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AGENDA ITEM 4d
SSTAC Meeting
March 4, 2026

DATE: February 26, 2026
TO: Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)
FROM: Stephen Luther, Associate Regional Planner
SUBJECT: **FY 2026-27 Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) Draft Report of Findings**

DISCUSSION ITEM
STAFF REPORT

Contents:

- Staff Summary
- 2025 UTN Comments and Recommended Findings
- Draft FY 26-27 Unmet Transit Needs Report of Findings

Staff Summary:

The purpose of this agenda item is for the SSTAC to review all unmet needs comments received for the 2025 calendar year, consider the attached comments, and provide direction to staff based on the preliminary analysis in the attached draft report.

As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Humboldt County, HCAOG is responsible for the administration of Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. TDA funds (funded through ¼ percent of the statewide sales tax) are the primary funding source for most transit systems. As part of its TDA duties, HCAOG is required to implement an annual unmet transit needs process, which has three key components: soliciting testimony on unmet transit needs; analyzing needs in accordance with adopted definitions of unmet transit needs reasonable to meet; and adoption of a finding regarding unmet transit needs that may exist for the upcoming fiscal year. Unmet transit needs findings ensure that transit needs found reasonable to meet are funded prior to non-transit purposes.

Public process

HCAOG held the required public hearing on November 20, 2025, for the purpose of soliciting public comments on unmet needs. The hearing was legally noticed in the North Coast Journal. Hearings were also held at the City of Arcata, City of Eureka, City of Fortuna, City of Rio Dell, City of Trinidad, the County of Humboldt, and the Humboldt Transit Authority.

In addition to posting on social media (Facebook), HCAOG created an online survey soliciting public input. A flyer was posted on the HTA bus message board with a QR code linking to the survey. A total of 32 survey responses were received.

HCAOG also received comments by email, phone, and mail as well as while tabling at events like the Tri-County Independent Living Expo and conducting outreach for the Regional Transportation Plan Update. In total, 59 distinct comments were received. The list of comments was sent to HTA for review and operator notes, which are included in the attachment.

Unmet Needs Analysis:

HCAOG’s adopted definitions and criteria for unmet transit needs are on pages four and five of the attached draft report. For each comment that was determined to meet the criteria of an unmet need, staff analyzed if it would be “reasonable to meet” and made a recommendation. The attached draft Report of Findings (ROF) provides an initial analysis of the unmet needs and a basis to guide the SSTAC discussion.

The report looks in detail at RTS Sunday service, later night weekend service on RTS, later weekday service on ETS, and service to Ferndale. Based on staff analysis, the proposed recommendation is that these unmet needs are not reasonable to meet due to low anticipated ridership that doesn’t meet farebox as well as the lack of sustainable funding. Below is a summary of the findings in the draft report:

- Sunday service was requested six times. However, with an estimated ridership at 50% of the number of Saturday passengers, the service does not meet the required farebox ratio. A limited hour pilot service may seem to have lower operating costs, but realistically it would be difficult to attract enough riders. An additional day of operations would require new scheduling for HTA which would further add to costs with funding that is not available.
- Later night weekend service is a recurring request, specifically to assist in providing rides to and home from social weekend events. The ridership would be too low and the funding is not available.
- Later weekday service on ETS was analyzed in detail in 2024 and the overall ridership patterns have not changed significantly since that time. The number of passengers drops off significantly after peak hours and extending service hours is not projected to meet the minimum marginal farebox return ratio of 10%.
- Service to Ferndale is not reasonable to meet. Staff suggested that the City of Ferndale could pursue ridesharing or private taxi vouchers if interested in supporting transportation options for people traveling in and out of Ferndale.

As noted in the report, the request for more frequent service is being addressed in HTA’s current work plan and was not further considered as an unmet need. Likewise, service on Old Arcata Road to Indianola, Bayside and other points is now being served by the full roll-out of the Ride Humboldt Flex microtransit.

An additional six comments were not further analyzed as they were individual comments that did not meet the threshold for a minimum of two comments to demonstrate community support.

Comments and direction from the SSTAC will be incorporated into the Final Draft Report of Findings which will be brought back on May 6 to review and make a recommendation to the HCAOG Board.