



**HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS**  
**Regional Transportation Planning Agency**  
**Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority**  
**Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies**  
611 I Street, Suite B  
Eureka, CA 95501  
(707) 444-8208  
www.hcaog.net

**AGENDA ITEM 5a**  
**SSTAC Meeting**  
**February 1, 2023**

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**DATE:** January 23, 2023  
**TO:** Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)  
**FROM:** Stevie Luther, Associate Planner  
**SUBJECT:** **Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) Comments and Reasonable Need Determination**

**STAFF REPORT**

**Contents:**

- Staff's Recommended Action
- Staff Summary
- 2022 UTN Comment Matrix
- Unmet Needs Definitions

**Staff's Recommended Action:**

1. Introduce the item as an action item;
2. Allow staff to present the item;
3. Receive public comment;
4. Discuss item and consider making the motion:  
"I move that the SSTAC direct staff to update the UTN comments matrix and proceed in preparing the FY Report of Findings based on which needs are reasonable or not reasonable to meet as discussed."

**Staff Summary:**

As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Humboldt County, HCAOG is responsible for the administration of Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. TDA funds (funded through ¼ percent of the statewide sales tax) are the primary funding source for most transit systems. As part of its TDA duties, HCAOG is required to implement an annual unmet transit needs process, which has three key components: soliciting testimony on unmet transit needs; analyzing needs in accordance with adopted definitions of unmet transit needs and

reasonable to meet; and adoption of a finding regarding unmet transit needs that may exist for the upcoming fiscal year. Unmet transit needs findings ensure that jurisdictions expend all TDA funds on transit purposes, if there is a need found reasonable to meet.

Outreach efforts for the UTN process used similar methods to prior years. HCAOG published the UTN public meeting dates in the newspaper (North Coast Journal), operators posted flyers on buses, and HCAOG accepted comments through our website, by email, telephone, and mail. In addition to posting on social media (Facebook), HCAOG created an online survey soliciting public input. A total of 10 survey responses were received. Several comments were made during the unmet transit needs public hearings and to staff by phone/email.

Previous reports have found unmet transit needs including late-night weekday service on the RTS and an express bus between McKinleyville and Eureka during peak commute hours. Due in part to the coronavirus and declining ridership, these needs have not met the required farebox return threshold for being reasonable to meet.

The unmet needs identified in this year's comments reiterate the public's requests for: more frequent service, with a particular emphasis on Trinidad and Blue Lake; expanded weekday hours for commuters; and Sunday service. Staff summarized comments in a matrix to assist the SSTAC in their discussion. Staff categorized comments as "unmet needs," "operational" or "general" and shared those recommendations with operators. The matrix reflects feedback received from the operators.

Staff created the image included below, "A Transit Hierarchy," to visualize the various elements of transit service and start to provide a glimpse into the systemic relationships. This visual is one step toward addressing the larger discussion about communicating the challenges of addressing unmet needs to the public. A next step would be for staff to include a section in the Report of Findings that specifically addresses the barriers to implementing the most common requests.

The SSTAC will determine if comments are operational or unmet needs, and identify which unmet needs, if any, are reasonable to meet according to HCAOG's adopted definitions and criteria. Once all determinations are complete, the SSTAC will forward a recommendation to the HCAOG Board. Unmet transit needs that require additional information, such as an analysis of a specific service's projected marginal farebox return ratio, will be researched by staff and brought back for discussion at a future meeting.

The SSTAC is being asked to review and discuss if any of the comments received during the UTN cycle are deemed reasonable or not reasonable to meet. Staff will draft the Report of Findings based on SSTAC direction.

# A TRANSIT HIERARCHY

