



**HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS**  
**Regional Transportation Planning Agency**  
**Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority**  
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**AGENDA ITEM 6b**  
**SSTAC Meeting**  
**May 1, 2024**

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DATE: April 25, 2024  
TO: Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)  
FROM: Stephen Luther, Associate Regional Planner  
SUBJECT: **FY 2024-25 Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) Comments and Reasonable to Meet Recommendations**

### **STAFF REPORT**

#### **Contents:**

- Staff's Recommended Action
- Staff Summary
- Draft FY 24-25 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings
- UTN Recommended Findings

#### **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 the HCAOG Board adopt the FY 24-25 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings determining that increasing weekday headway to every half hour during peak hours between McKinleyville and Arcata is an unmet need that is reasonable to meet.”

#### **Staff Summary:**

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.

**Unmet Needs Reasonable to Meet Analysis:**

HCAOG’s adopted definitions and criteria for unmet transit needs are on pages four and five of the attached draft report. The criteria include the newly adopted standards for a minimum of two comments to demonstrate community support, and to include an analysis of performance measures including subsidy per trip and ridership per hour of new services.

For each comment that was determined to meet the criteria of an unmet need, staff analyzed if it would be “reasonable to meet” and made a recommendation. The attached draft Report of Findings provides an analysis of the unmet needs and recommended findings for each. Staff work between the March and May drafts concentrated on providing additional analysis on the estimated subsidy per trip and ridership per hour of new services. In addition, where the 2023-2028 Transit Development Plan (TDP) included estimated performance of the same or similar new services considered as UTNs, the TDP analysis was included as a row in the table to provide an additional data point. Although some of the assumptions and inputs are different, the outcomes are similar.

In March, the SSTAC reviewed the 2023 unmet transit needs comments and staff’s initial draft analysis of unmet needs. The March draft analysis found that late-night Saturday service on RTS and Sunday service on RTS would be above the required 10% marginal farebox return ratio and were reasonable to meet. However, these results were based on a lower average operating cost than would be the reality if these services were to be implemented over the next three years. Using the most recent monthly operating cost per vehicle hour for RTS of \$150.30, the updated analysis in this report finds that late night Saturday service and Sunday service would not meet the minimum farebox and are therefore not reasonable to meet.

The unmet need calling for more frequent service on RTS was initially considered in March as a potential express route between Cal Poly and Eureka, a new service that was one of the top recommendations from the TDP. However, HTA currently provides 30-minute frequency trips between Eureka and Arcata during peak hours and the comments received pointed to a need for more frequent and convenient connections between McKinleyville and Arcata. Staff focused the unmet needs analysis for increased headway on the particular segment between the Airport and Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle. The service is estimated to achieve a 21% farebox return and is therefore reasonable to meet. Staff is recommending that the HCAOG Board’s finding should be worded in a way that is flexible in terms of how the need would be implemented, as it could potentially be included as part of the RTS trunk line or piloted as a more regional express route that HTA is considering. The funding mechanisms for either option remain to be determined but based on feedback from the SSTAC the qualifier “cannot be funded” will not be applied in the finding.

The other unmet needs are not reasonable to meet based on low ridership and poor projected performance. These include: ETS expanded weekday hours, ETS expanded weekend hours, ETS expanded frequency and coverage area, and A&MRTS service to Bayside.

The SSTAC is being asked to recommend the HCAOG Board adopt the Draft FY 24-25 Unmet Needs Report finding that increasing weekday headway to every half hour during peak hours between McKinleyville and Arcata is an unmet need that is reasonable to meet.