



Unmet Transit Needs Comments

FY 2026-2027

April 25, 2025 – November 14, 2025

1. Online Survey #1

Name: Anonymous

Received: August 8, 2025

Q1: Which systems do you most frequently use?

A1: Madera Metro (Metro), (Metro) Dial-A-Ride, Chowchilla Area Transit Express (CATX), Madera County Connection (MCC), Eastern Madera County Senior Bus, MCC Madera Dial-A-Ride (DAR), Eastern Madera County Escort Service, Kerman

Q2: Are there places in Madera County you would like to travel to by bus but cannot? If so, where? To effectively evaluate your comment, please provide the nearest cross street or area of town, your destination, day of the week, and approximate time of day that you are interested in making your trip.

A2: Every fast-food place.

Q3: Describe the transit improvements(s) you are requesting.

A3: Complementary snacks.

Q4: Do you feel safe using transit? Why or why not?

A4: Yes, because it's safe.

Q5: (Optional) Your comments will be compiled in a report on Unmet Transit Needs. If you would like to be contacted regarding your comment please provide your name, phone number and/or email address.

A5: Respondent skipped this question.

[Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation: None](#)

2. Online Survey #2

Name: Anonymous

Received: September 26, 2025

Q1: Which systems do you most frequently use?

A1: Eastern Madera County Escort Service, Mountain Bus Service

Q2: Are there places in Madera County you would like to travel to by bus but cannot? If so, where? To effectively evaluate your comment, please provide the nearest cross street or area of town, your destination, day of the week, and approximate time of day that you are interested in making your trip.

A2: Respondent skipped this question.

Q3: Describe the transit improvements(s) you are requesting.

A3: Bus Driver [REDACTED] missed 2 bus stops this week. One on Tuesday, at the gulf 41. 2nd one Friday 4:51 at the Medical Adventist Center. Both times I saw him drive past the bus stops.

Q4: Do you feel safe using transit? Why or why not?

A4: Not when they drive too fast.

Q5: (Optional) Your comments will be compiled in a report on Unmet Transit Needs. If you would like to be contacted regarding your comment please provide your name, phone number and/or email address.

A5: Respondent skipped this question.

[Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation:](#) This is an operational issue.

Riders are encouraged to report any safety or customer service issues immediately as they occur. Timely reporting allows the agency to investigate and address these issues promptly.

3. Online Survey #3

Name: Anonymous

Received: September 26, 2025

Q1: Which systems do you most frequently use?

A1: MCC Eastern Mountain Fixed Bus Stops

Q2: Are there places in Madera County you would like to travel to by bus but cannot? If so, where? To effectively evaluate your comment, please provide the nearest cross street or area of town, your destination, day of the week, and approximate time of day that you are interested in making your trip.

A2: Respondent skipped this question.

Q3: Describe the transit improvements(s) you are requesting.

A3: Respondent skipped this question.

Q4: Do you feel safe using transit? Why or why not?

A4: Respondent skipped this question.

Q5: (Optional) Your comments will be compiled in a report on Unmet Transit Needs. If you would like to be contacted regarding your comment please provide your name, phone number and/or email address.

A5: Bus Driver [REDACTED] missed 4 bus stops. YLP club house, South Fork, even leaving behind a girl there. But then had to turn back and pick her up. He also lied to get saying he was late because he was running behind. But it was because he never went to the stop.

Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation: This is an operational issue. Riders are encouraged to report any safety or customer service issues immediately as they occur. Timely reporting allows the agency to investigate and address these issues promptly.

4. Online Survey #4

Name: Jessica Sanchez – Oakhurst Apartments

Received: September 29, 2025

Q1: Which systems do you most frequently use?

A1: Eastern Madera County Senior Bus

Q2: Are there places in Madera County you would like to travel to by bus but cannot? If so, where? To effectively evaluate your comment, please provide the nearest cross street or area of town, your destination, day of the week, and approximate time of day that you are interested in making your trip.

A2: Oakhurst Shopping, Doctor Appointments

Q3: Describe the transit improvements(s) you are requesting.

A3: It would be nice to have a bus on route in Oakhurst that picks up drops off at Apartment Complexes, doctor offices, shopping, etc.

Q4: Do you feel safe using transit? Why or why not?

A4: I am a Property Manager at a Low-Income Rental Assisted property. My residents need better access to go and do what they need to do. The ones who use the Senior Bus, appreciate the service very much.

