



**MENDOCINO
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

367 North State Street~Ukiah~California~95482
www.mendocinocog.org

PHILLIP J. DOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Administration: Suite 206
(707) 463-1859
Transportation Planning: Suite 204
(707) 234-3434

October 27, 2017

To: MCOG Board of Directors
From: Janet Orth, Deputy Director/CFO
Subject: Information Packet of November 6, 2017 Meeting - No Action Required

* * * * *

The following items are attached.

1. Caltrans Excellence in Transportation Award Winners 2017 – The Willits Bypass was recognized in the rural highway category (excerpt attached).
2. MCOG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Meeting minutes of September 20, 2017.
3. “FY 2018 and Beyond: What’s at Stake for Small and Rural Transit Providers” – Memorandum from Transportation for America detailing cuts to federal funding of public transit proposed in the Administration’s budget and status of the Congressional appropriations process.
4. “MTA Offers Service Upgrades for Dial-A-Ride” – News article from September 17, 2017 Ukiah Daily Journal describing the new RouteMatch dispatch software funded by the Proposition 1B Transit System Safety, Security, and Disaster Response Program, allocated by MCOG’s Board in December 2016. (The RouteMatch system was funded by MCOG Local Transportation Funds in July 2017 for MTA’s system-wide service, currently being implemented.) Thanks to Director Steve Scalmanini for the clipping.



Information #1
MCOG Meeting
11/6/2017

Caltrans Excellence in Transportation Award Winners 2017

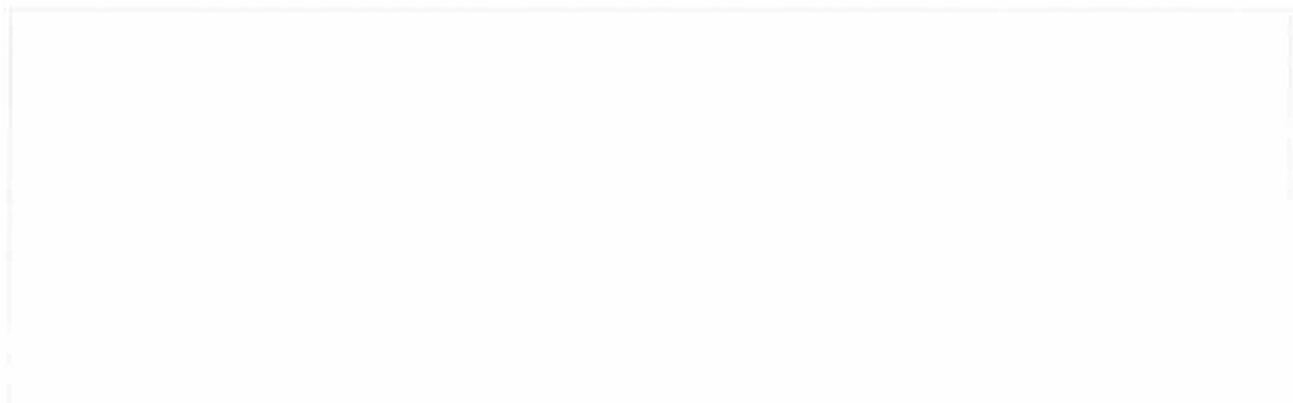
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Each year, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) highlights the best of its work and the work of its partners through the annual Caltrans Excellence in Transportation Awards Program. Caltrans received nearly 100 entries from within Caltrans, public agencies, private contractors and consultants across the state. Congratulations to those of you who have worked hard to make these projects a reality by participating in the effort to provide positive and measurable improvements in transportation, resulting in a lasting benefit to the state of California.

Intermodal Transportation System

US-101 HOV Project with Class I Bike Path

- Caltrans District 7
- Caltrans District 5
- Santa Barbara Association of Governments





US-101 HOV Project with Class I Bike Path

The first commuter-period, high-occupancy vehicle lane in Ventura County was built in the median in each direction of US-101 to relieve congestion in this growing region. The lane is open to all traffic during off-peak times. A scenic Class I bike path/pedestrian trail with aesthetic design features along the southbound shoulder was also constructed, upgrading the existing Class III bike path. The bike path/trail completes a 4-mile gap in the California Coastal Trail, providing a connection between Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. The path also offers four new vertical accesses to the beach. An ADA-compliant pedestrian undercrossing at La Conchita gives the public access to the beach where none existed. New intelligent transportation system elements such as vehicle detectors, closed-circuit TV camera and changeable message sign have also been added within the project limits.

The Highway (Rural)

Willits Bypass

- Caltrans District 1
- Caltrans Division of Engineering Services
- Caltrans North Region Design
- Caltrans North Region Environmental



Willits Bypass

The Willits Bypass Project moved US-101 to a new 6-mile alignment on the east side of the city of Willits. It opened to traffic in November 2016 and eliminated the final traffic signals between San Francisco and Eureka. Through partnerships, primarily between Caltrans, Mendocino Council of Governments, the County of Mendocino, and the City of Willits, the project came to fruition—almost 60 years after its conception. The project significantly reduced travel time, improved highway access, and restored downtown Willits from a major highway to the center of a livable rural community. The alignment and design give motorists woodland and pastoral views from start to finish and was chosen to minimize effects to the numerous cultural and natural resources in the Little Lake Valley. A mile-long floodway viaduct significantly minimized wetland impacts and allows exceptional elevated views of the valley. Endangered plant rhizomes were relocated, and over 2,000 adjacent acres of wetland/pasture/woodlands are being restored, enhanced, and protected to mitigate for 80 acres of wetland impacts. This unprecedented effort will help restore the significant hydrologic functions and aquatic habitat of the scenic valley, which for more than a century have been altered by agricultural activities designed to drain it. Many severely degraded stream channels within the project footprint have also been reconstructed and planted with native vegetation to restore historic migratory fish habitat.

MINUTES

**MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

September 20, 2017
MCOG Conference Room

Members Present

Jason Wise, County DOT
Rick Seanor, City of Ukiah
Robert Dostalek, County DPBS
Jacob King (*for Carla Meyer*), MTA
Alexis Kelso, Caltrans (*arrived @ 10:16 a.m.*)

Present via Teleconference

Richard Shoemaker, City of Point Arena

Staff & Others Present

Phil Dow, MCOG Administration
Loretta Ellard, MCOG Planning
Nephele Barrett, MCOG Planning

Members Absent

Mitch Stogner, NCRA (*Non-Voting*)
Barbara Moed, AQMD
Tom Varga, City of Fort Bragg
Dusty Duley, City of Willits

1. **Call to Order/Introductions** – Phil called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Self-introductions were made.
2. **Public Expression** – None.
3. **Input from Native American Tribal Governments’ Representatives** – This is a standing agenda item to allow input from tribal representatives. There were no tribal representatives present.
4. **Approval of 8/9/17 Minutes** – Motion by Rick Seanor, seconded by Jason Wise, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (6 ayes – Wise, Seanor, Dostalek, King, Kelso, Shoemaker; 0 noes; 3 absent – Moed, Varga, Duley) to approve the minutes of 8/9/17 as submitted.

Agenda item #5 was moved to later in the meeting, awaiting arrival of Caltrans’ representative.

6. **FY 2017/18 Overall Work Program – Discussion of Potential Project(s) for Rural Planning Assistance (RPA) funds** – Loretta reviewed her staff report and explained that the Rural Planning Assistance (RPA) funds reserved in the FY 2017/18 Overall Work Program need to be programmed soon to avoid carryover problems. The reserve currently totals \$62,275, and an additional \$14,253 in FY 2016/17 RPA is expected to be available as soon as Caltrans formally certifies the FY 2016/17 carryover amount.

10:16 a.m. – Alexis Kelso arrived

MCOG staff reviewed the following potential projects, including “regional” benefit:

- a regional sidewalk inventory/engineered feasibility study

- a traffic study of circulation patterns surrounding neighborhood near Ukiah High School
- a traffic impact study for the new courthouse to be built in Ukiah
- an update to the 2008 State Route 1 Corridor Study
- an update to the 2005 Route 101 Corridor Interchange Study

Discussion ensued on needs and priorities. Richard Shoemaker supported a sidewalk inventory project. Rick Seanor noted the traffic study near Ukiah High School currently has funding commitments from MCOG, the City of Ukiah, and the school district, and the scope of services is done. He thought a traffic impact study for the new courthouse would be premature, as the future tie-in with Clay/Leslie Streets is still a few years out. Phil said he checked with County Planning staff on the need for the ten year update to the SR 1 Corridor Study, but has not heard back. Phil did not think updating the Route 101 Interchange Study was high priority because none of the recommended improvements have happened; and, we now have the micro-simulation model which can be used to test scenarios.

Discussion continued regarding a sidewalk inventory/engineered feasibility project. Phil reviewed his success with obtaining a Caltrans planning grant in the last cycle to complete the same type of project in Lake County (*inventory of existing needs, gaps in unincorporated and incorporated areas, prioritization of projects, planning level cost estimates/engineered feasibility of priority projects*). The objective is to have identified projects ready to go when funding comes around (i.e. Active Transportation Program, which has an additional \$100 million per year from SB 1).

Since limited funding (\$76,528) is available, MCOG staff noted that the project would likely need to be phased. Funding will also need to be programmed for MCOG staff to conduct the RFP process and manage the project; however, MCOG planning contractor (Davey-Bates Consulting) has an annual “not to exceed” budget, so other work elements would end up being under claimed. Richard Shoemaker indicated interest in Point Arena being included in the first phase, and after discussion, a *consensus* emerged to study the greater Point Arena area and the south coast in the first phase. A future project could study the remaining areas of the County.

