

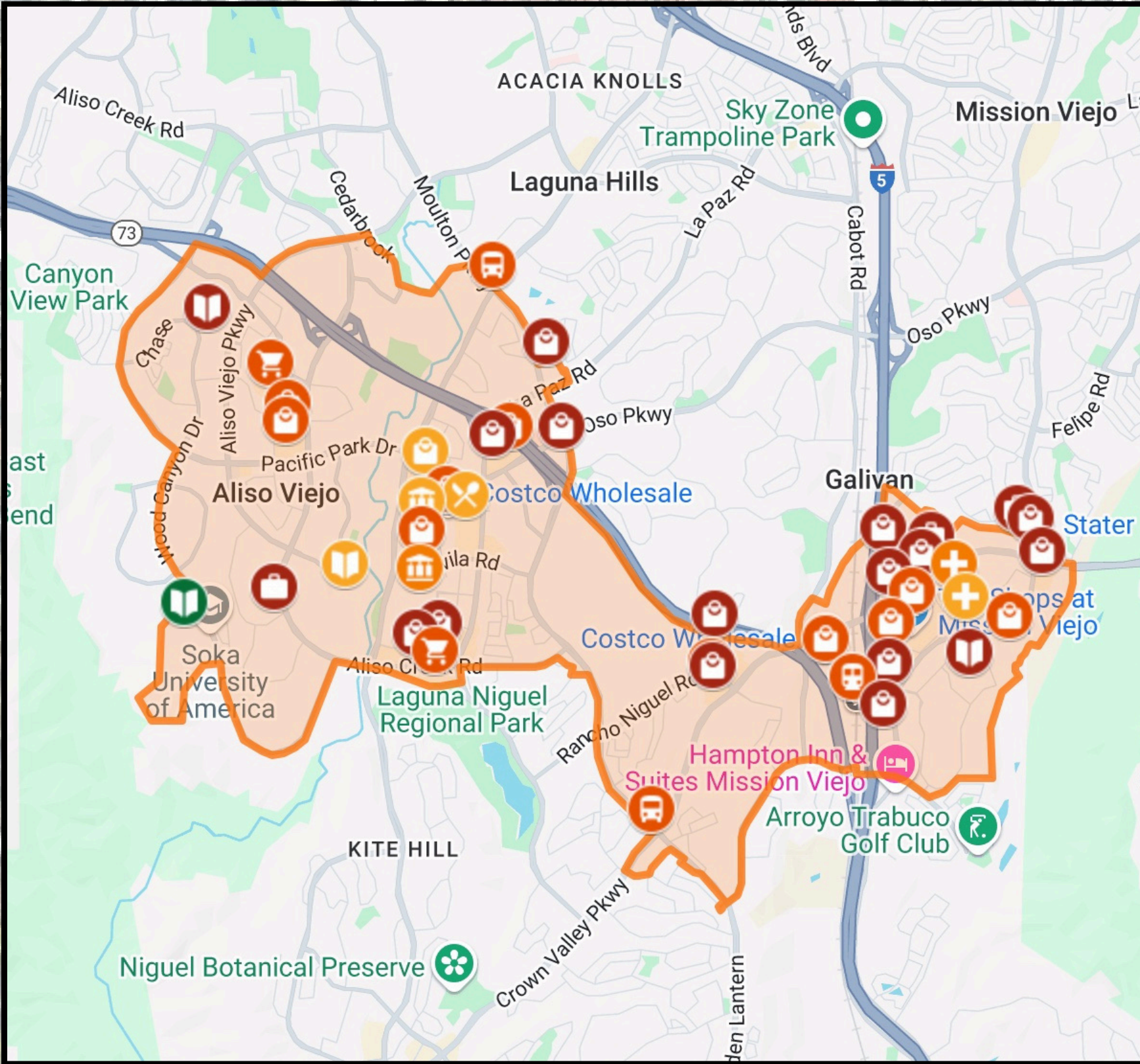
Improving Electronic Ride Hailing Service

OC Flex, in South Orange County
a research analysis on ridership needs for the cities of Aliso Viejo and the Laguna Hills