Q5: (Optional) Your comments will be compiled in a report on Unmet Transit Needs. If you would like to be contacted regarding your comment please provide your name, phone number and/or email address.

A5: Jessica Sanchez Oakhurst Apartments oakhurstapts@dkdpmco.com

Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need. At this time, MCC's fixed-route service provides stops at several key residential and commercial locations; however, not all shopping centers can safely accommodate a full-size bus for fixed-route access. The annual cost to offer an additional run to the existing service offerings in Eastern Madera County is \$251,566.43. To support the current farebox rate of 10%, an additional 57 riders per day would be required. Current Eastern Route daily ridership is 74, or an average of

15 passengers per run. MCC does not have sufficient data to support the needed increase in ridership that needs to be generated. MCC is exploring the potential for microtransit in the area, which could offer more flexibility. Because microtransit uses smaller vehicles and an on-demand service model, it may provide additional options for riders and improve overall accessibility in Oakhurst.

5. Online Survey #5

Name: Anthony Misner

Received: October 10, 2025

Q1: Which systems do you most frequently use?

A1: None of the above.

Q2: Are there places in Madera County you would like to travel to by bus but cannot? If so, where? To effectively evaluate your comment, please provide the nearest cross street or area of town, your destination, day of the week, and approximate time of day that you are interested in making your trip.

A2: Transportation in Eastern Madera County is severely LACKING! It is a HUGE BARRIER to citizens of all ages that need services and education.

Q3: Describe the transit improvements(s) you are requesting.

A3: A bus schedule that allows getting to Fresno/Clovis as well as Madera. The current schedule is not adequate.

Q4: Do you feel safe using transit? Why or why not?

A4: Yes.

Q5: (Optional) Your comments will be compiled in a report on Unmet Transit Needs. If you would like to be contacted regarding your comment please provide your name, phone number and/or email address.

A5: Anthony Misner [REDACTED]

[Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation](#): Not an unmet transit need

The annual cost to offer an additional run to the existing service offerings in Eastern Madera County is \$251,566.43. To support the current farebox rate of 10%, an additional 57 riders per day would be required. Current Eastern Route daily ridership is 74, or an average of 15 passengers per run. MCC does not have sufficient data to support the needed increase in ridership that needs to be generated.

Service from Oakhurst to Fresno is available; however the trip is lengthy and requires a transfer in Madera. Take the Eastern Madera County route into Madera. Transfer at the Intermodal Transportation Center and connect to the College/Children's Hospital route. The College/Children's Hospital route offers a connection from Madera to Fresno Area Express. The

County also provides Medical Escort Service from Eastern Madera County to Fresno for medical appointments.

MCC is exploring the potential for microtransit in the area, which could offer more flexibility. Because microtransit uses smaller vehicles and an on-demand service model, it may provide additional options for riders and improve overall accessibility in Oakhurst.

6. Online Survey #6

Name: Daisy Miramontes

Received: October 21, 2025

Q1: Which systems do you most frequently use?

A1: Madera County Connection (MCC)

Q2: Are there places in Madera County you would like to travel to by bus but cannot? If so, where? To effectively evaluate your comment, please provide the nearest cross street or area of town, your destination, day of the week, and approximate time of day that you are interested in making your trip.

A2: I would like a stop by my home, [REDACTED], Madera CA to and from Madera Community College if possible. The trip I would like to be early in the morning Tues, Thur, Fri around 9am. Maybe Fri back.

Q3: Describe the transit improvements(s) you are requesting.

A3: The bus experience quality is really nice.

Q4: Do you feel safe using transit? Why or why not?

A4: Yes, I feel safe, the bus drivers are nice and respectful. Also, people keep to themselves.

Q5: (Optional) Your comments will be compiled in a report on Unmet Transit Needs. If you would like to be contacted regarding your comment please provide your name, phone number and/or email address.

A5: Daisy Miramontes, [REDACTED]

[Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation:](#) Not an unmet transit need. Both the MCC and Madera Metro Dial-a-Ride services can accommodate this trip. This service area will be included in future microtransit service offerings. The population density in this area does not currently support additional fixed route service.

7. Online Survey #7

Name: Anonymous

Received: October 22, 2025

Q1: Which systems do you most frequently use?

A1: None of the above.

Q2: Are there places in Madera County you would like to travel to by bus but cannot? If so, where? To effectively evaluate your comment, please provide the nearest cross street or area of town, your destination, day of the week, and approximate time of day that you are interested in making your trip.

