



January 23, 2006

FOR RELEASE: Week of January 23, 2006

To: Mendocino County News Media

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MCOG Adopts \$16 Million Regional Transportation Program

Another opportunity to fund transportation capital improvements is presented by the 2006 cycle of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Although no new "STIP" funds are guaranteed for the Mendocino countywide region, there is the potential for more than \$16 million of funding over the next five years. The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) adopted its program January 23 at a public hearing. The Council's action follows several months of discussion, while considering recommendations made by staff and MCOG's Technical Advisory Committee.

"MCOG's 2006 Regional Transportation Improvement Program optimistically requests major funding for the Willits Bypass--according to established Council policy--in a period when statewide funding for roadway projects is extremely constrained. We'll be competing with the rest of the state for these highway funds," explains Phil Dow, MCOG Executive Director. "However, we're also requesting \$1 million for Mendocino Transit Authority's vehicle replacements, which has a very good chance of approval by the California Transportation Commission, because of the current availability of public transit funds." The State's decision is to be made in April.

The "RTIP" includes \$14,595,000 toward the Willits Bypass, \$1,000,000 to MTA for 16 new transit vehicles, and \$322,000 for regional planning activities. Additionally, MCOG will receive \$575,000 of guaranteed federal Transportation Enhancement funds for later programming. The RTIP cycle ends in 2011.

The State Transportation Improvement Program is an important source of funds for regional and local transportation, among several others such as Proposition 42. Also there are funds from the new federal “SAFETEA-LU” bill. California is struggling to catch up with investments in a neglected infrastructure, and various proposals are currently being considered, such as the Governor’s bond program. A stable, long-term source of funds for street and road maintenance has yet to be identified. To help solve these problems for Mendocino County, MCOG representatives meet often with statewide groups to work on policy proposals.

Acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, MCOG programs or allocates various types of state and federal transportation funds to Caltrans, the County of Mendocino and the four incorporated Cities of Ukiah, Fort Bragg, Willits, and Point Arena. In addition to projects on state highways and within its five member jurisdictions, MCOG helps support transportation activities of the North Coast Rail Authority, Mendocino Transit Authority, local airports, and others. Projects involve planning, capital improvements, rehabilitation and maintenance, fleet replacement, and intermodal transit centers. For more information, call the MCOG office at 463-1859 or consult the agency's web site at www.mendocinocog.org.

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