



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 5b
TAC Meeting
May 4, 2023

DATE: April 24, 2023
TO: Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
FROM: Stephen Luther, Associate Regional Planner
SUBJECT: **FY 2023-24 Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) Draft Report of Findings**

STAFF REPORT

Contents:

- Staff's Recommended Action
- Staff Summary
- Draft FY 23-24 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings

Staff's Recommended Action:

Motion to be approved by consent:

“The TAC recommends that the HCAOG Board adopt the FY 23-24 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings determining that Saturday night short-distance service on Redwood Transit System (RTS) and Sunday service on RTS are unmet needs that are 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 to 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 jurisdictions expend all TDA funds on transit purposes if there is a need found reasonable to meet. HCAOG's adopted definitions and criteria for unmet transit needs are on page 4 and 5 of the attached report.

The Social Services Technical Advisory Committee (SSTAC) is required by TDA law to participate in the process and recommend to the HCAOG Board one of the following findings:

- (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.

At the February 1 meeting, the SSTAC directed staff to further analyze several unmet needs, to determine whether those services met the criteria of reasonable to meet.

To respond to requests to provide Sunday service, Staff reviewed Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) ridership data over a six-month period of June - December 2022 for existing Saturday service on both Redwood Transit System (RTS) and Eureka Transit Service (ETS). Based on this data, and knowing that Sunday services generally have less ridership than Saturdays, the ETS Sunday service would not meet the farebox requirement to be considered reasonable to meet. On RTS, Sunday service is projected to meet farebox criteria and is reasonable to meet.

For Saturday late-night service on RTS, the marginal farebox return ratio depends on the service span. A short-run between Valley West and Bayshore Mall is projected to meet a farebox return over 10% and staff therefore finds this is an unmet need that is reasonable to meet. While it does not have an impact on the unmet needs finding, one of the known challenges in funding this service is that the Joint Powers Agreement structure of HTA means that the additional costs may be passed on to other member jurisdictions while the service would only be in Eureka and Arcata. Further, both Eureka and Arcata use their entire portion of the Local Transportation Fund on transit already.

The SSTAC also directed staff to return with an analysis of service to Bayside and service to South G Street on Arcata and Mad River Transit. Currently A&MRTS as a whole is performing with less than a 10% farebox ratio and as a result adding new services is not likely to meet minimum performance requirements to be considered reasonable to meet. Additional analysis is provided in the report detailing the demographics of Bayside area that make it unlikely to attract consistent ridership. The South G Street service request appears to meet the criteria to be considered an operational comment, but in fact may require a larger route modification effort that will benefit from service recommendations in the forthcoming Transit Development Plan.

In the Report of Findings every comment received during the UTN process is included in Appendix A: Summary of Public Comment. 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 SSTAC reviewed the draft report on April 5 and recommended the HCAOG Board adopt the FY 23-24 UTN Report of Finding. The SSTAC and TAC recommendations will be forwarded to the HCAOG Board for consideration of adoption at their May 18th meeting.