

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Approved MINUTES

Transit Productivity Committee - TPC

July 21, 2021

Audio-video Teleconference

PRESENT:

MCOG Board Members: Dan Gerde, Jim O. Brown
MTA Board Members: Tess Albin-Smith, Maureen Mulheren
Senior Centers Rep.: Richard Baker, Willits Seniors
Jill Rexrode, Redwood Coast Seniors (Alt.)
Staff & Others: Nephele Barrett, Janet Orth and Monica Galliani, MCOG
Jacob King and Dawn White, MTA

ABSENT:

None

1. **Call to Order.** Chair Gjerde called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Participants on the call were identified.

2. **Public Expression.** None.

3. **Consideration of Updates to Transportation Development Act (TDA) Funding Formula for Senior Centers' Specialized Services – *continued from May 21, 2019.*** Nephele gave an overview of her written staff report and presented the four funding scenarios provided in the agenda packet for consideration. She also showed two new variations on the scenarios recommended by those center directors who attended the Senior Centers Transportation Program Workshop hosted by MCOG staff on July 15, 2021, for a total of six different formulae. The existing formula is based on the five centers' services in the early 1990s, with no policy for revising or updating the formula, and no longer reflects their current levels of service. Over the past two years, MCOG has worked with MTA and the centers' directors to better standardize data reporting. Also, two of the directors had worked on new proposed formulae during that time, using pre-pandemic data, which helped to inform the options developed by staff. Questions and discussion included:

- Why use Farebox ratio as a criterion? Discussion of fares and other sources of funds included in Transportation Development Act (TDA) definition. By law, fares and/or local funding must provide at least ten percent of service cost. Senior centers have different philosophies about how they manage fare prices and subsidies to support the program. The statewide TDA working group, transit community and this committee have discussed pros and cons of charging fares versus free rides. (Tess, Dan, Richard, Nephele, Janet)
- Why use number of passengers as a criterion? The system is based on ridership. Best measure is to use all three service criteria: passengers, miles and service hours. Tax dollars reward for more service provided. Passengers criterion can be weighted a little more to encourage ridership while not penalizing distant rural areas. Many seniors relocate for access to services; there is not enough tax funding to provide for all those living in remote locations. (Tess, Nephele, Dan)
- Description of "specialized services" provided by the centers, i.e. "door-through-door. (Richard, Dan)
- MTA values its collaboration with the centers to provide paratransit services, which has been very cost effective. Recently MTA put out news and publicity about these services. (Jacob)
- Timeline to update formula; base on last full year of pre-COVID data, i.e. calendar year 2019. TPC annual performance is currently reviewed by calendar year. Earliest start date would be fiscal year 2022/23. Also the centers recommended update of the data every three years, based on the averages, consistent with TPC performance reviews. Re-setting periodically smooths variances; budgets can be planned over three years. (Nephele, Janet, Dan)
- Of the four adopted standards, the senior center directors preferred not to include Cost per Hour as a criterion, as there are too many variables. These can include gas prices, electric vehicles, driver pay. Using service miles is preferable, allowing choices like zero emission vehicles and more control over expenditures. (Nephele, Tess, Dan)

- Must the centers agree to the existing MCOG performance standards to qualify for funding? No. What happens if any service is suspended? Discussion of MTA contracts, TDA law, coronavirus accommodations. The standards are largely meant for TPC use to consider service improvements. (Jim, Nephele, Jacob, Janet)
- Are there any downsides to the senior centers' preferred Scenario #5? None identified. These are good reforms. (Jim, Dan, group)
- Under the six scenarios, generally largest programs (Fort Bragg, Ukiah) lose funding, while the three smaller programs gain some (Willits, Coastal, Anderson Valley). It was a difficult change to support, but was important to be fair. (Richard)
- There are competitive grant opportunities for Operations now under FTA's Section 5310 program; Coastal Seniors successfully applied and expanded service; the centers can grow their transportation programs, and the formula would be updated periodically to reflect that. (Nephele)
- Question about variations in Local Transportation Fund sales tax revenue; now is a good time to make a change, while revenues are coming in very high. (Jill, Nephele, Dan, Janet)

Recommendations:

Upon motion by Brown, seconded by Albin-Smith, and carried unanimously by roll call vote (5 Ayes – Gjerde, Brown, Albin-Smith, Mulheren, Baker; 0 Noes; 0 Absent), the TPC recommended that the MCOG and Mendocino Transit Authority Boards of Directors adopt Scenario #5:

- based on 100 percent service data (Passengers, Miles, Service Hours; no performance standards) with funding distributed by Passengers at 40 percent, and Miles and Service Hours at 30 percent each
- for implementation starting with the Fiscal Year 2022/23 budgets and contracts
- with initial distribution calculated from calendar year 2019, the last full year of pre-pandemic data
- to be updated every three years using an average of the previous three years of data.

- *Recommended Scenario #5 formula is attached.*

4. Review and Recommendation on MCOG Standards. Janet introduced this item and reported staff's continued recommendation to delay action on the one transit performance due for update, Passengers per Hour, perhaps until a new Short Range Transit Development Plan is available. She then reviewed her research and initial analysis of optional climate measures, as requested by the members at the April meeting.

Highlights of staff report:

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) role in collecting and analyzing data, coordinating with other federal agencies, resources available
- American Public Transportation Association (APTA) recommended practice for quantifying greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transit, in terms of Net Benefit
- Public transit reductions in GHG and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as a mode shift, enhanced when ridership increased or fleet converted to clean fuels as MTA is doing
- Issues to consider such as types of data, how reported already, potential uses, cost effectiveness, and relationship to Regional Transportation Plan goals, objectives and metrics
- Links to more information resources.

Discussion included:

- Usefulness of climate metrics in ranking fleet vehicles for replacement by which routes to best deploy zero emission vehicles (ZEVs); MTA is so planning and working with MCOG staff on a report; coaches will be replaced first, having the largest carbon footprint. (Dan, Jacob)
- Is the intention to set standard, then see how routes perform, or for analysis tool to gauge benefit of different transit approaches? (Nephele)
- Passengers and miles might be better indicators of GHG emissions than using farebox criterion. Could MCOG and MTA staffs work on an incentives approach to evaluating routes? (Dan)
- Quantitative numbers would be needed to apply the APTA method. More thought and data are needed. (Nephele, Jacob, Janet)
- Sonoma Clean Power provides 91% carbon free electricity to Mendocino County. (Dan)

- Ideally this would be developed through the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update in progress. How are the RTP performance measures or goals and objectives used? They are a useful decision making tool and can help with grant proposals. (Nephele, Janet)
- Staff can work with MTA as part of RTP development, take to Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review and recommendation, then to MCOG Board. (Nephele)

Recommendation:

There was consensus to refer optional climate measures to MCOG's Technical Advisory Committee and Board of Directors as part of Regional Transportation Plan development.

5. Miscellaneous / Members' Concerns / Announcements. None.

6. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

Submitted by Janet Orth, Deputy Director / CFO