connections to OC Bus and Metrolink rail service.
- Service expected to launch spring 2026.



Zero-Emission by 2040

- Committed to a 100% zero-emission fleet by 2040.
- Testing hydrogen fuel-cell and battery-electric buses to determine best technology for Orange County.



Transit Security & Operations Center

- Facility will centralize dispatch, operations, security and emergency response.
- Improves efficiency, safety and resiliency.

Challenges on the Horizon



Metrolink Funding

Ridership remains below pre-pandemic levels while operating costs rise, requiring sustained investment and regional coordination to maintain service.



Cap-and-Trade Uncertainty

\$367 million in critical OCTA projects at risk if California does not maintain predictable, sustained program funding.



Zero-Emission Transition

Higher vehicle and infrastructure costs, limited operating range and technology reliability issues create challenges in meeting the 2040 mandate.



Coastal Rail Resiliency

Landslides and erosion in south Orange County threaten rail service, requiring significant investment.

Key Takeaways

- **Stability through Strategic Planning**
Strategic service and financial decisions have kept OCTA sustainable.
- **Driving Ridership Growth**
Innovative programs and technology are attracting and retaining riders.
- **Investing in the Future**
Advancing major projects and preparing for long-term challenges.

More information: [octa.net](https://www.octa.net)