

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

APPROVED MINUTES

Monday, August 24, 2026

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
Willits City Hall, 111 E. Commercial Street, Willits
Point Arena City Hall, 451 School St., Point Arena
Caltrans District 1, 1656 Union St., Eureka

General Public Teleconference by Zoom

1. Call to Order and Roll Call. The meeting was called to order at 1:31 p.m. with a quorum present in the primary location. Directors present: John Haschak, Heather Criss, Maureen Mulheren, and Matthew Alaniz in Ukiah; Marcia Rafanan in Fort Bragg, Jeff Hansen in Point Arena, and Tatiana Ahlstrand for Caltrans/PAC in Eureka. Chair Haschak presiding.

Staff present in Ukiah: Nephele Barrett, Executive Director; Michael Villa, Deputy Director; James Sookne, Program Manager; Alexis Pedrotti, Project Manager; Hector Ortega, Regional Program Analyst; JD DeFrieze, Senior Planner; Jude Santos, Regional Project Coordinator; Julie St. Pierre, Administrative Assistant; and Orion Walker, Energy Program Manager, arrived later for Agenda item #15.g.

Guests present by Zoom: Kaitlyn Woolling of Caltrans for Agenda item #13.

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. There were no such requests.

Executive Director Nephele Barrett introduced newly hired MCOG staff members, JD DeFrieze and Jude Santos.

3. Regional Housing Needs Allocation Public Hearing on Appeal of Draft Allocation. Director Barrett summarized the approval timeline for the methodology and allocation thus far, and the appeal process for the draft allocation. She also expressed concern over HCD's growing authority over the process.

James Sookne, Program Manager, then summarized the RHNA process, including the attempt to appeal HCD's assignment of 6,456 units. Mr. Sookne referenced the City of Ukiah's appeal to the draft allocation. He outlined potential options going forward, which include denying the appeal, modifying the request and reducing the city's allocation by 135, reducing it by 225, or by 612. He reminded MCOG that approval of any change to the methodology will be at the discretion of HCD.

Ms. Barrett added that the methodology was a collaborative process. All submissions to HCD were developed with input from local agency staff.

Notice of this public hearing was published in the Ukiah Daily Journal on August 14, 2026, and proper notice has been established.

Chair Haschak opened the public hearing at 1:41 p.m.

City of Ukiah Community Development Director, Craig Schlatter, provided context around the appeal process. He expressed frustration with HCD's reliance on "feelings" rather than facts, laws, and established processes when making their decisions for housing allocations. He emphasized that the appeal takes issue with the State's role in the RHNA process.

Chair Haschak closed the public hearing at 1:45 p.m.

Ms. Barrett referenced a written comment from the County of Mendocino included in the meeting packet. She provided clarity on the options for the next steps, and answered a question about the consequences of being noncompliant with the overall determination. She mentioned that a letter will be written to HCD expressing the serious concerns with this process, which would be strengthened by direction from the Board.

Director Criss expressed frustrations over unrealistic expectations with housing development, due to lack of land and negative population growth in the county.

Director Mulheren mentioned concerns over the possibility of renegotiation with the State, and because of this, she recommended denying the appeal. She emphasized Ms. Barrett's suggestion for a letter and expressing frustrations to representatives.

Director Alaniz inquired about who would be responsible for the 135 units if Ukiah's allocation was reduced. Mr. Sookne responded that they would return to the county, at the corresponding income categories.

Nash Gonzalez from the County of Mendocino provided public comment. He agreed with the City of Ukiah regarding the State's unfair practices within rural communities. However, he explained that if units are returned to the county, they will not have the sewer and water resources to support additional housing.

Director Rafanan commented that, because she is not in Ukiah often, she is listening to the City of Ukiah's concerns.

Upon motion by Mulheren, second by Alaniz, and carried on roll call vote (*4 Ayes – Mulheren, Alaniz, Hansen, and Haschak; 2 Noes – Rafanan, and Criss; 0 Abstaining*): IT IS ORDERED that the appeal is denied.

Upon motion by Criss, second by Rafanan, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*6 Ayes – Rafanan, Mulheren, Alaniz, Hansen, Criss, and Haschak; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining*): IT IS ORDERED that the allocation be finalized and staff is directed to issue the proposed RHNA plan.

4. Convene as SAFE – Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

- a. Correction to the Adopted FY 2026/27 Mendocino SAFE Budget.** Michael Villa, Project Manager, summarized the error. The expenditures the prior year were listed rather than the actual fund balance. This was a \$44,000 change, and does not affect the current year expenses.

Upon motion by Criss, second by Rafanan, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*6 Ayes – Rafanan, Mulheren, Alaniz, Hansen, Criss, and Haschak; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining*): IT IS ORDERED that the corrected budget be approved.

5. Recess as SAFE – Convene as RTPA; Recess as RTPA – Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee.

6.-9. Consent Calendar. The Chair asked if anyone needed to pull anything from the Consent Calendar; no one responded. Next, the Chair invited comments; and none were heard.

Upon motion by Alaniz, second by Rafanan, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Rafanan, Mulheren, Alaniz, Hansen, Criss, Ahlstrand/PAC, and Haschak; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved.

6. Approval of June 1, 2026 Minutes – as written

7. Approval of First Amendment to Fiscal Year 2026/27 Transportation Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) – as written

8. Adoption of Resolution No. M2026-11 Approving the Allocation of FY 2026/27 State of Good Repair Funds to The Ukiah Transit Center Project and the Transfer of FY 2021/22 Funds to a new MTA Safety and Security Repair and Replace Project – as written

9. Approval of Title VI Program & Limited English Proficiency Plan Update – as written

10. Public Expression. Stephen Henderson (a.k.a. Gizmo) advocated for an Amber Alert messaging board in Covelo to provide information on missing people, as well as any other important messages.

Written public expression regarding bus services on the Redwood Coast Senior Buses was recognized.

11. Technical Advisory Committee Recommendation of August 19, 2026: Allocation of Additional Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program Funds for The Covelo SR 162 Corridor Multipurpose Trail. Mr. Sookne provided background on the project. Around \$27,500 is needed to backfill the construction management contract. Previously, some funds needed to be shifted to account for the final bridge installments. If funding is approved, construction should be completed by the end of next month. Caltrans has been involved with the project, and will be primarily responsible for maintenance of the project after construction is completed.

Director Mulheren referenced community use of the new trail, including a call in Round Valley for a community bike ride.

Chair Haschak opened up for public comment.

Gizmo mentioned that he believes this project has saved lives and congratulated the group for their work on the project.

Ms. Barrett provided additional context for this project. She mentioned that a segment of the road involved in the project had a fatality rate that was 22 times the statewide average for similar facilities. The danger of this stretch of road is what caused MCOG to get involved in a construction project. She mentioned how rewarding it is to see people utilizing the multipurpose trail, now off the highway.

Upon motion by Mulheren, second by Criss, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Rafanan, Mulheren, Alaniz, Hansen, Criss, Ahlstrand/PAC, and Haschak; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining): IT IS ORDERED that \$50,000 in STBG Partnership Program funds and up to \$50,000 in STBG administrative Local Assistance Carryover funds, totaling \$100,000, are approved for the Covelo SR 162 Corridor Multipurpose Trail.

12. Technical Advisory Committee Recommendation of August 19, 2026: Approval of Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Funding: \$221,000 for MTA's Purchase of Two Electric Vehicles and \$281,391 for City of Fort Bragg's EV Charging Infrastructure Project. Mr. Sookne reported that in July, Caltrans received word that the federal government could be attempting to take away the funds for electric vehicle infrastructure. To prevent funds from being

taken away, TAC recommended that \$221,000 be programmed for MTA's purchase of two electric vehicles, with the remaining funds for Fort Bragg on the condition that the city uses it for the electric vehicle infrastructure project. There were no comments from the board or the public.

Upon motion by Mulheren, second by Criss, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Rafanan, Mulheren, Alaniz, Hansen, Criss, Ahlstrand/PAC, and Haschak; 0 Noes): IT IS ORDERED that \$221,000 of the CRP funding be programmed for MTA's purchase of electric vehicles, with the remaining \$281,391 to be utilized for Fort Bragg's EV charging infrastructure.

13. Presentation: Garcia River Feasibility Study – Caltrans District 1. Kaitlyn Woolling, environmental scientist and hydrologist, led the presentation. She provided four alternatives for changes. Alternative One includes a six foot rise to the bridge deck. Alternative Two includes a viaduct adjacent to the highway. Alternative Three would involve bridge replacement and removing the intersection to the cemetery. Alternative Four involves a 10 to 12 foot raise of the existing embankment and a bridge widening. Meetings with stakeholders are ongoing. No funding options have been secured yet, but would be sought from local, state and federal funds.

Chair Haschak asked a question regarding climate adaptation grant funding availability.

Ms. Woolling reported an environmental concern regarding the Point Arena Mountain Beaver, and potential deed requirements.

Director Mulheren asked a question about what would come of the former highway in Alternative Two.

Chair Haschak inquired about funding.

14. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee – Reconvene as RTPA – Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. Upon motion by Criss, second by Rafanan, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (6 Ayes – Rafanan, Mulheren, Alaniz, Hansen, Criss, and Haschak; 0 Noes): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.

15. Reports – Information – No Action

a. Caltrans District 1 – Projects Update and Information. Tatian Ahlstrand reported that the budget for the Clean California funding shows an increase of \$40 million to continue investments. The US 101 Corridor Management Plan is still out for public comment, with potential adoption on October 30th. The State Route 128 Corridor Management Plan will begin in January 2027. The FY 2027/28 Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program applications are now open. The Albion River Bridge project will hold a virtual public meeting in September. The Gualala Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Project received allocation and will be advertised in September. Other ongoing projects in Fort Bragg and Hopland are moving along.

Ms. Barrett inquired about the Clean California funding, and thanked Ms. Ahlstrand for her presentation at MCOE in June.

b. Mendocino Transit Authority. Chair Haschak reported that there was a 50th anniversary celebration recently. MTA is progressing and appreciates support from MCOG.

c. **Great Redwood Trail Agency.** Director Mulheren reported that the agency is trying to increase staffing. Willits was awarded \$900,000 to complete their section of the trail. An agreement with the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians was approved regarding the location of the recycling facility. She mentioned forward progress with the County of Humboldt's portion of the trail.

Chair Haschak added that 40 percent of the trail has been constructed or is near completion.

d. **MCOG Staff - Summary of Meetings.** Julie St. Pierre referenced the written report.

e. **MCOG Administration Staff**

i. ***Miscellaneous.*** Ms. Barrett mentioned the allocation of the construction funding for the Gualala Downtown Streetscape Project.

ii. ***Next Meeting Date. Monday, October 5, 2026 – Transportation Tour - TBD***

f. **MCOG Planning Staff**

i. ***Work Element 5 – Mendocino County Sea Level Rise Roadway Impact Study.*** Hector Ortega, Project Analyst, reported that five priority sites were chosen for further technical analysis. The next phase of the study will involve developing and evaluating adaptation options for each of the selected sites. A feasibility study will be conducted and shared in the coming months.

ii. ***Work Element 8 – Regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program.*** JD DeFrieze, Senior Transportation Planner, reported that MCOG is developing a new program to provide a coordinated approach for addressing transportation impacts under SB743. The project is funded through a Caltrans sustainable transportation planning grant. Kimley Horn will prepare the program, plan and issue the firm a notice to proceed.

iii. ***Work Element 10 – SR 20 Willits Multimodal Circ. & Intersection Study.*** Mr. DeFrieze reported that the study will evaluate transportation conditions along the SR20 corridor at key intersections, and is funded through a Caltrans grant. The study will help develop a prioritized set of feasible improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists, and the recommendations will help guide future project development and funding efforts. A draft request for proposal has been prepared and will be publicly available after finalizing edits.

iv. ***Work Element 11 – Pavement Management Program Update.*** Mr. Ortega reported that draft reports have been submitted to local agencies and are currently under review. Presentations to reports will be made to MCOG once reports are finalized.

v.

vi. ***Miscellaneous.***

g. **Northern Rural Energy Network (NREN) Staff.** Orion Walker, Energy Program Manager, reported on several outreach events, including Willits Frontier Days, Covelo's Blackberry Festival, and the California Climate and Energy Collaborative Forum. Aldo Hernandez was recently hired.

Interviews for the Civic Spark intern are ongoing. On-site inspections in Little River are ongoing. Nonresidential on-site inspections are now available and are being advertised.

Chair Haschak asked several questions about outreach for the ongoing programs.

Mr. Walker responded that spreading the word about residential and nonresidential programs would be a help.

Ms. Barrett added that people within the city limits may not be eligible for these programs.

Gizmo asked about whether or not nonprofits inside of city limits are eligible for the programs. He also expressed concerns about the increasing number of roadside fires due to chains. He suggested a trailer chain safety pull out.

h. MCOG Directors. Director Rafanan reported a visibility issue caused by a curve on Georges Lane turning left onto Simpson Lane. Ms. Barrett said she would mention this to the County Department of Transportation.

Director Hansen emphasized the importance of the Garcia River flooding mitigation.

Director Mulheren reported that the Inland Water Power Commission recently gave a presentation on the new Eel Russian Facility Modeling, which highlighted that the average annual water available through the new facility will be very similar to what it has been since 2004. She expressed how important it is that the public be made aware of the findings.

Chair Haschak mentioned previous concerns about a stretch of Branscombe Road with limited visibility. He talked to the CHP captain and found that not many incidents were reported around that area. The sales tax issue for road maintenance did not receive enough votes to be listed on the ballot in November. He also expressed appreciation for Caltrans and Cal Fire for their work on prescribed burns along Highway 101.

Ms. Barrett added that there was a fire that started shortly after the prescribed burns that did not spread because of the burns.

Director Mulheren reported that Great Redwood Trail Agency worked with Caltrans to create additional parking for businesses in Hopland while the construction is ongoing.

i. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates. Director Criss reported that amendments have been made to SB 1087. CALCOG is awaiting a suspense hearing to work with the opposition to reach an agreement in order to move AB2002 forward. CALCOG is opposing AB2168 because there are provisions requiring guidelines to maximize leverage of the STIP funding for active transportation projects. Additional work is being done on AB2296 and RHNA.

Chair Haschak added that SB 1087 was eliminated from the bill. Another motion to support pursuing CEQA exemptions and subsequent legislative cycles passed. Dues increased by 10 percent, for a total of \$4890.

16. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

Submitted: NEPHELE BARRETT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Julie St. Pierre, Administrative Assistant