



Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2026

TO: CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

SUBMITTED BY: DAISY PEREZ, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

PREPARED BY: CHRISTIAN HERNANDEZ, PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGER

SUBJECT: SENIOR MOBILITY PROGRAM UPDATE

SUMMARY

Staff requests City Council approve a phased approach to modify the Senior Mobility Program and address current fiscal constraints while preserving access to essential services. Staff also requests City Council approve submitting an updated Service Plan to Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA).

PROPOSED MOTION

1. Approve an interim modification to the Senior Mobility Program, effective March 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026 limiting participants to one round trip per day, with other program guidelines remaining unchanged.
2. Approve proposed Senior Mobility Program modifications effective July 1, 2026 including revised eligible trip purposes, geographic limitations and fare structure.
3. Authorize City Manager, or designee, to submit an updated Senior Mobility Program Agency Service Plan to OCTA consistent with the approved changes.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Approve the Proposed Motion
- Direct staff to implement only the interim program changes
- Other options brought by City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Proposed Motion.

CITY MANAGER REMARKS

None.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statement:

- Fiscal and Organizational Stability.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Senior Mobility Program experienced higher than anticipated utilization during the current fiscal year. Staff anticipates fully expending OCTA allocated program funding by the end of February 2026, based on current expenditure trends. Staff expects program costs to exceed the allocation by approximately \$83,000 through June 30, 2026.

The Parks and Recreation Department will absorb the one-time additional costs within the Department operating budget for FY 2025-26, comprised of \$45,000 in salary savings and \$38,000 in savings achieved by digitizing the seasonal Fullerton Fun program guide, to offset projected cost overruns through June 2026.

Staff expects limiting the program to one round trip per day between March 1, 2026 and June 30, 2026 would reduce monthly program expenditures by approximately \$4,000 to \$5,000. Staff anticipates program modifications effective July 1, 2026 would generate \$145,000 to \$165,000 annual program savings for FY 2026-27

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Measure M2 (Renewed Measure M) sales tax revenues administered by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) fund the Senior Mobility Program operated by the City of Fullerton pursuant to a Cooperative Agreement and Agency Service Plan. The program provides transportation to essential destinations for older adults, including medical appointments, grocery shopping and City-sponsored programming to promote independence, health and quality of life for seniors who may no longer be able to drive.

Senior Mobility Program ridership declined significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic when the City closed the Fullerton Community Center and suspended in-person programming. Measure M2 fund allocation to the program continued during this period, accumulating a larger than anticipated fund balance. Staff implemented several program adjustments, including significantly reducing participant costs and expanding the number of free or low-cost trip options to increase program utilization and responsibly draw down these funds prior to expiration. Staff intended to re-engage seniors, remove financial barriers and restore ridership levels as the community reopened with these changes.

These efforts increased participation and fundamentally changed usage patterns. Ridership levels not only recovered but increased substantially beyond historical norms as normal operations resumed. The program sees high-frequency use by a small number of participants, particularly for nutrition-related trips, resulting in costs exceeding sustainable funding levels.

The Senior Mobility Program provided 14,647 one-way trips during Calendar Year 2025, averaging approximately 1,220 trips per month. Program data indicates approximately 10 percent of participants account for nearly 50 percent of total program costs, with a significant portion of trips related to grocery and food access rather than medical appointments. Staff anticipates current expenditure trends will exhaust the Senior Mobility Program funding allocation by the end of February 2026 unless the City implements program changes or identifies additional funding.

Staff provided an update on the Senior Mobility Program to the Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) on December 9, 2025, outlining current fiscal challenges and sharing preliminary ridership data and cost trends. Staff initially recommended limiting the program to 12 round trips per month per participant to extend program funding and avoid a mid-year service disruption. Committee members asked if the City could request additional funding from OCTA and supported program changes, if necessary, to preserve the program and avoid a complete suspension of services due to lack of funds.

Staff conducted a more detailed analysis of 2025 ridership data, usage patterns and cost drivers and developed proposed phased program modifications presented in this report to stabilize the program in the short term while establishing a more sustainable structure for future fiscal years.

Phased Approach to Program Modifications

Staff recommends a phased approach to modifying the Senior Mobility Program to ensure continuity of service, allow appropriate public outreach and provide ample time to communicate upcoming program changes to participants. The proposed modifications represent a shift in program structure and staff believe it is important to implement these changes thoughtfully to minimize confusion and hardship for program users.

Proposed Program Modifications

Staff recommends implementing an interim modification to the program structure for the remainder of the 2025-26 fiscal year (March 1 through June 30, 2026) limiting participants to 30 round trips per month. All other program guidelines, eligible trip purposes and fare structures would remain unchanged during this period. This interim measure addresses the most significant cost driver — multiple same-day trips — while preserving access to essential services. This approach also allows staff time to provide clear and consistent communication to participants regarding proposed changes that would take effect in the next fiscal year.

Staff proposes a revised program structure effective July 1, 2026 to refocus Senior Mobility Program on essential transportation needs and align the program more closely with those offered by peer cities. The proposed structure would limit the program to the following eligible trips:

- Medical appointments within the City of Fullerton or up to ten miles outside City limits, with a \$2 copay per one-way trip.
- Grocery shopping trips within City limits only, with a \$2 copay per one-way trip.

- Trips to and from the Fullerton Community Center (340 West Commonwealth Avenue) and City Hall (303 West Commonwealth Avenue), with no copay and capped at 20 round trips per month.

These changes prioritize medical access, food security and participation in City-sponsored programs, while eliminating discretionary trips contributing to unsustainable cost growth. Staff projects these modifications would reduce annual program expenditures by approximately \$145,000 to \$165,000, depending on utilization patterns and participant behavior.

Staff presented the proposed changes to the Senior Advisory Committee on February 10, 2026. The SAC discussed several options for future program sustainability including a city-operated transportation program. Ultimately, the SAC voted unanimously to support the phase I proposed changes (30 free round-trips from March to June 2026) and voted 4 – 2 (Opposed: Gobar, Reese) to support the phase II proposed changes (20 free round-trips starting July 1, 2026 and \$2 grocery and medical trips).

Peer City Comparison

Staff reviewed senior transportation programs offered by neighboring Orange County cities and found many peer cities operate more narrowly defined senior mobility programs prioritizing essential trip purposes, apply geographic limits and require modest participant contributions.

City	Program Focus / Structure	Participant Cost per Trip
Anaheim	Participants can utilize the program within a 10-mile radius of their home. Complementary transportation to city-sponsored congregate meal sites for nutrition. City Employee Operated.	Congregate Meal program is free of charge. Vouchers for round trip rides are prices at \$2.00 with two vouchers for round trip ride.
Brea	Van Service is available for Brea residents, 60+ years of age. Mileage limit: 5 miles (within Orange County). Senior Center Shuttle only does two pick-ups and two drop offs per day to the Senior Center. City Employee Operated. No cab service.	\$4 per one-way.
Orange	Transportation to congregate lunch program is available for a suggested donation. All trips within City of Orange have a fee. Trips are available for medical and grocery shopping purposes, including the Orange Senior Center.	\$5 for 6 one-way rides to City of Orange locations.

Buena Park	Transportation Program transports seniors to congregate lunch for free. Non-Emergency transportation program is limited to Tuesday – Thursday from 8:00am to 2:30pm. City Employee Operated.	Suggested donation of \$1 for non-emergency medical trips. Free to congregate meal program.
Placentia	Trips are limited to and from the Placentia Senior Center only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8:30 AM - 1:30 PM. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM, trips are available to cities such as Brea, Yorba Linda & Anaheim for recreational and medical purposes.	No cost to the participant
La Habra	Senior mobility focused on medical and essential errands. Trips are limited to 10 miles outside of La Habra with the exception of the Veteran’s Hospital in Long Beach. Rides are available Monday-Friday from 7:00am-4:00pm only. Patrons must reserve their trip 72 hours in advance. Participants are limited to 1 round trip ride per week	\$2 one-way for all locations
Fullerton (Proposed)	Medical, grocery, and City facility trips only	Free trips to/from Community Center or City Hall (with monthly cap); \$2 one-way medical and grocery trips

This comparison demonstrates the proposed program structure and fare approach consistent with regional practices while continuing to preserve access to essential services.

Staff will continue evaluating additional mobility options during Fiscal Year 2025-26, including a nutrition-focused shuttle service or other delivery-based alternatives to further support food access while reducing reliance on individualized transportation. Staff would submit an updated Senior Mobility Program Agency Service Plan to OCTA reflecting the adopted changes required under the existing Cooperative Agreement, if City Council approves this item.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – OCTA Cooperative Agreement (2021–2026)

- Attachment 2 – Senior Mobility Program Agency Service Plan (Fiscal Year 2024-25)
- Attachment 3 – Senior Mobility Program Utilization Summary (Calendar Year 2025)

cc: Interim City Manager Eddie Manfro