



HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional Transportation Planning Agency
Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority
Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies
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AGENDA ITEM 7b
HCAOG Board Meeting
May 16, 2024

DATE: May 10, 2024
TO: HCAOG Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
FROM: Stephen Luther, Associate Regional Planner
SUBJECT: **FY 2024-25 Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) Report of Findings**

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 PAC 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. Local Transportation Funds (LTF), which are funded through ¼ percent of the statewide sales tax and apportioned based on population, 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. The Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) leads the unmet needs process. 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 Table 7 provides a summary analysis of estimated performance of unmet needs including 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.

The SSTAC reviewed the 2023 unmet transit needs comments and the draft Report of Findings at their March and May meetings and recommended the HCAOG Board adopt the Report. The staff report to the SSTAC included a discussion of how the farebox findings for late-night Saturday service on RTS and Sunday service on RTS were dependent on operating costs. Earlier reports from HTA (November/December Board reports) showed a lower average operating cost (\$119/hr) 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 report found that late night Saturday service and Sunday service would not meet the minimum farebox and are therefore not reasonable to meet. The SSTAC also discussed how to make the best use of available regional transit funding to meet all unmet needs as well as how to maximize ridership of existing services.

The general unmet need requesting more frequent service on RTS was narrowed down to focus on increased headway on the particular segment between the Airport and Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle. More frequent service could also be interpreted as an express route between Cal Poly and Eureka, which was the top recommendation of the TDP, however HTA currently provides 30-minute frequency trips between Eureka and Arcata during peak hours. The UTN comments received indicated a need for more frequent and convenient connections between McKinleyville and Arcata, which currently has a one hour headway. The McKinleyville to Arcata service is estimated to achieve a 21% farebox return based on data showing an average of 183 daily boardings on the current RTS route between McKinleyville and Arcata and is therefore reasonable to meet. Staff is recommending that the HCAOG Board’s finding should be 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 running from McKinleyville to Fortuna that HTA is considering. The funding plan for either option remain to be determined. Per TDA law, no LTF funds can be used for non-transit purposes until the unmet need is funded. See Table 14 on page 24 of the Report to see the breakdown of FY 23-24 LTF funds.

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 (based on a lack of adequate roadway pending completion of the Old Arcata Road project and Bayside turnaround).

The PAC 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.