

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

MINUTES

Social Services Transportation Advisory Council

May 17, 2022

Teleconference Only - Remote Zoom Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

Nephele Barrett
Janet Orth
Jody Lowblad

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sheila Keys, Redwood Coast Regional Center
Kathy Sheehy, Ukiah Senior Center (Alternate)

MEMBER VACANCIES

“Potential ‘handicapped’ transit user”
“Potential transit user at least 60 years of age”

PUBLIC PRESENT

Dean Meester, Caltrans District 1
Lori Enriquez, Happy Rides, Inc.

1. Call to Order & Introductions. Executive Director Barrett called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Self-introductions were made, with new members and participants welcomed.

2. Public Expression. Ms. Enriquez, owner/operator of Happy Rides, described her business providing rides for the mobility impaired, and the reasons she became involved. She opened the business two years ago in Mendocino County serving the coast, and is currently starting additional services in the Ukiah area. The focus is on non-emergency medical transportation, coordinating with nonprofits, Veterans Administration and other public agencies for referrals. “We all need to do a better job” serving these constituents.

3. Minutes of January 12, 2022. Upon motion by Rexrode, seconded by King, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*4 Ayes – Baker, Rexrode, Sookne, King; 0 Noes; 1 Abstaining – Martinez; 2 Absent*), the minutes are approved as written.

4. Review and Recommendation on MTA’s Analysis and Prioritization of 2022/23 Unmet Transit Needs. Janet gave an overview of the annual cycle to date, the Transit Productivity Committee (TPC) recommendation that “there are unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet,” and next steps, as detailed in her written staff report. MCOG’s Board of Directors is to make a formal finding by resolution as part of budget adoption at its June 6 meeting. She briefly reviewed MTA’s analysis report, focusing on so-called High and Medium Priority needs. Nephele suggested the priority labels did not necessary indicate importance so much as readiness in some cases.

In discussion, Richard doubted whether the driver shortage would allow any more needs to be met other than restoring services. Jacob agreed, noting all others would be service expansion, which MTA is not prepared to take on. Janet further described Transportation Development Act (TDA) process, adopted definitions, and the MCOG Transit Productivity Committee (TPC) recommendation. Lori agreed this is all that can be done right now, invited all to contact her for assistance, sharing contact information. Further discussion of Happy Rides and related issues ensued.

Recommendation:

Upon motion by Baker, seconded by Rexrode, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*5 Ayes – Baker, Rexrode, Sookne, King and Martinez; 0 Noes; 2 Absent*), the SSTAC concurs with the Transit Productivity Committee’s recommended finding that the top four “High Priority” unmet transit needs on Mendocino Transit Authority’s analysis of the list are reasonable to meet for Fiscal Year 2022/23.

5. Discussion/ Recommendation on Any Other Transportation Issues. In discussion, Jacob described MTA’s vision for a transit center, linking neighboring counties’ transit services and multimodal transportation, with such features as zero emission vehicles and infrastructure, bicycle lockers, and a connection to the bike and pedestrian rail trail. Several Ukiah area locations are under consideration. A regional transit “hub” is needed. A study is funded in MCOG’s 2022/23 transportation planning work program.

Jacob also noted the east side of Ukiah, such as the Oak Manor neighborhood, has no transit service. Also there are farm labor mobility needs. A large community population in the county seat remains underserved. MTA previously worked on an internal “Ukiah circular project” to design routes; not this coming year, but perhaps next year they would be ready for a discussion of this with MCOG.

6. Members’ Concerns / Announcements

- a. FTA Section 5310 Draft 2021 Program of Projects – Prioritized List. Nephele summarized results of the recent funding cycle, included in the agenda packet, from the list of scores by the State Review Committee. The list next goes to the California Transportation Commission for public hearing and adoption in June. In Mendocino County, grant awards are expected to go to MTA, Redwood Coast Seniors, Coastal Seniors, and Consolidated Tribal Health. Congratulations were made all around and thanks given to those MCOG staff members who assisted with the applications.
- b. Updated Transportation Development Act (TDA) Funding Formula for Senior Centers’ Contracted Transportation Program – Starting FY 2022/23. Nephele asked when MTA would issue contract amounts. Jacob expected to be able to release budget figures by end of week. Nephele had run a rough calculation that indicated a loss of about seven percent for Redwood Coast Seniors and about six percent for Ukiah Seniors, and increases for the other three centers. The formula is set for three years and can be revisited after that. Nephele noted expansion of south coast services had caused some of the imbalance. It was acknowledged that the new formula is more fair, as it is based on hours, passengers and miles. Credit was given to Diana Clarke of Ukiah Seniors who led the effort, even though her own center would take a budget hit.
- c. Miscellaneous. Jill reported current COVID prevention practices at the center in Fort Bragg. Richard reported as co-chair of Rotary Club’s first ever Festival in the Redwoods fundraiser on July 30 in Brooktrails, to benefit high school scholarships and the senior center in Willits. Christine gave an overview of Redwood Coast Regional Center’s services and clientele.

7. Adjournment. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:10 p.m.

Submitted by Janet Orth, Deputy Director