

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Approved MINUTES
Monday, August 15, 2022

Teleconference Only
Pursuant to Brown Act and Assembly Bill 361

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 / Roll Call. The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. with Directors Jim Brown, Tess Albin-Smith, Greta Kanne, Scott Ignacio, John Haschak, Michael Carter, Tatiana Ahlstrand (Caltrans/PAC), and Dan Gjerde present by Zoom teleconference; Chair Gjerde presiding.

Staff present: Nephele Barrett, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO; Loretta Ellard, Deputy Planner; James Sookne, Program Manager; Alexis Pedrotti, Program Manager; and Jody Lowblad, Administrative Assistant. Several Caltrans staff were on hand for certain agenda items.

Note: Public comment was invited via email and online comment form; staff monitored for incoming comments throughout the meeting, reporting periodically.

2. Convene as RTPA

3. Recess as RTPA – Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee

4 - 6. Consent Calendar. The Chair invited directors and public to pull any items for discussion; none came forward. **Upon motion** by Carter, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (*8 Ayes – Brown, Kanne, Albin-Smith, Ignacio, Haschak, Carter, Ahlstrand/PAC, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved.

4. Adoption of Resolution Making Continued Findings Pursuant to Assembly Bill 361 to Conduct Public Meetings Remotely for MCOG’s Legislative and Advisory Bodies During the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

Resolution No. M2022-15

Making Continued Findings Pursuant to Assembly Bill 361
to Continue Public Meetings Remotely
for MCOG’s Legislative and Advisory Bodies
During the COVID-19 State of Emergency
[Reso. #M2022-15 is incorporated herein by reference]

5. Approval of June 6, 2022 Minutes – as written

6. Approval of First Amendment to Fiscal Year 2022/23 Transportation Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) – to carry over and reprogram planning funds unexpended in FY 2021/22, for Work Elements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 14. Total OWP funding increased from \$1,046,598 to \$1,178,312, an increase of \$131,714. The Executive Director is authorized to sign certifications and a revised OWP Agreement as needed and forward to Caltrans as required.

7. Public Expression. Jessica Stull-Otto of Covelo spoke about the Clean California grant program, noting a short timeframe for completing projects might preclude inclusion of sidewalk construction needs for pedestrian safety in the downtown area. A Round Valley committee met and is grateful for

the cleanup and beautification opportunity, yet hopes that sidewalks can be developed at a later stage if not in the current cycle, to address existing hazards. Executive Director responded that staff is working with Caltrans to develop the project, concurring there are strict time constraints. Caltrans partners had indicated they would be as flexible as possible to accommodate the community's wishes.

8. Report and Possible Direction on Gualala Downtown Streetscape Project. Ms. Barrett gave an introduction as summarized in her written staff report. An Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant application for construction funds was submitted in June, with initial results expected in October. A Draft Environmental Document (DED) was released in 2019; since then ongoing public comments were received and Caltrans responded with alternative compromises, which included the need for retaining walls due to width and slope of sidewalk improvements. Delays have occurred due to staffing changes, insufficient funding and community input. She described some of the challenges. Caltrans met with the Coastal Commission to support a Town Plan amendment; the Commission will support on-street parking only if a safety and operational need. Ms. Barrett expressed thanks to Frank Demling, recently retired Caltrans project manager, though he might return part time on the project. She said he went above and beyond in dedication to this project and in working with the local community.

Jamie Mateolli, Caltrans' corridor manager for Highway 1 in Mendocino County, invited contact about local projects and echoed the comments about Mr. Demling. He then introduced Caren Coonrod, a Caltrans engineer taking on duties of the project; she has long been familiar with the Gualala project, well aware of unique community needs.

Mr. Demling spoke as a private citizen in support of Caltrans project staff, with comments on the rationale of work with the Coastal Commission, and noting letters received and petitions circulated online and in the town on the draft environmental document. He described comments from a significant portion of the community concerning a left-turn lane, and the compromise reached. A continuous left-turn lane is not recommended nor supported by most of the community. The CCC did support a partial left-turn lane serving commerce at the south end of town. The roadway would be narrowed in the central area to accommodate a bikeway, six-foot sidewalks and landscaping. It is unlikely the draft environmental document would be recirculated. Next steps are update to right-of-way acquisition, final approval of the right-of-way document, update of appraisal maps, and negotiations. Much of funding will depend on results of Active Transportation Program (ATP) grants; if not approved, Caltrans would incorporate the project into its State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP) funding, rather than through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The Chair invited board comments. Hearing none, he opened public comment.

