

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Approved MINUTES
Monday, April 3, 2023

Primary Location:

County Administration Center, Board of Supervisors Chambers
Room 1070, 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah

Teleconference Locations:

Willits City Hall, 111 E. Commercial St., Willits
Fort Bragg City Hall, 416 N. Franklin St., Fort Bragg
Point Arena City Hall, 451 School St., Point Arena
Caltrans District 1, 1656 Union St., Eureka

General Public Teleconference by Zoom

ADDITIONAL MEDIA:

[Mendocino County Video](http://www.mendocinocog.org) or find
[YouTube link at http://www.mendocinocog.org under Meetings](http://www.mendocinocog.org)

The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) meets as the Board of Directors of:
Mendocino Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and
Mendocino County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE)

1. Call to Order and Roll Call. The meeting was called to order at 1:39 p.m. with Directors present: John Haschak, Michael Carter, and Josephina Duenas in Ukiah; Greta Kanne in Willits; Jeff Hansen in Point Arena; Bernie Norvell and Dan Gjerde in Fort Bragg; and Tatiana Ahlstrand (Caltrans/PAC) in Eureka. Chair Gjerde presiding.

Staff present in Ukiah: Nephele Barrett, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO; Loretta Ellard, Deputy Planner; and Jody Lowblad, Administrative Assistant.

Staff present by Zoom: Lisa Davey-Bates, Transportation Planner; James Sookne, Program Manager; Michael Villa, Project Coordinator; Alexis Pedrotti, Program Manager; and Jesus Rodriguez, Administrative Assistant.

2. Assembly Bill 2449 Notifications and Considerations. This item is to receive and address requests from Board members to participate in the meeting from a non-posted location, subject to conditions set forth in AB 2449. There were no such requests.

3. Convene as RTPA

4. Recess as RTPA – Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee

5 - 9. Consent Calendar. The Chair invited public comment and board discussion; none was heard. Upon motion by Carter, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (8 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Kanne, Hansen, Norvell, Duenas, Ahlstrand/PAC, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved.

5. Approval of February 6, 2023 Minutes – as written

6. Approval of February 24, 2023 Executive Committee Minutes – as written

7. **Approval of Third Amendment to Fiscal Year 2022/23 Transportation Planning Overall Work Program (OWP)** – *to pass through \$25,000 of State Rural Planning Assistance (RPA) funding for CALCOG’s California Academy for Regional Leaders (CARL) scholarship recipients. Total OWP funding increased from \$1,178,314 to \$1,203,314. The Executive Director is authorized to sign certifications and a revised OWP Agreement as needed and forward to Caltrans as required.*
8. **Technical Advisory Committee Recommendation of February 15, 2023: Authorization to Release Fiscal Year 2023/24 Draft Transportation Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) for Review, Comment & Circulation**
9. **Acceptance of MCOG 2021/22 Fiscal Audit** – *MCOG received a clean audit.*

10. **Public Expression.** No comments were received in advance or during the meeting.

11. **Presentation & Discussion: Mobility Solutions for Rural Communities of Inland Mendocino County – Interim Report – AMMA Transit Planning.** Executive Director Barrett introduced the item, noting the Council’s input was requested before issuing a final report, and the AMMA consultants: Heather Menninger and Selena Barlow, who gave a slide presentation. Also present from the project team were Dennis Brooks, Valerie Mackintosh, and Cliff Chambers. Highlights of the presentation included study goals, approach and analysis, public engagement findings, and potential mobility solutions for Covelo, Laytonville, Potter Valley, Brooktrails and Hopland. Issues included:

- No single strategy will be sufficient due to diverse needs across multiple communities.
- Limited funding is available, along with other challenges such as sustainability of new services.
- A new Mendocino County Rural CTSA (Consolidated Transportation Services Agency) is being discussed, which may be funded by up to five percent of Local Transportation Funds (LTF) [about \$250,000]. Other public funding sources (state and federal), as well as local partnerships, earned revenue and donations, could supplement a budget. A new Rural CTSA could be housed with either Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) or the nonprofit Family Resource Center Network. Advantages and potential of a Rural CTSA were noted.
- Focus is on establishing innovative mobility solutions, to be led by a dedicated mobility manager; detailed scenarios for the programs were suggested.
- Technology issues include limited range of any electric vehicles to be deployed.

Board and staff discussion included:

- MTA currently has the designation and responsibilities of CTSA in Mendocino County, while it is allowable to designate more than one. There are limitations such as insurance regulations. Throughout the study, it was learned how few suitable grants are available. Five percent of LTF would not be new funds, but would shift funds from MTA’s allocation. No formal action is required today; mainly seeking feedback. (Barrett)
- Alternatives are not very good; the status quo is not working. Likes the idea of Family Resource Center as Rural CTSA, perhaps in more distant communities where they already serve, such as Laytonville and Covelo; perhaps MTA could best serve Brooktrails and Hopland. Agreed LTF would reduce MTA’s funding. (Haschak)
- Appreciated this new level of information. Asked to elaborate on Medi-Cal funds, which is difficult for people to access individually. Some bureaucratic effort involved, could access revenue from trips to medical appointments. (Gjerde, Menninger, Barlow)
- County Social Services and rural health clinics could be a valuable resource also. (Gjerde)

- Discussion of Family Resource Center and timeline. Services could start at least one year out, under next cycles of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 program and MCOG's FY 2024/25 budget. (Group, Barrett)
- Does Jayma Shields Spence at Laytonville Healthy Start Family Resource Center have capacity to take on more workload? As Coordinator of the local network, she has been involved with MCOG from beginning of this study, and sees demand for transportation from constituents, needing one or more vehicles; could be viable with funding. Reference to past work with MCOG on Safe Routes to School study. (Haschak, Spence)
- How can transit be more accessible to people ages 65 and over, or with disabilities? Has seen empty transit busses in town. MTA has resources and funds could be raised; how to distribute among appropriately sized vehicles and make available for more riders? Could employers be asked to contribute to the program as is done in Mexico? Yes, the study team did receive some comments from employers; there was not strong support from that sector. The trips needs were not primarily for work, among young and older populations, in these cases. Some areas discussed are not within MTA's service territory. (Duenas, Menninger, Chambers, Barlow)
- Discussion of Rural CTSA designation: not creating a new organization, but a new dedicated funding stream to an existing organization for this purpose? Yes, it is a mechanism to provide funds through that designation. If MTA were the Rural CTSA, it would still carve out money for these services; however, one advantage of using Family Resource Center is that as a nonprofit, they likely could make funds go farther due to a lower cost operation. (Kanne, Gjerde, Menninger, Barlow)
- Difficulties recruiting for positions; to be successful, need someone to lead this effort within whichever organization takes it on. Regarding concerns for Laytonville Healthy Start's capacity, they provide compatible services and seek funds for expansion of services, so would have a very strong application for 5310 funds. The new federal infrastructure bill has increased funding for these services. An existing manager would not be expected to take on new duties long term, but would recruit an employee. These communities continue to go unserved. (Gjerde, Kanne, Menninger, Barlow)
- MCOG staff is commended for pursuing the planning grant to initiate this. (Menninger)
- MTA board members were invited to attend today's meeting. The final report will come to MCOG for acceptance in August, and MTA will be notified. (Ellard)

Chair Gjerde invited any further public comments and, hearing none, concluded the agenda item. The consultants were thanked for the presentation. No action was taken.

12. **Executive Committee Recommendations of February 24, 2023:**

- a. Approval of Extensions to Professional Services Agreements through September 30, 2024
 - i. *Administration & Fiscal Services – Dow & Associates*
 - ii. *Planning Services – Davey-Bates Consulting (DBC)*

Ms. Barrett reviewed her staff report, describing the two contracts and options for today's action. She advised the Council to plan ahead in the coming months to issue a Request for Proposals, as this would be the final extension of the ten-year contract period. Executive Committee members were invited to comment. Chair Gjerde indicated satisfaction with the service provided by the contractors and inquired which of the member agencies could take on the next procurement process. Director Kanne thought City of Willits might. Ms. Barrett suggested an ad hoc committee could address the task. Director Haschak noted the committee was unanimous in its recommendation to approve both extensions. No public comments were received. Ms. Barrett and Ms. Davey-Bates thanked the Council.

Upon motion by Haschak, second by Carter, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (8 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Kanne, Hansen, Norvell, Duenas, Ahlstrand/PAC, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that, as recommended by the Executive Committee, the existing contracts for Administration & Fiscal Services with Dow & Associates and Planning Services with Davey-Bates Consulting are extended for one year through September 30, 2024, including a COLA increase of 7.3 percent, and the Chair is authorized to execute the agreements.

- b. Draft FY 2023/24 Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) Budget – No Action. CFO Orth summarized her written report, with a focus on the Local Transportation Funds (LTF) from sales tax revenue and State Transit Assistance (STA) from gasoline and diesel fuel taxes. The LTF windfalls of the pandemic period have tapered off, though audited FY 2021/22 surplus revenues are available to help cover a budget shortfall projected for 2022/23. The County Auditor-Controller/Treasurer-Tax Collector's 2023/24 budget estimate of \$4.9 million is comparable with actual revenues of the past two closed fiscal years. On the other hand, STA revenues are on the rise as travel and fuel consumption have resumed, with a new State Controller's estimate at an all-time high over \$1 million. The Executive Committee again recommended setting aside 15 percent (\$735,000) of estimated revenues in the LTF Reserve, available for Mendocino Transit Authority's future needs. The recommendation provides \$4.3 million for transit, down slightly, while noting allocations in recent years have been remarkably high. Proposed MCOG program allocations were also noted. Total available revenues for allocation from all sources were estimated at \$11 million, before several million to be added from pending items, such as project funds carried forward.

There were no questions from Board members, and no public comments were received. A budget workshop will be on the May meeting agenda as usual. This report was for information only.

13. Presentation & Discussion: MCOG Board Orientation – MCOG Staff – No Action.

Ms. Barrett, Ms. Orth, and Ms. Ellard elaborated on a slide presentation, to be made available at www.mendocinocog.org under About Us/MCOG Board Manual. Topics included Background of the agency; Board Composition with officers and committee appointments; MCOG Staffing; Responsibilities such as fiscal oversight, transportation policy development, advocacy and program management; Programs such as funding, transportation planning work elements, deliverable products, and special projects; Mendocino SAFE motorist aid callbox program; regional role in housing planning and addressing climate change. There were no questions or discussion of this item.

14. Review & Discussion of State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Outlook and Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) Policy Review.

Ms. Barrett gave an overview of process, timeline, eligible projects and fund estimate, as written in her staff report. Historically the STIP has been a major source of capital funding. Revenues have declined from fuel taxes over time as vehicle fuel efficiency has increased and federal funding has not kept up with inflation. Senate Bill 1, the Road Repair & Accountability Act of 2017, made this source more stable, so a similar level of funding as the last cycle can be expected, about \$3 million for the Mendocino County region. MCOG last adopted STIP policies in 2011. Local conditions and state priorities have changed since then. Capacity increasing projects are now generally discouraged by the California Transportation Commission (CTC), which governs allocation priorities. MCOG's policies and priorities were reviewed, some completed now, notably the U.S. 101 bypass of Willits. Rail grade improvements are no longer applicable. Bicycle and pedestrian (non-motorized) improvements remain eligible. Ms. Barrett requested

feedback from the Council members, as well as any direction for the upcoming cycle. Discussion included:

- There may be more latitude from CTC than in 2011, opportunity now to update. Agreed. (Gjerde, Barrett)
- It might be beneficial to have a standing or ad hoc committee address and bring back options for the full board. Start with Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), then Executive Committee, then Board, or possibly a Board ad hoc. Staff will start with outline of local policies. (Gjerde, Barrett)
- Who serves on the TAC? Agency staff, no board members. Review of positions currently filled. (Haschak, staff) – *refer to MCOG bylaws*

The Chair invited public comment. Dave Shpak of Gualala attempted a comment [inaudible due to audio feedback from the Point Arena location], to be submitted later.

15. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee – Reconvene as RTPA – Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. Upon motion by Haschak, second by Carter, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – *Haschak, Carter, Kanne, Hansen, Norvell, Duenas, and Gjerde*; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.

16. Reports - Information

- a. Caltrans District 1 – Projects Update and Information – Milestone Report. Director Ahlstrand reported a restructuring of their traffic safety and operations division, listing staffing role changes and offering to provide contact information as needed. A Caltrans grant award of \$900,000 was made for the Willits Road Diet project on South Main Street / State Route 20, formerly US 101, from bicycle safety funds. A proposal for federal PROTECT funding was submitted for climate resiliency planning studies and technical analysis addressing sea-level rise on State Route 128. 12 applications were received for FY 2023/24 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants program, several from Mendocino County. Another call for projects is anticipated this fall, as the Climate Adaptation portion was undersubscribed and planning funds remain available. Her team is available for consultation as needed; members may contact herself or planner Dean Meester, who serves on the TAC. Another round of Clean California grant applications are due April 28. A recent public meeting for an ongoing project was well attended, addressing a corridor plan for traffic calming on Talmage Road in Ukiah, including bicycle and pedestrian improvements; comments were still being accepted. Finally, an updated Milestone projects report was included in the agenda packet. Ms. Barrett added that an updated Caltrans organizational chart would be posted to MCOG’s website.
- b. Mendocino Transit Authority. General Manager Jacob King stated nothing to report.
- c. Great Redwood Trail Agency. Director Haschak reported on community open house meetings March 22 in Fortuna and March 23 in Willits, which were well attended, expressing concerns about the farther reaches of the Eel River Canyon and also positive comments about possibilities for the trail.
- d. MCOG Staff - Summary of Meetings. Ms. Barrett referred to the written report.
- e. MCOG Administration Staff
 - i. Covelo SR 162 Corridor Multi-Purpose Trail Project. Ms. Barrett reported the project is now fully funded, since \$2,317,000 of supplemental funding was approved by the CTC

- at their meeting of March 23 in Los Angeles. Staff is moving forward to sign the construction contract, previously approved by MCOG pending supplemental funds. Community stakeholders have been informed. The wet winter and spring affects construction season timing; a ground-breaking ceremony will be planned. Staff is thrilled for the community and to be making progress on this crucial project.
- ii. *Miscellaneous*. None.
 - iii. *Next Meeting Date*. Monday, May 1, 2023.
- f. MCOG Planning Staff
- i. *Feasibility Study - Mendocino Transit Authority's Ukiah Transit Center*. Deputy Planner Ellard summarized her written report. The consultant team met to review the first draft deliverable report on existing conditions. Public outreach starts in April: the consultants will be in Ukiah for pop-up events, as well as launching a survey and stakeholder interviews to gather community input. The project's final report, due in November, will help MTA to proceed with next steps for a new facility.
 - iii. *MCOG Public Outreach with ChargePoint for Rural Electric Vehicle Charging Grant*. Ms. Ellard summarized her updated report. MCOG had supported the successful grant application to the California Energy Commission last year, committing to provide public engagement services identifying preferred locations in the Ukiah Valley area for 25 chargers. A total of 89 responses were received from the survey and online comments. Public and agency workshops also were held. Staff is preparing a final report.
 - iv. *Miscellaneous*. Ms. Ellard reported discussions with stakeholder agencies to prepare an application for a Noyo Harbor circulation plan under Caltrans' Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants program. They expect to hear results this summer. Ms. Barrett reported successful Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grant awards, including all those who had applied using MCOG's Local Road Safety Plans from last year's planning project.
- g. MCOG Directors. None.
- h. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates – Annual Regional Leadership Forum, March 6-8, 2023 in Riverside. Director Haschak reported his attendance as the delegate. There was a focus on the need for a holistic approach involving transportation and housing, such as reducing vehicle miles traveled, making boulevards where people live and work, with autonomous vehicles and other solutions. Legislation in Sacramento is emerging to address the gap in gas tax revenues as a result of 1.4 million electric vehicles and growing in California. The CTC gave a presentation on projects statewide; he was glad they included smaller rural projects like the Covelo Trail. Overall it was a worthwhile conference, though largely with an emphasis on urban issues. Alternate Delegate Norvell also attended.

17. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 4:13 p.m.

Submitted: NEPHELE BARRETT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO