



STAFF REPORT
Board Meeting of January 21, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 5-B

PREPARED BY: Natalia Austin, Senior Regional Planner

SUBJECT:

Social Service Transportation Advisory Council's (SSTAC) FY 2026-27 Unmet Transit Needs Recommendations – Resolution No. 26-01

Enclosure: Yes

Action: MCTC Staff recommends the MCTC Policy Board approve the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council's (SSTAC) FY 2026-27 Unmet Transit Needs findings by Resolution No. 26-01

BACKGROUND:

Pursuant to Section 99401.5 of the California Public Utilities Code, the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC), as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, is responsible for performing the annual “unmet transit needs” process. The purpose of this process is to ensure that all “unmet transit needs” that are “reasonable to meet” are met on transit service before any Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds are expended for non-transit uses, such as streets and roads. If the MCTC Policy Board, through the unmet transit needs process, identifies an “unmet transit need” and determines the need is “reasonable to meet,” these transit needs must be met before any TDA funds are expended for non-transit uses, such as street and road projects. According to CA PUC Section 99401.5 (c), an agency's determination of needs that are “reasonable to meet” shall not be made by comparing unmet transit needs with the need for streets and roads.

In 2022, the MCTC Policy Board adopted the following definitions by Resolution No. 22-01 for its Unmet Transit Needs process:

- A. **UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS:** An unmet transit need is an expressed or identified need that is not currently being met through existing public transportation services. An unmet transit need also is a need required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- B. **REASONABLE TO MEET:** The term “reasonable to meet” shall apply to public or specialized transportation services that meet the following minimum criteria:
 1. **Feasibility**

- The proposed service can be provided with available Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding and/or other funding sources (per state law, the lack of available resources shall not be the sole reason for finding that a transit need is not reasonable to meet per PUC Section 99401.5(c)).
- Sufficient ridership potential exists for new, expanded, or revised transit services.
- The proposed transit service will be safe and comply with local, state, and federal law.

2. **Community Acceptance**
 - The proposed transit service has community support from the general public, community groups, and/or community leaders.
3. **Benefit to Population**
 - The proposed transit service serves a significant number of residents where it is needed and would benefit the general public and/or senior and disabled persons as a whole.
4. **Cost Effective**
 - The proposed transit service will not affect the ability of the overall system of the implementing agency or agencies to meet applicable transit system performance objectives or the State TDA farebox ratio requirement after any exemption(s) period(s) if the service is eligible for exemption(s) per CCR 6633.2.
 - The proposed transit service, if implemented or funded, would not cause the responsible operator to incur expenditures in excess of the maximum amount of LTF, STA, FTA funds, and fare revenues and local support.
5. **Consistent with Intent of Existing Transit Service(s)**
 - Once established, the proposed transit service will not abuse or obscure the intent of existing transit service(s).
 - The proposed transit need should be in conformance with the goals included in the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and consistent with the intent of the goals of the adopted Short Range Transit Plan.

The role of the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) is to aid the MCTC Policy Board in its review of transit issues with emphasis on the annual identification of unmet transit needs within Madera County. The MCTC Policy Board makes the final determination, taking into consideration the recommendations of the SSTAC, and adopts a finding of fact for each jurisdiction by resolution. 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 the Council. 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 Policy Board which finds, by resolution, that:

1. There are no unmet transit needs,
2. There are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet,
3. There are unmet transit needs, including 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.

The annually required public hearing to receive comments regarding unmet transit needs was held on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, at the MCTC Policy Board meeting. In addition, since April 25, 2025, MCTC staff have received public input on potential unmet transit needs within the region. The SSTAC met on December 9, 2025, and evaluated all comments received using the MCTC Policy Board adopted “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” definitions and made a recommendation to the MCTC Policy Board. The following staff summary was prepared in cooperation with the SSTAC. The SSTAC has also submitted a letter outlining its recommendations to the MCTC Policy Board under separate correspondence.

SUMMARY:

The SSTAC reviewed eight comments. Six of the comments were identified as potential unmet transit needs and were evaluated using the “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” definitions.

The SSTAC has made the following recommendations for each jurisdiction:

SSTAC Recommendation for Madera County: There are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.

Additionally, the SSTAC requests the following to be addressed during the upcoming fiscal year:

- The SSTAC formally recommends that the County of Madera identify and present a defined fiscal strategy to advance the implementation of a microtransit pilot project. With the County’s microtransit feasibility study already completed, the SSTAC believes that additional planning should be accompanied by a clearer path toward implementation. The SSTAC recognizes microtransit as a viable solution to address the unique transportation needs of the county’s rural and mountain communities and urges the County of Madera to take concrete steps toward implementation.

SSTAC Recommendation for the City of Madera: There are no unmet transit needs.

SSTAC Recommendation for the City of Chowchilla: There are no unmet transit needs.

MCTC Staff concur with the SSTAC recommendations for all three jurisdictions.

The potential unmet transit needs that have been evaluated and the recommendations made by the SSTAC for Madera County (MCC) are as follows:

- PROVIDE FIXED ROUTE SERVICE FROM OAKHURST TO FRESNO AND/OR CLOVIS

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: 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.

- EXPAND SERVICE IN OAKHURST, TO INCLUDE MORE ACCESS TO DOCTOR'S OFFICES, SHOPPING, ETC.

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: 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.

- INCREASE FIXED ROUTE SERVICES TO INCLUDE TWO DROP OFF TIMES INTO LA VIÑA

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: 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 make sure that any future changes are aligned with existing rider preferences. Based on the feedback of the majority of the residents, the arrival schedule will be changed to 8:00AM and 6:20PM from La Viña. 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 provide more service in La Viña in the future.

- ADD ANOTHER SERVICE DAY DURING THE WEEK AND ADD A WEEKEND SERVICE DAY TO THE EASTIN ARCOLA – RIPPERDAN - LA VIÑA ROUTE

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: Current ridership is 1.2 riders per day, 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 provide more service in La Viña in the future.

- **IMPLEMENT MICROTRANSIT IN LA VIÑA**

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: Microtransit has long been identified as a potential strategy to address service gaps and increase service frequency in the county, including areas such as La Viña; however, the SSTAC recommends Madera County move towards a clear, defined path toward implementation.

- **ADD A SHELTER, LIGHT POST, AND WASTE BASKET AT THE STOP ON VIÑA STREET**

SSTAC Recommendation: Unmet transit need, not reasonable to meet

Discussion: 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.

There were no potential unmet transit needs that were evaluated by the SSTAC for the City of Madera (Madera Metro).

There were no potential unmet transit needs that were evaluated by the SSTAC for the City of Chowchilla (CATX).

The rest of the comments received were determined to be either operational or non-transit issues. These comments were forwarded to the appropriate agencies to be addressed.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact on the approved 2025-26 Overall Work Program and Budget.