A2: Respondent skipped this question.

Q3: Describe the transit improvements(s) you are requesting.

A3: Respondent skipped this question.

Q4: Do you feel safe using transit? Why or why not?

A4: Respondent skipped this question.

Q5: (Optional) Your comments will be compiled in a report on Unmet Transit Needs. If you would like to be contacted regarding your comment please provide your name, phone number and/or email address.

A5: Respondent skipped this question.

[Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation: None](#)

8. Comment Letter

Name: Andrea Uribe, Policy Advocate, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Received: November 12, 2025

November 12, 2025

Madera County Transportation Commission 2001 Howard Rd, Ste 201

Madera, CA 93637

Submitted electronically via email to: NAustin@maderactc.org

Re: Comments on Unmet Transit Needs in Madera County

Dear Commissioners, SSTAC Advisory Council Members, and MCTC Staff Members,

We work with rural communities in Madera County who bear the burden of pollution and disinvestment in their communities. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in response to the Unmet Transit Needs process and the consideration from Staff and the Board. We hope by providing these comments we can collectively identify solutions to the community's unmet transit needs while upholding MCTC's responsibilities to the Transportation Development Act. Our comments are based on feedback we have received from residents through various methods including, community meetings, door to door surveying, and anecdotal experiences provided by the community.

A. Incorporating Public Input to Determine the Definitions of "Unmet Transit" Needs and "Reasonable to Meet" Into Public Engagement Process

The transportation needs of all communities and residents are important. Within Madera County the natural and built environment discourages the use of active transportation methods. Currently, the San Joaquin Valley has some of the nation's worst air quality, failing to meet federal health standards for both ozone (smog) and particulate pollution¹. Additionally, Madera County has severe heat. Poor air quality, high temperatures, pungent odors from dairies, and high pesticide exposure risks—paired with the lack of sidewalks and pedestrian facilities—underscore both the importance of providing these services and the difficulty residents in Merced face in using active transportation and public transit. However, an improved public transportation system would help decrease air pollution, increase physical activity, and decrease traffic benefiting all of Madera County. Consequently, the current definition must be amended to include *all* unmet transit needs of Merced County residents that are reasonable to meet. The specificities of the definitions should be further informed by a yearly hearing designed to receive community feedback. This needs to be done in accordance with the Transportation Development Act and PUC § 99401.5 – Unmet Transit Needs Finding, which states, “The definition adopted by the transportation planning agency for the terms “unmet transit needs” and “reasonable to meet” shall be documented by resolution or in the minutes of the agency.” The definition of “Unmet Transit Need” and “Reasonable To Meet” were last established on April 20, 2022. These definitions should be re-visited to keep up with the needs of residents and allow for flexibility to extend programs as new policies such as Regional Transportation Plan and expenditure plans for tax measures such as Measure T come together.

B. Community Engagement within the Community of La Viña Reflects the Need for both additional and better service

As always, we are appreciative of the opportunity to participate in this public process, and the opportunity to collaborate with Madera County and MCTC staff members. Our organization has now participated in over 5 unmet transit needs hearings. Each time we have elevated the needs and priorities of disadvantaged unincorporated communities such as Fairmead and La Viña. This year's participation comes with additional information gathered from a survey in partnership with Madera County. For this survey we knocked on all of the doors within the immediate¹ township of La Viña. We extend our gratitude to the Madera County Staff members coordinating this outreach and analysis to best serve Maderans. Within our outreach event we collected 40 surveys from La Viña residents and hosted a Community Meeting within the community of La Viña with Madera County Staff and Madera County Transportation Commission Staff Members. While the main objective of this outreach event was to identify “If there was an option to change the two current departure times for the La Vina Route from 8:45AM and 1:00PM to 7:30AM and 5:30PM, would that be: better, worse, about the same” for public transit users, we were able to gather other valuable information.

We will be using information from this survey to represent and advocate for the needs of La Viña residents. From the surveys we collected, some highlights included:

¹ [https://www.epa.gov/sanjoaquinvalley/epa-activities-cleaner-air#:~:text=The%20San%20Joaquin%20Valley%20has%20some%20of,are:%20%20**Ozone%20\(smog\)**%20%20**Particulate%20pollution**](https://www.epa.gov/sanjoaquinvalley/epa-activities-cleaner-air#:~:text=The%20San%20Joaquin%20Valley%20has%20some%20of,are:%20%20**Ozone%20(smog)**%20%20**Particulate%20pollution**)

- ❖ 25% of respondents used public transportation on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Respondents were asked what prevented them from using public transportation more often.
 - ❖ The top obstacles for access to public transportation included the current bus schedule, weather, accessibility features, and personal safety.
 - ❖ The top requests included increasing the number of days the bus passed by the community and increasing the number of times the bus came by per day.
 - ❖ Over half of the respondents said they would consider to start using public transit or use it more if these issues were addressed.

Ultimately, the need and support for public transportation were evident for community members. While the need may be evident to us and is reflected in the surveys collected, we ask for the continued outreach within small, unincorporated communities like La Viña. Figure 7 Distribution of Potentially Transit Dependent Populations by Census Tract of the Unmet Transit Needs FY 2025-2026 Final Analysis and Recommendations Report June 2025 does not include the La Viña Census Tract. However, the same report places the population of La Viña at 538 (Table 2) and the 2023 Population Estimate of Persons with Disabilities population at 126, making the potential percentage of transit dependent residents at 23.4%. This percentage is comparable or greater to the census tracts identified in Figure 7. Despite having small populations, rural areas and transit dependent residents deserve to have their needs represented and addressed.

C. Need to Prioritize Funding for Public Transit in Disadvantaged Communities

In previous years the Fare Box Recovery Rate of 10% has previously been cited to negate the unmet transit needs of La Viña Community Members. We refer back to Article 8 Section 99401.5 of the California Public Utilities Code states “the fact that an identified transit need cannot be fully met based on available resources shall not be the sole reason for finding that a transit need is not reasonable to meet.” Additionally, not only are the Farebox recovery ratios under exemption,² The Transportation Development Act also makes room to respond to community² needs by providing allowable exemptions to the Fare Box Recovery Rate. The allowable expense exemptions are (1) the cost of providing ridesharing (carpooling and vanpooling) services, (2) the additional costs (exceeding the CPI-adjusted prior year costs) of providing “comparable, complementary,” ADA-compliant paratransit service, and (3) the cost of new routes or extensions of public transit service “until two years after the end of the fiscal year in which the extension of services was put into operation” (PUC § 99268.8). Many community members state that they do not use the transit system because it is not responsive to their needs. A two year period with additional hours can better serve the needs of residents and reflect the true need of public transit within small, disadvantaged communities.

The current Eastin Arcola - Ripperdan - La Vina Route schedule only passes three days a week with only one route a day does not meet the needs of many community members. Not only does La Viña have a limiting schedule, it is also not serviced by other programs such as

² <https://legiscan.com/CA/text/AB149/id/2425119>

Dial-A-Ride. PUC § 99155.1, states, “In areas where public transit services are unavailable, local transit providers shall give priority, in the use of funds allocated under the CalWORKs program and made available by the county, to the enhancement of transportation alternatives, such as, but not limited to, subsidies or vouchers, van pools, and contract paratransit operations, in order to promote welfare-to-work purposes.” Many of the transit needs in communities such as La Viña are surrounding medical appointments. MCTC needs to look for additional partnerships with various other medical and social service programs to pool resources to create a more responsive transportation system. Additionally, Agenda Item 7-7-B from MCTC’s Policy Board on May 29, 2024 show that in previous years, 2022 and 2023 Road Construction and maintenance took 54% and 76% of total TDA Expenditures, while Madera County Connection Transit Costs only took 19% and 21% respectively. Before TDA funds are used for Road construction and maintenance, public transit systems should be further funded to meet the needs of residents.

D. Incorporate Direct Community Asks

(1) System Wide Recommendations

(a) Apply for grant funding to secure free rides for students

Residents request that MCTC follow in the footsteps of other jurisdictions like Ventura County which have launched pilot programs allowing students to ride public transit for free. Madera residents suggest that MCTC secure free transit access for children and adult students who depend on public transit to get to school each day. Free rides will be granted to students who show their student ID upon boarding. MCTC can utilize Low Carbon Operations Transportation Program funding to initiate such a pilot program.

(b) Increased Trainings for Bus Drivers

Residents have reported concerns over interactions with drivers. This includes safety concerns from residents over bus drivers starting to drive before passengers have taken a seat. This is particularly concerning for elderly passengers and those traveling with small children. Scheduling concerns may be a priority for drivers, however practices prioritizing safety for passengers should also be implemented and prioritized.

(c) Create a “How To” Video Vlog or “Reel” to Teach Residents About the Bus Service in English and Spanish

Through recent outreach efforts, it has become apparent various residents do not use the bus because they do not know how to use it, are unaware of the services, or are intimidated by the bus system. A short “How To” video could help increase ridership for those who may have a need for public transportation, but have not used it before. If needed, our organization would be happy to partner for something like this.

(2) Within the Eastin Arcola - Ripperdan - La Vina Route

(a) Increase route services to include two drop off times into the community of La Viña

While the proposed new schedule will better respond to residents needs, an additional route is still needed. This new route will allow for residents to have a greater opportunity to have their needs met. This would also allow parents who may have an errand to run in the City to be back in time to pick up their children from the school bus.

(b) Increasing the service days from Monday, Wednesday, Friday to at minimum include

an additional week day and one weekend day

Residents reported that many of their transportation needs revolve around doctor appointments, and sometimes those are not available under the current days the route runs, signifying a need to have an additional weekday covered. Additionally, residents spoke to the need for those who may have to work during the week, but do not have their own transportation methods. They are currently not able to use the bus. A weekend route would allow residents to go into the City for groceries and other needs.

(c) Increase micro transit options within the Community of La Viña, create partnerships to extend Dial-A-Ride service to the Community of La Viña

As previously noted, the current bus schedule does not respond to the transportation needs of many within the community. While we understand new routes and increased bus line services will take time to develop, micro transit options could be a faster way to respond to residents needs. This could include partnering with other social service agencies also targeting Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities.

(d) Incorporate a bus shelter, light post, and waste basket onto the stop on Vina St

The top reasons why residents were discouraged from public transportation included weather, accessibility, and safety. Incorporating bus infrastructure such as bus shelters, light posts, and waste baskets at stop would address some of these needs. Residents have requested to either make the improvements at the current location by partnering with the resident living near the residence of the bus stop or by slightly relocating the bus stop to be in a sidewalk that would allow for the installation of the bus stop to be ADA compliant.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter as part of this important public process. We welcome continued collaboration with Madera County residents, MCTC staff, and the Board.

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability and I stand ready to serve as a resource to MCTC in addressing these unmet transit needs. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrea Uribe
Policy Advocate
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Recommendation: Following the recommendation from the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) and direction from the MCTC Policy Board, on November 4, 2025, Madera County staff surveyed the residents of La Viña to make sure that any future changes are aligned with existing rider preferences. Based on the feedback of the majority of the residents, the departure schedule will be changed to 8:00AM and 6:20PM from La Viña. Current ridership is 1.2 riders per day on the Eastin Arcola – Ripperdan – La Viña route, which may be improved with planned service changes. The SSTAC recommends monitoring the performance of the recent service

changes before making further modifications or expansions, while recognizing that microtransit could be a promising solution to address service gaps and increase frequency in La Viña in the future. Therefore, the SSTAC requests Madera County to move towards a clear, defined path toward implementation of a pilot microtransit project during the next fiscal year.

Right-of-way limitations at the Viña Street bus stop currently prevent installation of a shelter and lighting. Resolving these constraints will require additional analysis to identify feasible solutions.

Madera County Transportation Commission Response:

January 21, 2026

Andrea Uribe

Policy Advocate

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Dear Ms. Uribe:

Thank you for your letter dated November 12, 2025, and for your work with rural communities in Madera County. MCTC appreciates the effort you dedicate each year to ensure that residents, particularly those in disadvantaged unincorporated communities, have meaningful opportunities to share their transportation needs and priorities.

Below are responses to the major points raised in your letter.

A. Incorporating Public Input to Determine the Definitions of “Unmet Transit Need” and “Reasonable to Meet” Into Public Engagement Process

MCTC recognizes the importance of periodically reviewing the definitions of “Unmet Transit Need” and “Reasonable to Meet,” as allowed under the Transportation Development Act (TDA).

The TDA Guidelines require that definitions be adopted by resolution and that the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) consult with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) and hold a public hearing as part of the overall unmet transit needs process. However, the Guidelines do not specify how the definitions must be developed or revised, or how frequent updates should occur. This is left to the discretion of each RTPA. While the Guidelines do not explicitly mandate that every update of definitions undergoes a formal public or SSTAC review process, this review is the practice followed by most RTPAs.

As you acknowledged in your letter, MCTC’s definitions were most recently reviewed and updated in spring 2022. The update process included a public review period from February 16 through March 18, 2022, during which members of the public and stakeholders were invited to comment. The SSTAC also conducted a comparative review of definitions used by other regional transportation planning agencies to ensure alignment with best practices and state guidance.

During this review, the SSTAC considered several rounds of input from members of the public and from the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability. Based on that input, the SSTAC recommended revisions to clarify how “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” are defined in Madera County. The MCTC Policy Board subsequently adopted the updated definitions by Resolution 22-01 following

public notice and recommendation from the SSTAC. This process ensured that the adopted definitions reflected statutory requirements and local transportation conditions.

It is equally important to maintain stability in these definitions so they can be applied consistently across multiple unmet transit need process cycles. Changing the definitions each year would undermine that consistency and make it more difficult for the public to understand how findings are being made. It could also create a perception that the SSTAC's recommendations are shifting in an ad hoc or haphazard manner, rather than following a clear and predictable framework. Allowing the definitions to remain in place for several cycles provides the opportunity to evaluate how well they function in practice, identify any gaps or challenges, and determine, based on experience, whether adjustments are warranted. That said, in the future, MCTC may revisit the definitions as needed through the same transparent, public process used in 2022. Any proposed changes would include meaningful public involvement and review by both the SSTAC and the Policy Board.

B. Community Engagement and Survey Findings in La Viña

Following the recommendation from the SSTAC and direction from the MCTC Policy Board, on November 4, 2025, Madera County staff surveyed the residents of La Viña to better understand their specific transportation needs and travel patterns to make sure that any future changes are aligned with existing rider preferences. We appreciate the Leadership Counsel's participation in this effort. Based on the feedback of the majority of the residents, the departure schedule will be changed to 8:00AM and 6:20PM from La Viña. The survey and subsequent community meeting in La Viña on November 6, 2025, provide constructive feedback that supplement the broader UTN outreach conducted throughout the county.

MCTC remains committed to direct engagement in rural communities and will continue working with partners, including Leadership Counsel and Madera County, to ensure that residents have accessible opportunities to participate.

C. Farebox Recovery and TDA Priorities

We acknowledge your reference to relevant TDA sections, including allowable exemptions for pilot projects and the requirement that funding limitations cannot serve as the sole basis for determining that a transit need is not reasonable to meet. As part of the annual UTN process, the SSTAC and MCTC Policy Board evaluate potential service changes using all TDA-required criteria, including cost-effectiveness, operational feasibility, and systemwide impacts.

Regarding TDA expenditures, it is important to clarify that MCTC does not directly determine how each jurisdiction allocates its TDA apportionment once funds are released. And yes, Cities and the County must first apply TDA funds to public transit needs before using any remaining funds for streets and roads. These allocations are subject to fiscal audits and compliance reviews. Your comments on prioritizing transit investment will be shared with the MCTC Policy Board.

Additionally, MCTC appreciates the reference to CalWORKs transportation provisions; however, to avoid confusion, CalWORKs funding and program administration are managed by Madera County Department of Social Services, not MCTC. While MCTC does not oversee or allocate CalWORKs resources, we agree that coordination between transit providers and social service agencies is important for improving access for residents who rely on transportation for medical, work, and family needs. As part of the upcoming

update to MCTC's Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan, the Madera County Department of Social Services and other social service agencies will be engaged as stakeholders to help guide the plan's development.

MCTC will continue to support collaboration among the County, transit operators, and relevant service providers to identify opportunities to enhance transportation options in underserved areas, consistent with each agency's roles and responsibilities.

D. Direct Community Requests

1. Systemwide Recommendations

Free student rides:

MCTC is committed to supporting efforts that reduce transportation barriers for youth and students. As the designated recipient of Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) Section 99313 funds for the Madera County region, MCTC allocates these funds to local transit agencies based on population, ensuring that selected projects meet LCTOP's criteria of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving mobility, especially in disadvantaged communities.

We agree that it is good practice to look at and learn from other agencies to identify successful programs that could potentially be replicated. It was mentioned in your letter that "MCTC follow in the footsteps of other jurisdictions like Ventura County which have launched pilot programs allowing students to ride public transit for free". Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) serves as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency similar to MCTC; however, a key distinction is that VCTC also functions as a transit operator, with dedicated staff and vehicles to directly implement and operate transit services, including pilot programs such as fare-free student initiatives. In contrast, MCTC does not operate transit services and relies on local transit agencies to plan, implement, and operate transit within Madera County. As such, MCTC does not have the staffing, operational capacity, or resources to purchase vehicles or directly operate transit services. While MCTC does not operate transit services or select specific projects on behalf of local agencies, recent investments have supported solar-powered charging infrastructure for zero-emission fleets and have helped improve transit service in priority population areas. Currently, Madera Metro's fixed-route system is fare-free, and dial-a-ride service is free for students and seniors. Paratransit service is also free for eligible users. Local agencies may continue to pursue grant opportunities or utilize LCTOP funds to help subsidize fares or enhance overall transit service.

Increased bus driver trainings:

Regarding the comments related to driver behavior and safety, Madera County Connection drivers receive 60 hours of extensive training as part of their initial onboarding and continue to receive two hours of safety training each month. The training includes passenger assistance, ADA protocols, defensive driving, and operational safety procedures. Most people who fill out the UTN surveys indicate that they feel safe using public transit in Madera County.

At the recent community meeting in La Viña, it was also clarified that the specific drivers referenced in some of the concerns raised by attendees are no longer employed as drivers. They also shared that they are satisfied with the current drivers serving the route.

MCTC also encourages riders to report any safety or customer service issues immediately to the transit agency as they occur. These are considered operational issues, and timely reporting allows the agency to investigate and address them promptly. The Unmet Transit Needs process is not intended to resolve individual operational complaints unless there is evidence of a systemwide or widespread deficiency among drivers. Only in such cases would it rise to the level of an unmet transit need.

Transit “How-To” video materials:

We agree that transit education tools can help new riders better understand available services. The transit agencies can explore the possibility of developing multilingual informational videos or materials.

2. Eastin Arcola – Ripperdan – La Viña Route

Additional trips and expanded service days:

These requests will be evaluated through the UTN process using the MCTC Policy Board adopted “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” criteria. The new survey results from La Viña will be included as part of this year’s assessment.

Microtransit or expanded Dial-A-Ride options:

The County is currently assessing how to implement microtransit based on the study that was completed last year.

Bus stop amenities on Viña St:

MCTC agrees that shelters and lighting improve safety and comfort. Implementation depends on right-of-way, ADA feasibility, and coordination with the County or City. As was discussed at the recent La Viña community meeting, the County will investigate possible solutions in coordination with nearby residents.

Additional Ongoing Transit Improvement Efforts

MCTC and local transit agencies have multiple ongoing initiatives to improve service countywide. These planning efforts help ensure that any strategies or service changes implemented are data-driven, feasible, and aligned with long-term needs.

MCTC is currently utilizing SB 125 Transit Program funds to prepare a long-term financial plan for the three local transit operators in Madera County. The project will analyze existing transit performance, evaluate ridership, service, and capital alternatives, and deliver a comprehensive long-range financial strategy to guide Madera County’s transit investments through 2036. The resulting plan will support a transit system that better meets rider needs with improved service quality, efficiency, and long-term stability. In addition, MCTC will be updating its Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan next year and have applied for a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to secure consultant support for this work. The SRTP will provide a detailed blueprint for how transit services can be improved and funded over the next several years. It evaluates current performance, identifies service needs, and outlines specific strategies for routing,

scheduling, capital investments, and operations. By clearly defining priorities and aligning resources, an SRTP helps local transit agencies make informed, efficient decisions.

The City of Madera is conducting a microtransit feasibility study and recently launched a public survey to gather input on potential improvements. Residents can provide their feedback [here](#). The study is planned to be completed next year.

The County of Madera is also in the early stages of implementing recommendations from its recently completed microtransit study. The County has also applied for a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to complete a Madera County Transit Master Plan: Vision 2047. If the grant is awarded, this project will provide Madera County an important opportunity to effectively integrate emerging trends and innovations in public transit and will outline a clear path toward implementation with measurable, community-focused outcomes.

Collectively, these efforts reflect a coordinated commitment to enhancing mobility options and strengthening the overall transit network for residents throughout the county.

Closing

Thank you again for your thoughtful comments, community engagement, and ongoing collaboration. Your input will be included in the official record for the FY 2026–27 Unmet Transit Needs process and shared with the SSTAC and MCTC Policy Board as part of their deliberations.

We look forward to continued partnership in supporting the mobility needs of residents throughout Madera County. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or to discuss any item in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Madera County Transportation Commission