

**(Reserved for Resolution)**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Contents**

<u>Executive Summary</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Transportation Development Act</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Transit Dependent Demographics</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Existing Transit Service</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Unmet Transit Needs Comments, Assessment, Findings</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>TDA Funds and Allocations</u>	<u>23</u>

## **Appendices**

<u>Appendix A: Summary of Public Input</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>Appendix B: Summary of Unmet Transit Needs History</u>	<u>26</u>

## **List of Tables**

<u>Table 1: Population Estimates for 2024</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Table 2: Transit User Groups</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Table 3: Persons 65 and Older Estimates</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Table 4: Persons in Poverty Estimates</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Table 5: Disability Status Estimate</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Table 6: Carless Household Estimates</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Table 7: Performance Analysis for RTS Sunday Service</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Table 8: ETS Weekday Ridership by Hour</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Table 9: LTF Fund Apportionments by Jurisdiction, FY 2025-26</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>Table 10: LTF Fund Use, FY 25-26</u>	<u>22</u>

## **List of Figures**

<u>Figure 1: Overview of the Unmet Transit Needs Timeline</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Figure 2: UTN Process Flowchart</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Figure 3: Total HTA Passengers 2007 - 2025</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Figure 4: HTA Ridership and CPH Enrollment</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Figure 5: Sensitivity of RTS Sunday Service to Span Times</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Figure 6: ETS Weekday Ridership by Hour</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Figure 7: RideHumboldt Flex Virtual Stops</u>	<u>20</u>

## 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. 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 2026-27 HCAOG Board finding:

The HCAOG Board adopted Resolution 26- on May 16, 2024 finding that...

## List of Acronyms

	<b>Acronym</b>
Arcata and Mad River Transit System	A&MRTS
Cal Poly Humboldt	CPH
Census Designated Place	CDP
College of the Redwoods	CR
Dial-A-Ride	DAR
Eureka Transit System	ETS
Fiscal Year	FY
Humboldt County Association of Governments	HCAOG
Humboldt Transit Authority	HTA
Joint powers authority	JPA
Local Transportation Fund	LTF
McKinleyville, California	McK
Redwood Transit System	RTS
Report of Findings	ROF
Social Services Transportation Advisory Council	SSTAC
Southern Humboldt Intercity	SHI
State of California Department of Finance	DOF
State Transit Assistance fund	STA
Transportation Development Act, California State	TDA
Transportation Development Plan <sup>1</sup>	TDP
U.S. Census American Community Survey	ACS
Unmet Transit Need	UTN

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<sup>1</sup> Five-Year Transit Development Plan 2023-2028 Final Report prepared for the HCAOG by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., [https://www.hcaog.net/sites/default/files/humboldt\\_county\\_transit\\_development\\_plan\\_-\\_final\\_report\\_no\\_appendices\\_compressed\\_0.pdf](https://www.hcaog.net/sites/default/files/humboldt_county_transit_development_plan_-_final_report_no_appendices_compressed_0.pdf)

## 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.

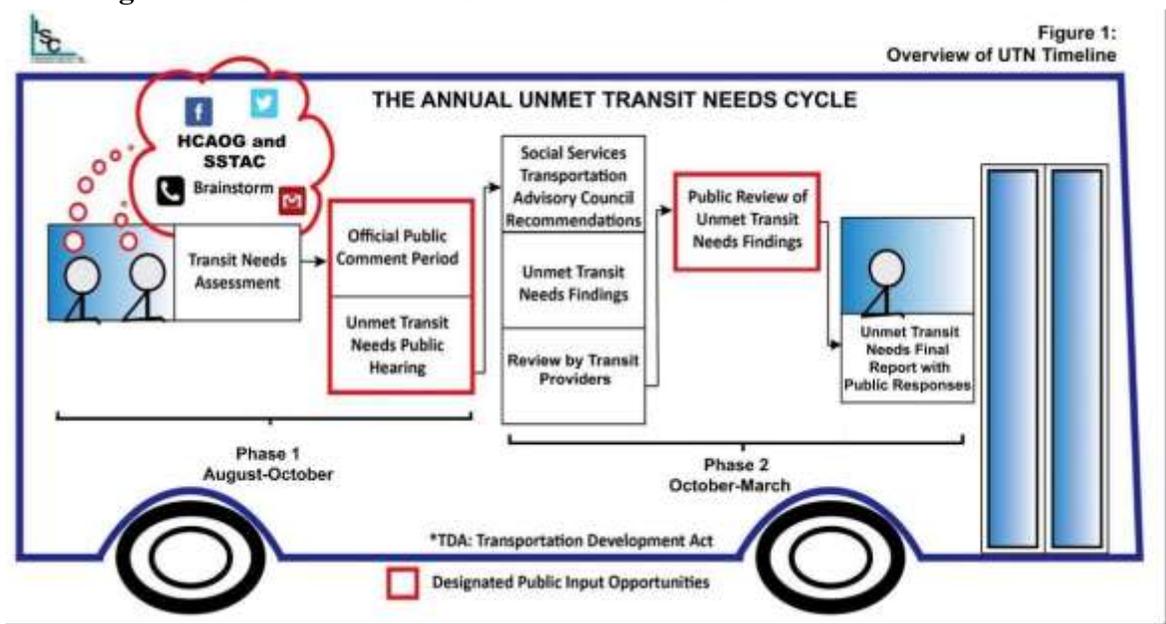
The transportation planning agency is required to:

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

Unmet transit needs and criteria are defined in the HCAOG TDA Rules and Regulations. The TDA Rules have periodically been updated to make slight revisions to the definitions and criteria. The current

### 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 canceled 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:

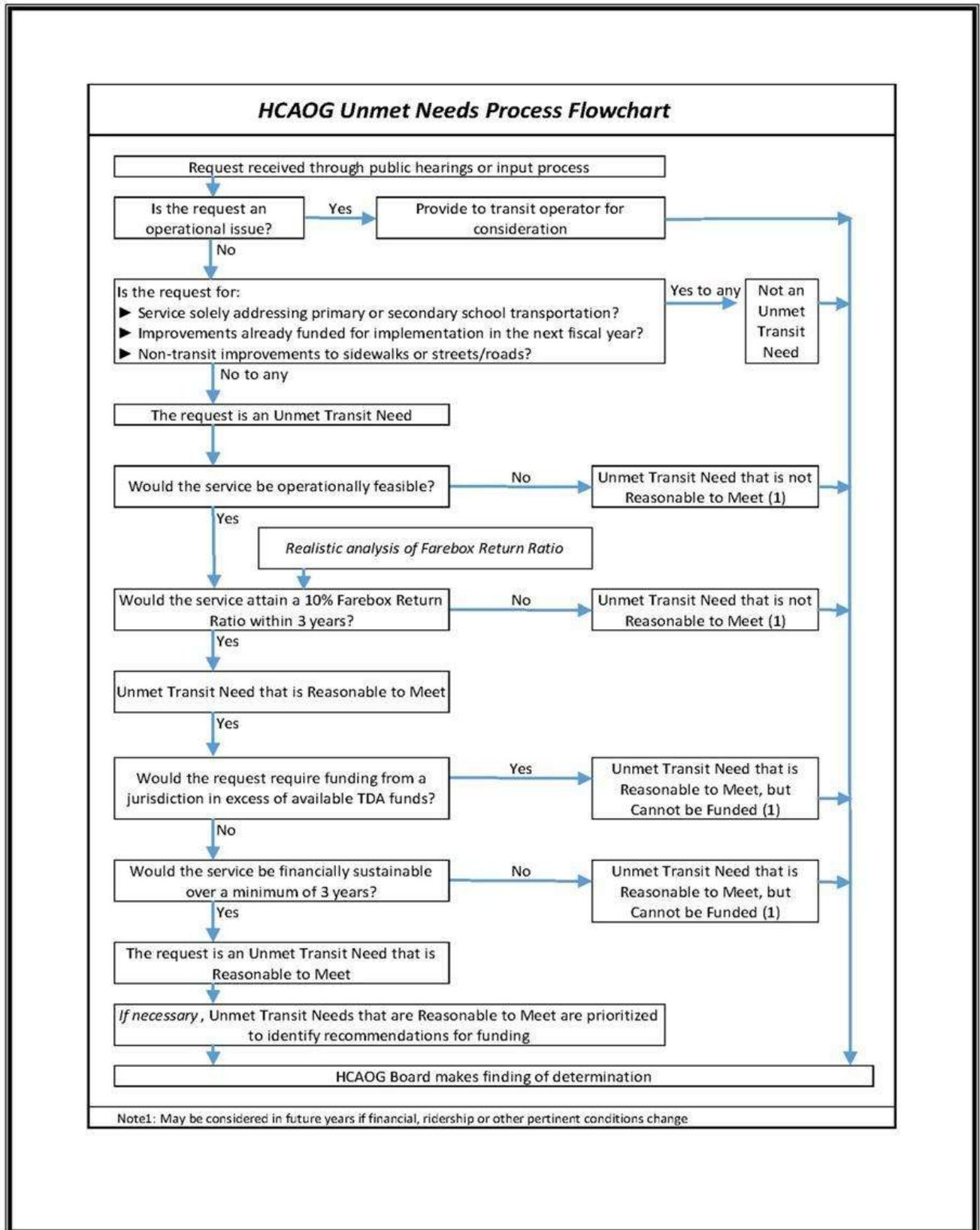
- (1) there are no unmet transit needs;
- (2) there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet; or
- (3) there are unmet transit needs, including needs that are reasonable to meet.

