



HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional Transportation Planning Agency
Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority
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AGENDA ITEM 4a
SSTAC Meeting
April 2, 2025

DATE: March 21, 2025
TO: Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)
FROM: Michelle Nielsen, Contract Planner
SUBJECT: **FY 2025-26 Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) Report of Findings**

STAFF REPORT

Contents:

- Staff's Recommended Action
- Staff Summary
- Final FY 25-26 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings
- Appendices A and B

Staff's Recommended Action:

1. Introduce the item as an action item;
2. Allow staff to present the item;
3. Receive public comment;
4. After receiving public comment and discussing, make the following motion:
"The SSTAC recommends that the HCAOG Board adopt the FY 24-25 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings determining that there are unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet but cannot be funded"

Staff Summary:

The purpose of this agenda item is for the SSTAC to review the Draft Report of Findings, dated April 2025, that was revised based on SSTAC input and direction provided at the March 5, 2025, regular SSTAC meeting. It is recommended that the SSTAC make a recommendation to the HCAOG Board following public comment.

As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Humboldt County, HCAOG is responsible for the administration of Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. TDA funds (funded through ¼ percent of the statewide sales tax) are the primary funding source for most transit systems. As part of its TDA duties, HCAOG is required to implement an annual unmet transit needs process, which has three key components: soliciting testimony on unmet transit

needs; analyzing needs in accordance with adopted definitions of unmet transit needs reasonable to meet; and adoption of a finding regarding unmet transit needs that may exist for the upcoming fiscal year. Unmet transit needs findings ensure that transit needs found reasonable to meet are funded prior to jurisdictions expending TDA funds on non-transit purposes. The recommendation from staff would be to update the findings from FY 24-25 and to find the following (the numbering of requests below corresponds to how they are numbered in the March 2025 Draft Report of Findings):

- (A) The following requests do not meet the definition of an unmet need:
 1. Later service in the evening on weekdays on RTS.
- (B) The following requests are unmet needs and are reasonable to meet but cannot be funded:
 2. More frequent service on RTS.
 3. Provide express service on RTS.
 4. Later night Saturday service on RTS
 5. Sunday service on RTS.
 6. Expanded ETS service to Greater Eureka, specifically Myrtle town.
 7. Expanded service in Blue Lake
 8. Expanded A&MRTS service to South Arcata
 9. A&MRTS Service to Bayside
 10. Later service on Southern Humboldt Intercity
- (C) Comments concerning dial-a-ride and paratransit service: The Report’s recommendation on these comments is for that paratransit providers reach out to social service providers and their clients to obtain specifics on DAR service gaps and how best to address them. Fixed-route transit operators are obliged to provide paratransit service pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As such, this is not an unmet need.

The table below provides an overview of the revisions and changes made to the earlier Draft Report of Findings that was considered by the SSTAC on March 5. As part of revising the Draft Report of Findings, the Contract Planner consulted with the General Manager of HTA on March 17, 2025.

Section of document	Summary of Change
List of acronyms	Added additional acronyms used in the report
Criteria to be found Reasonable to Meet (pg. 6).	Added a paragraph discussing the farebox return ratio requirement.

Section of document	Summary of Change
Table 7: Summary of Unmet Transit Need Performance	Updated to be more consistent with report.
The vehicle operating cost per hour in Tables 9 and 10 indicated as \$126.00.	Data on the vehicle operating cost per hour from HTA’s Comparative Performance Activity Reports of June 2024 and December 2024 was averaged. The result of the additional data and averaging changed the vehicle per hour operating cost from \$126.00 to \$132.00. Formulas in Tables 9 and 10 that use this factor, were recalculated accordingly.
2. More frequent service on RTS.	The original analysis for this finding has been separated into the two separate findings: 2. More frequent service on RTS; and 3. Provide express service on RTS. The analysis for both has been updated and revised accordingly.
2. More frequent service on RTS Recommendation.	Staff’s recommendation for this transit request in the earlier Report of Findings was that it was not an Unmet Need because improvements (microtransit) are scheduled for implementation. Since the March 5, 2025 SSTAC meeting, more information regarding the nature of the funding source has come to the report preparer’s attention. This information indicates that the funding is temporary and short term, and does not provide sustained longer funding for this service. Consequently, staff’s recommendation has been revised.
2. More frequent service on RTS	The first row of data in Table 8 has been reformatted to improve readability by screen readers. Additionally, the content has been updated to reflect performance data for the RTS line, Scotia to Trinidad, using HTA’s Comparative Performance Activity Reports of June 2024 and December 2024.
Table 8: Performance Analysis for RTS McKinleyville to Arcata	This table is now in of section “3. Provide express service on RTS.” The table has been condensed and now only shows data from the HCAOG 2023 Transportation Development Plan for a McKinleyville–CR express service.
All findings that originally stated, “This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet.”	All findings have been reworded to state, “This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded.” And are now consistent with Figure 2.

Section of document	Summary of Change
Numbering of findings.	Due to the insertion of finding #3, “Provide express service on RTS”, all findings that follow have been renumbered accordingly.
3. Dial-A-Ride Service.	Clarified recommendation to reference Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for all fixed-route public transportation systems.
4. More frequent service on A&MRTS.	Add description of Green/Gold route to analysis. While this additional information more accurately describes existing service, it does not alter the recommendation.
6. Later night Saturday service on RTS.	Because this is a recurring transit request, edits to the analysis to reflect updates in vehicle operating cost as per HTA performance data. Edits to the analysis reference content of Table 9 because it was hard to follow.
7. Expanded ETS service to Greater Eureka	Clarified the analysis but the revisions are non-substantive in nature, and did not alter the recommended finding.
10. Service to Bayside.	Amended the recommended finding, to suggest that the City of Arcata also identify marketing methods that may improve conversion of interest to ridership.

Public Process:

In November and December 2024, HCAOG and its member jurisdictions held public hearings to gather comments on unmet transit needs. These hearings were announced in the North Coast Journal. HCAOG staff suggested renaming the agenda item to "Transit Needs Assessment" to shift the focus from "unmet" needs, but this change was only partially adopted due to legal requirements.

Contract Planner Michelle Nielsen presented updates on transit ridership trends and recent actions to improve services, such as microtransit pilots, North State Express, fare consolidation, and branding. These presentations sparked several productive discussions.

HCAOG collected public comments via email, phone, and mail, and attended the Independent Living Expo to identify potential unmet needs. They also conducted an online survey in English and Spanish, promoted through social media and in-bus electronic messaging boards. The English survey received 77 responses, while the Spanish survey received none. Fifty-two responses were provided to the open-ended question about service improvements, with results included in Appendix A.