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INTRODUCTION

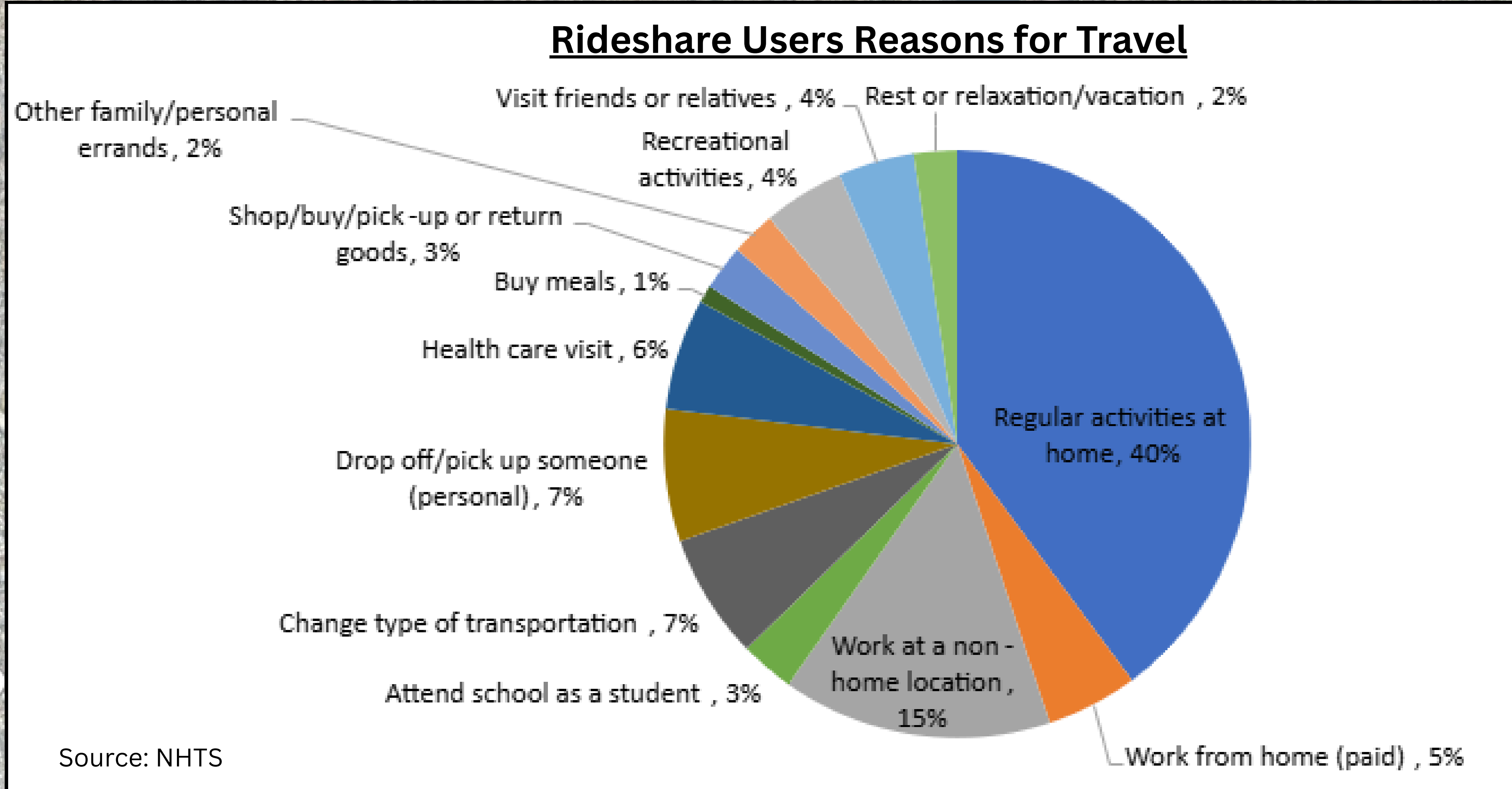
This study focuses on OC Flex, a shared electronic ride hailing service operated by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) in the cities of Aliso Viejo, Laguna Niguel, and Mission Viejo. The service is door-to-door with the main objective to connect passengers to the Mission Viejo-Aliso Viejo Metrolink Station and to provide a public transportation option that suits the surrounding area’s needs. The service was in response to declining bus ridership trends in the region with a 20% decrease in ridership from 2017 to 2023 (U.S. DOT, 2023).



Service Hours

Mon – Fri 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Sat - Sun 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

- Fare is \$4.50 on OC Flex app or \$5 cash on board
 - Valid all day on day of purchase
- Average wait time is 15 to 30 minutes
- Free transfers to Metrolink or Amtrak
- Free with daily or monthly OC Bus Pass



METHODOLOGY

The study takes a mixed-methods approach utilizing the following resources:

- National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)
- U.S. Census’ Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES)
- Origin-Destination data from Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP)
- LA County Metro Transportation Authority (Metro) agendas and Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee Reports
- Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) agenda and Transit Committee Reports

Board-Adopted Goals	Target	Jan 2025
Productivity (boardings per revenue vehicle hour)	6 b/vrh	2.3 b/vrh
Cost Effectiveness (subsidy per boarding)	\$9.00	\$58.06
Shared Rides (percent of bookings sharing a vehicle)	25%	47%
Connecting Transit Trips (percent of transfer trips)	25%	38%
Customer Satisfaction (by survey, customer rating)	85%	98%

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve marketing strategies to target local employers, Metrolink stations, community events, and schools
- Reconfigure and expand zone to connect with employment centers and high demand TAZs
- Charge a higher fare for non-vulnerable groups, median income for this area is high so it would help reduce the cost-per-trip
- Automatically enroll vulnerable populations (older population, women, children, disability) with a TAP card to take advantage of reduced fare rate
- Obtain more vehicle stock to improve ridership capacity to reduce wait times
- Operate a dynamic workforce to have enough drivers during peak times and less during slow times to reduce labor costs

KEY FINDINGS

- Rideshare users are majority women
- Rideshare users are using the service for daily routine utility trips, with most riders using the service to get back home
- Commuting by rideshare is used for short distance (<5 mi.) but often takes users 50+ mins. to reach their destination
- about 63.83% of worker’s from Aliso Viejo commute within a 10-mile radius

CONCLUSION

OC Flex had potential to promote sustainable design principles for the region, however, despite OCTA’s established goals mostly being met, the service was discontinued because of costs associated with operating and managing it. OCTA’s goal-based framework was successful in all but cost. Ultimately, if the service charged more, expanded its zone, and improved its marketing, costs would be lowered and all goals would be met. This would allow OCTA to transition to a framework focused on sustainability.