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:

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**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, and Fortuna. The cities of Trinidad, Blue Lake and Rio Dell as well as unincorporated county areas of Garberville and Willow Creek are also served by the public transit system. Ferndale does not have public transit.

**Table 1: Population Estimates for 2025**

Jurisdiction	2024 Population Estimate	2025 Population Estimate	Percentage Change	Percent of Countywide Population
Arcata	18,691	19,001	1.7	14.2%
Blue Lake	1,144	1,136	-0.7	0.8%
Eureka	26,172	26,122	-0.2	19.5%
Ferndale	1,367	1,361	-0.4	1.0%
Fortuna	12,245	12,198	-0.4	9.1%
Rio Dell	3,255	3,232	-0.7	2.4%
Trinidad	298	296	-0.7	0.2%
Unincorporated County	70,716	70,471	-0.3	52.7%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>133,888</b>	<b>133,817</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	

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	19.8%	15.7%
Very Low Income	Income below the poverty line	18.7%	12.0%
Disabled	People who may be unable to operate vehicles or utilize public transportation due to physical/mental disabilities	18.0%	11.6%
Limited Car Access	Zero vehicle households	6.1%	7.1%

\*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.

Demographic data indicate that Humboldt County continues to have a larger share of older adults and persons with disabilities compared to the statewide population, while its poverty rate remains substantially higher than the state average. Countywide, 19.8% of residents are age 65 or over (compared to 15.7% statewide), 18.7% live below the poverty level (compared to 12.0% statewide), and 18.9% of the population is living with a disability (compared to 11.6% statewide). The Cities of Blue Lake (38.4%), Trinidad (37.5%), and Ferndale (36.0%) have the highest percentages of residents age 65 or over, and several jurisdictions show notable increases in the 65+ population compared to the prior ACS cycle, reinforcing long-term demand for accessible transit options. Arcata has the highest poverty rate at 27.2%, followed by Fortuna (18.2%), Eureka (18.1%), and Rio Dell (17.6%); although poverty rates have declined modestly in some jurisdictions, they remain well above the statewide average. The high concentration of students attending Cal Poly Humboldt contributes to Arcata’s elevated poverty rate.

**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 <sup>+</sup>
Arcata	18,607	2,643	14.2%	11.8%
Blue Lake	982	377	<b>38.4%</b>	26.2%
Eureka	26,010	4,340	16.7%	17.0%
Ferndale	1,552	558	<b>36.0%</b>	<b>31.2%</b>
Fortuna	12,326	2,134	17.3%	16.5%
Rio Dell	3,349	526	15.7%	17.1%
Trinidad	347	130	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>29.2%</b>
McK. CDP	17,113	3,271	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>19.0%</b>
Countywide	134,541	26,660	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>
California	39,287,377	6,158,371	15.7%	14.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP05 2020-2024\* and 2019-2023<sup>+</sup> 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 <sup>+</sup>
Arcata	16,886	4,593	<b>27.2%</b>	<b>34.5%</b>
Blue Lake	936	151	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>24.4%</b>
Eureka	25,725	4,655	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>
Ferndale	1,552	201	13.0%	12.0%
Fortuna	12,245	2,225	18.2%	14.6%
Rio Dell	3,349	589	17.6%	10.0%
Trinidad	347	48	13.8%	14.0%
McK. CDP	17,013	2,409	14.2%	14.1%
Countywide	131,689	24,587	<b>18.7%</b>	<b>19.8%</b>
California	38,582,413	4,632,248	12.0%	12.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table S1701 2020-2024 and 2019-2023 + American Community Survey 5 -year Poverty

**Table 5: Disability Status Estimates**

Jurisdiction	Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population*	Population with a Disability*	% Population with a Disability*	Previous year % Population with a Disability <sup>+</sup>
Arcata	18,606	3,051	16.4%	13.9%
Blue Lake	982	260	26.5%	16.6%
Eureka	25,618	5,610	21.9%	20.2%
Ferndale	1,552	302	19.5%	19.1%
Fortuna	12,236	2,149	17.6%	18.6%
Rio Dell	3,349	789	23.6%	16.7%
Trinidad	347	62	17.9%	19.8%
McKinleyville	17,002	2,930	17.2%	15.5%
Countywide	133,650	25,206	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>17.9%</b>
California	38,818,413	4,497,522	11.6%	11.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP02 2020-2024\* and 2019-2023+ American Community Survey 5 -year Selected Social Characteristics Estimates.

All jurisdictions report disability rates significantly above the state average, with Blue Lake (26.5%), Rio Dell (23.6%), and Eureka (21.9%) among the highest. In several communities—particularly Blue Lake, Rio Dell, and Eureka—elevated rates of seniors, poverty, and disability overlap, reflecting compounding vulnerability and increased transit dependency. The City of Eureka also has the highest percentage of carless households at 11.7%, well above both the countywide (6.1%) and statewide (7.1%) rates, indicating a comparatively greater need for fixed-route and demand-response transit services. Given Eureka’s larger population base, these percentages translate into the greatest concentration of transit-dependent residents in the region. Taken together, these indicators demonstrate that transit in Humboldt County functions as essential mobility infrastructure for seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income households, particularly in Eureka and smaller jurisdictions with aging populations.

**Table 6: Carless Household Estimates**

Jurisdiction	Total Occupied Housing Units*	No Vehicle Available*	% Households With No Vehicle Available*	Previous year % Households With No Vehicle <sup>+</sup>
Arcata	7,884	603	7.6%	7.3%
Blue Lake	575	32	5.6%	7.8%
Eureka	10,392	1,220	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>
Ferndale	680	53	7.8%	3.6%
Fortuna	4,925	277	5.6%	6.5%
Rio Dell	1,480	104	7.0%	5.0%
Trinidad	174	4	2.3%	2.0%
McKinleyville	6,797	197	2.9%	4.6%
Countywide	54,992	3,330	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>
California	13,548,091	959,291	7.1%	6.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP04 2020-2024\* and 2019-2023+ American Community Survey 5 -year

## Existing Transit Service

Humboldt County benefits from a diverse network of public agencies, tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and private providers that fund and/or operate transportation services. Transit services are delivered through a coordinated mix of fixed-route, intercity, demand-response, and specialized transportation programs.

Transit service is concentrated in the greater Humboldt Bay area, where population density, employment centers, Cal Poly Humboldt, and medical facilities generate the highest demand. However, public transportation also serves more rural and remote communities, including Blue Lake, McKinleyville, Willow Creek, Hoopa, Orleans, 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, Arcata & Mad River Transit Service, Eureka Transit Service, North State Express 299 (formerly the Willow Creek Intercity), Southern Humboldt Intercity, 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), Cher-Ae Heights Casino Shuttle.

Interregional: Amtrak, Redwood Coast Transit, North State Express: 101 and North State Express 299. (In June 2024, Greyhound discontinued service to Humboldt County.)

The Redwood Transit System (RTS), Eureka Transit Service (ETS), and Arcata & Mad River Transit System (A&MRTS) are fixed-route public transportation systems. Fixed-route service operates along prescribed routes according to published schedules and serves designated stops. The North State Express 299 (formerly the Willow Creek Intercity) and Southern Humboldt Intercity (SHI) routes are rural intercity bus services that connect outlying communities with the Humboldt Bay area. These routes provide essential mobility for residents in rural and tribal communities and operate significant closed-door segments consistent with intercity service definitions.

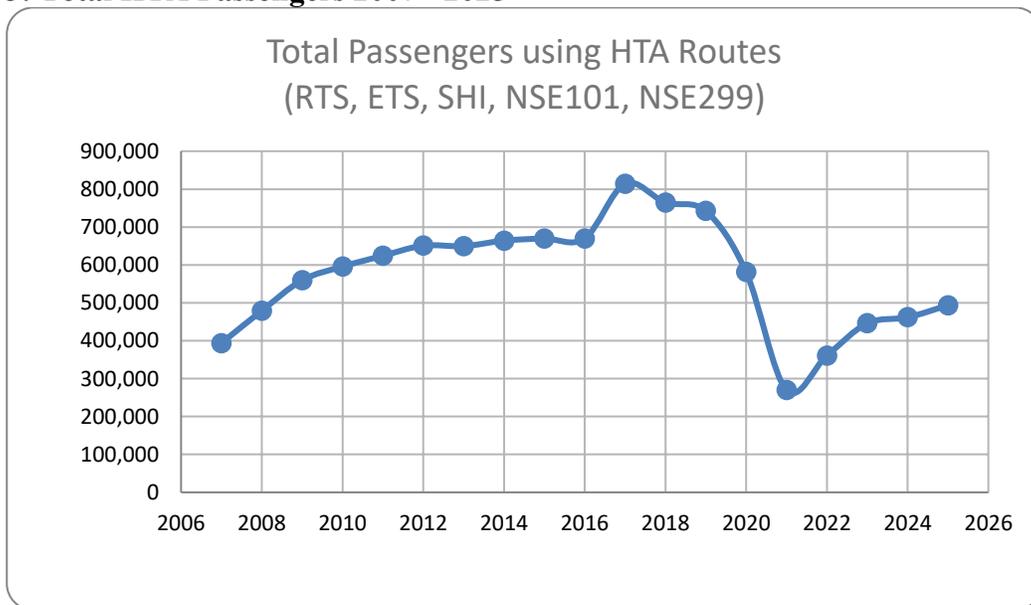
Dial-A-Ride provides ADA complementary paratransit service within federally required service areas and also operates beyond minimum ADA boundaries. Paratransit is available to eligible riders whose disabilities prevent them from using fixed-route service. Federal law (Americans with Disabilities Act) requires public transit operators to provide complementary paratransit

service within ¾-mile corridors of fixed routes. Humboldt’s Dial-A-Ride service currently extends beyond these minimum requirements.

