

# MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Approved MINUTES  
Monday, May 2, 2011  
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 1:37 p.m. with Directors Jesse Robertson (Caltrans/PAC), Mari Rodin, Larry Stranske, Dan Gjerde, John Pinches, Kendall Smith, and Susan Ranochak present; Chair Gjerde presiding. Director Lauren Sinnott arrived subsequently.

Staff present: Phil Dow, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy Director for Administration; Loretta Ellard, Assistant Executive Director; and Nephele Barrett, Senior Planner.

**2. Convene as RTPA**

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

**Public Expression.** None.

**4 - 6. Regular Calendar.**

**4. Joint Meeting of MCOG and Steering Committee for Vision Mendocino 2030, Regional Blueprint Planning Program - Phase 2, to Receive Presentation from Consultant (*Design, Community & Environment*) and to Comment on Draft Report.** Ms. Barrett briefly introduced the matter, noting the printed report distributed (available online at [www.visionmendocino2030.org](http://www.visionmendocino2030.org)).

Steering Committee members in attendance identified themselves: Chris Carterette, City of Fort Bragg; Alan Falleri, City of Willits; Lief Farr, County of Mendocino; and Chris Brown, Mendocino County Air Quality Management District (AQMD). Board members serving on the Steering Committee were Directors Robertson, Gjerde, and Pinches. Ms. Barrett noted that Bruce Richard of Mendocino Transit Authority also served, but was not present.

Mr. Bruce Brubaker, Associate Principal of Design, Community & Environment (DC&E) introduced himself and colleague Agnes Chan, then gave a slide presentation of the draft report. He identified the grant program funding as meant to sustainably manage growth through land use and transportation policy. He described the four phases of the project and status of each phase. The first phase is compiling existing conditions data. Phase Two, "Vision and Values," gathered public input through workshops, the steering committee and online survey, completed with this report. A third phase will develop several growth alternatives through scenario modeling and select a preferred scenario that maps distribution of growth throughout the countywide region. Phase Four will begin implementation of the preferred scenario.

Director Sinnott arrived at 1:50 p.m.

Mr. Brubaker summarized results of all input received from the public during Phase Two. Concepts for growth were covered, including baseline and types of growth favored by the participants. Recommendations were made for five types of growth based on these results.

The Chair then invited comments.

Mr. Jeff Oldham, Potter Valley, asked where the identified priority of food sustainability was reported. Mr. Brubaker clarified differences in priorities between the online survey and various community workshop results, noting the food sustainability issue came up in several communities.

Mr. Chris Brown, Director, AQMD, noted that participants were a self-selected group, so this is not a scientific survey. He advised the Council that results are not devalued because of that, however the emphasis might not reflect views of the entire community. Through his work around the county he can say the issues reported here accurately reflect what many people think, yet there are also issues not reflected in the report.

Mr. Alan Falleri, Community Development Director, City of Willits, commented on an issue recently arisen, directly related to the Highway 101 bypass of Willits project, that is in conflict with a stated priority and plans of the Willits community around value-added local food production. The Willits plans are consistent with Regional Blueprint goals of economic development, public health, resource protection, and sustainability. The bypass mitigation team now indicates that grazing may be limited. The City is concerned this would impact ranchers in the Little Lake Valley. The County's general plan identifies this historic agricultural base. He discussed background of how the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) was chosen by Caltrans for the bypass route and how the Corps of Engineers permit requires specific mitigation for loss of wetlands from construction. It was a surprise to hear of a grazing limitation this late in planning. After many years of the environmental process for this project, this new issue dramatically changes the context.

Board and staff comments included:

- Results reflect the relatively few participants of workshops. Needs in Point Arena for internet access, infrastructure and jobs have changed emphasis since the workshop there. (Sinnott)
- The charts in this presentation are based on how survey results were assigned to general categories. Broad representation on the steering committee ought to balance the more random public input, and together these may reflect views of the county as a whole. (Barrett)
- A few staff people at the Corps of Engineers are responsible for the grazing limitation decision affecting Willits. Agriculture is meant to be exempt under the permit. (Pinches)
- Issues of concern in Willits are the need for more and better jobs, desired even more than local food production. The threatened plant species Baker's Meadowfoam actually thrives under grazing, which controls invasive plants. (Stranske)
- MCOG is aware of the wetlands mitigation and grazing issue. About 2,000 acres were acquired by Caltrans for mitigation; the Corps recommends grazing on about 350 acres for the sole purpose of maintaining the Meadowfoam plant. (Dow)
- Discussion of survey results comparing use of transportation modes by bus, bicycle, walking and riding a horse. (Stranske, Pinches, Sinnott, Barrett)
- Discussion of scenarios and how various growth concepts would be selected. As a matter of degree, emphasis on infill can coexist with outlying growth; the concepts are not exclusive. The next Blueprint phase will address this, generating alternative maps. In Lake County, the preferred scenario combined elements, taking best characteristics of each. (Rodin, Brubaker, Dow)
- The recent Census indicates there might not be any growth as envisioned in this plan. Families are leaving the area for lack of work. (Pinches)
- MCOG is doing this in response to a legislative bill that resulted in the Regional Blueprint program to deal with statewide growth projections. Under the State-mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation, some growth is assumed that calls for planning. (Dow)
- This report indicates more water capacity will be needed, which conflicts with local government positions on water needs (example of Boy Scout Lake east of Willits). (Pinches)

- When communities are reducing in size, as Point Arena is, that is a good time to conduct intelligent planning activities, as there is less pressure to act. (Sinnott)
- How will Phases Three and Four relate to parallel efforts such as the Ukiah Valley Area Plan (UVAP) and County General Plan, and how can tools from the Blueprint planning cost effectively help to implement and integrate with local plans? (Smith) This will be an opportunity to review county plans in light of these results, incorporate as much as possible the good work of local governments' plans and use them as a starting place when developing the Blueprint scenarios, likely as part of the baseline scenario. This is a countywide, 20-year vision. (Brubaker)

Ms. Barrett described the next phases, including identifying funding sources for implementation. Mr. Brubaker described how the Blueprint plan can have a positive effect on future grant applications. This Council will have plenty of opportunities for review and input throughout this process. Staff answered questions about the amounts of funding and grants for all of the Blueprint phases.

Mr. Jack Cox of Ukiah, stated this is a redundant process in view of the UVAP and County General Plan, and also inconsistent with them. A small number of people have been involved in the Blueprint effort. It is a waste of tax dollars.

The Chair thanked all for the comments and the presentation. Staff requested action to accept the report, with or without addition of today's comments.

**A motion was made** by Director Sinnott to accept the report as amended with comments received today, and to circulate the amendment to the Council members for final comments about each of their own communities. After discussion, **the motion was withdrawn**.

**A motion was made** by Director Sinnott to continue this item on the next agenda for action to accept the report with an addendum provided beforehand. **The motion failed for lack of second.**

**Upon motion** by Rodin, second by Stranske, and carried on roll call vote (*7 Ayes – Robertson/PAC, Sinnott, Rodin, Stranske, Smith, Ranochak and Gjerde; 1 No - Pinches; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the Draft Vision Mendocino 2030 Blueprint Plan - Phase Two: Community Involvement and Outreach report is accepted as final with an addendum of comments heard at today's meeting.

The Chair called a recess at 3:05 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

**5. Fiscal Year 2011/12 RTPA Budget Workshop.** Ms. Orth gave a slide presentation covering the Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds, and touching on the Planning program and Regional Surface Transportation Fund (RSTP). The TDA funds consist of the Local Transportation Fund, from the countywide quarter-cent sales tax administered by MCOG, and State Transit Assistance (STA). The budget was placed in context of existing policies and recent activity. Details covered in her written staff report and the presentation included the following.

- a. Report of Revenues Fiscal Year to Date 2010/11. Local Transportation Fund (LTF) sales tax receipts through April (10 of 12 months) total \$2,275,282, at \$77,242 more than the FYTD budget estimate. In February, the County Auditor-Controller had projected a fiscal-year-end excess ("unrestricted balance") of \$110,818. (Budget is \$2,637,644.) If this trend of economic recovery holds, it would begin to reverse the past two years of revenue shortfalls.
- b. Executive Committee Recommendations of February 28, 2011. The committee unanimously recommended a first draft of the budget with allocations for MCOG Administration, optional 2% Bicycle & Pedestrian, and Planning, with the remainder available for Transit, consistent with established priorities for Local Transportation Funds.

- c. TAC Recommendation of February 23, 2011 – Planning Overall Work Program. The Draft OWP was recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee to be forwarded to Caltrans for comment by March 1 as required annually. Total funding was \$585,000 from all sources. This amount is expected to increase (likely double) when amounts to be carried over are identified in the final work program. Ms. Ellard briefly reviewed each work element and invited questions.
- d. Transit Productivity Committee Recommendations of April 19, 2011 - Mendocino Transit Authority's Annual Transit Claim and Unmet Transit Needs. The TPC met and reviewed MTA's claim along with annual transit performance review and related matters. Given the current context of service cuts, the TPC recommended not starting any new services and thus a finding that "there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet" for FY 2011/12. The committee also recommended full funding of MTA's claim for FY 2011/12, with STA allocations contingent on actual revenues, and a procedural amendment to "Long-Term Capital Reserve" to reconcile MTA's and MCOG's fund estimates.

Staff answered questions during the workshop, including:

- Could North Coast Railroad Authority apply to MCOG for TDA funding of passenger rail service? (Pinches) Yes. If a claim were received from NCRA, this Council would follow TDA guidelines to decide how best to allocate the transit funds among more than one operator. Currently MTA receives all of MCOG's funds available for public transit.
- Why is there a decrease for FY 2011/12 Senior Center transportation contracts with MTA? (Pinches) This is the amount claimed by MTA, as they have authority for this program. (Orth) Ms. Sally Webster of MTA, explained that one of the six participants, the Indian Senior Center, dropped out of the program, so the total program funding level is reduced.
- How does one get a planning project into the OWP? (Stranske) Ms. Ellard described the annual six-week application cycle and dates, and how projects are selected and recommended for inclusion in the program.

Director Smith left the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

- Chair Gjerde asked for clarification of the finding to be made next meeting that there are no fundable unmet transit needs. Staff detailed the process conducted so far this fiscal year and MCOG's adopted definitions of "unmet transit need" and "reasonable to meet."

Directors Sinnott and Rodin complimented staff on the clarity and format of the budget presentation. No action was taken.

**6. Consideration of Letter to North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) Supporting Rails With Trails Projects in the "North-End" Segment and Urging Timely Action to Determine Feasibility of Continued Rail Operations in the "Canyon" Segment, and Related Matters.** Chair Gjerde introduced the matter, which had been discussed during MCOG's April tour and meeting in Covelo. NCRA officials had been quoted recently that it might cost as much as \$500 million to restore the Eel River Canyon segment and take as long as ten years to produce environmental reports and make a decision. Relative to the question of restoring rail service, this could delay efforts by Humboldt County residents to access part of NCRA's right-of-way for development of a trail between towns in the North segment. Chair Gjerde had proposed that MCOG write to NCRA to encourage a more timely decision, to allow additional uses of the corridor. He has corresponded with a staffer from City of Arcata with her analysis of local rail-trail issues.

Discussion followed on drafting such a letter:

- It would be unfair to characterize NCRA's position based on an offhand comment supposedly made by Executive Director Stogner. (Dow)
- Under present law, no amount of money can make Eel River Canyon service feasible; it would require a change or waiver of federal laws such as NEPA and Clean Water Act. (Pinches)
- Why not also include in this letter the rail-trail plans and projects ongoing in Mendocino County, and make clear our support for trail development near population centers generally, wherever feasible. (Rodin, Gjerde)
- Clarify intent of letter: 1) encourage NCRA to work with those entities developing rail-trail projects within or along the corridor right-of-way, and 2) deal with the 60-mile canyon segment decision as quickly as possible. (Ellard, Dow)

By consensus, it was agreed to direct staff to draft the letter in the manner suggested. Chair Gjerde will forward to staff relevant information gathered to date.

**7 - 8. Consent Calendar.** Upon motion by Rodin, second by Stranske, and carried unanimously (7 Ayes; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent - Smith): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved:

**7. Approval of April 4, 2011 Minutes – as written**

**8. Third Amendment to Fiscal Year 2010/11 Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) - Adds federal grant of \$60,000 for Blueprint Planning approved by Caltrans for Phase 4 of MCOG's Regional Blueprint, Work Element 17. Also adds required local match of \$15,000 from carryover Local Transportation Funds. These two additions at \$75,000 bring the new total OWP to \$1,536,302.**

**9. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee - Reconvene as RTPA - Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee.** Upon motion by Ranochak, second by Rodin, 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.

## **10. Reports - Information**

- a. Mendocino Transit Authority. Sally Webster, MTA Finance & Personnel Manager, reported and answered questions. Director Pinches asked about the new eRide program. Ms. Webster gave a brief overview of status, noting MTA's enthusiasm. She reported their budget is uncertain at this point, so they have prepared baseline, best case, and worst case scenarios, depending on revenues. General Manager Bruce Richard is attending a course on construction project management, for MTA's major capital project. MCOG members and staff thanked MTA again for the ride to Covelo last month.
- b. North Coast Railroad Authority. Staff handed out notes of NCRA's most recent meeting Ms. Ellard reported, noting NCRA's discussion of "railbanking." Comments followed on the railbanking issue. NCRA's next meeting is scheduled for this week in Ukiah.
- c. MCOG Administration & Planning Staff
  1. *Summary of Meetings.* Mr. Dow referred to his written staff report. He described the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) scoping process of the Regional Transportation Plan; no one from the public attended the advertised scoping meeting. He does not anticipate any problems with the EIR component of the Plan. RTP adoption is anticipated for the August agenda. A brief discussion followed on nonmotorized transportation in Covelo.
  2. *Pavement Management Program.* Mr. Dow announced that he and staff will be offering a presentation to each of the Cities and County about this program, to build public

awareness of the widespread problem of deteriorating pavement. The issue was discussed at the most recent meeting of the California Transportation Commission, where he had reported MCOG's actions to date.

Director Rodin left the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

3. *Miscellaneous.* Ms. Orth noted that the City's chambers would be unavailable for the June 6 meeting, so MCOG would need to either relocate or reschedule. An alternative location had been reserved. Staff was directed to see if space and members are available on June 13 at 10:30 a.m.
- d. MCOG Directors. Director Pinches inquired as to status of reclassifying of certain rural roads. Mr. Howard Dashiell, Director, Mendocino County Department of Transportation, reported Bell Springs Road was completed.
- e. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates. Director Sinnott reported on the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Regional Issues Forum in Monterey, April 28-29. Presentations will be made available online. She considered the conference a success and described the new Executive Director in positive terms. Her sense is that CALCOG is still a viable organization worthy of MCOG's membership, despite recent controversy. Discussion followed on causes of division within CALCOG's membership and distinctions between lobbying and advocacy. Staff was directed to agendize a report of the forum for MCOG's June meeting.

**11. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Submitted: PHILLIP J. DOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Director for Administration