Motion by Rick Seanor, seconded by Richard Shoemaker, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (6 ayes – Wise, Seanor, Dostalek, King, Kelso, Shoemaker; 0 noes; 3 absent – Moed, Varga, Duley) to recommend that the \$76,528 in RPA funds be programmed toward a new regional sidewalk inventory/engineered feasibility study, with phase 1 being the greater Point Arena area and south coast area, with \$70,000 for consultant work, and \$6,528 for MCOG staff.

Loretta summarized that this project will be added to the FY 2017/18 OWP in a second amendment, and submitted for MCOG approval likely in November, since the RPA certification is not expected until after the October 2 MCOG meeting.

5. Caltrans Local Assistance Changes to Architectural & Engineering (A & E) Consultant Contract Procedures – Alexis Kelso, Caltrans District 1 staff, advised of changes to the A & E consultant contract process which require that Exhibit 10-C (A&E Consultant Contract Review Checklist) for new and amended federal/state funded consultant contracts, must

be accepted by Caltrans prior to contract award, effective 10-1-17. She said there will be a training on this topic tomorrow at District 1 in Eureka, and was pleased that several local agency representatives have registered to attend. She also distributed project status sheets.

7. Caltrans' Sustainable Communities & Adaptation Planning Grants – Potential Projects – Loretta advised that grant applications for Caltrans Sustainable Communities grant program and Adaptation Planning grant program are due October 20, 2017. She advised that significant new funding is available under SB 1 (*\$12.5 million annually in the competitive portion of Sustainable Communities Grants; and \$20 million over three cycles for Adaptation Planning Grants*) and MCOG staff is looking for input on potential regional grant applications.

Discussion ensued, and there was a *consensus* for MCOG staff to submit an application for phase two of the regional sidewalk inventory/engineered feasibility study to cover the remaining portions of the unincorporated and incorporated areas, not covered under the new RPA-funded project discussed today under agenda item #6 above.

Motion by Rick Seanor, seconded by Jason Wise, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (6 ayes – Wise, Seanor, Dostalek, King, Kelso, Shoemaker; 0 noes; 3 absent – Moed, Varga, Duley) to recommend that MCOG staff submit a Caltrans' Sustainable Communities grant application for a regional sidewalk inventory/engineered feasibility study to cover the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County, with the exception of the greater Point Arena/South Coast areas that will be included in the RPA-funded project.

The grant budget request was not determined; the similar approved application in Lake County can be used for reference.

Loretta advised that she will follow up on whether MTA plans to submit a grant application to update the Five Year Transit Development Plan, and also advised that MCOG staff is available to help local agencies with grant applications. Richard Shoemaker advised that he will follow up with Point Arena City Council on a potential Adaptation planning grant for a project at the cove.

8. Regional Transportation Plan – 2017 Update – Nephele reviewed the RTP update timeline, noting changes that occurred due to changing from a five-year to four-year RTP update cycle. The schedule calls for the next RTP update to be due by December, 2017, with future updates to be on a four-year cycle.

She reviewed progress to date, including updated Goals, Objectives and Policies in 2014, public workshops in 2016, local agency input, reviewing of planning documents, and requested tribal input. She distributed sections of the draft, and asked for comments by October 11. Transit and tribal elements are not yet done, and will be sent out for review as soon as available.

A brief discussion ensued. Nephele reviewed comments from Howard Dashiell who recommended there be a shift toward “fix it first” in the goals and policies. She agreed to address that issue, including pavement condition, in the local streets and roads element, and Phil advised that SB 1 can also be highlighted in the narrative.

9. 2018 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – Nephele reviewed that at the last TAC meeting there was a consensus that projects deleted in the 2016 STIP are priorities for 2018 STIP funds (\$3,000,000 available, less \$298,000 for Planning, Programming & Monitoring, leaves \$2,702,000 for projects). Deleted projects totaled \$2,656,000. TAC members were asked to check with their agencies and report back on whether the deleted projects are still a priority, and whether cost estimates need to be updated. City of Fort Bragg and County staff had said their projects were still a priority, and Ukiah staff was going to follow up and report back to the TAC.

General discussion ensued. Nephele said Ukiah's project (Low Gap Road/N. Bush Roundabout – Construction component) may be premature, as the programmed project development component has not yet started. Rick advised that he will have a better idea if it's still a priority after the traffic analysis near the High School is completed.

Nephele noted that if Ukiah's project is not reinstated, \$749,000 would be available. However, that is not enough to program the construction component of the County's North State Street Intersection/Interchange project (which has a reserve for construction of \$1,602,000). She also noted that the Gualala Downtown Streetscape project, which currently is programmed only for PA&ED, is in need of funding for PS&E. She suggested using the \$749,000 for either increased cost estimates, the Gualala project, or leaving it unprogrammed until the next cycle.

Phil supported funding the next phase for Gualala, and said environmental is expected to be completed this winter. He said the Project Study Report did not separate out design, so he's requested a cost estimate from Caltrans, but it won't be available until November. The next phase identified in the PSR is Right of Way at \$200,000 (*a ten-year old estimate*).

Potential projects for future RTIPs were mentioned as construction component for Gualala, and improvements to two-lane segments of Highway 101 between Ukiah and Hopland. A project to correct the flooding at Garcia River was also mentioned, and Phil advised that Caltrans is working on several alternatives to relieve the flooding there, outside of the RTIP.

After discussion, there was a *consensus* for Nephele to prepare the draft RTIP reprogramming the County's and Fort Bragg's deleted projects, and adding PS&E or PS&E/ROW for Gualala (*depending on costs --- Phil was hopeful that it would cost <\$400k*), with future STIP reserve for North State Street construction and Ukiah's roundabout.

Nephele summarized that the RTIP will come back to the TAC for recommendation in October or November, and will be adopted at the December MCOG meeting. Phil thanked the TAC for supporting the Gualala project, and said he was pleased with the \$3 million fund estimate, as he did not expect any funding in the 2018 cycle.

10. SB 1 – Road Repair & Accountability Act of 2017 - Includes Active Transportation Program; Local Partnership Program; Local Streets & Roads; State Highway Operation & Protection Program; State Transportation Improvement Program; Planning Grants – Phil reviewed his staff report and noted a correction to the Local Streets & Roads funding estimate for Fort Bragg (\$52,000, not \$225,000). He gave an update on the various SB 1 programs and meetings he's recently attended. He reviewed the positive CTC staff recommendation that

proposes a flat \$100,000 per year to self-help cities under the Local Partnership Program. Richard Shoemaker commended Phil for his work in getting the \$100,000 flat rate for cities. Phil said the staff recommendation will be going to the CTC, and guidelines are scheduled to be adopted October 18-19.

11. **Staff Reports** – None

12. **Miscellaneous**

Ukiah City Council – Rick Seanor reported on the following: (1) tonight's Ukiah City Council meeting includes an agenda item to award a contract to Ghillotti Construction for Talmage interchange improvements. Ghillotti also recently received a construction contract for Redwood Business Park improvements; (2) Costco plans to open in April, 2018; and (3) the Planning Commission approved a new hotel in the Redwood Business Park.

12a. Next Meeting – October 25, 2017

13. **Adjournment** – 12:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Loretta Ellard
Deputy Planner

/le

FY 2018 and Beyond:
What's at Stake for Small and Rural Transit Providers

 Information # 3
MCOG Meeting
11/6/2017

Federal transit programs for communities of all sizes face unprecedented levels of cuts

Federal transit funding – including the funding on which small and rural transit providers rely – is once again on the chopping block. At risk for smaller cities and rural areas are funding reductions, phase-outs or the total elimination of Small Starts, TIGER and formula funding. Those who operate or depend on transit – whether in small, rural areas or large, urban ones – must band together to convince both Congress and the President of the vital nature of public transportation services.

What the President has proposed and the status of the current appropriations process

In outlining his proposed budget last May, President Trump clearly and bluntly stated that transit is an inherent local responsibility, and therefore, not a candidate for federal funding. Under the administration's proposal, new transit projects would be limited to a handful of major metropolitan areas that can tax themselves to pay for their own capital investments while everyone else will be left out in the cold.

Wrongly, this philosophy establishes an elite, small group of winners pitted against every other transit property in the nation – large and small. The approach is counter to a prevailing bipartisan funding arrangement the industry fought for, earned, and sustained over decades.

The administration is targeting Small Starts, TIGER and transit formula funding specifically for either cuts, phase-outs or total elimination. The administration's budget also calls for phasing out funding for New Starts and Core Capacity Programs once the currently funded projects are completed.

Figure 1: Federal Share of Transit Costs

Capital expenses	
Population	Federal Share
<50,000	66%
50,000 - 200,000	56%
>200,000	42%
Operating expenses	
Population	Federal Share
<50,000	33%
50,000 - 200,000	27%
>200,000	7%

Source: Community Transportation Association analysis of National Transit Database 2015

Transit properties risk not only losing a federal partner but also the very funding they rely upon to serve their communities well and to make future capital investments. Small and rural transit providers must let local officials and their representatives in Congress know that these cuts would take money from small communities across the country – not just from big cities.

We have been here before

In 2012 when the House Ways and Means Committee passed a bill to end all dedicated funding for transit, a broad-based coalition representing communities of all sizes, both sides of the political spectrum, business groups, civic groups and others, took immediate action to oppose the bill and ultimately killed it.¹ We can do it again!

¹ See, e.g. this letter signed by over 600 organizations: <http://t4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/HR3864-coalition-letter.pdf>

Did you know? Many members of Congress are not aware that:

- Transit use is widespread in small and rural communities; when ranked by transit use per capita, seven of the top 20 cities have populations under 200,000.²
- Smaller transit systems are both a lifeline service and a powerful economic development catalyst in the communities they serve.
- Smaller communities are more reliant on federal investment than their larger urban counterparts. **As a result, reductions in federal funding have more adverse impacts in smaller cities and rural areas.**

What you should do today

- Tell Congress and the President that funding for all transit programs must be preserved — and if anything, should be increased, not cut.
- Tell Congress to reject the administration's proposals to reduce or eliminate funding for New Starts, TIGER, Small Starts and transit formula funding.

What you should do when you go home

- Keep the drumbeat of your own story alive.
- Invite members of your delegation to a “ride-along” on a local transit route or to tour a new transit capital project that was federally funded.
- Host a meeting in-district where your member of Congress can meet transit riders.
- Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed for the local newspaper about the importance of your transit system — and share it with your member of Congress once published.
- Speak with and educate local reporters about potential funding cuts and explain the impacts of those cuts for your riders and your community.

Formula transit programs

Figure 1 (on the first page) illustrates how rural and small-city public transportation services are more reliant on federal investment than their larger urban counterparts, so even relatively small reductions in these funds would have a dramatic impact. Most of this funding comes from formula-driven funds set aside exclusively for transit from federal gas tax proceeds flowing into the federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF). Since 2008, the gas tax has not generated enough revenue to fully fund authorized highway and transit programs. As a result, Congress has transferred \$135 billion in general funds into the HTF to keep it afloat, but the latest transfer of funds will be depleted in 2020.

Unless additional sources of funding are identified by the end of the current transportation authorization that is set to expire in 2020, transit formula-funded programs could be cut. Because the

² Those cities are Athens, GA; Champaign, IL; State College, PA; Iowa City, IA; Gainesville, FL; Davis, CA; and Bellingham, WA. The full list is available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-your-citys-public-transit-stacks-up/>

current authorization is also subject to the annual appropriation process, those cuts could come earlier. While the administration's budget proposal includes full funding for transit formula programs in FY2018, it also proposes cuts to these programs in the following two years, and drastic reductions after FY2020.

If Congress does not raise the gas tax, find another funding source, or transfer additional general funds into the HTF by 2020, highway and transit programs will be cut back to levels equal to the revenue coming from the gas tax, roughly a \$95 billion cut in federal spending over the next six years beyond 2020. Assuming, these cuts would be shared between highway and transit programs according to the historical 80:20 ratio, transit formula programs could suffer a \$19 billion cut, or about 22 percent.

Impact of program cuts: Considering the Trump Administration's rhetoric on transit funding thus far, there could very well be an effort to make a disproportionate share of these cuts to transit or to remove transit completely from the HTF in order to avoid cuts to the highway program. Any reduction in the transit formula programs would adversely impact transit agencies' ability to conduct preventive maintenance, replace vehicles and equipment, and keep garages and passenger facilities safe and in a good state of repair. **Cuts to formula funding would bring greater impacts on the operation of smaller, rural transit agencies – agencies that are also permitted to use a portion of federal dollars on the day-to-day operations of their systems.** As state and county budgets also fall under pressure, it cannot be assumed that state or local funds would be available to cover the shortfall.

Small Starts

The Small Starts program within the broader transit capital construction program provides funding for bus rapid transit (BRT) and rail projects with a total cost under \$300 million, and is the most practical source for small cities planning a major transit investment.³ Smart Starts represents approximately 10 percent of the Federal Transit Administration's capital grant program, which also includes New Starts and Core Capacity grants. Despite the success and popularity of the Small Starts program, the administration's budget proposes to eliminate it, along with the New Starts and Core Capacity programs, once current funded projects are completed.

Small Starts was created in 2005 specifically for the purpose of giving smaller communities access to federal funds for major transit investments. Over the years, this program has funded dozens of projects, including three BRT lines in Eugene-Springfield, Oregon. Those two small cities had a vision for their future but could not have amassed enough capital at the local level all at once to construct what is now one of the most successful BRT systems in the country. The New Starts and Small Starts programs filled the gap, providing 75 percent of the funding for the system.

Examples of Small Starts projects

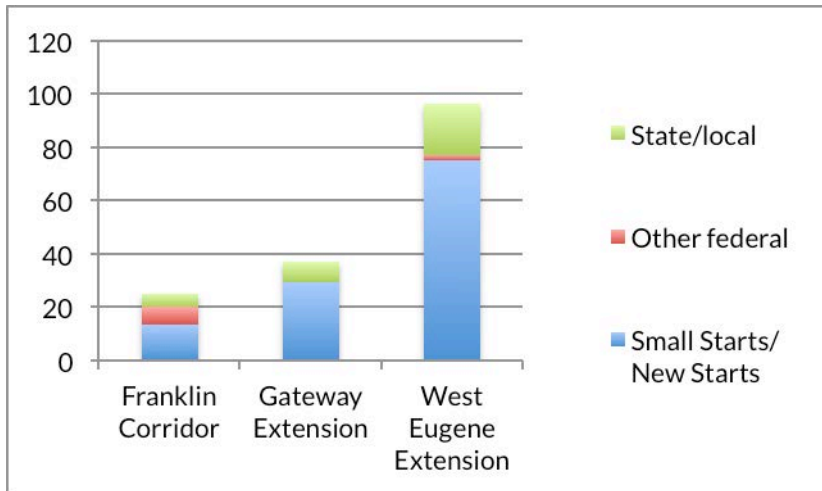
BRT in Grand Rapids, MI
BRT in Fresno, CA
BRT in Eugene, OR
BRT in Fort Collins, CO
BRT in Roaring Fork Valley, CO
BRT in Flagstaff, AZ
Commuter rail in Fitchburg, MA
Streetcar in Little Rock, AR*

**Funded as a New Start prior to creation of the Small Starts program.*

A complete list of Small Starts projects is available in FTA's annual reports: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/capital-investments/annual-report-funding-recommendations>.

³ MAP-21 increased these values from \$75 million in funding and \$250 million total project cost.

Figure 2: Funding for Eugene-Springfield EmX BRT (\$ in millions)



Sources: [https://www.nbrti.org/docs/pdf/EmX %20Evaluation_09_508.pdf](https://www.nbrti.org/docs/pdf/EmX%20Evaluation_09_508.pdf),
https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FY09_Annual_Report_on_Funding_Recommendations.pdf,
<https://www.ltd.org/latest-news/regions-emx-transit-line-receives/>.

At the time of publication, the Small Starts program is still in limbo for FY 2018. While the President has called for its elimination and the House Appropriations Committee recommended only enough funding to support projects that already have funding agreements (\$182 million), the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$168.4 million for new Small Starts projects in addition to \$149.9 million to complete previously approved Small Starts projects.⁴ The final funding amount will be negotiated in fall 2017.

Impact of program elimination: Thirty-five projects are currently in the Small Starts pipeline, and many other communities are in the planning stages.⁵ Should this program be terminated, no new Small Starts projects would move forward again with federal funding, leaving communities to support these projects entirely on their own. (Most are already raising their own taxes or other revenues to pay a large share, as much as 50 percent of the full cost.) If TIGER is also eliminated (see below), the only source of federal funding for new such transit projects would be formula programs or the Bus and Bus Facilities program. In other words, these projects would be forced to share the same funding pots that transit agencies rely on for state of good repair and vehicle purchases.

⁴ Both the House and Senate figures are below the amount that Small Starts has received in the past two years, but are fairly consistent with historical Small Starts funding levels. In FY2017, \$407.8 million was appropriated for 10 specified Small Starts projects, and in FY2016, \$353 million was appropriated for Small Starts.

⁵ Available here: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/capital-investments/current-capital-investment-grant-cig-projects>.

The TIGER competitive grant program

The TIGER program, created in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, was designed to fund economically beneficial transportation projects that are difficult to fund using traditional federal programs. **It's long been one of the only ways that smaller local communities can access federal funding for their priority projects, without having to go hat-in-hand to the state department of transportation.** As such, demand for the funds have always outstripped supply. In 2016, for example, USDOT received 585 applications requesting \$9.3 billion from the \$500 million program.⁶

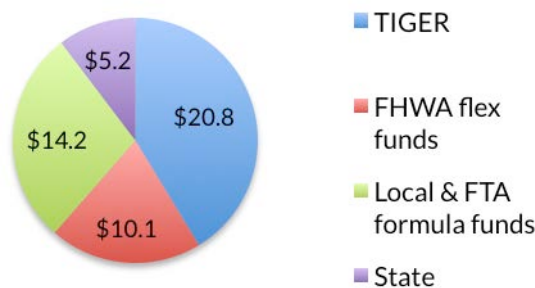
TIGER grants have been provided to both urban and rural areas, and are available for capital projects that can include new construction as well as state of good repair. For example, in 2015, the state of Texas received a \$20.8 million grant to procure 325 buses and vans to replace aged vehicles and construct four transit centers in rural areas of central Texas. TIGER will cover 40 percent of the cost of the project, and they reward projects that bring significant local or state money to the table.

Examples of TIGER projects

- Transit center in Moscow, Idaho
- Replacement buses and transit facilities for rural providers in Central Texas
- CNG buses for Muskegon County (MI) transit
- New scheduling and dispatch services for rural transit systems in Ohio
- BRT in Reno, NV
- Transit facility, bus stop renovation, and hybrid buses for Brownsville, TX
- Intermodal hub in Oklahoma City
- BRT in Omaha, NE
- Intermodal hub in Ames, IA
- Transit facility in Hopkinton, RI

An interactive map showing all TIGER grants is available at <http://t4america.org/maps-tools/tigermap>.

Figure 3: Funding for Texas Rural Transit Asset Replacement Project (\$ in millions)



Source: Texas Department of Transportation, <https://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/ptn/tiger-grant-app.pdf>

Despite its success and popularity, the Trump Administration's budget for FY2018 proposes to eliminate the TIGER program. As of this writing, the House Appropriations Committee has also voted to eliminate the TIGER program in FY2018, while the Senate Appropriations Committee would provide \$550 million (up from the \$500 million appropriated for the program in FY2017). As with Small Starts, the final program total will be negotiated in fall 2017.

⁶ See <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/us-transportation-secretary-foxx-announces-tiger-awards-nearly-500-million-grants>

Impact of program elimination: If TIGER is eliminated a major funding source for transit facilities and other system improvements will disappear. Transit agencies with one-time capital needs will have to turn to the Bus and Bus Facilities discretionary program, placing further pressure on that small program, or use formula funds. **Even if TIGER survives, the administration may establish new evaluation criteria, as they recently did for the freight-oriented Infrastructure for Rebuilding America or INFRA program, previously known as FASTLANE, which will now prioritize public-private partnerships and a higher local match.**

Future Outlook

The various proposals currently under consideration in the federal budget debate raise many questions for the future of the transit program. In addition to proposing the cuts discussed above, the Trump Administration has recommended a \$200 billion federal infrastructure program focused on leveraging private capital.⁷ (Note that there will be many claimants for that funding; according to the administration, the \$200 billion is intended not just for transportation, but also for broadband and veterans hospitals, among other needs.) Given the challenges that transit agencies can face in attracting private capital, it is not clear to what extent transit will be able to access the \$200 billion unless a portion of that amount is specifically set aside for transit needs.

The administration, however, has stated their belief clearly that transit is an inherently local responsibility and, therefore, not a candidate for federal funds. In explaining the proposed elimination of the Capital Investment Program, the budget states that the program:

Provides Federal funding for local transit projects that should be funded by States and localities that benefit from their use. Localities are better equipped to scale and design infrastructure investments needed for their communities. Several major metropolitan areas, including Denver, Los Angeles, and Seattle, have already begun to move in this direction by asking residents to approve multi-billion dollar bond measures to speed the delivery of highway and transit investments. These regions realize waiting for Federal grant funding is not the most efficient way to meet their local transportation needs. Federal resources should be focused on making targeted investments that can leverage private sector investment and incentivize the creation of revenue streams where possible.⁸

Under the administration's proposal, new transit projects would be limited to the handful of major metropolitan areas that can tax themselves to pay for them. **While Congress thus far has not adopted this view, pressure from the administration to cut spending on domestic programs could eventually lead appropriators in that direction.**

⁷ See

https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/fact_sheets/2018%20Budget%20Fact%20Sheet_Infrastructure%20Initiative.pdf.

⁸ See p. 76, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/msar.pdf>.

With a smaller pot of transit funds and increasingly urgent repair needs at large agencies, Congress will face difficult choices, and may redirect funds from other programs to assist large urban systems.^{9,10} With fewer “new” transit cities (as plans for new light rail and BRT systems are scrapped following the disappearance of New Starts and Small Starts), transit’s political influence could decline, sparking a downward spiral for the program as a whole.

There are obviously many possibilities short of this worst-case scenario.

Thus far, House and Senate appropriators have opposed some of the administration’s most drastic cuts. But with the administration pushing to cut federal spending and without a solution to the looming HTF shortfall, there is no guarantee that transit funding will continue to be protected.

Transit providers of all sizes, in all parts of the country, should band together and start making the strongest possible case for preserving the federal transit program.

Resources

The President’s proposed budget: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget>

House Appropriation bill:

<https://appropriations.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=395016>

Senate Appropriations bill:

<https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/majority/committee-advances-fy2018-transportation-hud-appropriations-bill>

⁹ E.g., in June of this year, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority was in a state of emergency (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/29/nyregion/cuomo-declares-a-state-of-emergency-for-the-subway.html>). In March 2016, the Metrorail system in Washington, D.C. closed for an entire day for an emergency inspection (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/washington-braces-for-full-day-of-metro-shutdown-to-deal-with-safety-concerns/2016/03/16/42324598-eb3f-11e5-b0fd-073d5930a7b7_story.html). In 2010, the seven largest rail systems accounted for more than 60% of the state of good repair backlog in the country (https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/National_SGR_Study_072010%282%29_1.pdf).

¹⁰

For example, the House Appropriations Committee seems to have used some of the savings from eliminating TIGER in its FY2018 budget bill to provide funding for the New York-New Jersey Gateway Program. See <http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-transportation/2017/07/11/house-thud-bill-drops-with-gateway-goodies-221266>.

MTA offers service upgrades for Dial-A-Ride

Submitted

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Ukiah Daily Journal

<http://www.ukiahdailyjournal.com/lifestyle/20170916/mendocino-transit-authority-offers-service-upgrades-for-dial-a-ride-customers>



CONTRIBUTED

Kathryn Brooks stopped driving last December and had to find another way to get to Frank Zeek School in Ukiah, where she teaches special education students five days a week. Now she calls ahead to use the new reservation service offered for Dial-A-Ride passengers by Mendocino Transit Authority

When Kathryn Brooks' eyesight worsened last year, her son asked the retired special needs teacher to stop driving. So in December she hung up the car keys for good and started using the Dial-A-Ride on-demand bus service offered by Mendocino Transit Authority.

"I've been retired for four years but I find I can't stay away from little kids," said Brooks. "I'm working continually now at Frank Zeek School, subbing five days a week. I call ahead to Dial-A-Ride and they set me up for the whole week."

Under a new service rolled out in mid-August, MTA customers who reserve a Dial-A-Ride bus up to two weeks in advance and at minimum 24 hours in advance are guaranteed a scheduled ride.

In Brooks' case, a Dial-A-Ride bus picks her up at Brookside Retirement Community at 7:10 a.m. each morning, drops her off at Frank Zeek School, then returns to pick her up at 11:45 a.m. for the return trip back home, five days a week.

"The drivers really are wonderful, I'm very happy," said Brooks. "I'm adjusting to not driving and my son is relieved. I'm making it work and Dial-A-Ride is helping me make it work."

The backbone of MTA's new service is RouteMatch software for bus transit companies. The software provides computer-aided dispatching that matches buses to customer reservations for service and streamlines routing. Drivers are equipped with dashboard-mounted tablets that provide GPS-enabled route stops and changes. Brooks said that, under the new service, she noticed the drivers don't have to talk to MTA dispatch nearly as much as before.



"Customers still can call the same day that they want to take a Dial-A-Ride bus, but wait times will vary as they have in the past," said Carla Meyer, MTA's general manager. "The upgraded service is perfect for those who need to be on time for doctor appointments, work and scheduled meetings."

The RouteMatch software cost \$80,000, and Meyer said MTA expects it to pay for itself in efficiency cost savings within two years.

The upgrade was supported and approved by members of the Mendocino Council of Governments and MTA's board of directors, who cited operational efficiency as a major benefit. RouteMatch reduces mileage and gas on Dial-A-Ride bus routes.

The upgrade also boosts the productivity of Dial-A-Ride drivers and helps MTA deploy fewer buses to meet demand. Ridership on Dial-A-Ride is increasing and in June of 2017, the latest month tallied, reached 1,761 riders, MTA reported.

Dial-A-Ride is an on-demand, door-to-door bus service for those with special needs and is offered Monday through Saturday in Ukiah and Monday through Friday in Fort Bragg. Each Dial-A-Ride bus is equipped to transport people with disabilities, and senior rates are available for those age 62 years or older.

MTA now stops at the Santa Rosa SMART train terminal

MTA added a new stop on its Route 65 and Route 95 buses to Santa Rosa so that passengers can catch the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART train) south to cities along the Highway 101 corridor, including downtown Petaluma and the Marin Civic Center. The SMART train terminal where MTA stops is a mile east of the Charles M. Schultz Sonoma County Airport on Airport Boulevard in Santa Rosa.

Currently, the connection offers MTA riders a travel route as far south as SMART train's southern terminus in San Rafael, and SMART train's planners said it can save an hour or more of travel time during periods of traffic congestion on Highway 101. SMART train announced it will provide train service within the next year to the Larkspur ferry terminal for passenger trips to San Francisco and AT&T stadium.

"MTA appreciates feedback and suggestions from our customers for improved bus service throughout our service area," said Meyer.

To comment, visit the MTA Facebook page, RideMTA. Or call MTA at (707) 462-1422.

Mendocino Transit Authority provides safe, environmentally responsible, low-cost and reliable public bus service throughout Mendocino County and south to Santa Rosa. To learn more, visit <http://www.mendocinotransit.org/>