

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

MINUTES

Social Services Transportation Advisory Council
May 10, 2023

Primary Location:

Mendocino Transit Authority
Conference Room, 241 Plant Road, Ukiah

Teleconference Locations:

Redwood Coast Senior Center, 490 N. Harold St., Fort Bragg
Harrah Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road, Willits
Redwood Coast Regional Center 1116 Airport Park Blvd, Ukiah

General Public Teleconference by Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT

Richard Baker, Willits Senior Center
Jill Rexrode, Redwood Coast Seniors
Christine Sookne, Redwood Coast Regional Center
Jacob King, Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA)
Dawn White, MTA
Luis Martinez, MTA (Alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ukiah Senior Center

MEMBER VACANCIES

“Local social service provider for the handicapped”
“Potential handicapped transit user”
“Potential transit user at least 60 years of age”

MCOG STAFF PRESENT

Nephele Barrett
Janet Orth
Jody Lowblad

PUBLIC PRESENT

Dean Meester, Caltrans District 1

- 1. Call to Order & Introductions.** Executive Director Barrett called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Self-introductions were made: Jacob, Dawn, Luis, Janet and Jody at MTA; Richard in Willits; Jill in Fort Bragg; Christine at Regional Center; and Nephele and Dean joining by Zoom.
- 2. Public Expression.** None.
- 3. Minutes of November 28, 2022.** The minutes from the November meeting were included in the packet for information and reference. Due to the length of time between meetings, the minutes had been finalized. No action was taken.
- 4. Review and Recommendation on MTA’s Analysis and Prioritization of 2023/24 Unmet Transit Needs.** Janet briefly reviewed the annual process with status to date. Today’s meeting is a chance to comment and make a recommendation on whether any of the needs are “reasonable to meet.” The Transit Productivity Committee (TPC) will meet to consider the same item on May 12, followed by MCOG’s Board of Directors meeting June 5 to make a formal finding by resolution as part of budget adoption. Jacob then reviewed his report, which was shared on screen:
 - “High Priority–Consider for FY 2023/24” – #S-3 is for affordable service to/from Humboldt County, as the existing Greyhound is a private, for-profit service that is unaffordable for some and other problems. MTA is working with Humboldt Transit Authority and Caltrans to fund a transit link with the requested stops, to include Laytonville. #P-2 originated with a letter from a business owner in Mendocino village with retail workers; discussion of whether additional Route 65 trips would meet this identified need, starting July 1 at \$246,000; Jacob believed it would help.
 - “Medium Priority–Consider for FY 2023/24” – #S-4, Mobility solutions/transit/micro-transit service for Covelo, Laytonville, Brooktrails, Hopland and Potter Valley, is the subject of a planning feasibility study by MCOG this year, so could possibly start in 2024/25 depending on

results. #M-3, Saturday service for Willits Local Route 1, has not shown significant demand but MTA is actively investigating for eventual implementation for the transit-dependent public. #M-4, Brooktrails connection for commuters, also is pending results of the Mobility Solutions study.

- “Low Priority– Consider for FY 2023/24” – #S-2, Westport/North Coast limited service, is currently infeasible due to remote location and lack of drivers, but merits further investigation to quantify need in the upcoming Short Range Transit Development Plan update. In discussion, infrequent ridership and cost were noted as a challenge. Perhaps it could be met with DAR or a local community subscription service; an aging population potentially becoming transit dependent could indicate other service types. #S-5, restoration of Ukiah evening workforce service, is not feasible this fiscal year due to driver shortage and lacks demand, so Jacob doesn’t want to get people’s hopes up; review has been ongoing and service anticipated for FY 2024/25. MTA wants to restore all services to pre-pandemic levels; first priority is to serve the College first for evening classes; currently the last trip is at 6:00 p.m. #S-6, Anderson Valley to/from the coast, is a complicated proposition requiring more study. Ridership demand is low and service would be costly to provide; MTA will look at adding to existing services.
- “Already Exists” – #S-1, Wednesday Ukiah senior center service, is a long-standing need that Jacob added to the list again this year and wants to see restored; he recommends federal 5310 program funding. Nephele agreed and questioned whether “already exists” was entirely correct, as the current DAR is not equivalent to the senior center’s “door-through-door” service. Dawn reported a new executive director was recently hired; Richard will look into an introduction and share contact information as available. #M-2, Saturday service between Ukiah and Willits, starts July 1 for a total of four trips per day on the restored Route 65 (see also #P-2).
- “Not Feasible” – #M-1, bus stop at Waugh Lane & Talmage for Local Route 9; Jacob explained why infeasible to install a safe bus stop for pedestrians. Discussion; no stops between Walmart and Cherry Street, quite a distance on foot. #P-1, equitable fare pricing for youth on Route 65, does not meet the definition of an unmet need. MTA is reviewing and addressing fare policies, a major task with many ideas; Jacob gave examples such as a flat rate countywide. Nephele and Janet described details of the testimonial submitted, in which a minor did not meet requirements for a fare discount. Jacob gave further details on inter-county service reporting, noting changes over time and a good opportunity now for MTA’s board to revisit the need for more ridership fare equity. This issue is quite technical and will be part of the Short Range Transit Development Plan update now underway.

Nephele summarized and brought discussion back to how the needs were categorized, not necessarily prioritized by need, but by a combination of factors such as feasibility and funding availability. In discussion, it was noted that of the “High Priority” needs, #S-3 is pending funding by HTA. #P-2 is already in MTA’s budget and could be broken out in MTA’s claim for funds. Without any objections from the group, consensus was that these two are “reasonable to meet.” Discussion of any other needs to add included funding levels, cost increases, and low staffing. MTA is still claiming available COVID relief funds within the guidelines for eligible expenditures.

Recommendation:

Upon motion by Baker, seconded by King, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (5 Ayes – Baker, Rexrode, King, White and Sookne; 0 Noes; 0 Absent), the SSTAC recommended a finding that the top two “High Priority” unmet transit needs on Mendocino Transit Authority’s analysis of the list are reasonable to meet for Fiscal Year 2023/24:

- #S-3 Affordable public transit link to Humboldt County, stopping in Piercy, Leggett, Laytonville
- #P-2 Fixed route timing that coincides with retail workforce shifts in the Fort Bragg/ Mendocino coast area.

5. Discussion/ Recommendation on Any Other Transportation Issues. Janet recapped the two items reported by the SSTAC last meeting, recommending development of a multimodal transit center and a new MTA administration building. Discussion of MCOG's Ukiah Transit Center planning study, with the consultant's survey still open; all were encouraged to respond. No further recommendations were made.

6. Members' Concerns / Announcements

- a. 2023 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 Program Call for Projects. Nephele described this program, as an important way to fund capital equipment, recently expanded to cover operations, specifically targeted at services for elderly and disabled riders. The local senior centers have funded vehicles and programs this way. Applications tend to be lengthy and cumbersome; however, MCOG staff has experience and can assist. The solicitation opens June 14, expected to be due in August. Richard plans to apply to replace vehicles for seniors transportation in Willits. More information was provided in the agenda packet.
- b. Miscellaneous. Dawn confirmed the new director at Ukiah Senior Center is David Lieberman, and the next board meeting is May 17 at 2:30 p.m. in their administration building. Harrah Senior Center in Willits will host a Mother's Day champagne brunch this Sunday with real mimosas. Nephele hopes to schedule another annual senior centers workshop in the next couple of months. Christine, as Resource Manager for the regional center, reported no news but invited all to contact her with questions anytime.

7. Adjournment. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Submitted by Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO