

Transportation Development Act

Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings



Draft April 2023

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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 an 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 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 23-24 HCAOG Board finding:

The HCAOG Board adopted Resolution 23-**XX** on May 18, 2023 finding that Redwood Transit System (RTS) Sunday service and RTS late-night Saturday service between Arcata and Eureka are unmet needs that are reasonable to meet.

The SSTAC directed staff to review estimated ridership and operating costs for Sunday service on Eureka Transit Service and service to the Bayside area on the Arcata and Mad River Transit Service. These services are not projected to meet the required minimum marginal farebox return ratio of 10% and are therefore unmet needs that are not reasonable to meet. The report includes an analysis of the additional unmet needs comments received this year.

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 the 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.

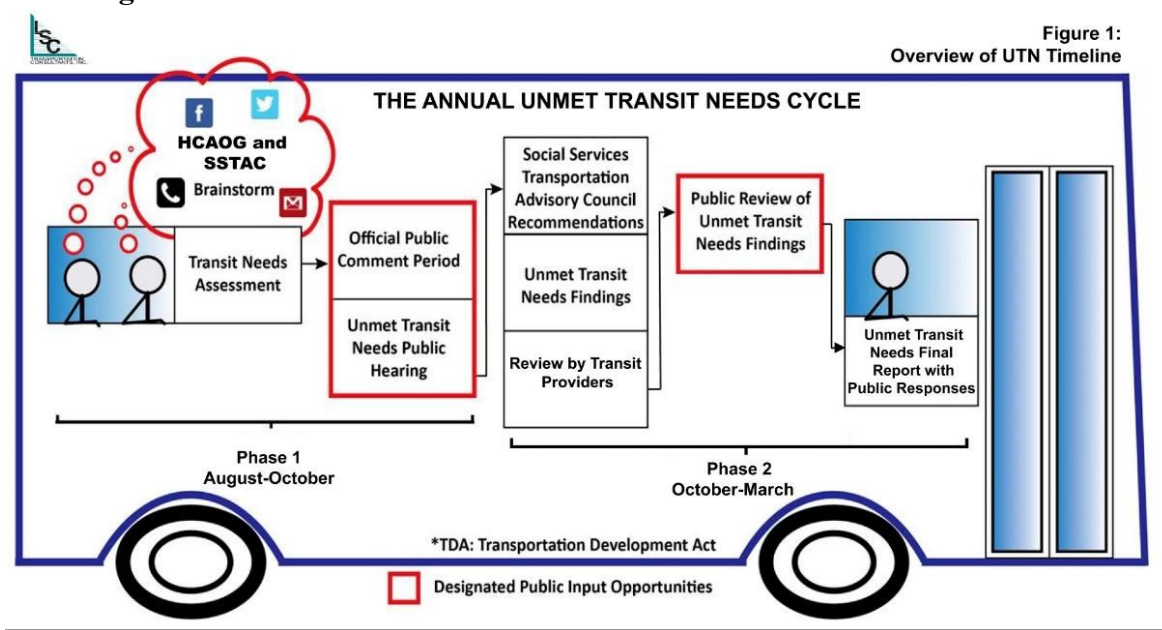
The transportation planning agency is required to:

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. A new TDP update will be completed in June 2023, and HCAOG staff is exploring whether the SSTAC would like to revisit the Strategic Plan and Unmet Needs definitions in the next Fiscal Year.

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.

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 of 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. If multiple competing services are requested, other factors such as estimated subsidy per passenger trip

and passengers per vehicle hour of service may 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.

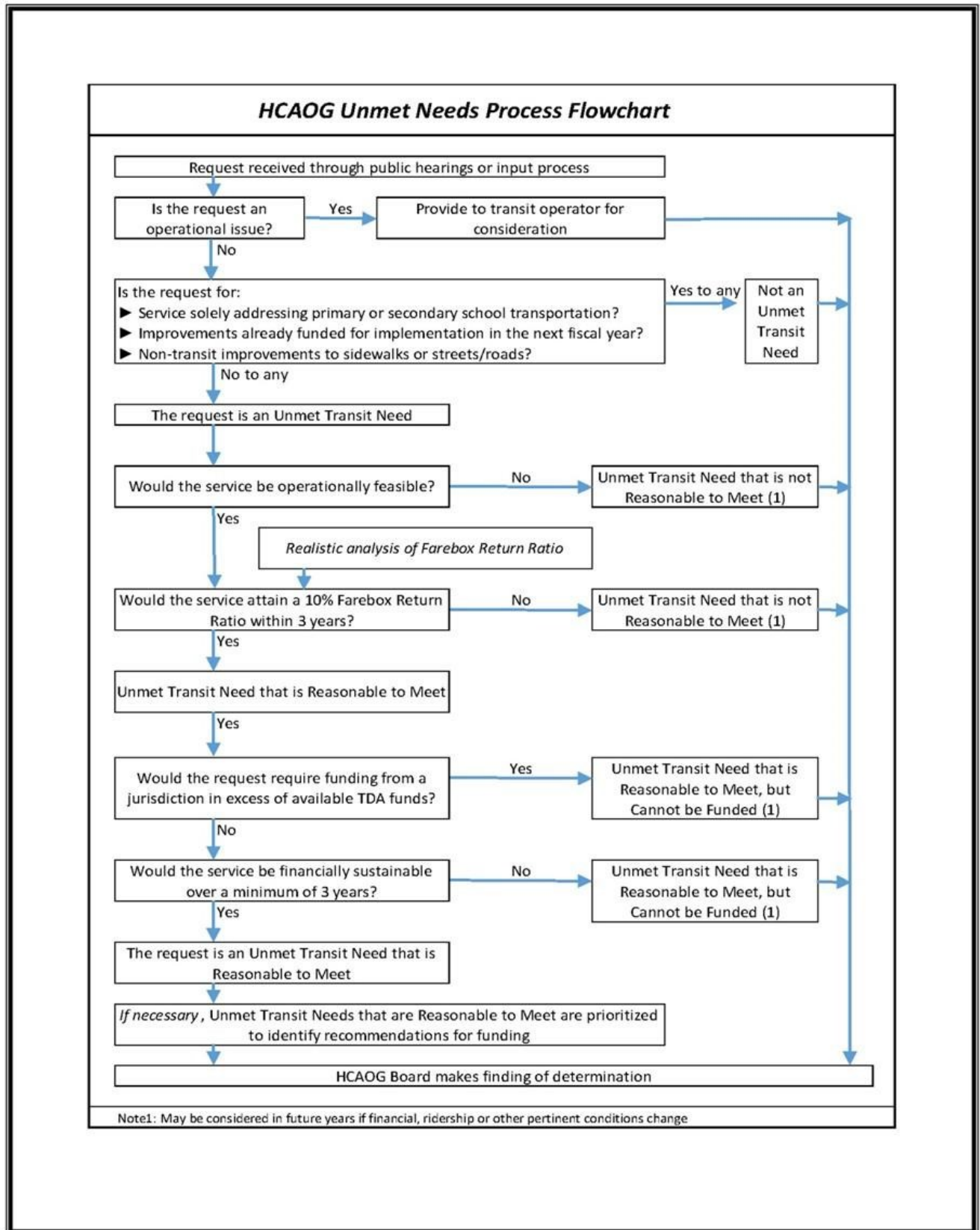
After considering all available information compiled pursuant to the Unmet Transit Needs public participation process, HCAOG must adopt, by resolution, one of the following findings:

- (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 2022 estimated population by jurisdiction.

Table 1: Population Estimates [To be updated in May w/ release of DOF data]

Jurisdiction	2021 Population Estimate	2022 Population Estimate	Percentage Change	Percent of Countywide Population
Arcata	17,633	18,059	2.4%	13.36%
Blue Lake	1,165	1,219	-1.2%	0.85%
Eureka	27,134	26,768	-1.3%	19.80%
Ferndale	1,376	1,367	-0.7%	1.01%
Fortuna	12,523	12,432	-0.7%	9.20%
Rio Dell	3,380	3,342	-1.1%	2.47%
Trinidad	300	296	-1.3%	0.22%
Unincorporated County	72,042	71,753	-0.4%	53.08%
Total Population	135,553	135,168	-0.3%	100%

Source: Department of Finance Projection

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	18.1%	14.4%
Very Low Income	Income below the poverty line	20.3%	12.3%
Disabled	People who may be unable to operate vehicles or utilize public transportation due to physical/mental disabilities	17.4%	10.6%
Limited Car Access	Zero vehicle households	6.7%	6.9%

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, 18.1% of the population is age 65 or over, 20.3% of the population is below the poverty level, and 17.4% are living with a disability. These are all significantly higher than the respective statewide percentages of 14.4% over age 65, 12.3% poverty rate and 10.6% disability status. 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 Trinidad 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. 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	19,038	2,138	11.2%	11.3%
Blue Lake	927	244	26.3%	24%
Eureka	26,763	4,143	15.5%	17.6%
Ferndale	1,481	494	33.4%	28.9%
Fortuna	12,480	1,984	15.9%	19%
Rio Dell	3,385	592	17.5%	12.7%
Trinidad	323	112	34.7%	26.8%
Countywide	135,940	24,767	18.1%	17.3%
California	39,455,353	5,669,879	14.4%	13.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP05 2017-2021* and 2016-2020⁺ 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	17,370	6,023	34.7%	34.5%
Blue Lake	883	241	27.3%	24.2%
Eureka	26,304	5,125	19.5%	19.8%
Ferndale	1,464	236	16.1%	11.1%
Fortuna	12,392	1,820	14.7%	18.7%
Rio Dell	3,368	368	10.9%	7.1%
Trinidad	323	64	19.8%	15.8%
Countywide	133,833	27,116	20.3%	19.7%
California	38,701,352	4,741,175	12.3%	12.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table S1701 2017-2021 and 2016-2020⁺ 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	19,033	2,386	12.5%	10.4%
Blue Lake	927	172	18.6%	20.7%
Eureka	26,267	4,882	18.6%	17.8%
Ferndale	1,481	287	19.4%	21.0%
Fortuna	12,408	2,258	18.2%	20.4%
Rio Dell	3,385	664	19.6%	20.2%
Trinidad	323	66	20.4%	20.1%
Countywide	136,067	23,615	17.4%	16.5%
California	38,946,377	4,145,501	10.6%	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP02 2017-2021* and 2016-2020+ 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	7,081	453	6.4%	8.9%
Blue Lake	487	34	7.0%	4.4%
Eureka	10,808	1,197	11.1%	11.5%
Ferndale	602	29	4.8%	2.5%
Fortuna	4,901	295	6.0%	6.7%
Rio Dell	1,371	72	5.3%	5.6%
Trinidad	165	4	2.4%	5.5%
Countywide	53,729	3,603	6.7%	7.1%
California	13,217,586	911,655	6.9%	7.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP04 2017-2021* and 2016-2020+ 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, Blue Lake Rancheria 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.

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 10 survey responses were received. Several comments were made during the unmet transit needs public hearings and to staff by phone/email.

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 page 4 and 5 of this report. Operational comments were forwarded to the transit operators.

Of the 42 total comments, 15 were initially determined to meet the definition of an Unmet Transit Need. Those 15 comments were then examined to see if they met the adopted criteria used to determine if the UTN is reasonable to meet, provided on pages 4 and 5 of this report.

The last spreadsheet in the Appendix was developed to incorporate the adopted criteria to determine if the unmet need is reasonable to meet following the schematics of HCAOG's UTN flowchart, provided on page 6 of this report.

The first query is if the requested service would be operationally feasible:

- If the answer is yes, then you move on to the question in the next column.
- If the answer is no, then the UTN is not reasonable to meet but may be considered in future years if financial, ridership or other pertinent conditions change.
- If additional information is required, then the follow up action or comment is provided in the Comment/Action column.

Following the same flow process as the first question, the next column asks if the service would attain a 10% Farebox Return Ratio within 3 years.

Assessment of Unmet Needs

This section will provide a justification for the determination of each comment that met the definition of an unmet need, or explain why the comment was determined not to meet the definition of an unmet need. As stated above, comments that are operational in nature have been provided to transit agency staff.

1. More frequent service to Trinidad and service down Patrick's Point Drive. This would provide hourly service to Trinidad, and also serve residents outside of town.

Response: Depending on whether a new vehicle or personnel would be required, frequency of service could fall in the category of an operational issue tied to scheduling rather than an unmet need. As frequency of service is an often-requested change to transit, this issue would be appropriate to address in a future SSTAC Strategic Plan discussion.

Although long headways to and from Trinidad can make trips inconvenient for residents with wait times up to three hours in the afternoon, the Redwood Transit System does provide service. In addition, the Redwood Coast Transit (RCT) Route 20 from Crescent City to Arcata stops in Trinidad three times per day both northbound and southbound. Riders can call

Redwood Coast Transit at (707) 464-6400 to schedule a flag stop along Patrick’s Point Drive. See the table of service times provided below.

With the inclusion of RCT service to the RTS service, weekday busses make eight runs to Trinidad and headway is about two hours and 15 minutes or up to three hours in the afternoons. While this level of service is not convenient, there is existing service that meets the need for trips to serve the almost one-third of Trinidad’s population that is 65 years or older. In addition, Census data shows about 95-97.5% of households in Trinidad have at least one vehicle

In terms of meeting regional mode shift goals to significantly increase transit ridership and reduce vehicle miles travelled, further study would be needed to determine the costs and benefits associated with long distances and low population. On-demand microtransit service is a promising solution as described in HCAOG’s Mobility-on-Demand Study. Using smaller vehicles and route matching software, microtransit could provide rides to and from Trinidad within 15 minutes of a person requesting a ride.

Table 7. Timetable of Transit Service to Trinidad

Southbound Pickup at Trinidad Park n Ride	Northbound Dropoff at Trinidad Park n Ride
6:46 am	8:58 am
9:03 am	10:23 am
9:46 am	11:58 am
11:51 am	1:13 pm
12:46 pm	2:53 pm
3:40 pm	5:58 pm
4:51 pm	6:13 pm
6:40 pm	7:22 pm
Redwood Coast Transit	Humboldt Transit Authority

Recommended Finding: This is not an unmet need.

2. 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 would not meet the minimum performance standards necessary to be considered reasonable to meet.

Table 8. Farebox Analysis for ETS Sunday Service

Service	Total riders over 31 operating days	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox
ETS Saturday	4,895 total = 158 trips/day	158 trips/day x \$1.22 avg fare = \$192.76	\$131.00/hr x 16 hours (2 routes at 8 hours each) = \$2,096	193 / 2,096 = 9.2%
ETS Sunday	4,895 * 0.5 = 2,447 total = 79 trips/day	79 trips/day x \$1.22 avg fare = \$96.38	\$131.00/hr x 8 hours (2 routes at 4 hours each) = \$1,048/day	96 / 1,048 = 9.1%

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

3. Sunday Service on RTS.

In 2012, Sunday service on Redwood Transit was found 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 around 376, about 50% of the Saturday service ridership. Average daily riders on RTS on Saturdays for the period July 1 to December 31, 2022 is 382 average daily riders. 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. With 11,847 riders in the six-month period covered by the data, it would be expected that about 6,200 passengers would ride RTS on Sundays, which comes to 200 passengers per day and average collected fares of \$440. With routes totaling 31.48 hours run-time the total daily operating cost comes to \$4,218. This equates to a marginal farebox return ratio of 10.4% which meets the criteria for reasonable to meet. The Sunday service may operate at limited hours compared to Saturday, which would decrease operational costs and further increase the farebox return.

Table 9. Farebox Analysis for RTS Sunday Service

Service	Total riders over 31 operating days	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox
RTS Saturday	11,847 total = 382 trips/day	382 riders / day x \$2.20 avg fare = \$840.75	\$134.00/hr x 31.48 hours = \$4,218.77	840 / 4,218 = 19.9%
RTS Sunday	11,847 * 0.5 = 6,200 total = 200 trips/day	200 trips/day x \$2.20 avg fare = \$440.00	\$134.00/hr x 31.48 hours = \$4,218/day	440 / 4,218 = 10.4%

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet.

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

Response: Pre-pandemic, RTS operated an earlier morning and a later evening run. As ridership levels have begun to rebound post-Covid, Humboldt Transit Authority anticipates running these routes in the next fiscal year. Services that are planned and funded for the next fiscal year are not considered unmet needs. HTA General Manager Greg Pratt has stated one of the barriers to implementing this change is hiring and training new bus drivers.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is planned to start next fiscal year.

- 5. Later night weekday service from Cal Poly to Valley West:**

Response: The last RTS southbound run leaves Valley East at 7:18 pm and northbound leaves Library Circle at 8:14 p.m. When the span of service is expanded as described above, there will be an additional RTS run an hour later. The A&MRTS Orange Line runs from 5-10pm on weekdays, with the last run from Library Circle leaving at 9:33 pm. Ridership levels for a fixed-route service operating past 10 p.m. would not meet required performance criteria. However, a flexible on-demand service may be more financially feasible, especially with relation to student transport past 10 p.m. This service model is being explored in the Transit Development Plan.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet. HCAOG will continue to work with Cal Poly Humboldt and the City of Arcata to evaluate options for later night service in Arcata.

- 6. Later night Saturday service on RTS**

Response: The option to ride public transit on weekend nights is often cited by concerned citizens as a safety precaution to prevent drinking and driving. In addition, those attending popular events such as the Eureka's Arts Alive! may find it more convenient to take alternative transportation. For background, beginning in January 2017 HTA offered a new Saturday night bus run, from McKinleyville to Scotia, to promote public transit and celebrate local art. The first Saturday of every month, the rides are free, the same day as Arts Alive! In the first six months, the new service had 1,053 passengers in the first six months. HCAOG, the Cities of Arcata, Eureka, and Fortuna and the County of Humboldt partnered with HTA on this service. Funding for this Saturday service came from the California Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund/Low-Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) and the program ran through 2019.

HTA provided data of Saturday RTS service collected over a six-month period from July 1 to December 31, 2022 which encompasses a total of 31 operating days. Each of the 20 daily trips provides a total run time and an average number of passengers per hour. The average fare per passenger is \$2.20, which is based on a full year's worth of ridership data to average out various pass costs. The operating cost per hour of service is \$134.00. Using this data, HTA calculated the minimum fares required to achieve a marginal farebox return ratio of 10% for each trip. The last two evening runs on Saturdays are under the 10% ratio. However, both are long runs with hour and 50 minute runtimes going from Trinidad to Fortuna and Scotia to McKinleyville. The service from Bayshore Mall to Valley West is a

runtime of 41 minutes which translates to an operating cost of \$91.57. The minimum fare required to meet farebox is therefore \$9.00 which could be met with just five passengers. Given the consistent requested demand for a later night Saturday service and previous success using LCTOP funding, this service qualifies as an unmet need that is reasonable to meet. Staff recommends marketing the service during Saturday Arts Alive and tracking ridership during that time for a six-month period.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet provided the late-night run is of a short duration between Valley West to Bayshore Mall.

Table 10: Farebox Analysis for RTS Late Night Saturday Service

Service Route Description	Riders over 31 operating days	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox
RTS Saturday Overall	11,847 total = 382 riders/day	382 riders / day x \$2.20 avg fare = \$840.75	\$134.00/hr x 31.48 hours = \$4,218.77	840 / 4,218 = 19.9%
RTS full-run Sat. evening	291 (avg. of north + south routes)	5.09 riders/hr x \$2.20 = \$11.20	\$134.00/hr x 1.87 hours = \$246.78	11.20 / 246.78 = 4%
RTS Arcata - CR	208	7.74 x \$2.20 = \$17.03	\$134.00/hr x <u>0.87</u> hours = \$116.58	17.03 / 116.58 = 14.6%
RTS Later Night (mid)	208 x 50% = 104	4.9 x \$2.20 = \$10.20	\$134.00/hr x <u>0.87</u> hours = \$116.58	10.20 / 116.58 = 8.7%
RTS Later Night (short)	208 x 50% = 104	4.9 x \$2.20 = \$10.20	\$134.00/hr x <u>0.68</u> hours = \$91.57	10.20 / 91.57 = 11.1%

7. Service from Indianola/Freshwater/Myrtle to Eureka along Old Arcata Road

Response: This service was found to be an unmet need reasonable to meet in 2015/16. Service began in 2017 and consisted of on-demand rides that had to be ordered 24 hours in advance. The new service was marketed with a mailer and other promotional materials, but it failed to gain traction. The service was discontinued in 2020 and based on this history it is not anticipated to be a financially sustainable service. There is a large population of people 65 years and older living in this Census Tract which may account for the frequency of this request. The area is served by supplemental Dial-A-Ride service. HCAOG as well as HTA are monitoring land-use development proposals in the Indianola area, which may change the projected ridership and financial sustainability of a new service. In addition, there may be opportunities to provide service on Old Arcata Road by building on findings from on-demand microtransit pilot programs underway in the region.

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

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

Response: The Arcata and Mad River Transit System (A&MRTS) currently provides service on the Red Line with a stop at Buttermilk Lane and Bayside Road. A request was made to the Arcata City Council for transit service to Bayside. Data shows the Buttermilk Lane & Bayside Road stop has a daily average of 34 boardings and alightings, while Crescent Way (Northside) has 27. These stops are located in Block Group 1 of Tract 9 in the Sunny Brae area. The adjacent Block Group 1 of Census Tract 10.02 which includes multi-unit apartments on Union Street has over 80% of it’s population in the 18-29 year old range, presumably students. Block Group 2, Tract 9 is the Bayside area. There are less households and of those about 30% are ages 65 years or over. Due to a lower population and commercial use density of the Bayside area, daily trips originating and going to Bayside would be lower. Extending A&MRTS service to Bayside would not be financially feasible based on this information.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet. Overall, more planning and direct outreach is needed to explore new service to Bayside. HCAOG recommends working with the City of Arcata to conduct targeted outreach to residents of Bayside to inform potential pilots for transit services to Bayside.

Table 11: Demographic Information for Southeast Arcata

Census Tract	Population	Households	Dominant demographics	Commuters*
Tract 10.02, Block Group 1(Samoa Blvd to Union)	1,093	719	>80% 18-29 year olds (students)	808: 525 car, 11 bus, 71 taxicab, 79 bicycle, 66 walked, 56 WFH
Tract 9, Block Group 1 (Sunny Brae)	1,833	821	~50% students	807: 572 car, 6 bus, 8 bicycle, 63 walk, 105 WFH
Tract 9, Block Group 2 (Bayside)	1,083	513	~15% students, 30% older adults	535: 383 car, 0 bus, 22 bicycle, 7 walk, 123 WFH

Source: ACS 5-year 2017-21 Table B08301 Means of Transportation to Work

9. Service to South G Street

Response: The A&MRTS Gold line currently stops at H and 6th followed by a stop at the Uniontown Shopping Center (see Figure below). Operationally, it appears that the bus could cross Highway 255 at H Street and make a left turn on south G Street. The adopted criteria requires an unmet need to affect the operating cost of the transit service, either by requiring additional staff and/or additional vehicle hours of service or miles of service. Extending Gold line service to South G Street would require approximately five minutes travel time and 0.8 miles distance. This amount of time and mileage does not initially appear to meet the criteria of causing an increase in operational cost that is required to constitute an unmet need. That said, an additional five minutes is challenging to integrate into the existing route schedule and it would require skipping other stops. Effectively beginning service to South G street would therefore need to be tied into larger system goals

to start a new route, the Green Line. The A&MRTS is currently seeking the additional capital, personnel, and funding to implement a Green Line that would make service to South G more feasible operationally. At this point, the A&MRTS system as a whole is performing with less than a 10% farebox return ratio. The marginal addition of this stop would not be expected to meet farebox requirements.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet. HCAOG recommends working with the City of Arcata and Humboldt Transit Authority to assess route modifications and service options that arise out of the Transit Development Plan update in June.

10. Later service from Arcata to Willow Creek. This would provide an additional run from Arcata to Willow Creek past 6 p.m.

Response: The existing Willow Creek Intercity bus leaves Arcata Transit Center at 5:58 p.m. A later bus would leave between 6-7 p.m. Ridership trends such as seen with ETS show significant drop-off in evening routes. A later evening service is not likely to have the ridership levels to be financially sustainable.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet based on projected performance metrics.

11. Stop in Blue Lake during weekday. This would result in the Willow Creek Intercity stopping in Blue Lake in both the west and east routes. The commenter was seeking additional transit services, such as a direct express route or on-demand transit, for a morning commute from Blue Lake to Eureka.

Response: The Willow Creek Transit Service does not currently stop in Blue Lake on its route between Willow Creek and Arcata. Blue Lake has a population of about 1,200 and does have a high proportion of residents over 65. Trips from Blue Lake to connecting points at the Arcata Transit Center are available through the Blue Lake Rancheria Transit System, to which the City of Blue Lake contributes a portion of its LTF.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is not reasonable to meet. HCAOG recommends conducting targeted outreach in coordination with HTA, BLRTS and the City of Blue Lake to determine the use levels of an additional stop in Blue Lake.

12. New service to Ferndale.

Response: One person called specifically to request a public transit trip to Ferndale to shop during the holiday season. During public outreach for the Regional Transportation Plan in 2022, several people stated they would like a bus to Ferndale, even if only for special events at the Humboldt County Fairgrounds. However, in recent years there have been no requests from the public to the Ferndale City Council for transit service. The Ferndale City Council makes their own finding every year that there are no unmet transit needs reasonable to meet. Ferndale is not a member of the Humboldt Transit Authority Joint Powers Authority.

Ferndale does have a significant percentage of its population, about 33%, that is 65 or older. The Ferndale Senior Resource Agency provides a privately funded service called “Bridging the Gap” that is available to residents of Ferndale’s 95536 zip code area. The service is available for people who are 62 years or older or have a disability. Rides are booked 24 hours in advance and are free within Ferndale. A fare is charged to get to Fortuna, Scotia,

Eureka and Arcata. This service appears sufficient to meet the demand for transit dependent groups within Ferndale.

The requested ride was for public transportation to Ferndale as a destination. Ferndale is 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 is 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.

Prior Year Findings

No unmet transit needs were identified in the 2022/23 UTN process. 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 13 for a summary of FY 22-23 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. Funding apportioned to Humboldt is shown in Figure 4. The spike beginning in 2017-18 is due to the passage of the Road Repair and Accountability Act (Senate Bill 1). The zero amount shown in 2010-11 was due to the State of California’s illegal diversion of transit funding which began in the 2009-10 State Budget. The program was reinstated as part of the original “Gas Tax Swap” agreement of 2010, which reconfigured the funding streams that flow into the program.

Figure 3: Humboldt County State Transit Assistance Trend

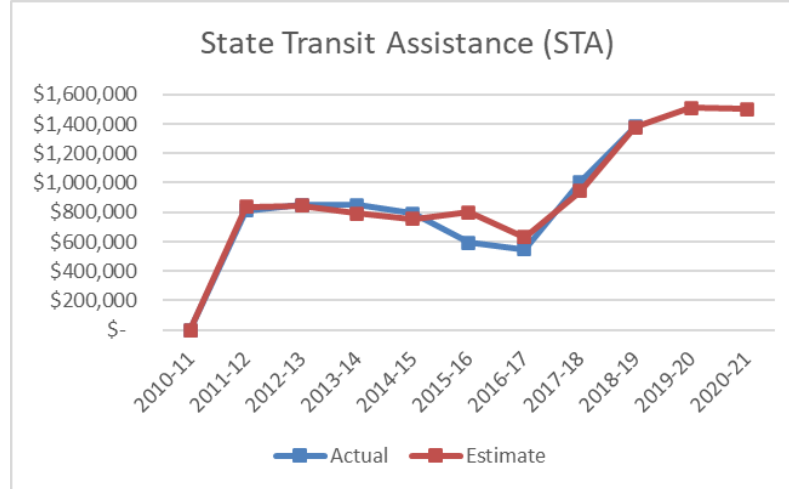


Table 12 provides FY 2023-2024 LTF apportionments for funds allocated by the HCAOG Board. These projections are based on an estimate provided by the Humboldt County Auditor Controller (Auditor) pursuant to Government Code Section 6620. The Auditor makes the estimate from such data as is available including 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 12: LTF Funds Allocated by Jurisdiction, FY 2023-24

Jurisdiction	Estimated FY 2023-24 Apportionment	Balance FYE June 2022	Total Available FY 2023-24
Arcata	722,150	663,314	1,385,464
Blue Lake	46,683	20,462	67,145
Eureka	1,015,307	442,402	1,457,709
Ferndale	50,934	21,954	72,888
Fortuna	479,315	198,717	678,032
Rio Dell	125,803	54,618	180,421
Trinidad	13,212	32,006	45,218
Humboldt County	2,772,603	1,537,265	4,309,868

*Allocation estimate does not include potential rollover funds from FY 22-23

Table 13: LTF Fund Use FY 22-23

Jurisdiction	FY 2022-23 Apportionment	Transit Use	Pedestrian and Bicycle Uses	Streets & Roads Use
Arcata	815,409	882,237		
Blue Lake	52,712	32,375		28,098
Eureka	1,146,425	1,146,425		
Ferndale	57,512			57,512
Fortuna	541,214	381,487	12,333	222,350
Rio Dell	142,049	54,057		87,992
Trinidad	14,918	5,265		9,653
Humboldt County	3,130,658		205,000	930,571
Total	5,900,896		217,333	1,336,176

Appendix A: Summary of Public Input

Will paste the Excel sheet here in the final version

Appendix B: Recent History of Unmet Needs Requests

Hearing Year/Primary Request	HCAOG Response or Action
FY 2015/16	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service to Tish Non Community Village 2. Service on Old Arcata Road 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service began, and underperformed. Discontinued. 2. Service began, and underperformed. Discontinued.
FY 2016/17	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fieldbrook / Glendale / Korbel / Blue Lake routes considered with survey 	Not reasonable to meet based on farebox return.
FY 2017/18	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most frequent comments asked for increased late-night and weekend service to CR and for service to Samoa 	Not reasonable to meet based on farebox return
FY 2018/19	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Saturday service to Blue Lake 2. Bus stop on south Broadway 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service began October 12, 2019. Willow Creek line makes 3 stops in Blue Lake on Saturdays 2. Bus stop considered in Broadway Multimodal Corridor Plan. HTA seeking funding.
FY 2020/21	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Express bus between McKinleyville and Eureka during peak commute hours 	Not reasonable to meet due to Covid-19. SSTAC recommended this unmet need be revisited in future UTN cycles.
FY 2022/23	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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.