Tom Murphy of Gualala, noting he no longer represented Gualala Municipal Advisory Council (GMAC), added his congratulations on Mr. Demling's retirement. Staff confirmed his clarifying question that the present design did not include any onstreet parking. He considered a continuous left-turn lane unnecessary, as the community supports a partial left-turn lane. It is a major stride forward that there will be no need to recirculate or amend the Town Plan. He appreciated the landscape plan and was interested in details of the next public review.

Robert Juengling of Gualala added his congratulations. On weekends in Gualala, downtown traffic circulation is not working. It is good news that parking will be removed. He looks forward to seeing the project funded and moving ahead.

Dave Shpak of Gualala stated this configuration is exactly what is called for by the town in terms of safety and transportation planning. It will create a place for summer activity that is safer, with a practical opportunity for landscaping. He expressed thanks; it has been a long road getting to this point and he looks forward to the resulting improvements.

Melissa Finley, GMAC member, agreed with comments approving of the design, and looks forward to walking on sidewalks, as it is not safe now. She would like to exercise and do errands on foot. The changes are needed.

Board and staff discussion included:

- Although Caltrans will install, they do not maintain landscape; this will need to be addressed with a local maintenance plan. (Barrett)
- Will accept feedback from community before finalizing, though first need to work with new project development team over the next couple of months, then can give a clear presentation and timeline for engagement. (Mateolli)
- Will bike lanes continue beyond or only within project limits? There are long-term plans for a four-foot bikeway along the coast; segments are in progress. (Haschak, Demling)
- Congratulations to residents of Gualala. Appreciates the landscaping, adds to community pride. Thanks for all the hard work by both Caltrans and MCOG. (Kanne)

Chair Gjerde thanked staff for the update, and noted the community seemed pleased with the result so far. No action was taken.

9. Adoption of Resolution Allocating Fiscal Year 2022/23 Rural Counties Task Force Funds for Administration – Addendum to MCOG Budget. Ms. Orth commended Executive Director Barrett for her appointment as Chair of the Rural Counties Task Force, who reports directly to the California Transportation Commission. The proposed addendum would add up to \$38,500 to be collected from membership dues to cover direct costs of the duties. No additional compensation for time would be provided. The funds would pass through the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) Administration account for tracking and audit purposes, available for claiming reimbursement under the Dow & Associates contract for MCOG Administrative & Fiscal Services.

Upon motion by Brown, second by Ignacio, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (8 Ayes – Brown, Kanne, Albin-Smith, Ignacio, Haschak, Carter, Ahlstrand/PAC, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 0 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that the following resolution is adopted as an addendum to the budget.

Resolution No. M2022-16
Allocating Fiscal Year 2022/23
Rural Counties Task Force Funds for Administration
[Reso. #M2022-16 is incorporated herein by reference]

10. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee – Reconvene as RTPA – Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. Upon motion by Carter, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Brown, Kanne, Albin-Smith, Ignacio, Haschak, Carter, 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.

11. Reports - Information

- a. Caltrans District 1 – Projects Update and Information. Director Ahlstrand introduced project engineer Geoffrey Wright, who was on hand for this report. He described two bridges to be replaced in Calpella at US-101 and SR-20; ground has been broken, with traffic controls at East Side Calpella Road during the construction project. Also a safety project has started at three locations on SR-20 (west) at James Creek, including guard rail improvements, curve realignment, and a realignment with retaining wall. This project is expected to be completed by early December.

In Q&A, Mr. Wright described several other small projects on SR-20: recently completed areas of chip seal, also some paving in progress. Work on US-101 at Crawford Creek Bridge and McNab Creek Bridge, with detours for these, and a location on SR-162 are anticipated for completion by end of December. An accident occurred that morning near Hopland, where a truck carrying dry cement overturned in a detour; repairs will be needed, and a CHP report is pending.

Another project at the southern interchange of the Willits Bypass is in progress. An emergency Director's order addressed conditions last winter where saturated subgrade on the 101 northbound lane resulted in slope failure that slid toward the off-ramp. At the same time groundwater had caused a landslide above the southbound on-ramp, where rock buttress replaced several years ago was moving, and their geologist determined to remove all rock, recut the slope to a new ratio and replace the rock for stabilization. They hope this will finally resolve a long-standing problem. Excess material was disposed of onsite where environmentally safe to use as fill, avoiding truck trips and GHG emissions. Project budget is about \$4.5 million and they hope to complete by October 1.

Director Ahlstrand announced upcoming community meetings. The 2023/24 Caltrans Adaptation and Sustainable Transportation planning grants will open soon for applications, with a one-time \$50 million available for climate adaptation this year. Also a coastal development permit was approved for the Elk Creek Bridge SHOPP project.

- b. Mendocino Transit Authority. MTA Executive Director Jacob King reported continuing with the zero emission vehicle (ZEV) bus program, with a new battery-electric cutaway vehicle due at end of year. Also he will be working with MCOG staff on the annual State of Good Repair program proposal.
- c. Great Redwood Trail Agency. Director Haschak reported on a meeting that morning. A contract is being finalized with the consulting firm Alta Planning for the Master Plan, including community engagement. A settlement agreement was reached with M.C.M. Construction in the legal suit over the Ukiah rail depot property, concluding a long process.
- d. MCOG Staff - Summary of Meetings. Ms. Barrett referred to the written report.
- e. MCOG Administration Staff
 - i. *Regional Energy Network and Climate Protection Agency Update*. Nephele reported on the RuralREN application. The MCOG Board had approved joining with several other counties in this REN proposal, administered by Redwood Coast Energy Authority, who submitted a business plan to the California Public Utilities Commission. As noted in her last report, there was a chance that the plan would go forward on a separate, expedited track; instead the PUC consolidated with other applications for a decision next year, delaying launch to January 2024. Staff will continue working with the Rural Hard to Reach (RH2R) working group that comprised parties to the proposal; an amendment of their bylaws is necessary for MCOG to formally join, perhaps to be ready this fall. (Further details provided in the Information Packet.)
 - ii. *Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) Update*. Nephele reported a high-level overview, as not many details are available yet. The IIJA is a five-year authorization as is usual for a federal transportation bill. It increases funding of some existing programs and adds new programs. Multiple working groups are working on details, such as California's historic 60/40 state-regional funding split. She highlighted a few programs. Important to note is that names of federal funding programs are not always the same as state programs, so might not be familiar; for example the Active Transportation Program (ATP) is the

- state’s compilation of several federal and state sources for bicycle and pedestrian projects. While some program increases are anticipated, it will take several months to learn regional and local funding amounts. She will share information from CalSTA.
- iii. *Rural Electric Vehicle Charging Grants – Awards Proposed June 24, 2022.* Ms. Orth summarized her written staff report of the California Energy Commission’s Notice of Proposed Awards for Grant Solicitation GFO-21-604, with background on efforts made by herself and Supervisor Gjerde to meet high priority needs consistent with MCOG’s Mendocino County Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) and Alternative Fuels Readiness Plan Update. County of Mendocino’s proposal ranked seventh in the field of applicants. Over \$22 million will be awarded to the top 17, including six in Northern California. Director Gjerde added details of the County’s project and climate plans; discussion followed.
 - iv. *Miscellaneous.* Ms. Barrett reported on AB 2237, which would have eroded local control in transportation funding programs while adding new unfunded planning requirements. At the June meeting, MCOG had joined others in taking action to oppose the bill, and it has failed to advance.
 - v. *Next Meeting Date.* Monday, October 3, 2022.
- f. MCOG Planning Staff
- i. *Feasibility Study - Mobility Solutions for Rural Communities of Inland Mendocino County – Community Listening Sessions August 22-26, 2022.* Ms. Ellard reported the consultant AMMA Transit Planning would hold workshops in the five participating communities all week, also she would accept written comments. She described publicity to date, including a notice mailed to every household, and invited questions. Thanks were expressed for the public outreach. Ms. Ellard noted MCOG’s annual unmet transit needs identification process finds many of the same needs each year for these communities.
 - ii. *Miscellaneous.* Ms. Ellard report a Request for Proposals of professional services will be issued soon for a feasibility study of MTA’s planned transit center in Ukiah. \$150,000 is programmed in MCOG’s Overall Work Program for the project. She also noted the past year’s project to develop Local Road Safety Plans was completed.
- g. MCOG Directors. Director Carter commented that the contractor on a bridge project near his community had done a phenomenal job; Director Ahlstrand will pass along the compliment to Caltrans staff. Another bridge just to the north around Shamrock Ranch also was well done; the locals approve and appreciate.
- Director Haschak thanked Caltrans for the Clean California program work on Covelo “dump days” where the local communities are going out to help gather old appliances and waste from elders’ homes and other areas to properly dispose of the items during amnesty.
- h. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates. The next meeting is Friday, August 19. Director Haschak had attended as Alternate Delegate in July and noted not much activity, as the state budget had recently passed.

12. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Submitted: NEPHELE BARRETT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO