

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

367 North State Street ~ Suite 206 ~ Ukiah, CA 95482
Phone (707) 463-1859 ~ Fax (707) 463-2212
www.mendocinocog.org

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To: Mendocino County News Media

Contact: Loretta Ellard, Deputy Director for Planning, Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG), 463-1859

Funds Available for Transportation Enhancement Projects

Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG), as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, announces the availability of \$2,023,000 in federal funding for Transportation Enhancement (TE) projects within Mendocino County. The funds are intended for enhancements to the surface transportation system. Eligible projects include bicycle and pedestrian trails, scenic and historic preservation, landscaping and beautification, and wildlife habitat connectivity. MCOG will be accepting applications, at a minimum of \$100,000, from June 15 through October 15, 2004. Approved projects will become part of the 2004 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP).

MCOG will sponsor one or more workshops, depending on need, to assist applicants and provide additional information regarding the TE application process. Workshop dates and locations have not yet been established, but are expected to occur in July, 2004. Interested applicants may contact Loretta Ellard, MCOG Deputy Director of Planning, at 463-1859 for more information or to request notification of workshops, or visit MCOG's website at www.mendocinocog.org.

MCOG has adopted a local TE application process to determine how to distribute these funds. Included in this process are the following key points:

- **Applicant Eligibility** - In recognition of the involved federal process required to access these funds, all applicants or sponsoring agencies must be capable of entering into a Master Agreement with Caltrans. Potential applicants may include the County, Cities, Mendocino Transit Authority, Northwestern Pacific Railroad, and California Western Railroad. Other agencies may also be eligible if they meet the Master Agreement requirements.

- **Project Eligibility** - The TE Program is a capital-improvement program for projects that comply with federal environmental requirements and other federal regulations. Projects must have a direct relationship to the surface transportation system, and be over and above normal projects. Eligible activities include: **(1)** Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles; **(2)** Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicycles; **(3)** Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites; **(4)** Scenic or historic highway programs, including tourist and welcome center facilities; **(5)** Landscaping and other scenic beautification; **(6)** Historic preservation; **(7)** Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities; **(8)** Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including conversion and use for pedestrian or bicycle trails) **(9)** Control and removal of outdoor advertising; **(10)** Archaeological planning and research; **(11)** Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity; and **(12)** Establishment of transportation museums.
- **Project Selection** - Applications are expected to be reviewed and ranked by MCOG's Technical Advisory Committee during October – November, 2004, with MCOG selection expected to occur in December, 2004. Successful projects will be amended into MCOG's 2004 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and programmed over the five year RTIP period (FY 2004/2005 – 2008/2009).

This is a federally funded program, and is a component of the federal transportation bill (*formerly known as Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century – TEA 21*) which is currently undergoing federal reauthorization hearings.

Acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, MCOG programs or allocates various types of state and federal transportation funds to entities including 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, California Western Railroad, 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.