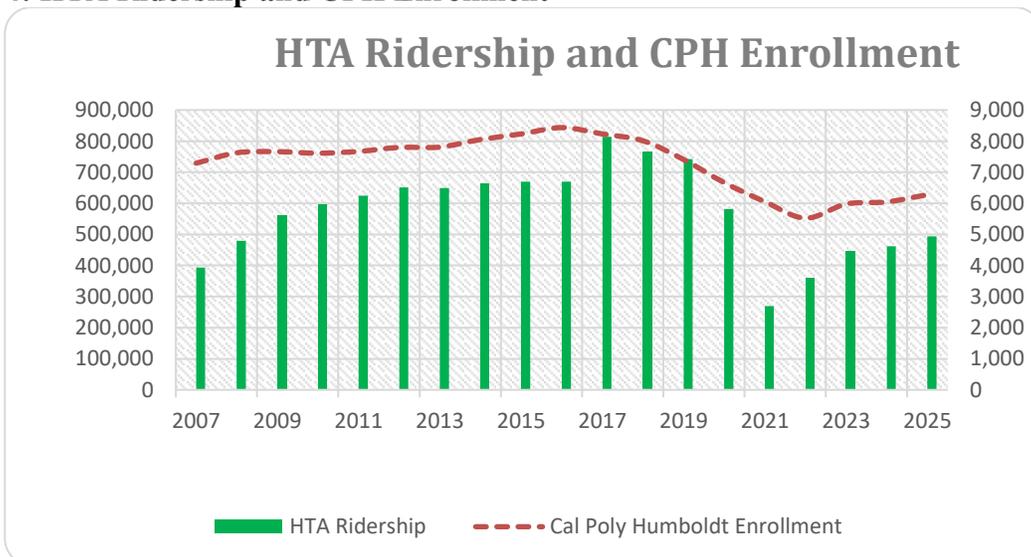
In addition to public fixed-route and paratransit services, Humboldt County residents may access private taxi services, medical transportation providers, and nonprofit or volunteer driver programs for medical and essential trips.

More detailed information regarding system performance, service areas, and funding structure is provided in the Humboldt County Transit Development Plan and related coordination planning documents. The figures below illustrate the long-term trend in overall transit ridership as well as the positive correlation between regional transit ridership and Cal Poly Humboldt enrollment.

**Figure 3: Total HTA Passengers 2007 - 2025**



**Figure 4: HTA Ridership and CPH Enrollment**



## **Unmet Transit Needs Comments, Assessment, Findings**

HCAOG published the UTN public meeting dates in the North Coast Journal newspaper, 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 32 survey responses were received. Although a Spanish language survey was developed and distributed, no responses were received in Spanish. Several comments were made during the unmet transit needs public hearings through individuals and by elected representatives who had heard from their constituents. Emailed comments were also forwarded from HTA. HCAOG tabled at the Independent Living Expo in September 2025 to gather information on unmet needs.

All comments received are summarized in Appendix A. The comments are grouped into the following categories using HCAOG's adopted definitions provided earlier in this report and themes observed in the compiled data:

- Potential Unmet Need
- Bus Stops and/or Shelters
- General
- Microtransit
- Operational

Of the 59 total comments, 31 were initially determined to meet the definition of an Unmet Transit Need. Those individual comments were grouped together for a total of six 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 B.

All comments were forwarded to the Humboldt Transit Authority for notes. Comments were analyzed to weigh the presence of community support by having received a minimum of two separate comments requesting service. There were six stand-alone comments requesting service that were therefore not considered as unmet needs.

## Assessment of Unmet Needs

This section will provide justification for the determination of each comment that met the definition of an unmet need.

### 1. Sunday Service on RTS

Sunday service was the most common unmet need this year, with at least six separate commenters noting how they needed

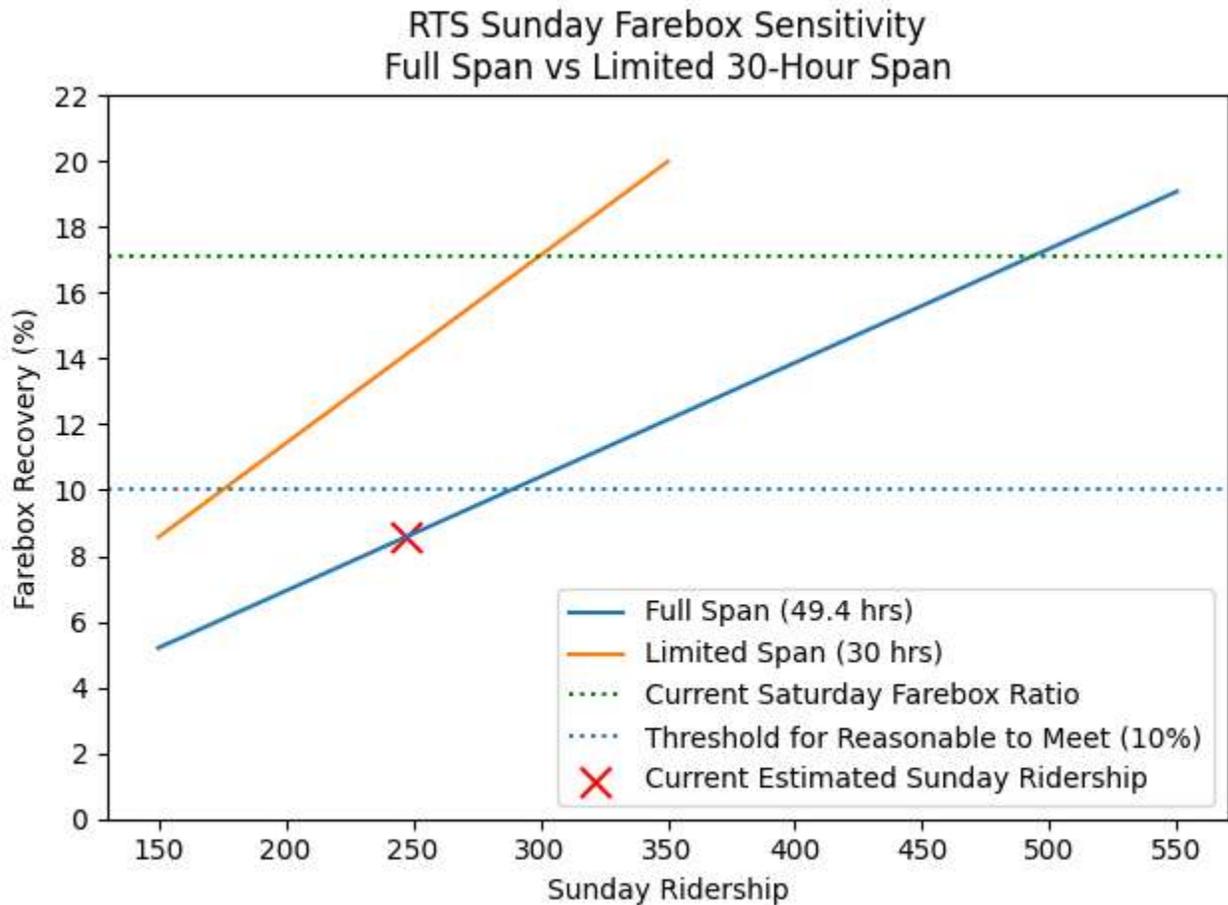
Data from HTA’s June 2025 Board report show 494 average daily Saturday ridership on Redwood Transit System. Based on FY 19-20 records for RTS (the last full year in which Sunday service ran), there were 52% as many riders on Sundays as on Saturdays which translates to an estimated 247 average daily Sunday riders. At an operating cost per vehicle hour of \$148.85, average fare of \$2.25, and equivalent Saturday/Holiday schedule of 49.4 operating hours, the total daily operating cost for Sunday service is \$7,353. This equates to a marginal farebox return ratio of 8.6% and a subsidy per passenger of \$27.20.

The “optimistic” scenario included below is a thought exercise to consider potential service effectiveness. The aim is to achieve a minimum of 8 riders per service hour. If the span of service on Sundays was reduced to 30 hours and ridership was assumed to stay at 247, the service would be at a 14% marginal farebox recovery with 8.2 passengers per hour and a subsidy per passenger of \$15.53. Unfortunately, this scenario is not realistic as reducing service hours by 40% would result in a decrease of anticipated ridership. Another optimistic scenario one could imagine is keeping the 49.4 service hours but projecting that Sunday ridership would be 70% of the Saturday ridership at 347 riders, which would bring the farebox return up to 12%. Figure 5 is illustrative of how the span of service (operating cost) relates to how quickly (the slope of the line) the farebox return is met as the number of passengers grows.

**Table 7. 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 Sat. Overall	494 riders/day	494 trips/day x \$2.55 avg fare = \$1,260	\$148.85/hr x 49.4 hours = \$7,353	\$1,260 / \$7,353 = 17.1%	(7,353-1,260) / 494 = \$12.33	494 / 49.4 = 10.0
RTS Sun. Projected	494 * 0.5 = 247 trips/day	247 trips/day x \$2.55 avg fare = \$630	\$148.85/hr x 49.4 hours = \$7,353/day	630 / 7,353 = 8.6%	(7353-630) / 247 = \$27.20	247 / 49.4 = 5.0
RTS Sun. Optimistic	247 riders	247 x \$2.55 = \$630	\$148.85/hr x 30 hours = \$4,466	630 / 4,466 = 14%	\$4,466 - \$630 / 247 = \$15.53	247 / 30 = 8.2
RTS Sun. (TDP)	Annual ridership 5,700	\$13,400	Annual operating cost \$135,300	9.9%	\$22.13	6.1

**Figure 5: Sensitivity of RTS Sunday Service to Span Times**



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 well above the required 10% in order to be considered a viable route. The projected Sunday farebox return is just 8.6% 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.

**Recommended Finding:** This is an Unmet Need that is **not** reasonable to meet **and** cannot be funded.

## **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. The FY 25-26 Report found that more frequent service on RTS is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but found there was not funding to support it. In FY 26-27, HTA is working to streamline the RTS trunk line to provide faster and more convenient service to passengers within reason of the available budget. While a 15-minute peak hour frequency is desired, for the purposes of meeting this need for faster travel times, the HTA streamlining of RTS with the aim of getting to 30 minute headway is considered sufficient.

**Recommended Finding:** HTA is actively seeking to streamline the trunk line service to improve frequency. This work is scheduled for the next fiscal year and is therefore not analyzed further as an unmet need for the purposes of this report.

## **3. Later night weekend service on RTS.**

**Response:** Extending the RTS commuter line hours on the weekends to accommodate recreational trips is a frequent request. Currently, NB RTS buses depart 5<sup>th</sup> & D in Eureka at 6:03, 7:46 and 8:42 PM, arriving at the final stop of McKinleyville High School at 6:54, 8:31 and 9:27. (The weekday schedule has one additional run between the same stops from 9:37 to 10:27). Southbound options are slightly more limited between McKinleyville/Arcata and Eureka.

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).

**Finding:** This is an Unmet Need that is **not** reasonable to meet **and** cannot be funded.

## **4. Provide later weekday service on ETS.**

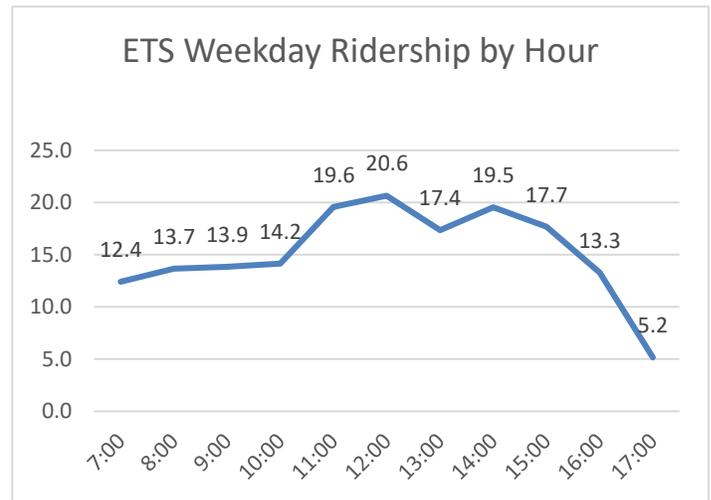
**Response:** HTA provided data for average ridership by hour averaged across the four ETS weekday routes for the seven-month period from July 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024. This data and findings are carried forward as the ETS ridership has remained fairly stable with about 120,000 passengers annually in the year ending in June 2024 and in June 2025. 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 8. ETS Weekday Ridership by Hour**

July 2023 - Jan 2024			
147			
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 5: ETS Weekday Ridership by Hour**



**5. 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 with a new fixed-route or microtransit service. The City of Ferndale may elect to encourage a public ridesharing system or private taxi voucher program to support providing rides to those who need help with transportation from Ferndale to access services in Eureka / Fortuna, or for those in the Humboldt Bay area who want to attend events and shop in Ferndale.

**6. Service on Old Arcata Road (Indianola – Eureka, Arcata – Bayside).**

**Response:** Several people requested service along Old Arcata Road. The requests were for various trips including Indianola to Eureka and Bayside to Arcata. Fixed route services along Old Arcata Road are not reasonable to meet due to low projected ridership. However, the current rollout of RideHumboldt Flex, the microtransit service that is a result of opening Dial-a-Ride vehicles to general public on-demand shared rides, has several virtual stops along Old Arcata Road such as Myrtle Ave & Flying Ranch Road, the Indianola Market, and the Jacoby Creek School (see Figure 6 image of virtual stops added to The microtransit service therefore fills this need.

Some comments about microtransit requested longer hours. The current hours are Monday – Friday 8am – 6pm. It is premature given the pilot nature of the service to consider expansion, but as the service matures HCAOG and HTA will continue to monitor the data and look for opportunities to expand coverage.

**Recommended Finding:** This need is currently being met.

**Individual Comments**

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

- Routes to recreational areas (Prairie Creek, Big Lagoon)
- Service to West End/Glendale
- Service down South G Street (met with microtransit)
- Eureka Transit additional Cutten service on Saturdays
- Express service to the airport
- Expanded service on SHI (earlier morning SHI run for Miranda to Garberville and mid-afternoon NB run)



Figure 1: Additional stops added to

**Figure 6: RideHumboldt Flex Virtual Stops** Source:

HTA February 2026 Board packet.

## **Prior Year Findings**

The 2025/26 Report of Findings identified the following requests as unmet needs that are reasonable to meet but cannot be funded.

1. More frequent service on RTS.
2. Provide express service on RTS.
3. More frequent service on A&MRTS.
4. Later night Saturday service on RTS.
5. Sunday service on RTS.
6. Expanded ETS service to Greater Eureka, specifically Myrtle town.
7. Expanded service in Blue Lake.
8. Expanded A&MRTS service to South Arcata.
9. A&MRTS Service to Bayside.
10. Later service on Southern Humboldt Intercity.

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 full City of Arcata and the City of Eureka allocations are claimed by the Humboldt Transit Authority. 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 9 for a summary of FY 25-26 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 10 provides FY 2026-2027 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. The allocation table includes rollover from unclaimed LTF balances of FY 24-25.

**Table 9: LTF Funds Allocated by Jurisdiction, FY 2026-27**

\*Apportionment estimate includes rollover funds from FY 24-25

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Dept. of Finance Population Projection</b>	<b>% of Total Population</b>	<b>FYE 2024-25 Fund Balance</b>	<b>Estimated FY 2026-27 Apportionment</b>
Arcata	19,001	14.20%	423,856.81	1,064,717.02
Blue Lake	1,136	0.85%	1,117.35	39,432.03
Eureka	26,122	19.52%	184,545.22	1,065,580.45
Ferndale	1,361	1.02%	299.22	46,202.63
Fortuna	12,198	9.12%	2,674.25	414,084.85
Rio Dell	3,232	2.42%	22,794.00	131,801.96
Trinidad	296	0.22%	11,855.97	21,839.37
Humboldt County	70,471	52.66%	390,934.31	2,767,759.73
<b>Total</b>	<b>133,817</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$ 1,038,077.13</b>	<b>5,551,418.03</b>

“DOF” = California Department of Finance

**Table 10: LTF Fund Use FY 25-26**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>FY 25-26 Estimate</b>	<b>Transit</b>	<b>Streets &amp; Roads</b>	<b>Bike/Ped</b>
City of Arcata/ A&MRTS	698,212.00	698,212.00	-	-
City of Blue Lake	43,271.00	-	43,271.00	-
City of Eureka/HTA	981,903.00	981,903.00	-	-
City of Ferndale	51,067.00	-	51,067.00	-
City of Fortuna	458,733.00	467,954.00	29,681.00	9,175.00
City of Rio Dell	122,055.00	64,179.00	57,876.00	-
City of Trinidad**	11,072.00	6,386.00	4,686.00	
County of Humboldt	2,646,200	2,600,000	-	46,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 5,012,512.00</b>	<b>\$ 4,979,024</b>	<b>\$ 162,853</b>	<b>\$ 9,175</b>

## **Appendix A: Summary of Public Input**

**(To be completed)**

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## Appendix B: Recent History of Unmet Needs Requests

Hearing Year/Finding	HCAOG Response or Action
<b>FY 2015/16</b>	
Service to Tish Non Community Village Service on Old Arcata Road	Both services began, underperformed, and were discontinued.
<b>FY 2016/17</b>	
Fieldbrook / Glendale / Korbel / Blue Lake routes considered with survey	Not reasonable to meet based on farebox return.
<b>FY 2017/18</b>	
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
<b>FY 2018/19</b>	
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.
<b>FY 2019/20</b>	
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.
<b>FY 2020/21</b>	
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.
<b>FY 2022/23</b>	
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.
<b>FY 2023/24</b>	
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.
<b>FY 2024/25</b>	
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.
<b>FY 2025/26</b>	
Report listed eleven needs, including express and more frequent service, as reasonable to meet but that they could not be funded	The findings highlight the structural lack of funding for new or expanded transit service which has needed additional state funding simply to keep up with the rising costs of existing operations.