

Transportation Development Act

Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings



May 2024

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(Reserved for Resolution)

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Executive Summary

The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) is Humboldt's designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA). As the RTPA, HCAOG is responsible for the administration of the Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds received for the Humboldt region. HCAOG's membership includes the cities of Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Trinidad, in addition to the County of Humboldt.

The purpose of the Unmet Transit Needs process is to ensure that all unmet transit needs that meet HCAOG's adopted criteria of being reasonable to meet are given funding priority over non-transit uses. Local Transportation Funds (LTF) may be used for non-transit purposes, such as road improvements and bicycle and pedestrian uses, if it can be demonstrated that there are no unmet transit needs in the region that are reasonable to meet. If the HCAOG Board determines that there are unmet needs that are reasonable to meet, the affected jurisdiction must satisfy those needs before any LTF funds may be expended for non-transit purposes.

Each year, pursuant to the California State TDA, HCAOG must identify any unmet public transit need that may exist in Humboldt County. The process is led by HCAOG's Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). As mandated in Section 99238(c) of the TDA, the SSTAC is responsible for:

1. Annual participation in the identification of transit needs in the jurisdiction, including unmet transit needs that may exist within the jurisdiction of the council and that may be reasonable to meet by establishing or contracting for new public transportation or specialized transportation services or by expanding existing services.
2. Annual review and recommended action by the transportation-planning agency for the area within the jurisdiction of the council, which finds, by resolution, that (A) there are no unmet transit needs, (B) there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet, or (C) there are unmet transit needs including needs that are reasonable to meet.
3. Advising the transportation-planning agency on any other major transit issues, including the coordination and consolidation of specialized transportation services.

The HCAOG Board makes the unmet transit need finding in consideration of the SSTAC recommendation. The Board decision is based on deliberation and consideration of comments generated during the unmet needs public participation process and measured against the evaluative criteria established by HCAOG's adopted definitions for the terms "unmet transit need" and "reasonable to meet."

Fiscal Year 24-25 HCAOG Board finding:

The HCAOG Board adopted Resolution 24-11 on May 16, 2024 finding that increasing service to half-hour frequency during peak hours on Redwood Transit System (RTS) between McKinleyville Airport and Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet. The finding includes the flexibility to implement service as an addition to the core RTS routes or as a uniquely structured Express Route that would include stops at the Airport, School Road and Cal Poly Library Circle at a minimum.

Transportation Development Act

The California State TDA was enacted in 1971 and became effective July 1, 1972. The TDA established state funding for local jurisdictions to work regionally to improve existing public transportation and coordinate regional public transportation. The TDA provides two funding sources:

1. *Local Transportation Fund (LTF)*, which is derived from a ¼ cent of the general sales tax collected statewide; and
2. *State Transit Assistance (STA)* fund, which is derived from the statewide sales tax on gasoline and diesel fuel. The STA fund was established in 1980. Effective January 1, 2018, an additional vehicle registration fee called the “Transportation Improvement Fee” is collected with rates based on the value of the motor vehicle. Statute requires that 50% of STA funds be allocated based on population, and 50% be allocated according to operator revenues from the prior year.

Other transit funding sources include California’s State of Good Repair program and Low Carbon Transit Operations Program and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310, 5311 and 5311(f) Programs.

The following TDA Articles, under Public Utilities Code Division 10, Part II, Chapter 4, direct how LTF funds are distributed:

Article 3 allows for up to two percent of funds made available to counties and cities for facilities provided for the exclusive use of pedestrians and bicycles unless HCAOG finds that the money could be used to better advantage for the purposes stated in Article 4 (Section 99260) and Article 4.5 (Section 99275), or for local street and road purposes in the development of a balanced transportation system.

Article 4 generally supports public transportation systems, research, and demonstration projects. Operators that provide both fixed-route and paratransit service are required to maintain a ratio of fare revenues to operating costs (farebox ratio) of 10%.

Article 4.5 supports “community transit services” that “link intracommunity origins and destinations,” including services to the elderly or persons with disabilities.

Article 8 is utilized by jurisdictions that do not operate their own transit operations. Article 8 provides transit funds to pay a contractor to provide public transportation or special needs public transportation. Article 8 also provides funding for local streets and roads, and projects which are provided for use by pedestrians and bicycles (§99400(a)); and passenger rail service operations and capital improvements (§99400(b)).

Unmet Transit Needs Process

The TDA requires each transportation planning agency to annually identify the unmet transit needs of the jurisdiction and those needs that are reasonable to meet, before allocating any funds for any purpose *not* directly related to public transportation services or for facilities used exclusively by pedestrians and bicyclists (§99401.5). Should any unmet transit need be identified, a further determination or assessment must be made to establish whether or not those needs are “reasonable to meet.” In accordance with state law, a jurisdiction must first fund unmet transit needs, which are found to be reasonable to meet, before LTF funds can be allocated to the jurisdiction for non-transit purposes. Figure 1 depicts the Unmet Transit Needs process.

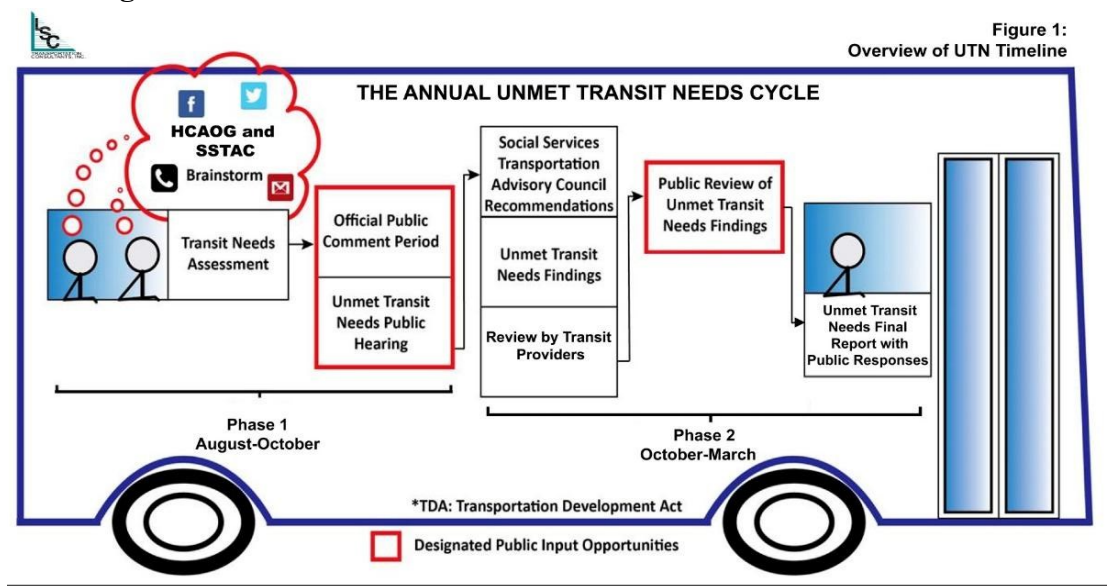
The transportation planning agency is required to:

1. Consult with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) established pursuant to Section 99238.
2. Identify the transit needs of the jurisdiction, including:
 - (a) Assessing the size and location of identifiable groups likely to be transit dependent or transit disadvantaged.
 - (b) Analyzing extent to which existing private and public transportation services are meeting transit demand.
 - (c) Analyzing potential alternative public transportation services and service improvements that would meet all or part of the transit demand.
3. Identify the unmet transit needs of the jurisdiction and those needs that are reasonable to meet, holding at least one public hearing to solicit public comments.

HCAOG encourages each member entity to conduct its own public hearing on unmet transit needs. This provides local elected officials an opportunity to hear and respond directly to the expressed needs of their constituents. HCAOG notifies all persons or groups known to have an interest in transit related matters and publishes a public notice(s) of the public hearings in the local newspaper. Flyers in both English and Spanish are posted in buses as well.

The SSTAC leads the process in soliciting input from transportation- dependent and transportation-disadvantaged persons, and in recommending a finding to the HCAOG Board.

Figure 1: Overview of the Unmet Transit Needs Timeline



Definitions and Criteria

In November 2017, the 2017-2022 Humboldt County Transit Development Plan (TDP) and the SSTAC Strategic Plan were adopted by the HCAOG Board. The TDP is a five-year planning document that assesses transit and related transportation issues in the county and provides a “road map” for improvements to the public transit program over the upcoming five years. The Strategic Plan reviewed the process of defining, identifying and analyzing unmet transit needs and developed a strategy to make the UTN process as clear and efficient as possible. Both documents are available for review on HCAOG’s website:

http://hcaog.net/sites/default/files/humboldt_tdp_2017_plan_final_nov_2017.pdf

http://hcaog.net/sites/default/files/sstac_strategic_plan_final_nov_2017.pdf

Based on recommendations from the Strategic Plan, the HCAOG Board amended the TDA Rules and Regulations to include updated unmet transit needs definitions and criteria used for determining if an unmet need is reasonable to meet. The Triennial Performance Audit recommended HCAOG consider revisions to the Unmet Needs Criteria. The SSTAC discussed these proposed changes and made the addition that an unmet need should demonstrate community support defined by a minimum of two requests. In addition, criteria number two was reworded to emphasize that estimated subsidy per passenger trip and passengers per vehicle hour of service will be considered.

Definition of Unmet Transit Need:

1. Trips requested from residents who do not have access to public transportation, specialized transportation, or private transport services or resources for the purpose of traveling to medical care, shopping, social/recreational activities, education/training, and employment;
or
2. Proposed public transportation, specialized transportation, or private transport services that are identified in the following (but is not limited to): a Transportation Development Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan.
3. Sufficient broad-based community support exists, meaning that persons who will likely use the service on a routine basis demonstrate support with at a minimum two requests for general public service and for disabled service.

Unmet transit needs do **not** include the following:

- Improvements funded or scheduled for implementation in the next fiscal year.
- Minor operational improvements or changes such as bus stops, schedules, and minor route changes. Minor operational improvements are changes to service which do not affect the operating cost of the transit service either by requiring additional staff and/or additional vehicle hours of service or miles of service.
- Trips for primary or secondary school transportation.
- Sidewalk improvements or street and road needs.

Criteria to be found Reasonable to Meet:

1. To be considered reasonable to meet, a service must be operationally feasible and financially sustainable, as defined below:
 - a. To be considered operationally feasible, the service must have adequate running time, adequate roadways, and must be safe to operate.

- b. To be considered financially sustainable, enough money should be available from identified sources of funding to pay for the marginal operating cost of the service continuously for three years.
2. Additionally, to be considered “reasonable to meet” the service must be projected to meet a minimum “marginal farebox return ratio” of 10 percent within two years. Performance measures including estimated subsidy per passenger trip and passengers per vehicle hour of service will also be considered. Ridership and farebox return ratio thresholds will also be considered for continuing newly-introduced services.
3. Pursuant to the requirements of Transportation Development Act (TDA) Statutes (Public Utilities Code Section 99401.5 (c)), a determination of needs that are reasonable to meet shall not be made by comparing unmet transit needs with the need for streets and roads, for the allocation of TDA funds.
4. Once a service is determined to be “reasonable to meet” and is implemented, it can be expected that the ridership in the first 1-2 years of the new service will be less than the projected optimal ridership. Ridership should be evaluated at 6-month intervals to determine if service is meeting performance standards adopted by the transit provider, and specifically whether the service meets a minimum 10 percent marginal farebox ratio. If the service is being adequately promoted and fails to be within 60 percent of the identified standards after six months, 90 percent within the first year, or 100 percent within two years, the service may be cancelled and deemed “no longer reasonable to meet.” An exception to this rule is when a community or group is willing to participate in sharing the ongoing cost of the new service.

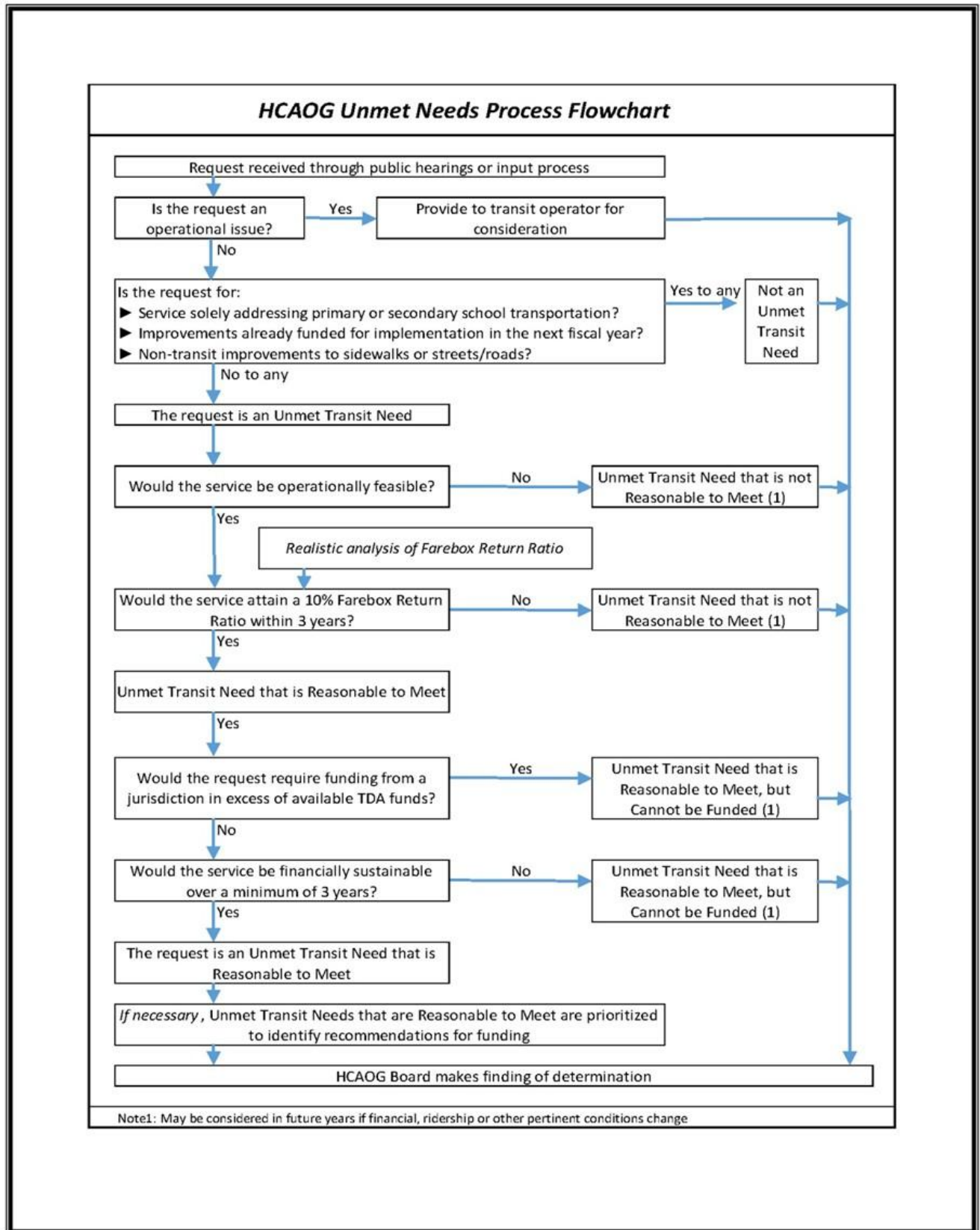
After considering all available information compiled pursuant to the Unmet Transit Needs public participation process, HCAOG must adopt, by resolution, one of the following findings:

- (1) there are no unmet transit needs;
- (2) there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet; or
- (3) there are unmet transit needs, including needs that are reasonable to meet.

Pursuant to subdivision 99401.5 (e), if HCAOG adopts a finding that there are unmet transit needs, including needs that are reasonable to meet, then the unmet transit need shall be funded before any allocation is made for other (non-transit) uses within the jurisdiction. Local jurisdictions may decide to voluntarily fund needs that are determined not to be “reasonable to meet” from the jurisdiction’s TDA funds or other revenue sources.

The flowchart provided in Figure 2 depicts the process used when determining unmet transit needs:

Figure 2: Unmet Needs Process Flowchart



Transit Dependent Demographics

The majority of the county’s population is located within the greater Humboldt Bay Area, centered around the highly populated communities of McKinleyville (unincorporated) and the cities of Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, and Rio Dell. The cities of Trinidad and Blue Lake as well as unincorporated county areas of Garberville and Willow Creek are also served by the public transit system. Table 1 lists the 2024 estimated population by jurisdiction.

Table 1: Population Estimates for 2024

Jurisdiction	2023 Population Estimate	2024 Population Estimate	Percentage Change	Percent of Countywide Population
Arcata	18,830	18,540	-1.5	13.9%
Blue Lake	1,164	1,149	-1.3	0.9%
Eureka	26,283	26,073	-0.8	19.6%
Ferndale	1,376	1,356	-1.5	1.0%
Fortuna	12,318	12,181	-1.1	9.2%
Rio Dell	3,290	3,241	-1.5	2.4%
Trinidad	298	294	-1.3	0.2%
Unincorporated County	71,038	70,266	-1.1	52.8%
Total Population	134,597	133,100	-1.1	100%

Source: Department of Finance Projection, Table E1

While all sectors of the community may utilize public and private transportation services, groups likely to be transit dependent or transit disadvantaged are those that are either unable to operate a vehicle or do not have access to a vehicle. Older citizens, young adults, persons with disabilities, carless households and persons of limited means are more likely to rely on transit and may require specialized transportation. For all these vulnerable populations, accessibility to necessary services is a critical factor for quality of life.

Table 2: Transit User Groups

Transit User Group	Description	Humboldt*	California*
Seniors	Age 65 and over	18.9%	14.9%
Very Low Income	Income below the poverty line	19.8%	12.2%
Disabled	People who may be unable to operate vehicles or utilize public transportation due to physical/mental disabilities	17.9%	11.0%
Limited Car Access	Zero vehicle households	7.0%	6.9%

*Various Census and American Community Survey sources. See detailed statistics below.

For the purposes of this document, older citizens are considered to be individuals 65 years and older, and persons of limited means are those with incomes below the poverty threshold as defined by the federal government. Chapter 2 of the Transit Development Plan provides a more in-depth discussion of demographic trends and commuter patterns.

Demographics show that Humboldt County, relative to the statewide population, has a larger percentage of older adults, a higher rate of poverty, and a greater share of the population living with a disability. Countywide, 18.9% of the population is age 65 or over, 19.8% of the population is below the poverty level, and 17.9% are living with a disability. These are all significantly higher than the respective statewide statistics. The Cities of Blue Lake, Ferndale and Trinidad have the highest percentage of the population who are age 65 or over. The Cities of Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka and the unincorporated County have the highest rates of people with low-incomes. The high concentration of students attending Cal Poly Humboldt contributes to Arcata’s low-income population. All jurisdictions have a high percentage of the population living with a disability relative to the state average. The City of Eureka has the highest percentage of carless households, indicating there is a relatively higher need for transit service.

Table 3: Persons 65 and Older Estimates

Jurisdiction	Population for whom age was determined*	Persons 65 years plus*	Percentage 65 plus*	Previous year % of Persons 65 Years and Over⁺
Arcata	18,536	2,188	11.8%	11.2%
Blue Lake	841	220	26.2%	26.3%
Eureka	26,519	4,504	17.0%	15.5%
Ferndale	1,569	489	31.2%	33.4%
Fortuna	12,527	2,061	16.5%	15.9%
Rio Dell	3,386	578	17.1%	17.5%
Trinidad	449	131	29.2%	34.7%
McK. CDP	16,913	2,797	16.5%	15.4%
Countywide	136,132	25,688	18.9%	18.1%
California	39,356,104	5,865,300	14.9%	14.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP05 2018-2022* and 2017-2021⁺ American Community Survey 5 -year Demographic and Housing Estimates.

Table 4: Poverty Level Estimates

Jurisdiction	Population for whom poverty status is determined*	Persons Below Poverty Level*	% Below Poverty Level*	Previous year % Below Poverty Level⁺
Arcata	16,947	5,843	34.5%	34.7%
Blue Lake	803	196	24.4%	27.3%
Eureka	26,164	5,043	19.3%	19.5%
Ferndale	1,554	187	12.0%	16.1%
Fortuna	12,425	1,813	14.6%	14.7%
Rio Dell	3,386	337	10.0%	10.9%
Trinidad	449	63	14.0%	19.8%
McK. CDP	16,869	2,371	14.1%	18.0%
Countywide	133,139	26,394	19.8%	20.3%
California	38,643,585	4,685,272	12.2%	12.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table S1701 2018-2022 and 2017-2021⁺ American Community Survey 5 -year Poverty Status Estimates.

Table 5: Disability Status Estimates

Jurisdiction	Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population *	Population with a Disability *	% Population with a Disability *	Previous year % Population with a Disability +
Arcata	18,533	2,574	13.9%	12.5%
Blue Lake	841	140	16.6%	18.6%
Eureka	26,091	5,273	20.2%	18.6%
Ferndale	1,569	300	19.1%	19.4%
Fortuna	12,429	2,306	18.6%	18.2%
Rio Dell	3,386	566	16.7%	19.6%
Trinidad	449	89	19.8%	20.4%
McKinleyville	16,847	2,616	15.5%	16.8%
Countywide	135,228	24,235	17.9%	17.4%
California	38,874,540	4,275,158	11.0%	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP02 2018-2022* and 2017-2021+ American Community Survey 5 -year Selected Social Characteristics Estimates.

Table 6: Carless Household Estimates

Jurisdiction	Total Occupied Housing Units *	No Vehicle Available *	% Households With No Vehicle Available *	Previous year % Households With No Vehicle Available +
Arcata	7,496	546	7.3%	6.4%
Blue Lake	449	35	7.8%	7.0%
Eureka	10,905	1,159	10.6%	11.1%
Ferndale	662	24	3.6%	4.8%
Fortuna	4,955	321	6.5%	6.0%
Rio Dell	1,371	68	5.0%	5.3%
Trinidad	203	4	2.0%	2.4%
McKinleyville	6,643	303	4.6%	4.8%
Countywide	54,495	3,794	7.0%	6.7%
California	13,315,822	922,535	6.9%	6.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP04 2018-2022* and 2017-2021+ American Community Survey 5 -year Selected Housing Characteristics Estimates

Existing Transit Service

Humboldt benefits from several public entities and private enterprises that provide transit services. Organizations that provide and/or fund transit services include municipalities, the County of Humboldt, tribal governments, social services, private businesses, and community-based/non-profit organizations. Transit services are concentrated around the greater Humboldt Bay area, where population densities are higher and destinations are more compact. However, public transit also provides services to Blue Lake, Willow Creek, and Hoopa in eastern Humboldt, and communities in southern Humboldt.

The following existing transportation resources are identified in Chapter 3 of the Humboldt County Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Plan:

Public transit service: Humboldt Transit Authority (Redwood Transit Service, Eureka Transit Service, Willow Creek Intercity, Southern Humboldt Intercity), Arcata & Mad River Transit Service, Dial-A-Ride, Fortuna Transit, Yurok Tribal Transit.

Social services: Redwood Coast Regional Center, Area 1 Agency on Aging, Humboldt Senior Resource Center, County of Humboldt Health and Human Services, K'ima:w Medical Center, Adult Day Health Care of Mad River, Ferndale Senior Resource Agency "Bridging the Gap," Southern Trinity Health Services.

Private service: Humboldt Medi-Trans, Taxi services (includes CAE Transport Inc dba City Cab, which operates DAR and CAE Transport service under contract with HTA), Cher-Ae Heights Casino Shuttle.

Interregional: Amtrak, Greyhound, Redwood Coast Transit, Redwood Coast Express.

The Humboldt Transit Authority and Arcata & Mad River Transit System are fixed-route transit systems defined as a system of providing designated public transportation on which a vehicle is operated along a prescribed route according to a fixed schedule. Other bus services primarily connect outlying areas with a central city through bus service that operates with at least five miles of continuous closed-door service. Paratransit service (dial-a-ride) runs flexible routes usually with door-to-door service for their customers. It is provided for persons with disabilities or health-related conditions that restrict them from using general public transportation. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all fixed-route public transportation systems to provide paratransit service. Other transportation services range from taxis to volunteer-driver programs for taking patients to medical appointments. More detailed information is provided in Chapter 3 of the Transit Development Plan.

Unmet Transit Needs Comments, Assessment, Findings

Outreach efforts for the UTN process used similar methods to prior years. HCAOG published the UTN public meeting dates in the newspaper (North Coast Journal), operators posted flyers on buses, and HCAOG accepted comments through our website, by email, telephone, and mail. In addition to posting on social media (Facebook), HCAOG created an online survey soliciting public input. A total of 13 survey responses were received. Several comments were made during the unmet transit needs public hearings and to staff by phone/email. HCAOG tabled at the Independent Living Expo in September 2023 to gather information on unmet needs. Feedback was gathered through a game where participants could spend money on various needs. The results from a total of 13 participants each spending their \$500 allocation were the following:

1. More frequent service \$2,200
2. Earlier/later service: \$2,100
3. Sunday service: \$1,450
4. Express service: \$750

The Blue Lake Community Resource Center ran a survey in fall 2023 to collect input from the community on transit need following the sudden termination of Blue Lake Rancheria Transit System. The survey results are informative as to the desires and needs of the Blue Lake community for public transit.

All comments received are summarized in Appendix A. The comments were grouped into three categories (Unmet Transit Need, Operational, General Comment) using HCAOG's adopted definitions, provided on pages four and five of this report. Operational comments were forwarded to the transit operators. New this year, comments were analyzed to weigh the presence of community support by having received a minimum of two separate comments requesting service. There were four stand-alone comments requesting service that were therefore not considered as unmet needs.

Of the 74 total comments, 39 were initially determined to meet the definition of an Unmet Transit Need. Those individual comments were grouped together for a total of 11 Unmet Needs comments which were then examined to see if they met the adopted criteria used to determine if the UTN is reasonable to meet. Appendix B incorporates the adopted criteria to determine if the unmet need is reasonable to meet following the schematics of HCAOG's UTN flowchart, provided on page six of this report. The findings discussed in detail below are summarized in Appendix A.

Assessment of Unmet Needs

This section will provide a justification for the determination of each comment that met the definition of an unmet need. Table 7 shows a summary of key performance indicators.

Table 7: Summary of Unmet Transit Need Performance

Service addition	Estimated daily riders	Marginal Farebox Return Ratio	Operating subsidy per passenger trip	Passenger-trips per vehicle service hour
RTS Standards (TDP rec.)	--	10% min (current 18%)	\$4.66 max (current \$10.18)	11 min - 15 (10.3 current)
RTS 30-minute peak hour frequency McK. to Arcata	153	21%	\$8.26	14.3
RTS express McK – CR/Fortuna (per TDP)	131	17%	\$11.40	10.4
RTS Sunday service	226	10.5%	\$18.69	7.2
RTS late-night Saturday service Arcata - Eureka	5	9.7%	\$14.27	4.4
ETS Sunday	94	9.2%	\$14.82	5.9

1. Changes to Redwood Transit Service span of service. This would provide service earlier in the morning and later in the evening on weekdays.

Response: As of February 19, 2024, the Redwood Transit System began operating earlier and later service. The new schedule, active as of February 19, 2024, adds two northbound runs. One begins at Fortuna Overlook at 7:37 PM and ends at Valley West at 9:10 PM, and the other leaves Scotia at 8:30 PM and arrives at McKinleyville High at 10:27 PM Southbound, one new route will depart from the Airport Terminal at 8:02 PM and arrive at the Fortuna Park & Ride at 9:46 PM, and the other departs Trinidad at 8:10 PM and arrives at Fortuna Park & Ride at 10:10 PM

RTS used to operate an earlier morning and a later evening run prior to the Covid-19 disruption of service. As ridership levels and driver recruitment have improved, Humboldt Transit Authority is able to begin implementing the expanded schedule. A significant challenge to implementing schedule changes is hiring, training and retaining new bus drivers. Increasing driver salaries led to new hires in the last year, but to retain drivers the shifts must involve reasonable hours. Some schedules involve blocks that require split shifts, where a driver may work two four-hour blocks separated by a long break in the middle of the day.

Recommended Finding: This service has been implemented and is no longer an Unmet Need.

2. More frequent service on RTS.

Response: More frequent service on RTS in general is often requested, including from the communities of Rio Dell and Trinidad. In reviewing the comments, several requests pointed to the need for more frequent weekday service between McKinleyville and Arcata during peak commute

times both to increase convenience and to assist in better connections to other regional services. RTS service between Arcata and Eureka currently runs on a 30-minute frequency during peak hours, while the RTS mainline between McKinleyville and Arcata operates on an hourly headway. Due to the higher population of McKinleyville compared to other areas where transit needs are requested, increased frequency between McKinleyville and Arcata is projected to exceed the minimum required farebox return ratio. According to LEHD data, 1,972 workers commute from McKinleyville to Arcata. Many Cal Poly Humboldt students, faculty and staff live in McKinleyville and are likely transit commuters.

To assess potential performance of additional RTS bus routes from the Arcata-Eureka Airport (ACV) to Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle (CPH), HTA provided a dataset of average daily boardings and alightings that showed 153 boardings at the McKinleyville and Valley West stops, with 95 alightings at the Arcata stops. This shows a high use of RTS to get on within McKinleyville and go to Arcata. Ridership would be further increased by the elasticity factor associated with increasing headway to a half-hour frequency. The marginal operational costs for the 40-minute round trip are estimated at \$1,600 for a farebox return of 21%. The estimated subsidy per passenger trip is \$8.26, which is lower than the current average for RTS.

The TDP analysis for the McKinleyville to College of the Redwoods Express route is also included for comparison. The Express route would result in a similar outcome by providing increased frequency of service between McKinleyville/Arcata, while also serving regional goals to lower the transit trip time between communities across the Humboldt Bay area. As a Joint Powers Authority with membership outside the County and Arcata jurisdictions that would benefit from increased service, HTA is evaluating the potential of an express route to serve more jurisdictions. Funding mechanisms for either type of service will need to be determined.

Table 8. Performance Analysis for RTS McKinleyville to Arcata Service

Service	Average daily boardings	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox Ratio	Subsidy per passenger	Passenger / hour
ACV - CPH	153	153 riders / day x \$2.20 = \$336.60	\$150.00/hr x 10.672 hours = \$1,600.80	336.60 / 1,600.80 = 21%	(4722-993) / 451 = \$8.26	153/10.67 = 14.3
McK-CR Express	Annual ridership 33,500 = 131 daily average	\$78,800	Annual operating cost \$463,400	17%	\$11.40	10.35

Recommended Finding: Providing more frequent service on Redwood Transit System (RTS) between McKinleyville Airport and Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet. The finding includes the flexibility to implement service as an addition to the core RTS routes or as a uniquely structured Express Route.

3. Later night Saturday service on RTS.

Response: The FY 23-24 UTN report found that a late-night Saturday run on RTS (past (9:30 PM) was reasonable to meet provided the route was limited to service between Valley West and Bayshore Mall. It was initially thought that funding for the service would be provided through the

Senate Bill 125 formula TIRCP program, a bridge funding program from the State of California to avert a fiscal cliff for transit agencies. However, HTA needs SB125 funds to continue to maintain existing levels of service. Furthermore, expanding the span of hours for Saturday night faces the same staffing challenges described above in #1.

Last year’s UTN report found that limiting the service to these destinations would result in a farebox return of approximately 11.1%. The updated analysis finds that RTS Saturday late night service would not be reasonable to meet based on a farebox return of less than 10%. RTS operating costs per vehicle hour have increased to \$150 on a monthly basis for January 2024 while overall Saturday ridership has increased only 2%. Looking forward, conservatively, the average annual operating costs are likely to remain in the \$150 range by the time this service would be implemented.

The table below demonstrates the relationship between shorter routes with lower operating costs and improved efficiency. A late-night Saturday service that extends to CR results in higher operating costs, and a lower farebox return. The RTS later night (short) analysis is based on the existing runs that leave Valley West at 4:15 PM to arrive at Bayshore Mall at 4:57 PM and depart Bayshore Mall at 5:07 PM to arrive at Valley West at 5:48 PM for a total travel time of approximately 42 minutes or 0.7 operating hours. Given that it is later in the night, staff used 85% of the ridership from the earlier run.

