

# MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## MINUTES

### SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

May 19, 2025

#### Teleconference Locations:

MCOG / Dow & Associates, 525 S. Main St., Suite B, Ukiah  
Mendocino Transit Authority, 241 Plant Rd., Ukiah  
Harrah Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road, Willits  
13325 Estate Drive, Boonville  
Redwood Coast Senior Center, 490 N. Harold St., Fort Bragg

#### General Public Teleconference by Zoom

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

Philip Thomas, Anderson Valley Senior Center  
Jacob King, Mendocino Transit Authority  
Dawn White, Mendocino Transit Authority  
Luis Martinez (Alternate), MTA  
Liz Dorsey, Ukiah Senior Center

#### STAFF PRESENT

Nephele Barrett, MCOG Executive Director  
Janet Orth, MCOG Deputy Director & CFO  
Jody Lowblad, MCOG Administrative Assistant  
Saskia Rymer-Burnett, Caltrans District 1

#### MEMBERS ABSENT

Richard Baker, Willits Senior Center  
Jill Rexrode, Redwood Coast Seniors

#### MEMBER VACANCIES

Potential “handicapped” transit user  
Potential transit user at least 60 years of age  
Local social service provider for the handicapped

**1. Call to Order & Introductions.** The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m., Nephele presiding. It was determined that a quorum of four voting members was present. Self-introductions were made all around. Luis voted as Alternate, in place of Dawn, who joined from a non-posted location.

**2. Public Expression.** Philip asked whether there had been any requests for bus replacement funding through FTA Section 5310. There was a discussion of Caltrans’ upcoming cycle. Saskia will forward notice when available. The Call for Projects will be released June 30; applications are expected to be due this summer. Nephele offered MCOG staff assistance with preparing applications.

**3. Minutes.** The meeting minutes of January 8, 2025 were provided for information. No action was taken.

**4. Review and Recommendation on MTA’s Analysis and Prioritization of 2025/26 Unmet Transit Needs.** Janet gave an overview of MCOG’s annual process to date, in conformance with the Transportation Development Act (TDA). This is the final step before MCOG makes its finding in June. Jacob reviewed his report and answered questions. Discussion included:

- Golden Rule service – MTA would consider working with Ukiah and/or Willits senior centers if funding comes available, which would not be in time to start in 2025/26.
- Wednesday service for Ukiah Senior Center – Liz reported their own analysis conducted over several months to ascertain ridership. It was suspended temporarily until there is more demand, otherwise is not financially viable. They are willing to restart if needed.
- Saturday service in Fort Bragg – The City Council brought this up; however service would not be able to start in this next fiscal year. This need is tied in with the Noyo Harbor circulation plan currently underway. Nephele thought it could be reasonable to meet in 2026/27.
- Brooktrails service – this might soon become a reality, connected to the rural mobility pilot for Covelo and Laytonville. It could be offered as Dial-A-Ride subscription-based micro-transit; in planning now. This too is more likely to be viable in another year, due to the workforce needed.

The remaining items were categorized as “Low Priority” and not discussed further. Janet and Jacob clarified that the high to low priority labels did not necessarily mean the needs identified were not important, but that they may not be feasible in the current cycle. Nephela reiterated that several could potentially be met in the following fiscal year’s cycle. Janet reviewed options for SSTAC action.

**Recommendation:**

Upon motion by Thomas, seconded by King, and carried unanimously (*4 Ayes – Thomas, King, Martinez/Alt., and Dorsey; 0 Noes, 2 Absent – Baker and Rexrode*), the SSTAC accepted the analysis prepared by Mendocino Transit Authority and recommended a finding that there are no Unmet Transit Needs that are reasonable to meet for Fiscal Year 2025/26.

**5. Debrief of April 9, 2025 Senior Centers Transportation Program Workshop.** Nephela recapped the meeting and noted the revised funding distribution based on the first three-year review of the adopted formula. All were asked to recheck their data to confirm the centers were reporting in the same way. She also noted a reduced MTA claim for 2025/26 due to the County Auditor’s revised revenue estimate.

- Philip reported the Area Agency on Aging also will reduce funding as of October 1, 2024. Meanwhile, the cost of groceries is up 47% since the pandemic.
- Nephela reviewed the revised distribution, an estimate pending insurance costs (not expected to make much difference). In three years, this will again be recalculated based on the performance data. Dawn noted annual vehicle insurance invoices were coming soon.
- MTA had some use-or-lose funding and spent it on marketing shared with the senior centers. Dawn reported ads in The Willits News, Ukiah Daily Journal, Fort Bragg Advocate News, and Anderson Valley Advertiser. The South Coast center did not respond to a request for content. Philip reported Renee is displaying the ad on all of their menus at the Anderson Valley center. Nephela thanked MTA for their efforts and will look for more opportunities to grow ridership.
- Dawn said they also talked about revenue and service miles and hours. She clarified definitions and sent her research to Janet (April 28); MCOG staff will review and decide next steps.
- MTA also offered driver training. Dawn explained they provide annual new driver and dispatcher training, including reporting requirements. – *See more under Agenda #6*

No action was taken.

**6. Discussion/ Recommendation on Any Other Transportation Issues – Non-transit service types.**

Janet clarified that topics might include bike & pedestrian needs, ADA access, infrastructure, or safety.

Philip reported their catalytic converter was stolen so now they store it in another location. Insurance was expected to cover this.

Jacob reported training has been successful. Ukiah Senior Center, soon after the April workshop, had an incident related to driver behavior, and MTA provided a documented training the next day. Insurance, public perception, and other issues are affected by drivers’ actions. Training helps to keep drivers in service. Liz recommended using cameras in the busses to provide proof and documentation of such incidents.

Nephela suggested MTA reach out to the other senior centers on available training. Jacob agreed, noting dispatcher training is starting up, including updates for full compliance with policies and procedures. Philip reported Anderson Valley will lose a driver soon. Jacob described important aspects for recruitment, such as customer service and professionalism, saying it is a people job more than a driving job. MTA will observe and make recommendations for senior center trainings. A supervisor is available at any time, and regular training is available once a year, inland and coast, to include safety and other reviews.

No action was taken.

**7. Members’ Concerns / Announcements / Membership Recruitment.** Janet mentioned vacancies on the SSTAC and noted the types of representation that could be added to better represent a wider community of interests, such as other social service agencies and potential or current transit users 60 years and older, or those with disabilities. Discussion followed on possibilities for recruitment.

**8. Adjournment.** With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:53 p.m.