

Unmet Transit Needs Draft Report of Findings

March 2025



Humboldt County Association of Governments

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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. 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 2025-26 HCAOG Board Finding:

[placeholder for adopted resolution number and HCAOG findings]

List of Acronyms

	Acronym
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 ¹	TDP
U.S. Census American Community Survey	ACS
Unmet Transit Need	UTN

¹ 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

Transportation Development Act

The California State Transportation Development Act (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 to be 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.

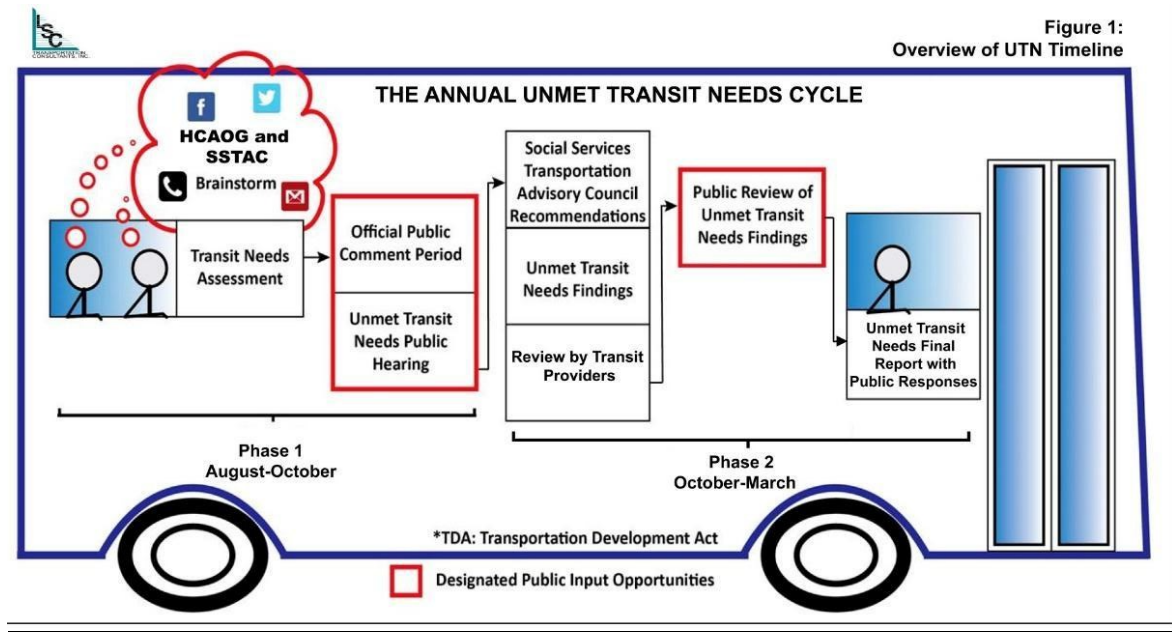
The transportation planning agency is required to:

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 with 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 October 2023, the 2023-2028 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:

- 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/2023-07/sstac_strategic_plan_final_nov_2017_3.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. The Triennial Performance Audit recommended HCAOG consider revisions to the Unmet Needs Criteria. The SSTAC discussed these proposed changes and made the addition that an unmet need should demonstrate community support defined by a minimum of two requests. In addition, criteria number two was reworded to emphasize that estimated subsidy per passenger trip and passengers per vehicle hour of service will be considered.

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:

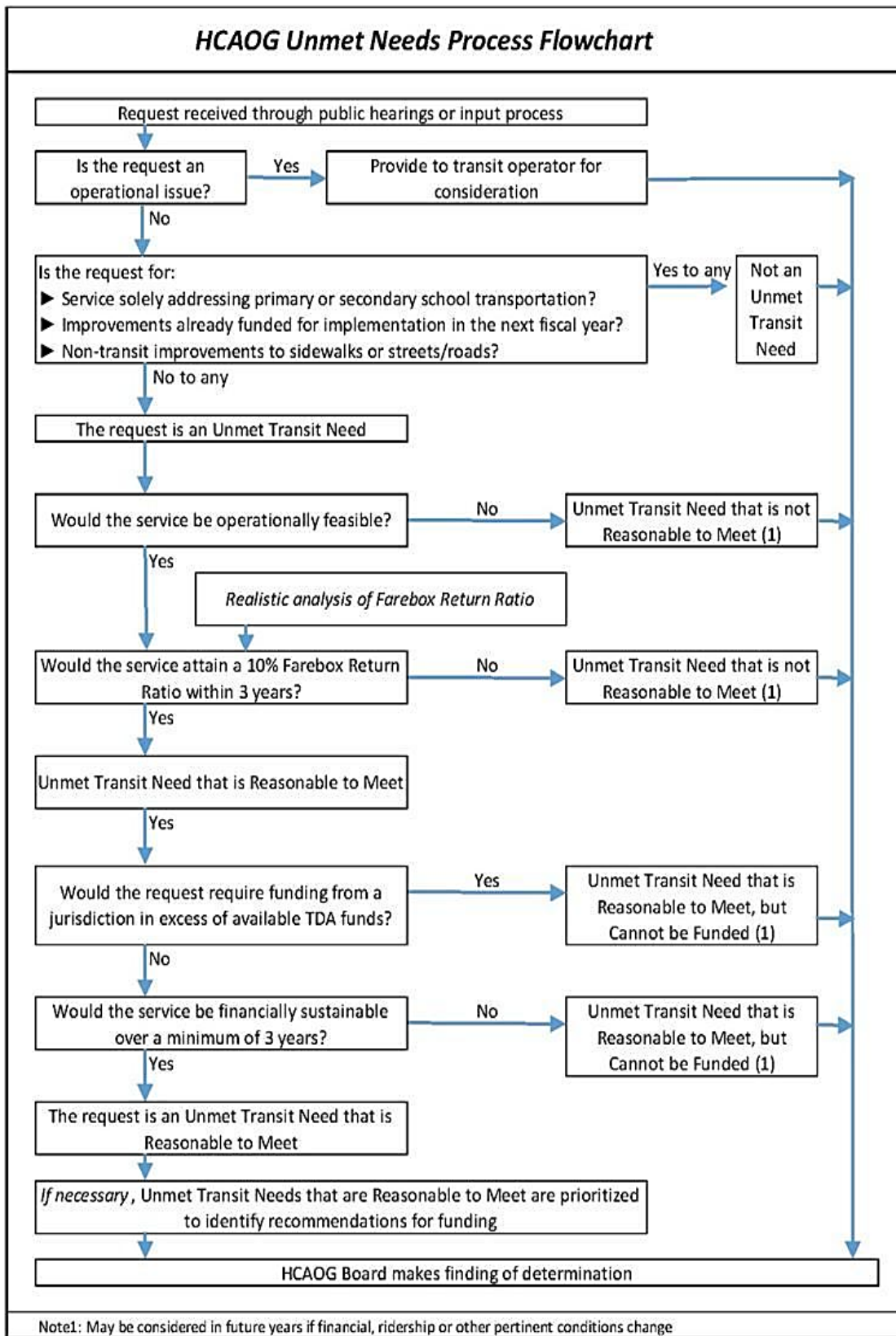
- (1) there are no unmet transit needs;
- (2) there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet; or
- (3) there are unmet transit needs, including needs that are reasonable to meet.

Pursuant to subdivision 99401.5 (e) of the Public Utilities Code, 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.

Due to COVID-19, the Transportation Development Act’s requirement that transit operators receiving LTF funds meet a minimum fare-box has been paused. There is an effort underway at the State to remove this requirement altogether. It is noted that because the locally-adopted reasonable to meet definition includes a 10 percent marginal farebox return ratio within two years fare-box will continue to be a criteria applied to the reasonable to meet analysis until such time as the locally adopted definition is updated to remove this criteria.

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 2024 estimated population by jurisdiction.

Table 1: Population Estimates for 2024

Jurisdiction	2023 Population Estimate	2024 Population Estimate	Percentage Change	Percent of Countywide Population
Arcata	18,830	18,540	-1.5	14%
Blue Lake	1,164	1,149	-1.3	1%
Eureka	26,283	26,073	-0.8	20%
Ferndale	1,376	1,356	-1.5	1%
Fortuna	12,318	12,181	-1.1	9%
Rio Dell	3,290	3,241	-1.5	2%
Trinidad	298	294	-1.3	0%
All of unincorporated County	71,038	70,266	-1.1	53%
Total Population	134,597	133,100	-1.1	100%

Source: California 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 who 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	20.6%	16.2%
Very Low Income	Income below the poverty line	16.2%	12.0%
Disabled	People who may be unable to operate vehicles or utilize public transportation due to physical/mental disabilities	18.6%	11.7%
Limited Car Access	Zero vehicle households	6.9%	7.3%

*Various Census and American Community Survey sources. See detailed statistics below.

For the purposes of this report, seniors 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, 20.6% of the population is age 65 or over, 16.2% of the population is below the poverty level, and 18.6% are living with a disability. These are all significantly higher than the respective statewide statistics. The cities of Trinidad, Ferndale, and Blue Lake have the highest percentage of the population who are age 65 or over. The cities of Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka and the unincorporated County have the highest rates of people with low-incomes, ranging between 17% and 29% of the population below the poverty level. 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 relative to the state average. 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 Yrs. & Older*	Percentage 65 Yrs. & Older*	Previous Year % of Persons 65 Years & Older⁺
Arcata	18,578	2,440	13.1%	11.8%
Blue Lake	997	281	28.2%	26.2%
Eureka	26,302	4,178	15.9%	17.0%
Ferndale	1,525	529	34.7%	31.2%
Fortuna	12,413	2,042	16.5%	16.5%
Rio Dell	3,371	544	16.1%	17.1%
Trinidad	424	147	34.7%	29.2%
McK. CDP	17,152	3,061	17.8%	16.5%
Countywide	133,985	27,535	20.6%	18.9%
California	38,965,193	6,311,919	16.2%	14.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP05 2023* and 2023⁺American Community Survey 5-year Demographic and Housing Estimates. “McK. CDP” refers to McKinleyville Census Designated Place.

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	16,966	5,019	29.6%	34.5%
Blue Lake	952	242	25.4%	24.4%
Eureka	25,996	4,563	17.6%	19.3%
Ferndale	1,525	201	13.2%	12.0%
Fortuna	12,309	2,069	16.8%	14.6%
Rio Dell	3,371	430	12.8%	10.0%
Trinidad	424	64	15.1%	14.0%
McK. CDP	17,102	2,532	14.8%	14.1%
Countywide	131,319	21,283	16.2%	19.8%
California	38,249,686	4,588,687	12.0%	12.2%

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

Estimates. “McK. CDP” refers to McKinleyville Census Designated Place.

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	18,576	2,985	16.1%	13.9%
Blue Lake	997	175	17.6%	16.6%
Eureka	25,905	5416	20.9%	20.2%
Ferndale	1,525	335	22.0%	19.1%
Fortuna	12,311	2,315	18.8%	18.6%
Rio Dell	3,371	579	17.2%	16.7%
Trinidad	424	77	18.2%	19.8%
McK. CDP	17,063	2,946	17.3%	15.5%
Countywide	133,168	24,824	18.6%	17.9%
California	38,495,524	4,519,739	11.7%	11.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP02 2023* and 2023+ American Community Survey Selected Social Characteristics Estimates. “McK. CDP” refers to McKinleyville Census Designated Place.

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	7,660	559	7.3%	7.3%
Blue Lake	552	25	4.5%	7.8%
Eureka	10,735	1,208	11.3%	10.6%
Ferndale	680	53	7.8%	3.6%
Fortuna	4,854	316	6.5%	6.5 %
Rio Dell	1,370	50	3.6%	5.0%
Trinidad	207	4	1.9%	2.0%
McKinleyville	6,797	197	2.9%	4.6%
Countywide	56,130	3,895	6.9%	7.0%
California	13,699,816	993,781	7.3%	6.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table DP04 2023* and 2023+ 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, 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, Redwood Coast Transit, North State Express. In June 2024, Greyhound discontinued service to Humboldt county.

The Redwood and Eureka Transit Systems operated by 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. The Willow Creek and Southern Humboldt Intercity are 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 and are intercity transit services. 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 and Instagram), HCAOG created an online survey soliciting public input. The survey was available in English and Spanish. (With assistance of HTA, HCAOG advertised the availability of the Spanish language survey but it did not receive any responses.) A total of 77 responses to the English language survey were received. Public comments were received by staff

during the unmet transit needs public hearings and by staff via phone and email.

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
- Other

All received comments were forwarded to the transit operators. Similar to last year, comments were analyzed to weigh the presence of community support by having received a minimum of two separate comments requesting service. Of the 159 total comments received, 93 were found to potentially meet the definition of an Unmet Transit Need. Of those 92 comments, 59 were found to have similar themes and to have received more than one comment. Table 7 below provides counts of potential Unmet Transit Need comments received by theme and by a single operator/route. Thirty-five comments were found to be stand-alone comments requesting service that were not evaluated further because the threshold was not met. Those 59 Unmet Needs comments were then examined to see if they met the adopted criteria used to determine if the UTN is reasonable to meet. The findings discussed in detail below are summarized in Appendix B.

Assessment of Unmet Needs

This section will provide a justification for the determination of each comment that met the definition of an unmet need. Table 7 shows a summary of key performance indicators.

Table 7: Summary of Unmet Transit Need Performance

Service Addition	Estimated Daily Riders	Marginal Farebox Return Ratio	Operating Subsidy Per Passenger Trip	Passenger-Trips Per Vehicle Service Hour
RTS Standards (TDP rec.)	1,095 (weekdays)	10% min (current 14.81%)	\$4.66 max (current -\$6.76)	11 min - 15 (8.98 current)
RTS 30-minute peak hour frequency McK. to Arcata	153	21%	\$8.26	14.3
RTS express McK. – CR/Fortuna (per TDP)	131	17%	\$11.40	10.4
RTS Sunday service	237	11%	\$15.53	7.53
RTS late-night Saturday service Arcata – Eureka (short)	132	10.6%	\$16.86	4.9

1. Changes to Redwood Transit Service span of service.

This would provide service later in the evening on weekdays.

Response: Multiple comments were received requesting that RTS service hours be extended further into the evening. As of February 19, 2024, the Redwood Transit System began operating earlier and later service. The new schedule, active as of February 19, 2024, adds two northbound runs. One begins at Fortuna Overlook at 7:37 pm and ends at Valley West at 9:10 pm, and the other leaves Scotia at 8:30 pm and arrives at McKinleyville High at 10:27 pm. Southbound, one new route will depart from the Airport Terminal at 8:02 pm and arrive at the Fortuna Park and Ride at 9:46 pm, and the other departs Trinidad at 8:10 pm and arrives at Fortuna Park & Ride at 10:10 pm.

RTS used to operate an earlier morning and a later evening run prior to the COVID-19 disruption of service. As ridership levels and driver recruitment have improved, Humboldt Transit Authority is able to begin implementing the expanded schedule but the need for funding. A significant challenge to implementing schedule changes is hiring, training and retaining new bus drivers. Increasing driver salaries have led to new hires in previous years, but to retain drivers the shifts must involve reasonable hours. Some schedules involve blocks that require split shifts, where a driver may work two four-hour blocks separated by a long break in the middle of the day.

Recommended Finding: This is not an unmet need because beginning in February 2024, transit service began operating later into the evening on weekdays.

2. More frequent service on RTS.²

This request would provide more frequent service on weekdays on RTS.

Response: More frequent service on RTS in general is often requested from residents spanning the communities of Scotia and Trinidad. This covers all of the members of the joint powers authority (JPA) that operates and governs HTA, the operator of RTS. All JPA members use nearly 50% or more of their LTF allocations for transit as shown in Table 12: below. This year a number of comments requested an increased frequency of transit to and from Trinidad so residents could reach other communities; two commenters requested more frequency service between Arcata, and the College of the Redwoods. RTS service between Arcata and Eureka and to CR currently runs on a 30-minute frequency during peak hours, while the RTS mainline between McKinleyville and Arcata operates on an hourly headway. Due to the higher population of McKinleyville (approximately 17,152 persons according to the 2023 American Community Survey), increasing the frequency between McKinleyville and Arcata is projected to exceed the minimum required farebox return ratio. On the other hand, it may be more challenging to meet the farebox ratio with change for more frequent service to the smaller outlying communities due to smaller populations. However, at the November 2024 Trinidad hearing, two individuals commented on the need for more frequent service to/from Trinidad.

The RTS route's current performance metrics are summarized below based on HTA's Comparative Performance Activity Reports of June 2024 and December 2024.

Average Daily Weekday Ridership:

1,095 number of RTS riders per day (avg.) or 21,900 per month

Collected Fares Per Month:

$(1,095 \text{ riders per day} \times \$2.00 = \$2,190) \times 20 \text{ weekdays} = \$443,800$

² To distinguish between "frequency" and "express": frequency is how often the bus comes; or in layperson's terms "how often the bus stops at my house". An express bus service is a fixed route that typically picks up passengers from suburban areas and takes them to a central business district in a city, with limited stops. An express service usually operates on a peak commuter time schedule, Monday through Friday.

Monthly Operating Cost:

$$(\$132.00 \text{ per hour (avg.)} \times 112 \text{ operating hours per day} = \$14,784) \times 20 \text{ days} \\ = \$295,680$$

Farebox Ratio:

$$\$43,800 \div \$295,680 = 14.81\%$$

Estimated Subsidy per Weekday Passenger:

$$(\$295,680 \text{ monthly operating costs} - \$443,800 \text{ monthly fares}) \\ \div 21,900 \text{ average monthly ridership} = -\$6.76$$

Last year's Report of Findings (ROF) analyzed the potential performance of additional RTS bus routes from the Arcata-Eureka Airport (ACV) to Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle (CPH) in response to transit requests for increased frequency. Although the area reviewed is a subarea of the greater RTS service area, it does provide some insights: From last year's report

HTA provided data for average daily boardings and alightings, which showed a high use of RTS to board within McKinleyville and to travel to Arcata with 153 boardings at the McKinleyville and Valley West stops, with 95 alightings at the Arcata stops. Further, the 2024-25 ROF assessed that ridership would be further increased by the elasticity factor associated with increasing headway from a 60-minute to a 30-minute frequency. The marginal operational costs for the 40-minute round trip were estimated to be \$1,600.80 for a farebox return of 21%. The estimated subsidy per passenger trip was \$8.26, which is lower than the current average for RTS.

HTA is in the process of implementing on-demand microtransit between McKinleyville and Arcata that is scheduled to begin next fiscal year. Implementation should alleviate some of the long transit times. However, the funding that supports the service is short term in nature and limits operation as pilot project. Moreover, the funding is unlikely to convert into a long-term sustained funding source, and does not satisfy the financially sustainable criteria of the reasonable to meet definition above.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but at this time sustained funding to support continuous operation has not been identified. While on-demand microtransit service between McKinleyville and Arcata is scheduled for implementation in the upcoming fiscal year, it is a pilot project and the funding is temporary, and does not meet the financially sustainable definition of reasonable to meet. To assist with forecasting potential ridership changes, especially for outlying JPA member communities, HCAOG recommends HTA periodically collect geo-tagged rider boarding counts to the extent feasible.

3. Provide express service on RTS.

This request would for the operation of an express service on weekdays on RTS.

Response: Six commenters identified the need for an express service on RTS to get between towns and major access points and destinations such as Cal Poly Humboldt and College of the Redwoods (CR) with fewer stops to decrease overall commute time. According to US Census data, 17,152 residents of McKinleyville commute from McKinleyville to Arcata, and 1,620 residents commute

from McKinleyville to Eureka.³ Many Cal Poly Humboldt and CR students, faculty and staff live in McKinleyville and are likely transit commuters. The 2023 TDP includes an analysis for the operation of a RTS express route from McKinleyville to CR. While the TDP data indicates a RTS express service would exceed the farebox ratio, the operation of a McKinleyville-CR Express would require \$463,400 in additional funding per year and the provision of two buses. Funding mechanisms, especially for operations, will need to be determined and secured.

Table 8: Excerpt from HCAOG 2023 Transportation Development Plan

Service	Ridership	Collected Fares	Annual Operating Cost	Farebox Ratio	Subsidy per passenger	Passenger / hour
McK – CR Express Service	Annual ridership of 33,500 = 131 daily average	\$78,800	\$463,400	17%	\$11.40	10.35

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded.

4. Dial-A-Ride Service.

Response: HTA administers ADA paratransit Dial-a-Ride (DAR) services for eligible passengers. The DAR services are operated by City Ambulance of Eureka under contract with HTA. Comments received relate to the availability of DAR and CAE, and that service levels have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Commenters requested additional capacity to use DAR and CAE to transport participants to their facilities. Also mentioned was the limited adult day health care (ADHC) bus service area. This in combination with capacity can limit the number of days ADHC participants can visit facilities. Another comment received was that ADHC participants are now transported on two or more buses with frequent stops which has increased travel times to an hour or more in both directions. A number of the comments received are sourced from the providers who provide services to DAR clients. In summary, commenters request that more resources be provided to the paratransit system.

Recommendation: This is not an Unmet Need because the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all fixed-route public transportation systems to provide paratransit service. HCAOG recommends that paratransit providers reach out to social service providers and their clients to obtain specifics on DAR service gaps and how best to address them. HCAOG can facilitate these communications as needed.

5. More frequent service on A&MRTS.

Several requests were received to increase the frequency of service provided by A&MRTS in Arcata.

Response: More frequent service on A&MRTS is often requested, particularly due to Cal Poly Humboldt students, staff, and faculty. Several requests pointed to the need for more frequent service in Arcata, notably during peak travel times. Another commenter requested that the frequency of

³ Analysis performed using the US Census <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>, accessed February 25, 2025. The On The Map's most current jobs data for Humboldt county is 2022.

A&MRTS service needs to be maintained during Cal Poly Humboldt (CPH) breaks. HTA and A&MRTS staff commented that the Red and Gold routes do not decrease service between CPH semesters, and they now run the Red and Gold routes, Monday through Friday (in the past, A&MRTS did just run the Orange route during CPH breaks). When CPH is in session, A&MRTS also operates the Green/Gold route on weekdays. The Green/Gold begins and ends at the Cal Poly library, and is a fixed-loop route with 30 minute headways beginning at 6:30 am and until 10:30 am. Service every 30 minutes resumes at 3:30 p.m. and runs until 7:30 pm. The Orange at 7 pm and the Green/Gold are funded by CHP. The TDP recommends implementing two new routes (see page 170): a weekday route during university sessions, and an early morning route during weekdays to serve local workers. The implementation of these new routes would improve frequency and help alleviate wait times. However, appropriate funding is needed for implementation, as all available LTF funding allocated A&MRTS is fully committed to existing services.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded.

6. Later night Saturday service on RTS.

Response: The FY 2023-24 UTN Report of Findings (ROF) found that a late night Saturday run on RTS (past 9:30 pm) was reasonable to meet provided the route was limited to service between Valley West and Bayshore Mall. It was initially thought that funding for the service would be provided through the Senate Bill (SB) 125 formula TIRCP program, a bridge funding program from the State of California to avert a fiscal cliff for transit agencies. However, HTA needs SB 125 funds to continue to maintain existing levels of service. Furthermore, expanding the span of hours for Saturday night faces the same staffing challenges described above in 1. For these reasons, HTA has not had the capacity to work toward meeting the need for late-night Saturday service nor did HCAOG act on diverting FY 23-24 Local Transportation Fund claims for non-transit purposes.

The FY 2023-24 ROF found that a late night Saturday service on RTS limited to the Valley West and Bayshore Mall destinations would result in a farebox return of approximately 11.1%. The FY 2024-25 ROF used a similar methodology and found a limited late night Saturday service would have an approximate farebox return ratio of 9.7%. The farebox return ratio change can largely be attributed to operating costs increasing from \$134.00 per hour to \$150.00 hour.

Table 9 below applies the same method as the FY 2024-25 ROF while updating the operating costs, and indicates that a RTS Saturday late night service limited to Valley West and the Bayshore Mall, identified as “RTS Later Night (short)” in Table 9, would yield a farebox return ratio of about 10.6%, although this barely exceeds the reasonable to meet farebox return threshold of 10%.

The table below demonstrates the relationship between shorter routes with lower operating costs and improved efficiency. A late night Saturday service that extends to CR results, identified as “RTS Later Night (mid)”, in higher operating costs, and a lower farebox return. The RTS later night (short) analysis is based on the existing runs that leave Valley West at 4:15 PM to arrive at Bayshore Mall at 4:57 PM and depart Bayshore Mall at 5:07 PM to arrive at Valley West at 5:48 pm for a total travel time of approximately 42 minutes or 0.7 operating hours. Given that it is later in the night, staff assumed 85% of the ridership from the earlier run.

Table 9: Farebox Analysis for RTS Late Night Saturday Service

Service Route Description	Riders	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox
RTS Saturday Overall (avg)*	411.05	411.05 riders/day * \$2.00 avg fare = \$822.10	\$132.00/hr. * 31.48 hours = \$4,155.36	822.10/ \$4,155.36 = 19.8%
RTS Trinidad - Scotia (Route 15/16)	306 (avg. of north + south routes over 27 operating days)	6 riders/hr. x \$2.00 = \$12.00	\$132.00/hr. * 1.87 hours = \$246.84	12.00 / 246.84 = 4.9%
RTS Arcata – CR (Route 17/18)	218 (over 27 operating days)	8.13 x \$2.00 = \$16.26	\$132.00/hr. * 0.87 hours = \$114.84	16.26 / 114.84 = 14.2%
RTS Later Night (mid)	218 x 85% = 140 (over 27 operating days)	5.2 x \$2.00 = \$10.40	\$132.00/hr. * 0.87 hours = \$114.84	10.40 / \$114.84 = 9.1%
RTS Later Night (short)	264 x 85% = 132 (over 27 operating days)	4.9 x \$2.00 = \$9.80	\$132.00/hr. * 0.7 hours = \$92.40	9.80 / 92.40 = 10.6%
TDP analysis*	500 annual	\$1,200	\$18,100	6.6%

* Source: <https://hta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024.06-June-Board-Report.pdf>, accessed January 2025.

† Source: https://www.hcaog.net/sites/default/files/humboldt_county_transit_development_plan_-_final_report_no_appendices_compressed_0.pdf, accessed February 24, 2025.

Green – denotes existing service; **Purple** – denotes potential service

*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).

As a point of process, it should be noted that HCAOG has received comments from the non-profit Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities (CRTP) suggesting the standard for determining farebox ratios for the purposes of establishing unmet transit needs should be the impact a marginal service has on the systemwide farebox (e.g. analyze whether operating a late night route would result in the RTS Saturday overall farebox return dropping by a particular percentage or below 10%). While this may be a potential alternative analysis the SSTAC may wish to consider in the future, the current Unmet Transit Needs definitions adopted in the HCAOG TDA Rules identify the minimum marginal farebox return ratio of a proposed service as the standard for determining if a need is reasonable to meet.

Recommended Finding: A short duration late night (after 9:00 pm) on Saturday RTS service between Valley West to the Bayshore Mall is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded. A late night (after 9:00 pm) on Saturday RTS service between Valley West to the college of the Redwoods is an Unmet Need but is not reasonable to meet because the farebox return ratio would not be met.

7. Sunday Service on RTS

This request would increase the span service to add transit service on Sundays.

Background: In 2012, Sunday service on Redwood Transit was found to be 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 376, about 50% of the Saturday service ridership. The FY 23-24 UTN Report analyzed Sunday service based on FY 22-23 RTS Saturday ridership data, and found an estimated farebox return ratio of 10.4% for RTS Sunday service. Based on this finding, Sunday service was determined to be an unmet need reasonable to meet. As described above in #3, HTA's service plan did not allow Sunday service to be funded and implemented. HCAOG did not take action to require the unmet need be funded prior to allowing local jurisdictions to use LTF funds for non-transit purposes due to actively working on securing the SB 125 operating funds for regional transit.

Updated Analysis: Data from HTA's June 2024 Performance Activity Report show 455.65 average Saturday riders on RTS for the Year-to-Date period from July 1 2023 to June 30, 2024. 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 236.9 average daily Sunday riders. At an average operating cost per vehicle hour of \$132 and an average fare of \$2.00, the total daily cost to operate an equivalent Saturday service (31.48 operating hours) for Sundays comes to \$4,155. This equates to a marginal farebox return ratio of 12.0%.

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 predicted Sunday farebox return is just 12% 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 for HTA to begin Sunday service in 2013.

Table 10: Performance Analysis for RTS Sunday Service

Service	Total Riders YTD Current FY*	Collected Fares	Operating Cost	Farebox Ratio	Subsidy per passenger	Passenger / Hour
RTS Saturday Overall*	455.65	455.65 riders/day * \$2.00 avg fare = \$911.20	\$132.00/hr. * 31.48 hours = \$4155.36	911.20/ \$4155.36 = 22%	(4,155.36 – 911.20) / 455.7 = \$7.11	455/31.48 = 14.61
RTS Sunday	455.65 * 0.52 = 237 trips/day	237 trips/day * \$2.00 avg fare = \$474.00	\$132.00 hr. * 31.48 hours = \$4,155.36/day	474 / \$4,155.36 = 11.0%	(\$4,155.36 – \$474.00) / 237 = \$15.53	237/31.48 = 7.53
RTS Sunday†	Annual ridership 5,700	\$13,400	Annual operating cost \$135,300	9.9%	\$22.13	6.1

* Source: <https://hta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024.06-June-Board-Report.pdf>, accessed January 2025.

† Source: https://www.hcaog.net/sites/default/files/humboldt_county_transit_development_plan_-_final_report_no_appendices_compressed_0.pdf, accessed February 24, 2025.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded.

8. Expanded ETS service to Greater Eureka

This request would provide more frequent and convenient service in Greater Eureka, specifically in Myrtle town.

Response: A couple of commenters requested better service frequency and/or service coverage expansion to the Greater Eureka area, specifically Myrtle town. Myrtle town is a unincorporated Census designated place that is 2.1 square miles in size, which is adjacent and east of the city of Eureka. Myrtle town has a population of 4,882 people, of which 23.5% are 65 years or older, and a 20.3% poverty rate. According to 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates data, only 6.1% of Myrtle town households are carless; 50% have one vehicle and 43.8% of households have two or more vehicles.

The community’s development pattern is characterized by detached single family residential housing, pockets of multifamily and neighborhood commercial uses, and several quasi-public and public facilities. A medical services corridor, centered on Harrison Avenue, straddles the boundary between the City Eureka and Myrtle town. Myrtle town is served by the Green Route of the Eureka Transit System that is operated by the HTA. The Green Route is a loop route that services the Harrison Avenue corridor, Myrtle town, and the Bayshore Mall, with the Bayshore Mall being on the west side of Eureka. The 2023 TDP does lay out a plan for increased headway within Eureka by updating the routes to a hub and spoke model. To increase headway and update ETS routes to the hub and spoke model involves updating all ETS routes and schedules, along with marketing the service changes to ETS riders and other riders who connect to ETS from other services. Moreover, improvements to frequency and ETS routes will also require financial support because HTA/ETS uses all the allocated Local Transit Funds to provide current levels of service.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded.

9. Expanded service in Blue Lake.

The requested service is for an increased frequency of service and coverage in the City of Blue Lake.

Response: The Blue Lake Rancheria Transit System ceased operating in October 2023. This left a gap in local service between the City of Blue Lake and destinations such as the Murphy’s Market in Glendale, a unincorporated community near the City of Blue Lake. As an stop gap measure, HTA began providing service by way of its Willow Creek intercity transit service. As part of the regular route to/from Willow Creek to the Arcata Transit Center, the Willow Creek bus makes two (2) eastbound and three (3) westbound stops daily, Monday through Saturday. The Willow Creek intercity transit service stops at Blue Lake City Hall and the Blue Lake Rancheria Casino. As the name implies, the WCI is an intercity route and as such the scheduling and funding source does not allow for local stops at locations such as Glendale. The City of Blue Lake is approximately 0.60 square miles in size, has a population of about 1,149 people, approximately 28% of the population is 65 years or older, and a 25.4% poverty rate, although residents who are under 18 years of age have the highest poverty rate (at 48.2%) followed by those who are 18 to 64 years of age. In addition, 25 out of the 552 households in Blue Lake do not have a vehicle. While the WCI provides some public transit access, there is a gap in local service.

During fiscal year 2023/24, the Blue Lake Community Resource Center ran a survey to collect input from the community on transit needs. As the survey results were informative as to the desires of the Blue Lake community for public transit, they were considered as part of the 2023/24 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings. For this year’s cycle, two Unmet Transit Needs public hearings were held in Blue Lake. As part of the November and December 2024 public hearings and the online survey, several commenters expressed a need for improved transit in Blue Lake, specifically mentioning the limited frequency of buses in the City inhibit residents’ ability to rely on transit services for their transportation needs. Commenters also indicated the need for a local fixed route transit and microtransit.

The City could operate a fixed-route system or contract with HTA for this service, but HTA does not have funding available or in the pipeline to provide this service. Unfortunately, a fixed-route local system simply would not perform well from a ridership or financial perspective regardless of the transit operator. In addition, the ability to fund such a service is a challenge as it requires appropriate capital and operational funding be secured by the City or to form a partnership for this purpose. Alternatively, the City of Blue Lake could explore undertaking the operation of a microtransit service. An on-demand microtransit service is the most likely service alternative. This will require capital funds to purchase a new vehicle, although the RideCo software purchased by HTA for microtransit pilots in Eureka have additional licenses that may be available for a Blue Lake microtransit service. In addition to securing capital funding, funding to operate a microtransit service would need to be secured.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded. HCAOG, the City of Blue Lake, and County of Humboldt, will continue to work to identify funding and potential operational solutions, such as the introduction of microtransit in the City.

10. Expand A&MRTS service to South Arcata.

Multiple requests were received to expand A&MRTS service to South Arcata, notably on South G Street.

Response: The A&MRTS Gold line currently stops at H and 6th followed by a stop at the Uniontown Shopping Center. 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 the 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. A&MRTS uses all Local Transit Funds and grant funds to provide minimal service; therefore, to improve service to South Arcata more funding needs to be secured. 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.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded. 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.

11. Service to Bayside.

Two comments requested increased coverage by providing transit service to Bayside.

Response: The Arcata and Mad River Transit System (A&MRTS) Red Line currently provides service with a stop at Buttermilk Lane and Bayside Road. A request was made to the Arcata City Council for transit service to Bayside. In previous years, HCAOG staff looked at Census demographic data to determine the relative transit need for Bayside area. The primary demographic factor for transit need is people over 65; however, the housing density for the area is very low. Some time ago, A&MRTS provided service out to Bayside but there was very little ridership so service was discontinued. Maybe when there is more development in Bayside there could be service; when there's a development across the street from the Jacoby Creek School could lead to Bayside being considered again.

A couple years ago, staff asked A&MRTS to evaluate the feasibility of modifying the existing Red Line to extend service down Old Arcata Road to Bayside Corners. A&MRTS staff identified that the route would add eight minutes and cannot be incorporated into the existing route. In response to this year's UTN comments, in January 2025 A&MRTS staff commented that with the completion of the roundabout at Old Arcata Road and Jacoby Creek Road service to Jacoby Creek will be possible in the future, however, funding to support the operation of the route needs to be secured, including funding for additional drivers. A&MRTS uses all Local Transit Funds and grant funds to provide minimal service; therefore, to add service to Bayside more funding would also need to be secured.

Overall, more planning and direct outreach is needed to explore new service to Bayside. HCAOG recommends working with the City of Arcata to chart a course for service to Bayside.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded. HCAOG recommends working with the City of Arcata to chart a course for service to Bayside that includes identification of potential funding sources and targeted outreach to residents of Bayside. Prior to commencing outreach, it is recommended that the City of Arcata identify marketing methods implemented by transit service providers that converted interest into increased ridership that would be feasible to implement given the previous record of this service underperforming.

12. Later Service on Southern Humboldt Intercity.

The requested service is for later transit service from College of the Redwoods to Southern Humboldt.

Response: The Southern Humboldt Intercity (SHI) service is an intercity route that runs north-south between Eureka and Benbow, traveling through Fortuna, Rio Dell, Redcrest, Weott, Meyers Flat, Miranda, Phillipsville, Redway, and Garberville along the way. The SHI service completes three northbound runs and two southbound runs daily, operating between 6:46 am and 7:15 pm Monday through Friday and between 8:30 am and 7:00 pm on Saturdays. One commenter requested that a bus depart from CR at 3:00 pm; the southbound bus currently departs from the College of the Redwoods at 3:38 pm. The SHI service provides two southbound and three northbound runs between Benbow and Eureka on weekdays and Saturdays (with both morning runs shifted later on Saturdays). This service level reflects changes made to better reflect demand based on low ridership generated by past levels of service. Due to the low population density and high mileage between activity centers, southern Humboldt is difficult to serve with transit. According to the 2023 TDP, 3.3 passenger trips are carried per hour of service, which is slightly higher than carried on the DAR service. Based on ridership levels, the 2023 TDP found that neither an increase nor a decrease in service is warranted.

The 2023 TDP does indicate there may be future service coordination opportunities utilizing the new North State Express (NSE, formerly RCX), a weekday express route between Eureka and Ukiah. The southbound NSE makes one stop in Garberville, and the northbound NSE makes one stop in Garberville. As the NSE service matures, service changes to the SHI service that would allow for better coordination between the two services should be considered.

Recommended Finding: This is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet, but cannot be funded.

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:

- Microtransit in Trinidad
- Service to Ferndale
- Service from McKinleyville to Bayshore Mall on Sundays
- Service to Hydesville
- Service to Woodley Island
- Sunday service on A&MRTS
- Extend service to Hydesville

Prior Year Findings

The 2024-25 Report of Findings 5 only found one transit request was an unmet need and reasonable to meet:

Request	Finding
More frequency service on RTS.	Providing more frequent service on Redwood Transit System (RTS) between McKinleyville Airport and Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle is an Unmet Need that is reasonable to meet. The finding includes the flexibility to implement service as an addition to the core RTS routes or as a uniquely structured Express Route.

Appendix B presents a summary of prior findings beginning with 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 12 for a summary of FY 2024-25 LTF uses by jurisdiction.

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 11 provides FY 2025-2026 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 the close of each fiscal year, the Auditor is responsible for reporting any remaining balance in each jurisdiction’s account.

Table 11: LTF Funds Allocated by Jurisdiction, FY 2025-26

Jurisdiction	DOF Population Projection	% of Total Population	Est. FY 2025-26 Apportionment
Arcata	18,540	13.93%	698,212
Blue Lake	1,149	0.86%	43,271

Jurisdiction	DOF Population Projection	% of Total Population	Est. FY 2025-26 Apportionment
Eureka	26,073	19.59%	981,903
Ferndale	1,356	1.02%	51,067
Fortuna	12,181	9.15%	458,733
Rio Dell	3,241	2.44%	122,055
Trinidad	294	0.22%	11,072
Humboldt County	70,266	52.79%	2,646,200
Total	133,100	100.00%	\$5,012,512

“DOF” = California Department of Finance

Table 12: LTF Fund Use FY 2024-25

Jurisdiction	FY 24-25 Estimate	Transit	Streets & Roads	Bike/Ped
City of Arcata/ A&MRTS	718,162.00	718,162.00	-	-
City of Blue Lake	44,040.00	3,184.00	40,856.00	-
City of Eureka/HTA	1,004,497.00	1,004,497.00	-	-
City of Ferndale	52,686.00	-	52,686.00	-
City of Fortuna	470,986.00	461,356.00	210.00	9,420.00
City of Rio Dell	125,317.00	61,432.00	63,885.00	-
City of Trinidad**	11,298.00	6,082.00	5,216.00	-
County of Humboldt	2,724,311.00	2,724,311.00	-	-
Total	\$ 5,151,297	\$ 4,979,024	\$ 162,853	\$ 9,420

* Blue Lake had carryover that is not included in this amount from 23-24 that they used towards transit for 24-25

** Estimated - have not submitted a claim yet

Appendix A: Summary of Public Input

DRAFT

Appendix B: Recent History of Unmet Needs Requests

Hearing Year/Finding	HCAOG Response or Action
FY 2015/16	
Service to Tish Non Community Village Service on Old Arcata Road	Both services began, underperformed, and were discontinued.
FY 2016/17	
Fieldbrook / Glendale / Korbel / Blue Lake routes considered with survey	Not reasonable to meet based on farebox return.
FY 2017/18	
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
FY 2018/19	
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	
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.
FY 2020/21	
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.
FY 2022/23	
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.

Hearing Year/Finding	HCAOG Response or Action
FY 2023/24	
<p>Sunday service on RTS</p> <p>Late night Saturday service on RTS between Arcata and Eureka</p>	<p>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.</p>
FY 2024/25	
<p>Changes to RTS span of service, later service on weekdays</p> <p>Providing more frequent service on RTS between McKinleyville Airport and Cal Poly Humboldt Library Circle</p>	<p>Both services were found reasonable to meet based on farebox. Changes to RTS span of service were implemented and is no longer an unmet need. Increasing frequency of RTS service will be dependent on funding availability.</p>

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