



FINAL REPORT  
APRIL 2020

# Ventura County Transportation Commission

Triennial Performance Audit for FY 2017 - FY 2019





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## Chapter 1

# Executive Summary

In 2019, the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) selected Moore & Associates, Inc. to prepare Triennial Performance Audits of itself as the RTPA as well as the nine public transit programs to which it allocates TDA funding. As one of the six statutorily designated County Transportation Commissions in the SCAG region, VCTC also functions as the respective county RTPA.

The California Public Utilities Code requires all Regional Transportation Planning Agencies conduct an independent Triennial Performance Audit in order to maintain eligibility for TDA funding. VCTC, as the RTPA, elected to conduct Triennial Performance Audits of all transit operators in Ventura County during this audit cycle to establish a baseline of performance and compliance. This audit report focuses exclusively on VCTC's role as a regional transportation planning agency. VCTC's role as a transit operator is analyzed in a separate Triennial Performance Audit.

To determine VCTC's compliance with TDA requirements, as well as its overall program effectiveness and efficiency, Moore & Associates interviewed VCTC staff and reviewed supporting documentation. This audit report details findings of our compliance and functional reviews and includes recommendations to enhance VCTC's effectiveness.

The Triennial Performance Audit includes five elements:

1. Compliance requirements,
2. Follow-up of prior recommendations,
3. Analysis of internal goal setting and strategic planning efforts,
4. Review of the RTPA's functions and activities, and
5. Findings and recommendations.

This chapter summarizes key findings and recommendations developed during the Triennial Performance Audit of VCTC for the period defined as:

- Fiscal Year 2016/17,
- Fiscal Year 2017/18, and
- Fiscal Year 2018/19.

Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) is a state-designated regional transportation planning agency created to address regional transportation issues. Its member agencies include the County of Ventura and its 10 incorporated cities. VCTC is governed by elected officials and selected representatives from Ventura County and the cities of Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, and Ventura.

VCTC sets transportation priorities, selects projects, and distributes state and federal monies to its members to maintain, repair and support operations of local roadways, public transportation and other

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transportation systems. The agency works with Caltrans to plan, select and construct major highway projects. VCTC is also responsible for administering Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds, including both State Transit Assistance (STA) funds and Local Transportation Funds (LTF). VCTC allocates transit funding to the City of Camarillo, City of Fillmore, City of Moorpark, City of Ojai, City of Santa Paula, City of Simi Valley, City of Thousand Oaks, County of Ventura, Gold Coast Transit District, and Metrolink. VCTC also operates VCTC Intercity Bus and serves as the administrator of the Valley Express.

The audit team conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our review objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The review was also conducted in accordance with the processes established by the California Department of Transportation, as outlined in the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*.

## TEST OF COMPLIANCE

VCTC adheres to Transportation Development Act (TDA) regulations in an efficient and effective manner.

## STATUS OF PRIOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The prior Triennial Performance Audit – completed in 2017 by Moore & Associates, Inc./Ma and Associates for the three fiscal years ending June 30, 2016 – included five recommendations:

1. Monitor the progress of fiscal audits to ensure they are prepared and submitted within the designated timeframe.  
**Status:** Implemented.
2. Update rules and regulations for the evaluation of claims for TDA Article 4.5 funds.  
**Status:** No longer relevant.
3. Update the county's Congestion Management Program and upload to the GoVentura website.  
**Status:** No longer relevant.
4. Work with ECTA partners to compile operating data on an annual basis so that a separate Triennial Performance Audit of ECTA can be completed during the next audit cycle.  
**Status:** No longer relevant.
5. Consider developing a policy for transit operators serving rural and urbanized areas (such as Ojai) that could be used to establish a "blended" farebox recovery ratio goal for such areas throughout the county, or continue to consider alternative options such as Article 4.5 funding.  
**Status:** No longer relevant.

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## GOAL SETTING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

VCTC's planning efforts have prioritized connectivity. Recent planning efforts have resulted in a county-wide Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) that tries to efficiently utilize resources and emphasize connectivity. This plan included a comprehensive analysis of all transit services within Ventura County, as well as a market analysis which identified service gaps. VCTC looks to update the SRTP within the next couple of years.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on discussions with VCTC staff and a review of program compliance, we identified no compliance findings.

The audit team identified one additional functional finding. While this finding is not a compliance finding, the auditors believe it is significant enough to be addressed within this review:

1. VCTC does not formally track the progress of recommendations arising from triennial performance audits or other key documents.

In completing this Triennial Performance Audit, the auditors submit the following recommendations for the Ventura County Transportation Commission as the RTPA. They have been divided into two categories: TDA Program Compliance Recommendations and Functional Recommendations. TDA Program Compliance Recommendations are intended to assist in bringing the agency into compliance with the requirements and standards of the TDA, while Functional Recommendations address issues identified during the Triennial Performance Audit that are not specific to TDA compliance.

Exhibit 1.1 Summary of Recommendations

Functional Recommendations		Importance	Timeline
1	Implement a process for operators to submit the implementation status of performance audit recommendations to VCTC's Transit Operations and Planning department on an annual basis.	Medium	FY 2019/20

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## Chapter 2

# Audit Scope and Methodology

The Triennial Performance Audit of the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) covers a three-year period ending June 30, 2019. The California Public Utilities Code requires all Regional Transportation Planning Agencies conduct an independent Triennial Performance Audit in order to be eligible for Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding.

In 2019, the Ventura County Transportation Commission selected Moore & Associates, Inc. to prepare Triennial Performance Audits of itself as the RTPA, the five transit operators to which it allocates TDA Article 4 funding, and four additional transit operators that do not receive TDA Article 4 funding. Moore & Associates is a consulting firm specializing in public transportation. Selection of the consultant followed a competitive procurement process.

The Triennial Performance Audit is designed to be an independent and objective evaluation of VCTC as the designated RTPA for Ventura County. Direct benefits of a Triennial Performance Audit include providing RTPA management with information on the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its programs across the prior three years; helpful insight for use in future planning; and assuring legislative and governing bodies (as well as the public) that resources are being economically and efficiently utilized. Finally, the Triennial Performance Audit fulfills the requirement of PUC 99246(a) that the RTPA designate an independent entity other than itself to conduct a performance audit of its activities as well as those of each operator to whom it allocates funds.

Moore & Associates conducted this performance review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require the auditors plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for its findings and conclusions based on its review objectives. The auditors believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on its review objectives.

The review was also conducted in accordance with the processes established by the California Department of Transportation, as outlined in the *Performance Audit Guidebook for Transit Operators and Regional Transportation Planning Entities*.

### OBJECTIVES

The Triennial Performance Audit has four primary objectives:

1. Assess compliance with TDA regulations,
2. Review actions taken by the RTPA to implement prior recommendations,
3. Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the RTPA through a review of its functions, and
4. Provide sound, constructive recommendations for improving the efficiency and functionality of the RTPA.

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## SCOPE

The Triennial Performance Audit is intended to be a high-level review of performance evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the RTPA. The review of VCTC included five related tasks:

1. Review of compliance with the TDA requirements and regulations.
2. Assessment of implementation of recommendations presented in prior performance audits.
3. Analysis of VCTC's internal goal setting and strategic planning functions.
4. Examination of the following functions:
  - Administration and Management,
  - Transportation Planning and Regional Coordination,
  - Claimant Relationships and Oversight,
  - Marketing and Transportation Alternatives, and
  - Grant Applications and Management.
5. Recommendations to address opportunities for improvement based on analysis of the information collected and the review of the RTPA's core functions.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the Triennial Performance Audit of VCTC as the RTPA included extensive review of documents relevant to the scope of the review, as well as information contained on VCTC's website ([www.goventura.org](http://www.goventura.org)). The documents reviewed included the following (spanning the full three-year period):

- Triennial Performance Audit report for the prior review period;
- Annual budgets;
- Audited financial statements;
- State Controller Reports;
- Agency organizational chart;
- Board meeting minutes and agendas;
- Planning studies and documents prepared during and prior to the audit period;
- TDA and transit funding allocations to operators; and
- Calls for Projects.

The methodology for this review included a site visit to VCTC's offices (located at 950 County Square Drive, Ventura) on January 30, 2020. The audit team met with Martin Erickson (Transit Director) and Claire Grasty (Program Manager – Regional Transit Planning) and reviewed materials germane to the Triennial Performance Audit.

The report is comprised of seven chapters divided into three sections:

1. Executive Summary: A summary of the key findings and recommendations developed during the Triennial Performance Audit process.
2. Scope and Methodology: Discussion of the review methodology and pertinent background information.

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3. Audit Results: In-depth discussion of VCTC's roles and responsibilities as well as findings surrounding each of the subsequent elements of the review:
  - Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements,
  - Progress in implementing prior recommendations,
  - Goal setting and strategic planning,
  - Functional review, and
  - Findings and recommendations.

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## Chapter 3 Overview of VCTC

The Ventura County Transportation Commission is a regional transportation planning agency governed by a Commission composed of one council member from each city, all five county supervisors, two public members, and one ex-officio member appointed by the Governor of California (typically Caltrans' District 7 Director). VCTC was created in 1989 by Senate Bill 1880 as the successor agency to the Ventura County Association of Governments (VCAG). In 2004, the Commission was reorganized under Assembly Bill 2784 into its current configuration.

VCTC's mission is to improve mobility within the County and increase funding to meet transportation needs. VCTC establishes transportation policies and priorities to ensure equitable allocation of federal, state, and local funds for a variety of transportation projects, including highway, transit, rail, aviation, bicycle, and pedestrian projects. VCTC's role is to build consensus, make strategic plans, obtain and allocates resource, and provide public information pertinent to Ventura County's transportation services and infrastructure. VCTC also administers a public transit program branded as Intercity Transit.

### ROLES

VCTC serves many functions within the region, including:

**Regional Transportation Planning Authority (RTPA).** As the RTPA, VCTC is legally responsible for allocating Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. The TDA provides two major sources of funding: Local Transportation Funds (LTF), which are derived from a one-quarter cent state sales tax, and State Transit Assistance (STA), which is derived from the statewide sales tax on diesel fuel. VCTC is required by state statutes to conduct multi-modal transportation planning, programming, and funding allocation.

**Consolidated Transportation Service Authority (CTSA).** VCTC is the agency responsible for coordinating programs serving the transportation needs of seniors, persons with disabilities, and other historically transit-dependent populations.

**Airport Land-Use Commission (ALUC).** ALUCs implement state law (Public Utilities Code) regarding airports and surrounding land-use compatibility.

**County Transportation Authority (CTA).** VCTC is responsible for determining the method for distributing sales tax revenue for transportation improvements, when applicable.

**Ventura County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE).** VCTC is responsible for operation and administration of roadside call boxes. This service is funded through a one dollar surcharge on vehicle registrations. In 2015, VCTC upgrades 420 of the county's 570 call boxes to 3G cellular service. In 2016, VCTC approved removal of approximately 140 boxes due to low usage.

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**Congestion Management Agency (CMA).** VCTC, as the designated Congestion Management Authority (CMA) for Ventura County, is responsible for coordinating land-use, transportation planning, and air quality to mitigate traffic congestion. VCTC is responsible for developing and implementing a Congestion Management System, which identifies likely areas of vehicular congestion and proffers strategies and recommendations for alleviating this congestion.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEES

**Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee/Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (CTAC/SSTAC).** The CTAC/SSTAC advises on planning regarding Unmet Transit Needs. The committee includes two non-elected members from each city and Ventura County, two at-large members, and one representative each from Camarillo Health Care District, Commission on Human Concerns, Developmental Disability, St. John’s Medical Center, Public Social Services Agency, and VCTC (as the CTSA).

**Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC).** TTAC advises VCTC on all technical transportation matters in the county and cities. The Committee includes one representative and one alternate from the following: Ventura County Public Works Department, each city, Oxnard Harbor District, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, Gold Coast Transit, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and Caltrans District 7. TTAC meets on an as-needed basis at locations throughout the county.

**Transit Operators Advisory Committee (Transcom).** Transcom advises VCTC on all transit-related matters including commuter rail. The committee includes one representative from each transit operator in Ventura County and one ex officio member of the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC). Transcom typically meets once a month at Camarillo City Hall.

**Santa Paula Branch Line Advisory Committee (SPBLAC).** The SPBLAC advises VCTC regarding usage and maintenance of the Santa Paula Branch rail line. Members include representatives of the cities of Ventura, Santa Paula, and Fillmore, as well as two County Supervisors who represent areas along the SPBL.

## ORGANIZATION

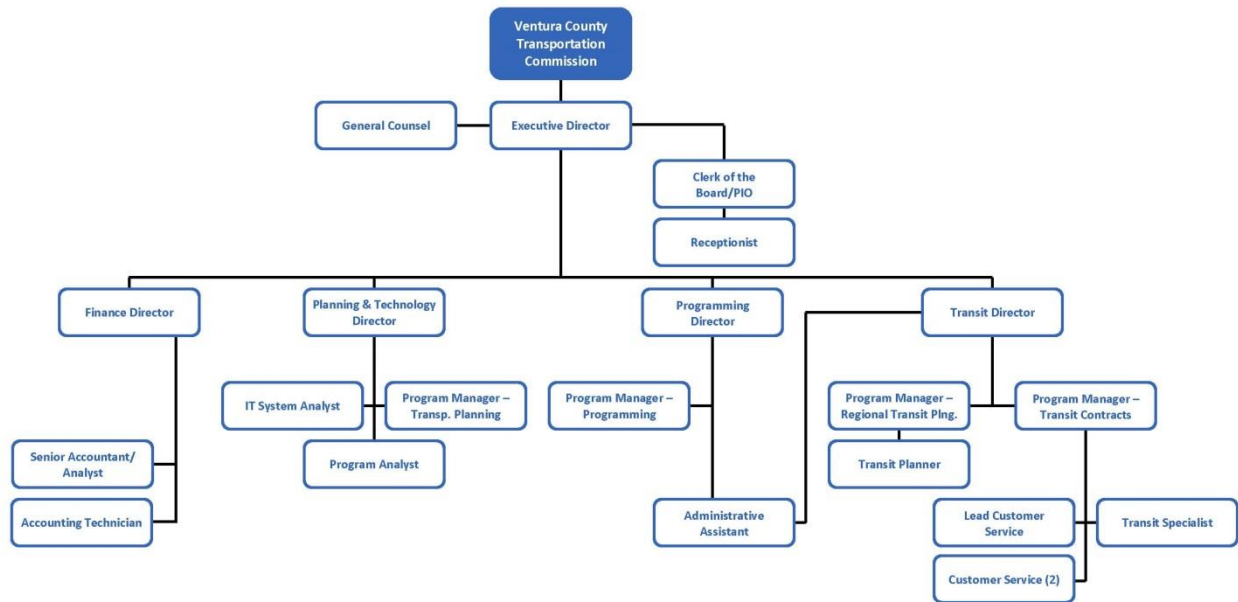
The VCTC organizational chart (see Exhibit 3.1) includes 21 full-time positions. VCTC’s Executive Director reports to the Commission and manages four departments—Finance, Technology and Planning, Programming, and Transit.

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Exhibit 3.1 Organizational Chart



Source: VCTC.

During the audit period, the following individuals served as voting members of the Ventura County Transportation Commission:

- Bill Little, City of Camarillo (2016-2017)
- Jan McDonald, City of Camarillo (2018)
- Charlotte Craven, City of Camarillo (2019)
- Tony Trembley, City of Camarillo (2020)
- Manuel Minjares, City of Fillmore (2016-2020; Chair 2019)
- Keith Millhouse, City of Moorpark (2016; Chair 2016)
- Ken Simons, City of Moorpark (2017-2020)
- Severo Lara, City of Ojai (2016)
- Randy Haney, City of Ojai (2017-2020)
- Bryan MacDonald, City of Oxnard (2016-2020; Chair 2017)
- Douglas Breeze, City of Port Hueneme (2016)
- Will Berg, City of Port Hueneme (2017-2020)
- Carl Morehouse, City of San Buenaventura (2016)
- Neal Andrews, City of San Buenaventura (2017-2018)
- Cheryl Heitmann, City of San Buenaventura (2019-2020)
- Ginger Gherardi, City of Santa Paula (2016-2018)
- Jenny Crosswhite, City of Santa Paula (2019-2020)
- Steve Sojka, City of Simi Valley (2016-2017)
- Mike Judge, City of Simi Valley (2018-2020)
- Claudia Bill-de la Peña, City of Thousand Oaks (2016-2020; Chair 2020)
- Steve Bennett, County of Ventura (2016-2020)

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- Peter Foy, County Supervisor (2016-2018)
- Kathy Long, County Supervisor (2016)
- Robert Huber, County Supervisor (2019-2020)
- Kelly Long, County Supervisor (2018-2020)
- Linda Parks, County Supervisor (2016-2020; Chair 2018)
- John Zaragoza, County Supervisor (2016-2020)
- Brian Humphrey, Citizen Rep, Simi Valley (2016-2020)
- Jim White, Citizen Rep, County (2016-2020)

VCTC Commissioners meet at 9:00 a.m. on the first Friday of the month at Camarillo city hall.

The Commission utilizes a Finance/Administration committee, as well as other ad hoc committees as needed. Commissioners are also assigned to regional committees such as Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN Corridor); Unmet Transit Needs; and Coastal Express commuter bus service (partnership with Santa Barbara County Association of Governments).

## GOAL SETTING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

In 2013, VCTC completed its first Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) long-range policy document, built from community-based needs and priorities for enhanced regional connections. The goal of the CTP is to ensure mobility and enhance the quality of life for all Ventura County residents. It provides a framework for future planning and collaboration and informs Ventura County's long range transportation decisions. The CTP also examines various funding strategies and options from the federal, state, regional and local levels.

The CTP developed a vision to guide future planning:

*A connected and integrated transportation system that provides convenient, safe and accessible options. This system is inclusive of all community members and needs, balancing all interests. It is intended to be built from a sustainable plan that reflects local priorities.*

The plan demonstrated support among the population to improve transit options and connectivity within the county. The report characterized current public transit services as presenting a challenge to riders due to differing levels of service and a lack of coordination among multiple operators.

As a result, VCTC has placed a priority on connectivity. Recent planning efforts have resulted in a county-wide short-range transit plan that tries to efficiently utilize resources and emphasize connectivity. This plan included a comprehensive analysis of all transit services within Ventura County, including service levels and ridership. The study also featured a market analysis which identified service gaps.

To accompany this plan, VCTC also prepared a VCTC Intercity Service Plan (completed in August 2015), which guides development of its Intercity Transit routes. The plan was created as VCTC prepared to rebrand its public transit services from VISTA to VCTC Intercity, which helped build brand recognition among its various transit services.



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In the years since the CTP was completed, VCTC has developed and updated the following plans related to its functions as the RTPA:

- High-Occupancy Toll Lanes Financial Feasibility Study (2014),
- Naval Base Ventura County Joint Land Use Study (2015),
- Ventura County Short Range Transit Plan (2015),
- SB 203 Annual Report (2016), and
- Bicycle Wayfinding Plan (2017).

VCTC does not prepare a Regional Transportation Plan for Ventura County, as Ventura County is included within the Southern California Association of Government's (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. The most recent document was adopted in 2016. SCAG is in the process of updating the document, which should be adopted in mid-2020.

In Chapter 6, we will further evaluate VCTC's effectiveness and efficiency as the RTPA.

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## Chapter 4 Program Compliance

This section examines the Ventura County Transportation Commission's compliance with the State of California's Transportation Development Act as well as relevant sections of California's Public Utilities Commission code. An annual certified fiscal audit confirms TDA funds were apportioned in conformance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Although compliance verification is not a Triennial Performance Audit function, several specific requirements concern issues relevant to the performance audit. The RTPA considers full use of funds under CCR Section 6754(a) to refer to operating funds but not capital funds. The Triennial Performance Audit findings and related comments are delineated in Exhibit 4.1.

Compliance was determined through discussions with VCTC staff as well as a physical inspection of relevant documents, including the fiscal audits for each year of the triennium. Also reviewed were planning documents, Board actions, and other related documentation.

VCTC adheres to Transportation Development Act (TDA) regulations in an efficient and effective manner.

### **The Future of the Transportation Development Act<sup>1</sup>**

In the nearly 50 years since the introduction of the Transportation Development Act, there have been many changes to public transportation in California. Many operators face significant challenges in meeting the farebox recovery ratio requirement, and it calls into question whether that remains the best measure for TDA compliance. In 2018, the chairs of California's state legislative transportation committees requested the California Transit Association spearhead a policy task force to examine the TDA.

Numerous meetings were conducted with the TDA task force across a full year. Other efforts included input from state-level stakeholders as well as transit agencies. It also reviewed the results of two research projects requested by legislative leaders and conducted by the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies. Two particularly important conclusions were:

- The state's goals for transit have changed and broadened considerably since 1971 when the TDA became law and 1978 when the farebox recovery requirement was added; and
- A survey of California transit and regional agency professionals reveals the current TDA requirements appear to influence agency management decisions in ways that do not align with the state's current goals for transit.

The task force then set forth a draft framework for TDA reform that maintained the farebox recovery requirement but significantly changed how it would be applied. The draft framework:

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Rick Ramacier, State Legislative Committee Chair, California Transit Association, and Joshua W. Shaw, Executive Director, California Transit Association to California Transit Association members, RTPAs, and other public transit systems. Subject: Transportation Development Act Reform – A Draft Framework (inclusive of Attachment 1, Draft Framework). Dated January 8, 2020.

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1. Retains TDA's current farebox recovery requirements as an important data set for policymakers at all levels. The ratios would be targets that all transit agencies should try to hit.
2. Removes financial penalties associated with missing farebox recovery requirements for all agencies.
3. Requires agencies that miss their required farebox recovery for three years in a row be given the option in year four to either 1) develop and submit an action plan to the RTPA that details the steps it will take to meet its farebox recovery requirement; or 2) develop new targets, in collaboration with the RTPA, that monitor the transit agency's contribution to local, community, regional, or statewide goals.
4. Adjusts some aspects of the farebox recovery ratio definitions for the numerator and denominator, and lower the basic targets, to better reflect current goals and objectives for public transit, and to more realistically accommodate today's most pressing transit challenges and unfunded mandates.

While these proposed changes to the TDA legislation have yet to be finalized and enacted, it is very likely the TDA will undergo significant revisions during the next audit period. As a result, the test of compliance, particularly for transit operators, may look quite different in subsequent triennial performance audits. The RTPA will likely need to implement changes to its TDA claims manual, forms, and processes to reflect changes to operator compliance requirements.

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## Exhibit 4.1 Transportation Development Act Compliance Requirements

Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
All transportation operators and city or county governments which have responsibility for serving a given area, in total, claim no more than those Local Transportation Fund monies apportioned to that area.	PUC 99231	In compliance	
The RTPA has adopted rules and regulations delineating procedures for the submission of claims for facilities provided for the exclusive use of pedestrians and bicycles (Article 3).	PUC 99233, 99234	In compliance	
The RTPA has established a social services transportation advisory council. The RTPA must ensure that there is a citizen participation process that includes at least an annual public hearing.	PUC 99238, 99238.5	In compliance	Public Unmet Transit Needs hearings held on: February 8, 2016 February 3, 2017 February 2, 2018 February 1, 2019
The RTPA has annually identified, analyzed, and recommended potential productivity improvements which could lower operating cost of those operators, which operate at least 50 percent of their vehicle service miles within the RTPA's jurisdiction. Recommendations include, but are not being limited to, those made in the performance audit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A committee for the purpose of providing advice on productivity improvements may be formed.</li> <li>The operator has made a reasonable effort to implement improvements recommended by the RTPA as determined by the RTPA, or else the operator has not received an allocation that exceeds its prior year allocation.</li> </ul>	PUC 99244	In compliance	VCTC's Transcom Committee (made up of all Ventura County transit operators) meets monthly. While it is not a productivity committee, it does provide operators with opportunities to discuss productivity, performance, and improvements.
The RTPA has ensured that all claimants to whom it allocated TDA funds submit to it and to the state controller an annual certified fiscal and compliance audit within 180 days after the end of the fiscal year.	PUC 99245	In compliance	
The RTPA has submitted to the state controller an annual certified fiscal audit within 12 months of the end of the fiscal year.	CCR 6662	In compliance	FY 2016/17: October 27, 2017 FY 2017/18: November 7, 2018 FY 2018/19: November 8, 2019 <i>Source: CAFRs.</i>
The RTPA has submitted within 90 days after the end of the fiscal year an annual financial transactions report to the state controller.	CCR 6660	In compliance	FY 2016/17: December 12, 2017 FY 2017/18: November 15, 2018 FY 2018/19: January 28, 2020

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Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
The RTPA has designated an independent entity to conduct a performance audit of operators and itself (for the current and previous triennia). For operators, the audit was made and calculated the required performance indicators, and the audit report was transmitted to the entity that allocates the operator's TDA money, and to the RTPA within 12 months after the end of the triennium. If an operators audit was not transmitted by the start of the second fiscal year following the last fiscal year of the triennium, TDA funds were not allocated to that operator for that or subsequent fiscal years until the audit was transmitted.	PUC 99246, 99248	In compliance	Prior triennial performance audits were prepared by Moore & Associates/Ma and Associates and submitted by June 30, 2017. Therefore, no operator allocations were affected by a failure to complete the audit.  Moore & Associates was engaged in 2019 to prepare the current triennial performance audits.
The RTPA has submitted a copy of its performance audit to the Director of the California Department of Transportation. In addition, the RTPA has certified in writing to the Director that the performance audits of operators located in the area under its jurisdiction have been completed.	PUC 99246(c)	In compliance	The RTPA audit report and a letter certifying completion of the operator audits was submitted to Caltrans on June 30, 2017.
For Article 8(c) claimants, the RTPA may adopt performance criteria, local match requirements, or fare recovery ratios. In such cases, the rules and regulations of the RTPA will apply.	PUC 99405	Not applicable	VCTC has not adopted alternative compliance requirements for any of its TDA 8(c) recipients.
The performance audit of the operator providing public transportation services shall include a verification of the operator's cost per passenger, operating cost per vehicle service hour, passenger per vehicle service mile, and vehicle service hours per employee, as defined in Section 99247. The performance audit shall include consideration of the needs and types of passengers being served and the employment of part-time drivers and the contracting with common carriers of persons operating under a franchise or license to provide services during peak hours, as defined in subdivision (a) of section 99260.2.	PUC 99246(d)	In compliance	
The RTPA has established rules and regulations regarding revenue ratios for transportation operators providing services in urbanized and newly urbanized areas.	PUC 99270.1, 99270.2	In compliance	
The RTPA has adopted criteria, rules, and regulations for the evaluation of claims filed under Article 4.5 of the TDA and the determination of the cost effectiveness of the proposed community transit services.	PUC 99275.5	In compliance	
State transit assistance funds received by the RTPA are allocated only for transportation planning and mass transportation purposes.	PUC 99310.5, 99313.3, Proposition 116	In compliance	

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Compliance Element	Reference	Compliance	Comments
<p>The amount received pursuant to the Public Utilities Code, Section 99314.3, by each RTPA for state transit assistance is allocated to the operators in the area of its jurisdiction as allocated by the State Controller’s Office.</p>	<p>PUC 99314.3</p>	<p>In compliance</p>	
<p>If TDA funds are allocated to purposes not directly related to public or specialized transportation services, or facilities for exclusive use of pedestrians and bicycles, the transit planning agency has annually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulted with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) established pursuant to PUC Section 99238;</li> <li>• Identified transit needs, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Groups that are transit-dependent or transit-disadvantaged,</li> <li>○ Adequacy of existing transit services to meet the needs of groups identified,</li> <li>○ Analysis of potential alternatives to provide transportation services;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adopted or reaffirmed definitions of “unmet transit needs” and “reasonable to meet”; and</li> <li>• Identified the unmet transit needs or there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.</li> </ul> <p>If a finding is adopted that there are unmet transit needs, these needs must have been funded before an allocation was made for streets and roads.</p>	<p>PUC 99401.5</p>	<p>In compliance</p>	<p>The annual Unmet Transit Needs process undertaken by VCTC includes the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of population densities and transit operators</li> <li>• Public comment period</li> <li>• Unmet Transit Needs survey</li> <li>• Meetings held throughout the county</li> <li>• Public hearing</li> <li>• Adoption/reaffirmation of definitions of “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet”</li> <li>• Identification of any unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet</li> <li>• Consultation with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)</li> </ul>

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## Chapter 5

# Prior Recommendations

This section reviews and evaluates the implementation of the prior Triennial Performance Audit recommendations and determines degree of implementation. This objective assessment is to provide assurance the Ventura County Transportation Commission has made quantifiable progress toward improving both the efficiency and effectiveness of its functions.

The prior audit – completed in 2017 by Moore & Associates, Inc./Ma and Associates for the three fiscal years ending June 30, 2016 – prescribed five recommendations for VCTC as the RTPA:

1. [Monitor the progress of fiscal audits to ensure they are prepared and submitted within the designated timeframe.](#)

**Discussion:** PUC Section 99245 requires the RTPA ensure all claimants to which it allocated TDA funds submit to it and to the State Controller an annual certified fiscal and compliance audit within 180 days after the end of the fiscal year (or 270 days if a 90-day extension is granted). The VCTC Intercity TDA fiscal audit for FY 2014/15 was submitted well past the allowable 90-day extension. However, since the FY 2015/16 audit was submitted on time, this does not appear to be an ongoing problem.

The TDA (CCR 6662) requires that an RTPA submit its fiscal audit within 12 months of the end of the fiscal year. However, the deadline for transit operators is considerably sooner (180 days following the end of the fiscal year, or 270 days if a 90-day extension is granted). This difference in submittal deadlines is a potential contributor to the late submittal of the VCTC Intercity TDA fiscal audit.

Because the subsequent year's audit was submitted on time, we do not believe this is an ongoing issue that requires action at this time. VCTC should monitor its TDA fiscal auditor to ensure appropriate deadlines are built into the contract and that those deadlines are being met.

**Progress:** During the audit period, all fiscal audits were completed and submitted on-time.

**Status:** Implemented.

2. [Update rules and regulations for the evaluation of claims for TDA Article 4.5 funds.](#)

**Discussion:** This recommendation was carried forward from the prior audit. As the designated Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) for Ventura County, VCTC is the only eligible claimant for Article 4.5 (Community Transit Services) funds, but did not claim these funds during the prior audit period. At the time, VCTC's allocation policies and procedures for Article 4.5 funds were last updated and approved in 1995. The prior audit called for updated guidelines for the evaluation of claims for these funds.

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**Progress:** While a CTSA has been designated, it is not currently utilized. As such, no funds are being distributed under Article 4.5. Updating rules and regulations for a funding program that is not currently being utilized has not been a top priority for VCTC, especially since there is no countywide sales tax measure. Therefore, we consider this measure no longer relevant at this time. However, VCTC should revisit this issue once reforms to the TDA have been identified and/or implemented.

**Status:** No longer relevant.

3. [Update the county's Congestion Management Program and upload to the GoVentura website.](#)

**Discussion:** This recommendation was carried forward from the prior audit. As the county's Congestion Management Agency, VCTC is required by federal regulation to maintain a Congestion Management Program (CMP). The Ventura County CMP provides local agencies and private developers the procedures and tools necessary to manage and decrease traffic congestion in the County. VCTC staff indicated that the 2009 CMP was being updated during the prior audit. Auditors recommended it be uploaded to the website as soon as it was approved by the Commission. However, while completion of the CMP Update has been budgeted each fiscal year, the update has yet to be completed. The county's CMP was originally due to be updated in 2011.

**Progress:** While VCTC has yet to update its Congestion Management Plan, the lack of significant roadway development in the county has minimized the need for an update. While a CMP is required under California's Congestion Management Program (which tied the appropriation of gas tax revenues to congestion management efforts), there is no mandate the CMP be updated with any regularity. While we encourage VCTC to update its CMP and post the updated document to its website, we recognize other issues (such as a countywide tax measure) have greater priority. Therefore we consider this recommendation no longer relevant.

**Status:** No longer relevant.

4. [Work with ECTA partners to compile operating data on an annual basis so that a separate Triennial Performance Audit of ECTA can be completed during the next audit cycle.](#)

**Discussion:** Given ECTA does not operate as an independent entity, the TDA does not require it to be evaluated as a stand-alone operator. However, each ECTA operator that uses Article 4 funds is required to undergo a Triennial Performance Audit.

At the time of the prior audit, ECTA was largely evaluated as part of the operating entities. It cannot be easily evaluated as a stand-alone program. While the TDA fiscal audit does evaluate compliance with the farebox recovery ratio requirement, no full performance evaluation of the service is possible given the information provided to the team preparing the Triennial Performance Audit. In order to achieve an independent audit, the auditor cannot be tasked with compiling the data that will be audited.

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The prior audit recommended VCTC work with ECTA partners – particularly the City of Thousand Oaks, which is ECTA’s fiscal agent – to compile operating data on an annual basis so that a separate Triennial Performance Audit of ECTA can be completed during the next audit cycle. The primary purpose of the Triennial Performance Audit, in addition to evaluating ECTA’s compliance as a separate program, is to assess ECTA’s overall performance. The audit did not recommend reporting ECTA as a separate service to the State Controller, or excluding services provided as ECTA from individual operator reporting.

**Progress:** VCTC, as the RTPA, regularly monitors the performance of the ECTA. However, the ECTA was not audited as a separate operator during the current audit period. The ECTA does undergo an annual fiscal audit, but its performance is still included under the City of Thousand Oaks, which operates the service and serves as the lead agency. VCTC believes if ECTA’s structure becomes more formalized (e.g., as a joint powers authority, rather than through a series of agreements), it should then receive a separate triennial performance audit. Until then, VCTC will continue to monitor performance and determine appropriate performance criteria.

**Status:** No longer relevant.

5. Consider developing a policy for transit operators serving rural and urbanized areas (such as Ojai) that could be used to establish a "blended" farebox recovery ratio goal for such areas throughout the county, or continue to consider alternative options such as Article 4.5 funding.

**Discussion:** In prior years, the City utilized TDA funds received by the County of Ventura and passed through by the Gold Coast Transit District to Ojai as local support to supplement farebox revenue. In May 2016, VCTC approved a policy clarifying that money allocated as TDA funds must retain that “color” even as it is passed through to other entities. The policy went into effect on July 1, 2016. As a result, the City struggles to meet the 20 percent farebox recovery ratio requirement due to its designation as part of the Oxnard-Ventura urbanized area despite its rural nature.

VCTC does not currently claim Article 4.5 funds. Within the last year, VCTC has been reassessing whether Article 4.5 could be used to fund communities such as Ojai that are considered urbanized, but because of the rural nature cannot meet the 20 percent farebox recovery ratio required of urbanized operators. Another potential option, given Ojai’s transit program serves both urbanized and non-urbanized areas, is to develop a county-wide policy allowing a “blended” ratio for any operator meeting defined operating criteria.

Given the City of Ojai is expected to fall below the 20 percent farebox recovery ratio threshold absent its prior source of supplemental revenue, VCTC and the Gold Coast Transit District (the TDA claimant) should consider developing a policy for transit operators serving rural and urbanized areas (such as Ojai) that could be used to establish a "blended" farebox recovery ratio goal for such areas throughout the county, or continue to consider alternative options such as Article 4.5 funding.

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**Progress:** VCTC did not elect to use Article 4.5 funding for the City of Ojai following the prior audit. Instead, the City has worked with Gold Coast Transit District to identify alternative local funds that can be applied to its farebox recovery ratio, as well as introducing a fare increase, launching an advertising program, and increasing its route guarantee from the Ojai Valley Inn. Given this change in circumstances, we find this recommendation no longer valid. In addition, depending on the outcome of TDA reform activities, changes to the TDA may be such that this issue is a moot point.

**Status:** No longer relevant.

## Chapter 6

# Functional Review

A functional review of the Ventura County Transportation Commission determines the effectiveness and efficiency of the following functional activities:

- Administration and Management,
- Transportation Planning and Regional Coordination,
- Claimant Relationships and Oversight,
- Marketing and Transportation Alternatives, and
- Grant Applications and Management.

### ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

VCTC sets transportation priorities, selects projects, and distributes state and federal monies to its members to maintain, repair and support operations of local roadways, public transportation and other transportation systems. The agency works with Caltrans to plan, select and construct major highway projects. VCTC is also responsible for administering Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds, including both State Transit Assistance (STA) funds and Local Transportation Funds (LTF). VCTC allocates transit funding to the City of Camarillo, City of Fillmore, City of Moorpark, City of Ojai, City of Santa Paula City of Simi Valley, City of Thousand Oaks, County of Ventura, Gold Coast Transit District, and Metrolink. VCTC also operates VCTC Intercity Bus and serves as the administrator for Valley Express. All major policy efforts go through a committee process to ensure collaboration.

Ventura County is included within the Southern California Association of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan. VCTC's prior planning efforts have placed a priority on connectivity. Within the next two year, VCTC will be updating its county-wide Short Range Transit Plan. The updated SRTP is expected to add a financial component as well as comprehensive fleet planning to address the Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) mandate from the California Air Resources Board. VCTC is also in the process of preparing a Transportation Emergency Preparedness Plan in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments and Caltrans. This Plan is expected to better guide the region's transit response to emergencies similar to those experienced during the current audit period.

Within its annual budget, VCTC identifies objectives for each of its programs, as well as recent accomplishments, key performance metrics (where appropriate), major work elements, work product, funding sources, and projected expenses. The annual budget includes all programs and funds for VCTC as the RTPA as well as for the transit programs it operates and administers.

Staff turnover has historically been low yet has increased recently due to retirements of several original staff members. Pay increases are generally provided via merit raises accompanying annual performance evaluations. Otherwise, VCTC does not utilize employee incentive programs. VCTC staff are eligible for health insurance (including dental and vision), life insurance, CalPERS retirement benefits, and vacation.

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## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND REGIONAL COORDINATION

The regional planning landscape in Southern California is unique with respect to how responsibility for particular activities has been assigned. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for a six-county region (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura). As the MPO, SCAG is responsible for coordinating land-use and transportation planning efforts within its jurisdiction. Its core areas of focus include:

- Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS),
- Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP),
- Annual Overall Work Program,
- Transit and Passenger Rail,
- Air Quality,
- Regional Transportation Model,
- Active Transportation,
- Plug-in Electric Vehicle Readiness,
- Transportation Finance, and
- Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

Responsibility for development of the RTP/SCS and FTIP would normally fall under the purview of the RTPA in other regions (such as San Diego County). Though VCTC and SCAG may appear to serve the same function regarding Ventura County, SCAG's focus is on Ventura County as one part of the six-county region, while VCTC's focus is solely on Ventura County.

SCAG's 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy is the guiding long-range transportation planning document for Ventura County. The plan takes a holistic approach to improving air quality, with plans for smarter development and additional modes of transportation resulting in reduced emissions and improved air quality. Such planning includes placing residences and commercial offices in proximity, promoting ridesharing, telecommuting, and alternative schedules, thereby removing vehicle trips during peak periods. The 2016 RTP/SCS calls for further investment across all transit modes and also calls for new household and employment growth to be targeted in areas that are well served by public transportation to maximize the improvements called for in the Plan. The Plan also endorses county plans to close arterial gaps and chokepoints in the transportation network. SCAG is currently in the process of updating the RTP/SCS, and expects to adopt the 2020 RTP/SCS in mid-2020.

## CLAIMANT RELATIONSHIPS AND OVERSIGHT

VCTC has monitored progress through SRTP updates and Transcom meetings. Overall, operators report satisfaction with VCTC's oversight and assistance. VCTC assists operators by preparing a group Transit Asset Management Plan (all operators except for Gold Coast Transit District) and marketing local transit services as part of its countywide outreach. Operators are aware of the assistance available through VCTC and make use of it as needed. VCTC is seen as a particularly valuable resource by operator staff new to their positions.

As the designated RTPA and a trusted source of transportation-related knowledge (as well as the conduit through which funding passes), VCTC staff interacts frequently with its claimants. Staff provides guidance on forms, claims, questions, and financial issues as needed. In November 2016, VCTC took the

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lead in advancing a sales tax measure to support public transit, which would have provided a steady revenue stream for operators. However, voters did not approve this initiative. VCTC still hopes to gain support for such a measure, which could be placed on the ballot again at some time during the next audit period.

VCTC has displayed a willingness to withhold TDA monies if a compliance issue is identified. For example, in FY 2017/18, the City of Simi Valley did not meet the farebox recovery ratio requirements and was assessed a penalty during FY 2019/20.

## MARKETING AND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

VCTC conducts a regional marketing program for public transportation. While individual operators typically handle their own marketing and outreach, VCTC includes operator materials as part of outreach activities it conducts throughout the county. Marketing activities are conducted via a marketing contract, which includes marketing and outreach for both VCTC as the RTPA and VCTC Intercity Bus.

In FY 2018/19, VCTC conducted origin/destination, transfer, and customer surveys. The origin/destination survey was conducted on 18 routes across six different Ventura County transit operators (VCTC Intercity Bus, Gold Coast Transit District, Thousand Oaks Transit, Simi Valley Transit, Moorpark City Transit, and Valley Express). The transfer survey included 12 different transfer locations, including locations in Camarillo, Moorpark, Oxnard, Santa Barbara, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Ventura, and the Heritage Valley. The customer satisfaction surveys were conducted on VCTC Intercity Bus and Valley Express services. Overall, nearly 1,300 surveys were collected in support of the origin/destination survey and approximately 350 surveys were collected for the customer satisfaction survey.

VCTC's marketing and outreach budget is less than one percent of the agency's budget. It covers four key areas: Intercity Bus; Regional Transportation; Rideshare; and Community, Youth, and Event Outreach. Rideshare marketing comprises 23 percent of the marketing budget, while community, youth, and event outreach comprised 41 percent. Regional transportation is the smallest segment, comprising 17 percent of the budget.

VCTC marketing activities during FY 2018/19 were many and varied and included the following:

- Community Outreach, Youth, and Events
  - Ventura County Fair
  - Student Summit
  - Earth Day
  - Santa to the Sea
  - Mobility 21
- Regional Transportation
  - Unmet Transit Needs
  - Destinations campaign
  - College Ride campaign
  - Veterans outreach
  - Metrolink and Amtrak service promotions

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- Rideshare
  - Rideshare Week
  - Bike to Work Week
  - “Evergreen” campaigns

Beyond those listed above, marketing activities included active social media, media releases, email blasts, and bilingual outreach. VCTC staff believe the agency could do more in terms of promoting operator service changes.

## **GRANT APPLICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT**

FTA and CMAQ applications are submitted through VCTC for itself and its subrecipients. Gold Coast Transit District and the City of Simi Valley apply for funding directly. VCTC is the designated recipient for Section 5310 funding. If operators apply for grants on their own, VCTC may write letters of recommendation, but typically does not provide technical assistance or review/coordinate grant applications.

VCTC monitors grants for itself and its designated recipients. The City of Simi Valley has been at risk of losing grant money due to non-compliance, but thus far this has not happen. VCTC reviews Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) on a quarterly basis.



## Chapter 7

# Findings and Recommendations

### CONCLUSIONS

We find the Ventura County Transportation Commission, functioning as the RTPA, to be in compliance with the requirements of the Transportation Development Act. In addition, the entity generally functions in an efficient, effective, and economical manner. Functional recommendations intended to improve the effectiveness of the organization as the RTPA, are detailed below.

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following discussions with VCTC staff and a review of program compliance, we identified no compliance findings.

The audit team identified one additional functional finding. While this finding is not a compliance finding, we feel it is significant enough to be addressed within this review.

1. VCTC does not formally track the progress of recommendations arising from triennial performance audits or other key documents.

In completing this Triennial Performance Audit, we submit the following recommendations for the Ventura County Transportation Commission as the RTPA. They have been divided into two categories: TDA Program Compliance Recommendations and Functional Recommendations. TDA Program Compliance Recommendations are intended to assist in bringing the agency into compliance with the requirements and standards of the TDA, while Functional Recommendations address issues identified during the Triennial Performance Audit that are not specific to TDA compliance.

Given there were no compliance findings, only functional recommendations are provided.

#### **Functional Finding 1: VCTC does not formally track the progress of recommendations arising from triennial performance audits or other key documents.**

**Criteria:** PUC 99244 requires RTPAs, on an annual basis, to identify, analyze, and recommend potential productivity improvements for lowering operating cost for transit operators that operate at least 50 percent of their vehicle service miles within the RTPA's jurisdiction. These recommendations include, but are not limited to, those contained within a triennial performance audit.

**Condition:** While Transcom serves as a de facto "productivity committee" for transit operators, there is no formal monitoring of whether recommendations arising from the triennial performance audit have been implemented.

**Cause:** VCTC has traditionally relied on Transcom to fulfill the role of "productivity committee," though that is not the committee's primary purpose.

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**Effect:** Without effective oversight by the RTPA, operators may not implement proposed recommendations in a timely manner, which could negatively affect productivity.

**Recommendation:** Implement a process for operators to submit the implementation status of performance audit recommendations to VCTC’s Transit Operations and Planning department on an annual basis.

**Recommended Action(s):** Using the sample form provided in Exhibit 7.2, VCTC should require operators to annually submit information regarding the status of performance audit recommendations. We recommend this process have a deadline of September 1 following the end of the fiscal year. In many cases, the responses will be anecdotal. In others, there will be no progress to report, or there may be an explanation of why the recommendation is no longer relevant. Given recommendations may require planning/budgeting or are contingent on other actions/conditions, not every recommendation can be implemented right away. It is likely VCTC will not need to step in or follow up until toward the end of a given audit period. These completed forms can also be provided to the team preparing the Triennial Performance Audit for a more comprehensive account of the status of prior recommendations. The purpose of the process will be to ensure there is *progress* toward the implementation of recommendations, not necessarily to force the implementation of recommendations. It will ensure productivity can be monitored without affecting the TDA claims process.

**Timeline:** Following the end of FY 2019/20.

**Anticipated Cost:** Modest.

**Management Response:** The audit team initially recommended the productivity form be incorporated into the annual TDA claim form. However, there was concern by VCTC’s Finance Director that doing so would put the review of productivity under the Accounting department, and could hold up the TDA claims process. While VCTC is in favor of monitoring productivity, it felt that doing it as part of the TDA claims process would not be an effective solution. Therefore, the auditors modified the recommendation to that shown above.

Exhibit 7.1 Summary of Audit Recommendations

Functional Recommendations	Importance	Timeline
1 Implement a process for operators to submit the implementation status of performance audit recommendations to VCTC’s Transit Operations and Planning department on an annual basis.	Medium	FY 2019/20

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## Exhibit 7.2 Sample Recommendation Status Form

### Progress Report on VCTC / Triennial Performance Audit Productivity Recommendations

Recommendation	Implementation Status

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