

Mendocino Council of Governments

Approved MINUTES
Monday, December 1, 2003
Ukiah City Council Chambers

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 / Roll Call . The meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. with Directors Willis (PAC), McEntire, Larson, Shoemaker, Dahlhoff, Gjerde, and Campbell present; Chair Campbell presiding. Director Wharff was excused by prearrangement.
Staff present: Phil Dow, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy-Administration; and Loretta Ellard, Deputy-Planning. Larry Wright, Deputy-Long Range Planning arrived later for reports.

2. Convene as RTPA

3. Recess as RTPA - Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee.

4 - 6. Consent Calendar. Upon motion by Shoemaker, second by Larson, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*7 Ayes – Willis/PAC, McEntire, Larson, Shoemaker, Dahlhoff, Gjerde, and Campbell; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent - Wharff*): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved:

4. Approval of November 3, 2003 Minutes – as written

5. Adoption of Social Services Transportation Action Plan – 2003 Update

6. Adoption of Second Amendment to 2003/04 Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) – adding funds to Work Element 3, Pavement Management Program Update, and deleting Work Element 15, Air Service Demand & Airport Feasibility Study

Public Expression. None.

7 - 9. Regular Calendar.

7. Public Hearing: Unmet Transit Needs for Fiscal Year 2004/05

- a. Staff Report. Orth briefly summarized the purpose of this hearing and the annual process as detailed in her written staff report. She noted that under its allocation policies MCOG is not required to conduct this process, however staff recommended that the process be carried out as usual. At the request of Chair Campbell, Orth and Dow refreshed the Board's memory on the establishment of the LTF Reserve Fund. Staff then verified proper notice with proofs of publication from three local newspapers.

Upon motion by McEntire, second by Larson, and carried unanimously (*7 Ayes; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that this public hearing on 2004/05 Unmet Transit Needs was properly noticed.

Staff submitted a list of 15 unmet transit needs compiled by the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) as testimony.

- b. Public Hearing. The hearing was opened at 1:40 p.m. Bruce Richard of Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) added one need and asked that #6 be separated into two related needs, #6a and #6b. With no one else wishing to speak to the issue, the hearing was closed at 1:47 p.m.
- c. Board Action. **Upon motion** by Dahlhoff, second by Shoemaker, and carried unanimously (*7 Ayes; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the testimony received includes “unmet transit needs” as qualified by MCOG’s adopted definitions, and those 16 needs are directed to Mendocino Transit Authority for analysis and later review by the Transit Productivity Committee.

8. Adoption of Proclamation in Honor of Rick Knapp, Retiring Director, Caltrans District 1. Staff had prepared a proclamation appreciating Mr. Knapp’s efforts and involvement with MCOG during his years at Caltrans.

Upon motion by McEntire, second by Shoemaker, and carried unanimously (*7 Ayes; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the “Proclamation Honoring Rick Knapp” is adopted.

Dow and Campbell planned to deliver the document to him at the retirement dinner on January 23.

9. Proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Association of Bay Area Governments Participation in the Wine Country Interregional Partnership (IRP). Dow explained the intent of the MOU, which would set up a structure in the event there is a chance to continue the IRP after the grant expires on June 30, 2004. He described the other two interregional partnerships to which ABAG is a party under the same statewide grant program, both due to conclude soon.

Staff recommended review and comment, for action at the next meeting. Discussion followed, with the following main points raised:

- How much effort and resources should MCOG commit to an ongoing effort of the IRP?
- The General Assembly scheduled for March 25, 2004, will reveal more about stakeholders’ commitment to an ongoing effort. Future MCOG work could be programmed under overall planning Work Element 1.
- If this MOU is adopted, a backup position should be included, in case the outcome is to close out the program, while retaining flexibility for future and ongoing efforts.
- MCOG will continue in its commitment to the major issues of housing, jobs, and transportation linkages; data sharing would be one way of collaborating with neighboring regions.
- An “Attachment B” outlining MCOG staff responsibilities could be added to the agreement.
- This MOU could be beneficial to MCOG for future funding leverage, as ABAG will likely need to continue working on these issues with the other regions. The main value of the MOU may be to document such intergovernmental relationships for future fundraising efforts.
- There was some concern that MCOG may be compelled in future to commit its own planning funds if ABAG does not follow through on identified tasks.

Chair Campbell directed staff to add an Attachment B defining MCOG’s role under the agreement and to bring the draft document back for action at the February meeting.

10. Reports - Information

- a. Mendocino Transit Authority. Bruce reported and distributed a handout from the California Transit Association to its members concerning Governor Schwarzenegger’s proposed cuts to

transit funding. Four potential sites for the Coast bus facility are expected to be narrowed to two for consideration at the next MTA Board meeting, or else to provide other direction. Concerning the North Ukiah Transit Center, MTA is still considering alternatives to the Fjords location.

- b. North Coast Railroad Authority. Mr. Mitch Stogner, the new Executive Director, provided a report in person and distributed a Draft Operational Plan summary. They are focusing on the southern end of the line, with a FEMA grant pending at approximately \$8 million.

Chair Campbell and Director Gjerde added comments, with Gjerde providing an update of Fort Bragg and Willits activities concerning the California Western Railroad closure and sale. Director McEntire also commented on the CWR bankruptcy proceedings. At his query, Mr. Stogner described the class standards for tracks, which are based on speeds allowed. Mr. Stogner thanked Director Willis and Caltrans staff for their assistance.

- c. MCOG Administration & Planning Staff

1. *Summary of Meetings*. Dow referred to his written staff report.
2. *2004 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Fund Estimate*. Dow reported he was not certain of the implications of the Traffic Congestion Relief program cancellation, noting several possibilities. He has attended several STIP workshops recently, with the situation changing daily. The fund estimate gives MCOG no new funds, as expected, and over the five-year cycle, we will not have to take projects out of the program, but only reschedule them; no new projects will be added. Fortunately, MCOG did not have any projects under the Traffic Congestion Relief program to lose. Dow distributed copies of the Draft Proposed 2004 STIP Fund Estimate, with Annual Programming Targets by county that propose “respreading” 2002 STIP funds already programmed over 2005 through 2009. This would mean significant reductions in the near term. He also discussed Transportation Enhancement (TEA) funds coming up under the TEA21 reauthorization bill “SAFETEA,” which will be programmed in the STIP. He proposed that MCOG hold a workshop or two on the TEA program before awarding project funds at an estimated \$2 million over six years.
3. *FY 2004/05 Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) Outlook*. Dow reported on the uncertainty of next year’s program, due to the funding situation. He noted the 2003/04 PPM planning funds from the State had not been allocated, and he does not yet know whether MCOG will get the funds for next year. Normally at this time of year we would have solicited for project applications among MCOG member entities, which has not been done. A draft work program is usually due to Caltrans in March. There is still a backlog of unfunded projects cut from this year’s program, which would not necessarily be first in line for funding. Dow stated our program is intentionally behind schedule while waiting for news of funding from the State. Coming up soon is the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update that will be due in 2005. He does not think that a great deal of effort will be justified for this updated plan; he listed the major areas needing update. Discussion followed on keeping the board informed between now and the next MCOG meeting in February, and on the degree of work to put into the next RTP update and its environmental review requirements.
4. *Progress of Wine Country Interregional Partnership (IRP)*. Larry Wright reported, urging MCOG to continue using the tools provided by the IRP after he retires in June. The present fiscal emergency and disrepair of the transportation system and inability to maintain it over the past 20 years has created an era of challenge for elected officials.

There is no alternative than to reach out to neighboring jurisdictions to find common ground and work together on investments.

One of the IRP tasks is a General Assembly of stakeholders scheduled for March 25 in Healdsburg. Staff will be using the news media to get the word out, as well as direct mail. A Projections Report is in progress for release and discussion at the General Assembly. He urged the Board not to abandon long range planning despite lack of funds. Dow agreed with Wright that the underfunded times are a good opportunity to reflect on long-term goals.

5. *Support for Sonoma County SAFETEA Federal Earmark Project.* Dow reported that under the new relationship resulting from the Interregional Partnership, he has been meeting with neighboring Regional Transportation Planning Agencies to coordinate efforts. He proposed supporting Sonoma County's top priority improvement project, which is in a different congressional district than MCOG's, so there would not be competition for "demonstration project" or "high priority" funds from Congressman Mike Thompson on the transportation committee. Chair Campbell concurred with Dow's proposal to bring this issue to the February agenda, including a map. Director Gjerde asked about Humboldt County's highest priority, at Buckhorn Summit on Route 299, which would dilute support for Mendocino County's priority, the Willits Bypass. However the 299 project is not as far along in project development, so future support would not be precluded.
 5. *Miscellaneous.* Director Dahlhoff asked about the State's proposal of a minimum size for STIP projects. Dow said it would be bad for rural areas and counter to the intent of Senate Bill 45. He has spent more time on this at State workshops than on the Fund Estimate; it has been referred to staff for revision, and he will keep the Board informed.
 - d. MCOG Directors. Director Dahlhoff announced that Point Arena's transportation sales tax passed the ballot in the November election. Director Willis announced that Charles Fielder had been appointed the new Caltrans District 1 Director upon Rick Knapp's retirement. Chair Campbell reported on a recent Caltrans open house meeting in Leggett for the Confusion Hill improvement project, which was well attended. Local businesses are concerned about loss of Transient Occupancy Tax and sales tax revenues as a result of the realignment on Route 101.
 - e. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates. As the MCOG delegate, Chair Campbell attended the most recent meeting, at which similar news was heard to that reported by MCOG staff today. CALCOG delegates are concerned about the Proposition 42 loan to the State budget and whether or not it will be repaid. Attendees seemed generally in shock by the State's funding crisis. The "use it or lose it" policy had caused regional councils to accelerate transportation projects, now ground to a halt.
- 11. a. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee - Reconvene as RTPA - Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee.** Upon motion by Shoemaker, second by Larson, and carried unanimously (*6 Ayes; 0 Noes; 1 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.
- b. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Submitted: PHILLIP J. DOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR