



STAFF REPORT
Board Meeting of July 21, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 5-B

PREPARED BY: Evelyn Espinosa, Associate Regional Planner

SUBJECT:

2021-22 Unmet Transit Needs, Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) Recommendation

Enclosure: Yes

Action: Approve the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council's 2021-22 Unmet Transit Needs findings by Resolution 21-12

SUMMARY:

Pursuant to Section 99401.5 of the California Public Utilities Code, the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC), as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, must make a finding after holding a Public Hearing that there are no unmet public transportation needs within the jurisdiction of claimants which can be reasonably met before it may approve Local Transportation Fund (LTF) claims for streets and roads.

The MCTC has determined that its definition of the term "unmet transit needs" includes all essential trip requests by transit-dependent persons for which there is no other convenient means of transportation, and the Commission has determined that its definition of the term "reasonable to meet" shall apply to all related public or specialized transportation services that:

1. are feasible;
2. have community acceptance;
3. serve a significant number of the population;
4. are economical; and
5. can demonstrate cost effectiveness by having a ratio of fare revenues to operating cost at least equal to 10 percent.

The MCTC has determined that its definition of the term "reasonable to meet" shall also apply to all service requests which do not abuse or obscure the intent of such transportation services once they are established.

The role of the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) is to aid the MCTC Policy Board in its review of transit issues with emphasis on the annual identification of transit needs within Madera County. The establishment of the Madera County SSTAC is

consistent with State Law (SB 498, Chapter 673, 1987) which mandates both the purpose and minimum membership of this body. The purpose of the SSTAC is to:

- A. Annually participate in identification of transit needs (Unmet Transit Needs Public Hearing Process).
- B. Review and recommend appropriate action by the MCTC for a jurisdiction which finds, by resolution, that:
 - (1) there are no unmet transit needs;
 - (2) there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet; and
 - (3) there are unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.
- C. Advise the MCTC on any other major transit issues; including the coordination and consolidation of specialized transportation services.

At the “Unmet Transit Needs” Public Hearing on Wednesday, April 21, 2021, the MCTC Policy Board opened the hearing to receive public testimony. The following staff evaluation was prepared in cooperation with the SSTAC. MCTC Staff, on behalf of the SSTAC, will submit that body’s findings to the MCTC Policy Board under separate correspondence.

NARRATIVE EVALUATION

City of Madera

There are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet at this time in the City of Madera.

MCTC staff has reviewed and discussed testimony regarding the City of Madera’s transit services with the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). The recommendation from staff and the SSTAC is that there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet within the City of Madera. The recommendation is based upon the definition of an unmet transit need, which includes any essential trip requests by transit-dependent persons for which there is no other convenient means of transportation.

Testimony was received regarding an additional bus stop at Roosevelt and Olive across from Sierra Vista Elementary School. The City of Madera will evaluate this request. Dial-A-Ride service is available to provide service when there is no bus stop. Additionally, comments were received to add a bus shelter at two bus stop locations: (1) Sunrise between A and Vineyard, and (2) Olive and Martin near Planet Fitness for shade and protection from inclement weather. The City of Madera will evaluate this request and discuss with their Transit Advisory Board.

One-hour long wait times occasionally, and the need for routes to run more frequently, was expressed in one of the comments. The City of Madera notes that this situation arose due to the pandemic restrictions that limit the number of passengers that the bus can transport. There was also a request to have wastebaskets at bus stops in the City of Madera. The City of Madera reported that there are trashcans available at bus stops. However, depending on when this situation happened, the City of Madera notes that a couple of trashcans were stolen.

Testimony was also received for more on-time schedules and to not be skipped by Dial-A-Ride. This is, however, an operational issue. On-time performance evaluation will be

performed. Additionally, a need to expand rate assistance programs to provide free rides was expressed. Madera Metro offered free rides due to the pandemic and that status is still active. This comment was directed to all agencies.

Testimony for the need of electronic bus signs on buses and at bus stops was also received. This is an operational and marketing issue. The City of Madera and the County of Madera will seek to coordinate how to best approach this comment. The City of Madera will be reviewing the possibility of developing an advertisement.

City of Chowchilla

There are no unmet transit needs in the City of Chowchilla.

County of Madera

There are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet at this time in the County of Madera.

MCTC staff has reviewed and discussed testimony regarding the County of Madera's transit services with the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). The recommendation from MCTC staff and the SSTAC is that there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet at this time in the County of Madera. The recommendation is based upon the definition of an unmet transit need, which includes any essential trip requests by transit-dependent persons for which there is no other convenient means of transportation.

Testimony was received for infrastructure improvements: 1) Street lighting in the communities of La Vina and Fairmead to ensure transit users' first and last miles are safely lit. 2) Repavement and clean mobility infrastructure, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and street lighting to facilitate their first and last miles, and thus, their use of public transit in unincorporated communities. Examples of this: sidewalks and street lighting along Avenue 9 and within the subdivision of homes located in La Vina, and road repavement to Road 26 in Madera Acres, Road 29 in Parksdale, and Valerie Avenue in Madera Acres. The recommendation was to share this information with the appropriate agency for their knowledge.

Testimony was received for YARTS to operate year-round to connect Coarsegold to Oakhurst and Fresno. The Council discussed that YARTS is a seasonal service. However, the Madera County Connection does provide service that offers this connectivity.

Testimony was received to increase routes between La Vina and the City of Madera. The County reports that additional runs were added to this destination during the 2020-21 Fiscal Year and that ridership was low and not cost-efficient. This service was suspended after a six-month period. Further evaluation will be undertaken to determine the feasibility of additional service in the future.

The need for the County of Madera, Fresno EOC, and Madera County Public Works to continue working towards installation of a second bus stop in Fairmead and that MCTC direct the agencies to continue their work on this project as soon as possible, and oversee progress to ensure this project stays on track was submitted as part of the comments. The County of Madera reports that there was a pre-pandemic meeting to decide on the new transit stop

specific location. Follow up to obtain this information has not yet been completed. The County of Madera is looking forward to continuing coordinating with the Fairmead community to narrow this down. It is outside MCTC's jurisdiction to oversee other agencies' work.

Testimony was also received for more on-time schedules and to not be skipped by Dial-A-Ride. This is, however, an operational issue. On-time performance evaluation will be performed. Additionally, a need to expand fare assistance programs to provide free rides was expressed. The County of Madera will be looking into offering a free-ride campaign.

Testimony for the need of electronic bus signs on buses and at bus stops was also received. This is an operational and marketing issue. The City of Madera and County of Madera will seek to coordinate over how to best approach this comment. The County of Madera posts information on routes on their website.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact to the approved 2021-22 Overall Work Program and Budget.