Table 9: Performance Analysis for RTS Late Night Saturday Service

Service Route Description	Riders	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox
RTS Saturday Overall	451.26 daily (based on FY 23-24 YTD data)	451.26 riders / day x \$2.20 avg fare = \$992.77	\$150.00/hr x 31.48 hours = \$4,722	992.77 / 4,722 = 21%
RTS Trinidad - Scotia (Route 15/16)	306 (avg. of north + south routes over 27 operating days)	6 riders/hr x \$2.20 = \$13.20	\$150.00/hr x 1.87 hours = \$280.5	13.20 / 280.50 = 4.7%
RTS Arcata – CR (Route 17/18)	218 (over 27 operating days)	8.13 x \$2.20 = \$17.88	\$150.00/hr x <u>0.87</u> hours = \$116.58	17.88 / 116.58 = 15.3%
RTS Later Night (mid)	218 x 85% = 140 (over 27 operating days)	5.2 x \$2.20 = \$11.44	\$150.00/hr x <u>0.87</u> hours = \$130.50	11.44 / 130.50 = 8.7%
RTS Later Night (short)	264 x 85% = 132 (over 27 operating days)	4.9 x \$2.20 = \$10.20	\$150.00/hr x <u>0.7</u> hours = \$105	10.20 / 105 = 9.7%
TDP analysis*	500 annual	\$1,200	\$18,100	6.6%

Green- existing service
Purple – potential service

*When reviewed as a service alternative in the Transit Development Plan 2023-2028, the RTS Saturday late night service included: “two additional runs that would be operated on Saturdays; one additional northbound bus would leave CR at 9:25 PM and arrive at Valley West at 10:20 PM,

and one additional southbound bus would leave Valley West at 9:20 PM and arrive at CR at 10:10 PM. This would add 114 vehicle hours and 2,500 vehicle miles of service annually at a cost of \$18,100. The increase in hours is estimated to generate 500 additional passenger trips per year and fare revenue of \$1,200 (Transit Development Plan, page 78).

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is **not** reasonable to meet.

4. Sunday Service on RTS

Background: In 2012, Sunday service on Redwood Transit was found to be an unmet transit need reasonable to meet. HTA began Sunday service and ran it until the service was discontinued during the Covid-19 emergency in 2020. When the service operated, average daily ridership on Sundays was 376, about 50% of the Saturday service ridership. The FY 23-24 UTN Report analyzed Sunday service based on FY 22-23 RTS Saturday ridership data, and found an estimated farebox return ratio of 10.4% for RTS Sunday service. Based on this finding, Sunday service was determined to be an unmet need reasonable to meet. As described above in #3, HTA's service plan did not allow Sunday service to be funded and implemented. The initial plan was to have this service funded with SB 125 formula funds; however, these funds will be needed to sustain current operations.

Revised Analysis: Data from HTA's January Statistics show 451 average Saturday riders on RTS for the Year-to-Date period from July 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024. Based on FY 19-20 records for RTS (the last full year in which Sunday service ran), there were 52% as many riders on Sundays as on Saturdays which translates to an estimated 226 average daily Sunday riders. At an operating cost per vehicle hour of \$150 and average fare of \$2.20, the total cost to operate an equivalent Saturday service (31.48 operating hours), the total daily operating cost for Sunday service is comes to \$4,722. This equates to a marginal farebox return ratio of 10.5%.

Notes: While a Sunday service may operate at limited hours compared to Saturday and thus decrease operational costs, limited hours would also lower ridership and potentially decrease the farebox return ratio. In the past, new services arising from UTN findings have performed with less than the optimal predicted ridership, and for that reason previous HCAOG UTN reports (FY 2018-19) have noted the estimated farebox return should be above the required 10% in order to be considered a viable route. The predicted Sunday farebox return is just 10.5% and actual performance after two years could be expected to underperform the estimate.

Discussions with transit operators and transit analysts have identified additional issues to consider in the Sunday service analysis. The Transit Development Plan 2023-2028 highlighted Sunday service as an important short-term service improvement. However, LSC Consultants pointed out that Sunday service should not be implemented on one line until there is a plan/funding to implement on all routes (ETS, RTS, and A&MRTS) simultaneously. The effectiveness of Sunday service, in terms of productivity, efficiency, and mobility, would be hampered if transit riders were not able to transfer to other intra-city services.

In addition, HTA noted that the operating costs for Sunday service are higher because five full-time equivalent positions would need to be hired to meet scheduling needs to operate seven days a week. Positions include two mechanics, two fuelers, and a dispatcher. The five jobs would increase the annual operating cost for HTA by approximately \$400,000. In addition to an operating cost of approximately \$200,000 annually (taking the average of the HCAOG and TDP operating estimates), the cost for starting Sunday service on RTS is approximately \$600,000. This tracks with the approximately \$500,000 it cost HTA to begin Sunday service in 2013.

Table 10. Performance Analysis for RTS Sunday Service

Service	Total riders YTD FY 23-24	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox Ratio	Subsidy per passenger	Passenger / hour
RTS Saturday Overall	451.26	451.26 riders / day x \$2.20 avg fare = \$992.77	\$150.00/hr x 31.48 hours = \$4,722	992.77 / 4,722 = 21%	(4722-993) / 451 = \$8.26	451/31.48 = 14.3
RTS Sunday	451.26 * 0.5 = 226 trips/day	226 trips/day x \$2.20 avg fare = \$497	\$150.00/hr x 31.48 hours = \$4,722/day	497 / 4,722 = 10.5%	(4722-497) / 226 = \$18.69	226/31.48 = 7.2
RTS Sunday (TDP)	Annual ridership 5,700	\$13,400	Annual operating cost \$135,300	9.9%	\$22.13	6.1

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is **not** reasonable to meet.

5. Sunday Service on ETS

Saturday service on the Eureka Transit Service currently has a farebox ratio of 9.2%. Past ridership on ETS and general principles for transit indicate that ridership would be lower on a Sunday than a Saturday. Even assuming 50% of Saturday trips and cutting the service time in half to reduce operating costs, the Sunday ETS service is projected to be right at the minimum farebox return ratio necessary to be considered reasonable to meet. The analysis also indicates an operating subsidy of \$14.82 per passenger and six riders per vehicle hour.

Table 11. Performance Analysis for ETS Sunday Service

Service	Total riders	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox Ratio	Subsidy per passenger	Passenger / hour
ETS overall	63,389*	\$204,175	\$576,590	18.4%	\$7.42	11.56
ETS Saturday	188 trips/day average*	188 trips/day x \$1.65 avg fare = \$310	\$105.14/hr x 16 hours (2 routes at 8 hours each) = \$1,682	310 / 1,682 = 18.4%	(\$70,548.94 - 9,430) / 5,647 = \$10.82	5,647 riders / 671 hours = 8.4
ETS Sunday	188 * 0.5 = 94 trips/day	94 trips/day x \$1.65 avg fare = \$155	\$105.14/hr x 16 hours (2 routes at 8 hours each) = \$1,682	155 / 1,682 = 9.2%	(\$1,682 - \$155) / 94 = \$14.82	94 riders / 16 hrs = 5.9
ETS (TDP)	2000 annual	\$3,400	\$95,200	3.6%	\$45.9	3.8

The Transit Development Plan 2023 – 2028 included an analysis of Sunday Service on ETS that modeled running the Gold and Rainbow Routes from 10 AM to 3 PM on Sundays. Based on these hours, the TDP projected just 2,000 passenger trips annually at a subsidy per passenger trip of \$45.90 and passengers per vehicle hour of just 3.8.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet.

6. Provide later weekday service on ETS.

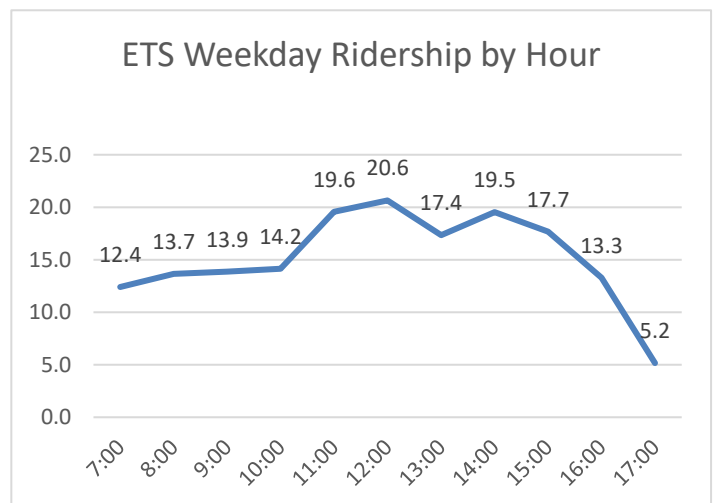
Response: HTA provided data for average ridership by hour averaged across the four ETS weekday routes for the seven-month period from July 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024. By the last hour, ridership had declined to 5.16 passengers per hour. Ridership would be expected to continue declining after 6 PM. At an operating cost of \$98.80 per operating hour, a minimum of \$9.88 in fares would be required. With an average of \$1.65 fare per person, six riders per hour are needed to meet minimum farebox. Later weekday ETS service would therefore not meet the minimum required marginal farebox return ratio.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet.

Table 12. ETS Weekday Ridership by Hour

July 2023 - Jan 2024			
Hour	Ridership	Op Days	Avg/Bus
7:00	7,295	49.63	12.41
8:00	8,034	54.65	13.66
9:00	8,147	55.42	13.86
10:00	8,323	56.62	14.15
11:00	11,513	78.32	19.58
12:00	12,142	82.60	20.65
13:00	10,204	69.41	17.35
14:00	11,486	78.14	19.53
15:00	10,390	70.68	17.67
16:00	7,815	53.16	13.29
17:00	3,034	20.64	5.16

Figure 3: ETS Weekday Ridership by Hour



7. Expand hours of ETS Saturday service.

Response: The ETS currently runs from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturdays. The request is tied to the view that people would benefit from being able to access public transit for popular evening events in Eureka, such as Arts Alive. As shown above, ridership drops quickly in later evening hours even during weekdays. The TDP analysis of expanded weekday service to 9:00 PM on ETS Gold and Rainbow Routes found the service would generate 3,200 passenger trips annually for \$5,400 in fare revenue, versus an operational cost of \$200,000 for a farebox return rate of just 2.7%. A weekend evening service would perform similarly poorly. Despite the frequency with which we hear the request for evening bus service to attend events such as Arts Alive, a fixed route service is not viable.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet.

8. Expanded ETS service to Greater Eureka (Myrtle town, Cutten, Ridgewood, West Gate, Golf Course, Mitchell Heights)

Response: Several commenters requested better service frequency and/or service coverage expansion to the Greater Eureka area. Myrtle town is served by the Green Route. The Red Route serves the Cutten area with stops on Campton and Walnut hourly. Greater frequency to these areas is not reasonable to meet. However, the TDP does lay out a plan for increased headway within Eureka by updating the routes to a hub and spoke model.

Expanding the coverage area of ETS or creating a new service further south down Ridgewood Drive or down Fairway Drive toward the Municipal Golf Course is unlikely to meet the minimum farebox return ratio based on population density, distance from major attractions, time of travel, and car ownership patterns.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet.

9. Weekday service from Blue Lake to Glendale. The requested service is for a weekday route from the City of Blue Lake to the unincorporated community of Glendale.

Response: The Blue Lake Rancheria Transit System ceased operating in October 2023. This left a gap in local service between the City of Blue Lake and destinations such as the Murphy’s Market in Glendale. As an immediate stop gap measure, HTA was able to arrange for the Willow Creek Intercity (WCI) to make two stops in Blue Lake three (3) times daily westbound and two (2) times daily eastbound. As the name implies, the WCI is an intercity route and as such the scheduling does not allow for local stops at locations such as Glendale. Blue Lake has a population of about 1,200 people and has a high proportion of residents over 65 and a 25% poverty rate. In addition, 35 out of the 450 households in Blue Lake do not have a vehicle. While the WCI provides some public transit access, there is a gap in local service.

The Blue Lake Community Resource Center ran a survey to collect input from the community on transit needs. The survey results are informative as to the desires of the Blue Lake community for public transit.

Unfortunately, a fixed-route local system simply would not perform well from a ridership or financial perspective. In addition, the ability to fund such a service is a challenge as it requires cobbling together available transit funds between the City of Blue Lake and the County of Humboldt, with operations likely provided by HTA. An on-demand microtransit service is the most likely service alternative and 92% of the survey responses were interested in using a micro transit system. This will require capital funds to purchase a new vehicle, although the RideCo software purchased by HTA for microtransit pilots in Eureka have additional licenses that could be used for a Blue Lake microtransit service.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet. HTA, City of Blue Lake, County of Humboldt, and HCAOG will continue to work on funding and potential operational solutions.

10. Seasonal service to Ferndale.

Response: Two people called specifically to request a public transit trip to Ferndale to shop during the holiday season.

The requested ride was for public transportation to Ferndale as a popular destination with its Victorian architecture, small businesses, a theater, and restaurants. In addition, the Humboldt County Fairgrounds holds events.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet. More research and outreach are needed to determine the demand for trips to Ferndale. It is recommended that research and outreach center around the potential for variable service such as on-demand microtransit and/or special event shuttles.

11. Service to Bayside. This would provide fixed-route service to Bayside Community Hall.

Response: The Arcata and Mad River Transit System (A&MRTS) Red Line currently provides service with a stop at Buttermilk Lane and Bayside Road. A request was made to the Arcata City Council for transit service to Bayside. Last year, HCAOG staff looked at Census demographic data to determine the relative transit need for Bayside area. The primary demographic factor for transit need is people over 65; however, the housing density for the area is very low.

This year, staff asked A&MRTS to evaluate the feasibility of modifying the existing Red Line to extend service down Old Arcata Road to Bayside Corners. Staff identified that the route would add eight minutes and cannot be incorporated into the existing route. Furthermore, Old Arcata Road does not have a safe turnaround for a bus. The Old Arcata Road project currently planned for construction will create a roundabout at the intersection of Old Arcata Road and Jacoby Creek Road where buses will be able to turn around.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet due to lack of adequate roadways.

Overall, more planning and direct outreach is needed to explore new service to Bayside. HCAOG recommends working with the City of Arcata to chart a course for service to Bayside.

Several comments met the definition of an unmet need, but did not meet the newly adopted threshold of a minimum of two individual commenters requesting the service. These comments were not further analyzed:

- Increased frequency for commuter route from Scotia/Rio Dell to Eureka in time for work
- Microtransit to Petrolia
- Earlier weekday service to Sunny Brae (AMRTS)
- Weekend service from Arcata to Blue Lake

Prior Year Findings

Redwood Transit System (RTS) Sunday service and RTS late-night Saturday service between Arcata and Eureka were found in last year's process to be unmet needs that are reasonable to meet. These findings are updated in this year's UTN Report of Findings and are no longer reasonable to meet based on farebox returns.

Appendix B shows a summary of prior findings dating to the 2015/16 UTN cycle.

TDA Funds and Allocations

The Transportation Development Act provides State funding sources meant primarily for public transportation. The TDA funding comes through two sources, the Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and the State Transit Assistance (STA) funds.

LTF is the main funding source for transit in the region. After off-the-top allocations to the County Auditor, HCAOG administration and planning, and 2% for bicycle and pedestrian uses, LTF funds are divided among the seven cities and the County based on population in a process called apportionment. In a typical year, the City of Arcata uses the entirety of their LTF apportionment for transit purposes. The City of Eureka contracts with the Humboldt Transit Authority, which claims the entirety of their LTF apportionment for transit purposes. The Cities of Blue Lake, Fortuna, Rio Dell and Trinidad annually contribute a majority of their LTF funds to their share of HTA service and other transit services, while also using a portion of LTF for Article 8 “Streets and Roads.” The City of Ferndale uses LTF money for streets and roads. The County of Humboldt uses LTF funds primarily for transit purposes. Any funds remaining after funding existing transit services are used on streets and roads. See Table 14 for a summary of FY 23-24 LTF uses.

The State Transit Assistance (STA) fund is now fully funded by the sales tax on diesel, and can be used for capital and operating purposes.

Table 13 provides FY 2024-2025 LTF apportionments for funds allocated by the HCAOG Board. These projections are based on an estimate provided by the Humboldt County Auditor Controller (Auditor) pursuant to Government Code Section 6620. The Auditor makes the estimate from such data as is available including those which may be furnished by the State Board of Equalization. The estimate includes those moneys anticipated to be deposited in the fund during the ensuing fiscal year as well as accrued interest. After close of each fiscal year, the Auditor is responsible for reporting any remaining balance in each jurisdiction’s account.

Table 13: LTF Funds Allocated by Jurisdiction, FY 2024-25

Jurisdiction	Dept. of Finance Population Projection	% of Total Population	Estimated FY 2024-25 Apportionment
Arcata	18,688	13.94%	718,162
Blue Lake	1,146	0.85%	44,040
Eureka	26,139	19.50%	1,004,497
Ferndale	1,371	1.02%	52,686
Fortuna	12,256	9.14%	470,986
Rio Dell	3,261	2.43%	125,317
Trinidad	294	0.22%	11,298
Humboldt County	70,892	52.89%	2,724,311
Total	134,047	100.00%	\$ 5,151,297

*Allocation estimate does not include potential rollover funds from FY 23-24

Table 14: LTF Fund Use FY 23-24

Jurisdiction	FY 23-24 Estimate	Transit Use	Streets & Roads Use	Bike/Ped
City of Arcata/A&MRTS	\$ 722,150.00	\$ 722,150.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Blue Lake	\$ 46,683.00	\$ 32,000.00	\$ 14,683.00	\$ -
City of Eureka/HTA	\$ 1,015,307.00	\$ 1,015,307.00	\$ -	\$ -
City of Ferndale*	\$ 50,934.00	\$ -	\$ 72,888.00	\$ -
City of Fortuna*	\$ 479,315.00	\$ 440,626.00	\$ 223,845.00	\$ 13,561.00
City of Rio Dell	\$ 125,803.00	\$ 56,437.00	\$ 69,366.00	\$ -
City of Trinidad*	\$ 13,212.00	\$ 21,274.00	\$ 23,944.00	\$ -
County of Humboldt	\$ 2,772,603.00	\$ 2,563,856.00	\$ 143,747.00	\$ 65,000.00
	\$ 5,226,007.00	\$ 4,851,650.00	\$ 548,473.00	\$ 78,561.00

*City of Ferndale and Fortuna claims include carryover from FY 22-23

*City of Trinidad claim includes unused LTF from previous four years. The \$21,274 in transit use represents Trinidad's total operating cost share to HTA for Transit Use for FY 20-21, FY 21-22, FY 22-23, and FY 23-24.

Appendix A: Summary of Public Input

Appendix B: Recent History of Unmet Needs Requests

Hearing Year/Finding	HCAOG Response or Action
FY 2015/16	
Service to Tish Non Community Village Service on Old Arcata Road	Both services began, underperformed, and were discontinued.
FY 2016/17	
Fieldbrook / Glendale / Korbel / Blue Lake routes considered with survey	Not reasonable to meet based on farebox return.
FY 2017/18	
No unmet needs reasonable to meet.	Late-night and weekend service to CR and service to Samoa found not reasonable to meet based on farebox return
FY 2018/19	
Late-night weekday service on RTS	Lacked funding to begin service. LCTOP funds reserved and service scheduled to begin in 2020. Funding repurposed to provide free transit during Covid. SSTAC recommended this unmet need be revisited in future UTN cycles.
FY 2019/20	
Saturday service to Blue Lake Bus stop on south Broadway	Service began October 12, 2019. Willow Creek line makes 3 stops in Blue Lake on Saturdays. Bus stop planned in Caltrans project for south Broadway.
FY 2020/21	
No unmet needs reasonable to meet.	Express bus between McKinleyville and Eureka during peak commute hours found not reasonable to meet due to Covid-19. SSTAC recommended this unmet need be revisited in future UTN cycles.
FY 2022/23	
Service to points in Mendocino County	Not reasonable to meet due to farebox returns. Express service between Eureka and Ukiah is planned through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) grant.
FY 2023/24	
Sunday service on RTS Late night Saturday service on RTS between Arcata and Eureka	Both services were found reasonable to meet based on farebox. Additional operating funding was planned to be secured through SB 125, however this funding needed to stabilize existing operations. Findings revised in FY 24-25 based on increases in operational costs.