

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

APPROVED MINUTES

Monday, March 4, 2024

Primary Location:

County Administration Center, Board of Supervisors Chambers
Room 1070, 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah

Teleconference Locations:

Fort Bragg City Hall, 416 N. Franklin St., Fort Bragg
Point Arena City Hall, 451 School St., Point Arena
Caltrans District 1, 1656 Union St., Eureka

General Public Teleconference by Zoom

ADDITIONAL MEDIA:

[Mendocino County Video](http://www.mendocinocog.org) or find
[YouTube link at http://www.mendocinocog.org under Meetings](http://www.mendocinocog.org)

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 and Roll Call. The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. with Directors present: John Haschak, Mike Carter, Josefina Duenas and Greta Kanne in Ukiah; Bernie Norvell and Dan Gjerde in Fort Bragg; Jeff Hansen in Point Arena; and Tatiana Ahlstrand (Caltrans/PAC) in Eureka. Chair Gjerde presiding.

Staff present in Ukiah: Nephele Barrett, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO; Loretta Ellard, Deputy Planner.

Staff present by Zoom: Lisa Davey-Bates, Transportation Planner; James Sookne, Program Manager; Michael Villa, Project Coordinator.

2. Assembly Bill 2449 Notifications and Considerations. This item is to receive and address requests from Board members to participate in the meeting from a non-posted location, subject to conditions set forth in AB 2449. Director Ahlstrand (PAC) requested participation from her home due to an allowable just cause, an unexpected need for childcare.

Upon motion by Norvell, second by Carter, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*7 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that Director Ahlstrand's request is approved and therefore she is allowed to vote in this meeting on Policy Advisory Committee matters.

3. Election of Officers – Chair and Vice Chair. Deputy Director Orth introduced this item, and with no objections conducted the election consistent with Robert's Rules of Order as usual. She opened the nominations for the office of Chair; Director Gjerde was nominated. With no further nominations, nominations were closed for the office of Chair.

Upon motion by Carter, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*7 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that **Director Gjerde is re-elected Chair.**

Nominations were opened for the office of Vice Chair; Director Haschak was nominated. With no further nominations, nominations were closed for the office of Vice Chair.

Upon motion by Carter, second by Duenas, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Hansen, Kanne, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that that **Director Haschak is re-elected Vice Chair.**

4. Convene as Convene as RTPA

5. Recess as RTPA – Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee

6 - 10. Consent Calendar. Upon motion by Carter, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (8 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, Ahlstrand/PAC and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved.

6. Approval of December 4, 2023 Minutes – as written

7. Appointments to Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)

- *Richard Baker, Willits Seniors, Inc., for “Local social service provider for seniors” – reappointed through April 2027*
- *Jill Rexrode, Redwood Coast Seniors, for “Local social service provider for seniors that provides transportation” – reappointed through April 2027*

8. Authorization to Release Fiscal Year 2024/25 Draft Transportation Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) for Review, Comment & Circulation

9. Approval of February 13, 2024 Executive Committee Minutes – as written

10. Acceptance of MCOG 2022/23 Fiscal Audit – MCOG received a clean audit.

11. Public Expression. “Gizmo” introduced himself and spoke to hazards of the North State Street northbound on-ramp to US-101 in Ukiah. Vegetation needs trimming for sight distance. He described near-accidents experienced at the site. His insurance has gone up and he assumes there has been no safety enforcement at this location by California Highway Patrol. The public bears costs of this deficiency, which should have been corrected years ago. He has been told the proximity of the hotel is a constraint to making improvements. He proposes a new ramp at Ford Road where access is underutilized. This situation has been a hazard for over 20 years.

Executive Director Barrett offered to follow up and consider a future agenda item.

12. Public Hearing: Unmet Transit Needs for Fiscal Year 2024/25 – Including Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) Recommendations of November 29, 2023 – Continued from February 5, 2024. Deputy Director Orth reported proofs of publication of the legal notice, included in the agenda packet, from The Willits News, Ukiah Daily Journal and Fort Bragg Advocate-News, published on January 3 and 4; also the Independent Coast Observer on January 5. Since the February 5 meeting was adjourned to March 4, it was not necessary to re-publish. Additional outreach included MCOG’s website and email to subscribers, which was sent out both in January and in February. With no objections, a finding of proper notice was made by consensus.

The Chair opened the public hearing at 1:49 p.m. Ms. Orth submitted as testimony a list of seven identified needs from the SSTAC’s unmet transit needs workshop on November 29, including six from the group and one from Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) public outreach throughout the past year. Issues from the workshop included micro-transit mobility solutions for remote inland and coastal areas, assisted services, non-emergency medical transportation, restoration of pandemic-related service suspensions, and a new local and visitor serving route for economic development in Fort Bragg. Additionally, she submitted two written letters received from members of the public, included in the agenda packet, one from a commuter working in Talmage requesting expanded

transit service to the area, and the other from a long-time Dial-a-Ride passenger (since 1978) requesting more drivers in order to meet demand and decrease wait times. After staff's report, public testimony was invited.

On the teleconference video:

- Valerie Johnson identified three unmet needs. 1) She echoed the need for Talmage corridor transportation, suggesting some type of public transit, perhaps a small jitney bus service. Destinations include City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Mendocino County Office of Education; the area includes affordable housing. 2) Existing bus service needs evening service after 6:00 p.m. to about 10:00 p.m. and would be appreciated for all routes, though likely feasible primarily in Ukiah. 3) Hopland needs more service along the corridor. Ukiah Senior Center currently provides one trip; a daily round trip remains a need for seniors.

In the Board chambers:

- Gizmo identified a gap in the Great Redwood Trail at the Sonoma County line to Hopland, suggesting weekend service that can carry trail users and their bicycles and electric bikes from Santa Rosa, and also connecting segments between Redwood Valley and Willits.

The public hearing was closed at 1:59 p.m. **Upon motion** by Norvell, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*8 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, Ahlstrand/PAC and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent*): **IT IS ORDERED** that MCOG receives as testimony all needs submitted by the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA), and written and verbal testimony submitted in today's public hearing; the testimony heard includes Unmet Transit Needs that appear to qualify under MCOG's adopted definitions, and those needs are directed to MTA for analysis and for further review and recommendations by the Transit Productivity Committee and SSTAC.

Staff reported additional SSTAC recommendations to 1) Develop a Ukiah Transit Center for multimodal connections and coordinated services and 2) MTA Administration facility upgrades/modernization. No action was taken on the additional recommendations.

13. Presentation: Gualala Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Project – Caltrans District 1.

Ms. Barrett introduced Katie Everett, Project Manager, who shared a brief slide presentation (included with the agenda packet online). With no board members wishing to discuss the matter, public comment was opened, first in the chambers.

Gizmo asked what sidewalk upgrades were proposed. Ms. Everett described the upgrades intended for ADA compliance. In response to further questions, Ms. Barrett clarified angle of slope and various features available such as flashing beacons.

Next Ms. Barrett read aloud written comments received from Tom Murphy, representing Save Gualala, in support of the project as formally approved by Caltrans in late 2023. He thanked and urged Caltrans, MCOG, Gualala MAC and staff to continue their support through completion in 2026.

Comments were received next from participants on the teleconference:

Don Hess of Gualala related discussions with Caltrans about stormwater run-off with chemicals harmful to Coho salmon. He quoted Caltrans' reply to his query and stressed importance of restoring salmonid habitat. Ms. Everett replied as to Caltrans actions for required permits that will come later in the project.

Dave Shpak of Gualala echoed comments of Mr. Murphy and extended his own compliments to Caltrans and MCOG staff for advancing this project, and to the Council and others who have supported the project throughout. The community looks forward to implementation. He extended thanks for hosting this report update.

Chair Gjerde thanked Ms. Everett for the report. No action was taken.

14. Report and Approval of Climate Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations of January 4, 2024: RuralREN (Regional Energy Network) Reorganization and Governance. Ms. Barrett summarized her written staff report and background. The purpose of the RuralREN is to serve hard-to-reach customers with energy efficiency options. MCOG joined this multi-jurisdictional effort in February 2022. She described the three petitions for modification of the original business plan that was approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in June 2023. These were due to a dispute that arose among the partner agencies in September. Petitions were filed with the CPUC with various approaches to resolving the differences. She reported the Ad Hoc committee recommendation to remain neutral and to communicate MCOG's position informally to the RuralREN partners. She believes there will be a path forward for MCOG to participate in the RuralREN, though it may take longer than anticipated.

Director Kanne moved to approve with a comment that it was disappointing this was slowing the process down, but sees no reason not to remain neutral. Chair Gjerde called for public comment, hearing none.

Upon motion by Kanne, second by Carter, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*8 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, Ahlstrand/PAC and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the ad hoc committee's recommendation is approved to maintain a position of neutrality regarding the Petition for Modification of the RuralREN decision and to express this position to the RuralREN partner agencies informally rather than filing a Motion for Party Status and proof of service.

15. Annual Committee Appointments

- a. Executive Committee. According to MCOG bylaws, the Chair and Vice Chair are members of this committee with addition of a third member reflecting a county-city balance. Director Norvell agreed to continue serving as the third member of the Executive Committee.
- b. Transit Productivity Committee. Director Carter agreed to continue serving. According to the bylaws, appointments are made by the Chair. Chair Gjerde re-appointed himself and Director Carter.
- c. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG). Director Haschak expressed a willingness to rotate out as the voting delegate, noting his impressions of the association's focus. With no other volunteers, he agreed to continue serving. Director Norvell agreed to continue as alternate. Discussion included recent meetings attended by Director Haschak and staff. – *see also #18h*
- d. Ad Hoc Committees – Covelo SR 162 Corridor Multi-Purpose Trail Project and Regional Energy Network / Climate. Directors Carter, Haschak and Hansen agreed to continue serving. Director Gjerde asked whether the Climate ad hoc was needed in addition to Executive Committee, or would they duplicate business such as RuralREN. Ms. Barrett explained why an unusual timing issue caused a duplication earlier this year. Discussion included whether the ad hocs are still needed for these projects. Ms. Barrett affirmed that they were, and suggested that the Covelo committee continue through project construction, expected to be completed this year.

Upon motion by Haschak, second by Carter, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*8 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, Ahlstrand/PAC and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the Council approves the above slate of committee appointments.

16. Executive Committee Recommendation of February 13, 2024: Approval of Fourth Amendment to Fiscal Year 2023/24 RTPA Budget: Adoption of Resolution No. M2024-01 Revising Allocation of Fiscal Year 2023/24 Funds and 2022/23 Carryover Funds for Administration, Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities, Planning and Reserves, Superseding Resolution #M2023-02 – to adjust for FY 2023-24 shortfall. Ms. Orth summarized her written report. On January 18, the County Auditor-Controller/Treasurer-Tax Collector issued a revised 2023/24 revenue estimate of Local Transportation Funds (LTF), indicating a budget shortfall of \$658,530 (13.4%) The Executive Committee met and reviewed three options prepared by staff: Option A (recommended); Option B with a transit allocation cut; and No Action/Status Quo. Option A recalculates Reserve at 15% of the revised LTF estimate and adds interest earnings, revokes the optional 2% Bicycle & Pedestrian allocation, and the remaining estimated shortfall of \$460,368 would be covered by Reserve, leaving a substantial balance in Reserve. In this option, just \$57,248 of additional LTF funds is needed to backfill the Reserve, less than with No Action. She invited questions and comments, noting committee members present.

In Board discussion, Director Haschak acknowledged it was hard to make any cuts and had noted in committee that the recommendation was the least painful approach. There was no public comment on the matter.

Upon motion by Carter, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (8 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, Ahlstrand/PAC and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that the following resolution is adopted.

Resolution No. M2024-01
 Revising Allocation of Fiscal Year 2023/24 Funds and
 2022/23 Carryover Funds for Administration,
 Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities, Planning and Reserves,
 Superseding Resolution #M2023-02
 (Reso. #M2024-01 is incorporated herein by reference)

Local Transportation Fund (LTF)		
MCOG Administration & Other Direct Costs	559,626	
2% Bicycle & Pedestrian	0	
Planning Program – new funds	141,479	
Planning Program – carryover	122,868	
Planning program – prior year funds	29,135	
Total LTF		853,108
Surface Trans. Block Grant Program – Admin.		101,116
Rural Counties Task Force – Admin.		38,500
ATP Infrastructure Grants – Admin.		6,500,000
PPM Funds - Planning		259,750
RPA Funds - Planning		319,000
State Highway Account - Planning		22,133
Total Allocations		8,093,607

17. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee – Reconvene as RTPA – Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. **Upon motion** by Norvell, second by Carter, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Haschak, Carter, Duenas, Norvell, Kanne, Hansen, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.

18. Reports - Information

- a. Caltrans District 1 – Projects Update and Information. Director Ahlstrand reported new staff members and their duties, including the Native American Liaison, leading a tribal transportation summit in April, and a Public Engagement Coordinator. A Climate Adaptation planning grant is hiring a hydrologist focusing on sea-level rise. A full-time Transit Planner will start April 2. The FY 2024/25 Sustainable Transportation Planning grants program cycle closed January 8; seven applications were received in the district, including two from Mendocino County. One is a partnership of MCOG and Mendocino County Department of Transportation to produce a sea-level rise infrastructure impact study, and the other is from City of Ukiah for a multimodal transportation center. Awards will be announced in May or June. She also gave updates on the Clean California program, including downtown Covelo and Anderson Valley projects; Laytonville and Caspar dump days with exceptionally high results; and STP litter crew ending this year.
- b. Mendocino Transit Authority. Jacob King, MTA Executive Director, reported he was looking forward to scoring the Unmet Transit Needs heard in today’s testimony.
- c. Great Redwood Trail Agency. Director Haschak reported the board met January 25 in Healdsburg and had a good discussion with tribal nations on increasing representation for dealing with sensitive areas throughout the corridor. A special meeting was held to address the MOU with City of Willits for the segment from Commercial Street north to the trailhead. The new Executive Director Elaine Hogan is on board, and they hope to have a draft Master Plan available for public review in the near future.
- d. MCOG Staff - Summary of Meetings. Ms. Barrett referred to the written report. Ms. Orth reported remotely attending the CTC’s California Road Charge Technical Advisory Committee meeting on March 1. [California Road Charge \(caroadcharge.com\)](http://caroadcharge.com) – see also #18h
- e. MCOG Administration Staff
 - i. *Draft FY 2024/25 Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) Budget – No Action*. CFO Orth gave a detailed verbal report of the Executive Committee’s February 29 budget meeting, highlighting the LTF revenues from sales tax and other funding sources. This is the first step of annual budget development. The County Auditor-Controller’s 2024/25 LTF budget estimate shows no change from the revised 2023/24 estimate. If the new estimate is revised, the Transit Productivity Committee will review it in April/May when considering Mendocino Transit Authority’s annual claim. The Executive Committee recommended setting aside ten percent (\$424,000) of estimated revenues in the LTF Reserve, available for MTA’s future needs (down from 15 percent). Total available revenues for allocation from all sources were estimated at about \$15 million. She noted that uncertainties remain, including procurement of staffing contracts now in progress, and that while local sales tax revenues are trending downward, other funds have been rising. A budget workshop with the full Board is planned for the May regular meeting agenda as usual. This report was for information only.

Director Kanne appreciated the overview, noting that even in this verbal format, the report helps to prepare for budget decisions to come. Committee member Haschak commented that one of the issues is declining LTF revenue and the recent need for withdrawals from Reserve, so that reducing the balance to ten percent is a sustainable path until another review next year.

In public comment, Gizmo noted the Volkswagon settlement funds and current status with another company that has also violated carbon pollution regulations, so more public funds will be coming from a new settlement.

- ii. *California Transportation Commission (CTC) Town Hall Meeting Hosted by MCOG in Fort Bragg, April 17-18, 2024.* Ms. Barrett reported status and purpose of the meeting. An afternoon meeting is planned for Day 1 and a bus tour courtesy of MTA in the morning of Day 2. Staff will be agendize the event as a special MCOG meeting for Brown Act compliance. An invitation has been extended to partner agencies to make presentations. A save-the-date email was sent to MCOG member agencies, so each can decide on attendance by their councilmembers.

In discussion, Director Haschak asked whether drone footage of the new Covelo Trail could be presented; Ms. Barrett affirmed that it was planned to be shown. She described numerous other projects that will be presented at the Town Hall and asked all to mark their calendars to attend. She also confirmed that public comment will be accommodated at both the meeting and the tour, likely as a block of time each day.

- iii. *Reminder – Form 700 Statements of Economic Interest.* Ms. Orth briefly noted how service on MCOG is to be filed, due April 1.
- iv. *Miscellaneous.* None.
- v. *Next Regular Meeting Date.* Monday, May 6, 2024.

f. MCOG Planning Staff

- i. *Grant Information Updates.* Deputy Planner Ellard reported that MCOG staff worked with County DOT staff to submit a \$400,000 Caltrans Climate Adaptation grant proposal, as noted in Director Ahlstrand's report, called Mendocino County Sea-level Rise Roadway Impact Study, to seek solutions for at-risk coastal roads. Also MCOG staff had worked with Potter Valley Family Resource Center to apply for a California Air Resources Board STEP (Sustainable Transportation Equity Project) grant for micro-transit services as identified in MCOG's Mobility Solutions study, which was not funded, however a debrief call indicated it was very competitive and they were encouraged to reapply next cycle.
- ii. *Work Element 3 - Feasibility Study - Mendocino Transit Authority's Ukiah Transit Center.* Ms. Ellard reported a December MTA meeting with City of Ukiah staff, who requested addition of another site for study. The consultant analyzed the new site under a contract extension with MCOG. On February 28, MTA's board met and accepted the consultant's report and three preferred options, any of which would be acceptable. They directed staff to form a Technical Advisory Group, with MCOG's participation, which will research further and make a recommendation on site selection. [Ukiah Transit Center - Project Update - Mendocino Council of Governments \(mendocinocog.org\)](#)
- iii. *Work Element 9 - Noyo Harbor Multimodal Circulation Plan.* A Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant was awarded and a kickoff meeting held in late January. A Request for Proposals is ready to be issued, pending comments from Caltrans concerning federal funds. City of Fort Bragg has expressed interest in combining the community outreach effort with a project of their own in the Noyo Harbor, so staff are coordinating.
- iv. *Work Element 10 - Update/Expand Local Road Safety/Action Plans.* This grant-funded project is underway with a short timeline; the consultant is attempting to complete the updated local City and County plans in time to qualify for federal funding, due in May.
- v. *Miscellaneous.* In further public comment, Gizmo expressed appreciation for actions taken toward building a public transit mall. For site selection, he outlined a vision for large-scale evacuations outside city limits, using the old Masonite site, where busses gathering evacuees during a disaster could be accomodated. Currently the area has blight and brownfields that could be redeveloped. Opportunities include repurposing railroad spurs, redesigning highway access ramps, links to trails, solar panels over existing holding ponds, and other ideas.

Ms. Barrett stated that discussion is allowed due to the transit center agenda item. In Board discussion, Director Haschak asked about the decision process for site selection. Ms. Barrett noted it is MTA's decision as the transit authority and owner, though it will be made with input from other agencies and organizations. She affirmed is MTA's project.

- g. MCOG Directors. None.
- h. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates. Director Haschak reported on the recent annual forum February 7-9 in Monterey. He noted Ms. Orth's talk on a panel was well received and heard, highlighting rural challenges with Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) issues in the 16-county North State Super Region. She gave a few more details. Director Haschak also reported on loss of transportation revenue due to impact of vehicle efficiency on gas taxes, noting an income equity gap if use of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) data is used as a revenue basis in a new Road User Charge model. These are all issues that must be addressed. – *see also #18d*

19. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 3:29 p.m.

Submitted: NEPHELE BARRETT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO