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Transportation Grants Awarded to Local Communities

Several grants of state and federal funds have been made to local communities in Mendocino County this summer. In the competition for public funds, these grants are good news. Local residents have long identified needs for transportation improvements and services, and they are eager to implement solutions and see results.

Laytonville hit the transportation jackpot this year, with no fewer than four projects to be delivered there, totalling \$2,836,102.

Caltrans has awarded a Community Based Transportation Planning grant to the Laytonville Traffic Calming & Downtown Revitalization: Planning for a Livable Community project at \$86,102. Project partners include Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) as lead agency sponsor, Laytonville Area Municipal Advisory Council, the Local Government Commission, and a consultant yet to be selected.

In addition to the planning grant, Laytonville will get \$300,000 of the state's share of federal Transportation Enhancement funds for construction projects and another Caltrans grant of Safe Routes to School federal funds at \$450,000 for pedestrian sidewalks. Together with a Caltrans District 1 safety project for curve alignment of Highway 101 in the downtown area at \$2 million, these projects will add up to some major improvements over the next couple of years.

"With the completion of the Willits Bypass, Laytonville will become the second of two stop-and-shop opportunities located directly on US 101 between San Francisco and Eureka, the other being Hopland," commented Hal Wagenet, 3rd District Supervisor and MCOG

councilmember. "It is absolutely critical at this time to position the town to take advantage of the coming tourist dollars by improving safety and image in one stroke. The LAMAC and Local Government Commission joined me for a strong lobbying effort. It was a remarkable feat to obtain this level of funding for Laytonville in the face of all the statewide budget cuts. This public-private partnership is a shining example of what government is supposed to do: help the citizens help themselves."

Caltrans also awarded a planning grant to Mendocino Transit Authority from federal funds, for the Willits Area Transit Service Implementation Plan at \$40,000. Both the MTA and the Laytonville planning projects will be part of MCOG's work program for fiscal year 2006/07.

MTA will be hiring a consultant to prepare the Willits transit plan, where a new "flex route" style of service will be considered. The community will have opportunities for input during this planning project.

Last year, a Community Based Transportation Planning grant was awarded to the "Gualala Community Action Plan" project, with MCOG as lead agency sponsor, still in progress.

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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