



"Citrus Capital of the World"

# City of Santa Paula

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August 19, 2013

The Honorable Brian J. Back  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
County of Ventura  
800 S. Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report – Senior Transportation in Ventura County

Dear Judge Back:

On May 23, 2013, the Ventura County Grand Jury issued its report entitled "Final Report -- Senior Transportation in Ventura County." The Report focuses on the transportation needs of senior citizens, including transportation options and availability for seniors living in Ventura County. At the conclusion of the Report, the Grand Jury requested a response from the City to Finding FI-04 and Recommendations R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04 and R-05. We provide the following responses to these Findings and Recommendations in accordance with Penal Code §933.05.

**Finding:**

**FI-04** *The demand-response transit services are found in all ten cities, although each city's service is independently operated and functions differently. This has been found to be very confusing and in some cases potentially dangerous to seniors. In the Heritage Valley seniors, children, farm workers and others are allowed the use of this service.*

As mentioned in the report, transportation funding is administered by the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). In addition, each jurisdiction is allocated a fixed amount of funding based on population and community need. In the City of Santa Paula, a federally recognized lower-income community, the need for public transportation extends to all residents, including seniors, students and working individuals. As a small community, the City receives a limited amount of funding, which is used to provide very limited public transportation within the City of Santa Paula and a single route connecting to Ventura and Fillmore.

The City's Dial-a-Ride program provides curb-to-curb transportation service seven days a week to the general public. For senior citizens and the disabled, the fare is \$0.85 and

rides can be scheduled through a phone reservation process. Information about the program is publicized at numerous locations, including City Hall, the Community Center, and on-line at the City's and VCTC's website.

The Dial-a-Ride program serves only local trip needs. While transfers to fixed route lines are available at no charge, the City recognizes that there is limited connectivity and varying operating hours, which may prove confusing to senior citizens commuting to other areas of the County. VCTC, however, assists passengers with transfer information at the time a Dial-a-Ride reservation is made and every effort is made to publicize fixed-route schedules and operating times.

**Recommendations:**

**R-01** *The Grand Jury recommends that an independent, non-elected County administrator be assigned to oversee the collaborative efforts of all the senior modalities in the County and produce strategies to simplify senior transportation. The administrator would seek consensus with the independent companies and city transportation agencies with a goal of consistency in the areas of availability, acceptability, accessibility, adaptability, and affordability. Further, the administrator would develop an advisory board comprised of senior bus-riding citizens to point out the opportunities for improvements. In addition, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors should be encouraged to ride a bus route once a year to determine the needs and the effectiveness of the programs.*

While the City of Santa Paula understands the reasons for this recommendation, it also recognizes that federal transportation funding is administered by VCTC as the regional transportation agency and any non-elected County administrator focused on senior transportation must be part of or work closely with VCTC in order to be effective.

In sum, the City believes that one of VCTC's roles is to oversee the provision of effective and affordable senior transportation on a regional basis, subject to the input of local communities who are in the best position to hear and convey any concerns of the citizens utilizing the transportation services. Hence, there is no further need for additional oversight.

**R-02** *In cooperation with the VCTC and VCAAA, programs should be implemented that are designed to assist senior citizens with transportation within their cities and throughout the County.*

The City of Santa Paula agrees with this recommendation and urges the both VCTC and VCAAA to cooperatively implement additional senior transportation programs across Ventura County.

**R-03** *The Ventura County Board of Supervisors should allocate specific funding for senior transportation.*

The Honorable Brian J. Back  
August 14, 2013  
Page 3

Limited transportation funding and differences in funding allocation per jurisdiction make it difficult for smaller communities like Santa Paula to focus funding solely on senior transportation. Additional funding from the County for senior transportation would greatly assist the City in the provision of additional senior transportation opportunities. The allocation of any additional funds is a decision properly left to the City (and its staff), which is in the best position to assess the transportation needs of its senior population.

**R-04** *The VCTC, working with VCAAA, should standardize requirements for participation in the senior transportation programs. They should also publicize the availability of programs that fulfill the transportation needs of seniors.*

The City of Santa Paula understands that standardized requirements might simplify access to public transportation. Again, it is important to point out that limited funding currently creates differences in fares and access requirements from one jurisdiction to another. As noted above, the City makes every effort to publicize local and regional transit options in both print and electronic media.

**R-05** *The VCAAA should plan for increased staffing to accommodate a growing senior population.*

The City of Santa Paula agrees that a growing senior population will require increased services across Ventura County. The City's Senior Center continues to see a constant increase in the number of seniors served annually. All agencies, including the VCAAA, should take the necessary steps to accommodate the growing senior population.

We thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Report. Should you have any further questions or desire any further information, please contact me or City Manager Jaime Fontes.

Sincerely,



Ralph J. Fernandez, Mayor

cc: Santa Paula City Council  
Jaime M. Fontes, City Manager  
Elizabeth Amador, Assistant to the City Manager  
Rosemary Reitz, Ventura County Grand Jury Foreperson