

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

MINUTES

SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

November 13, 2025

Teleconference Locations:

MCOG Offices, 525 S. Main St., Suite B, Ukiah
MTA Offices, 241 Plant Rd., Ukiah
Redwood Coast Senior Center, 490 N. Harold St., Fort Bragg
Harrah Senior Center, 1501 Baechtel Road, Willits
Ukiah Senior Center, 499 Leslie St., Ukiah
Anderson Valley Senior Center, 14470 Highway 128 (Veteran's Bldg.), Boonville

General Public Teleconference by Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT

Richard Baker, Willits Senior Center
Jacob King, Mendocino Transit Authority
Dawn White, Mendocino Transit Authority
Luis Martinez (Alt.), MTA
Philip Thomas, Anderson Valley Senior Center
Jill Rexrode, Redwood Coast Seniors

MEMBERS ABSENT

Liz Dorsey, Ukiah Senior Center
Sheryl Mitcham (Alt.), Ukiah Senior Center

MEMBER VACANCIES

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

STAFF PRESENT

Nephele Barrett, MCOG Executive Director
Janet Orth, MCOG Deputy Director & CFO
Jody Lowblad, MCOG Administrative Assistant

- 1. Call to Order & Introductions.** The meeting was called to order at 10:16 a.m., Nephele presiding. All present participated via Zoom teleconference.
- 2. Public Expression.** None.
- 3. Minutes.** The meeting minutes of May 19, 2025 were provided for information. No action was taken.
- 4. Annual Review of SSTAC Membership.** Janet reviewed status of the membership roster since appointments were last made by MCOG's Board in February 2025. There were three vacancies and three members with seats due to expire in April 2026: Philip and Dawn, with Luis as Alternate. They were nominated and all agreed to continue serving. Janet noted the two chronic vacancies for "potential transit users." A potential candidate was discussed; there was a question of possible conflict of interest as an MTA board member. Nephele noted there was no personal economic benefit and the member would represent transit users, not MTA. Staff will pursue appointment if the candidate is interested and eligibility questions resolved.

Staff has alerted MCOG's Board to help identify candidates for the vacancies to achieve broader representation. Duties of membership and other details were noted in the agenda packet. Appointments are to be formally made at MCOG's next board meeting.

Recommendation:

By consensus, the SSTAC nominated for reappointment to their expiring seats through April 2029: Philip Thomas, "Local social service provider for persons of limited means"; Dawn White and Luis Martinez as Alternate, "Representative of local Consolidated Transportation Services Agency."

5. 2026/27 Unmet Transit Needs Workshop and Recommendations – *Compile a list of Unmet Transit Needs and identify other transportation needs and potential solutions.* Janet reviewed the annual process of identifying needs, as detailed in the agenda packet. Today’s workshop is the first step of the funding cycle for the next fiscal year. Last year, none of the identified needs were found “reasonable to meet,” though it had been noted that some of them could be more feasible and ready in the next cycle. The previous year’s list was consulted for reference, and new information brought forward. Philip commented on the previous workshop, that it was educational to hear from Jacob why certain needs such as a particular bus stop could not logistically be met, shedding light on the various criteria faced by MTA.

Nephele noted that the SSTAC may also make recommendations in addition to transit services, such as capital or infrastructure needs. Discussion of unmet needs included the following, with Nephele sharing screen to build a new list.

Non-transit Service Needs:

- Operating funds – Philip brought up rising costs of food service at the same time funds have been cut. Senior centers need more public funding for transportation programs. Jacob also noted rising costs and reported meeting with Caltrans and CalSTA about public transit funding needs in general; he will continue these efforts. Brief discussion of needs for more drivers and driver training; MTA provides training for the senior centers’ transportation programs. Philip asked that a recommended need for funds specify “including senior centers.”
- NEMT – Richard brought up Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, in reference to a recurring item on the unmet needs list, which the Senior Center deals with frequently. For service outside of MTA’s Dial-A-Ride (DAR) hours, Jacob has discussed hospital release trips with nursing and desk personnel, both inland and coast locations; currently this need is met cost effectively by private taxi services. Nephele emphasized out-of-county rides; Richard reported three or four recent requests, and has been working on creative ways to meet this for different situations. Resources are available, though need to be matched with riders. Discussion followed on anecdotal reports and the need for information on all available NEMT services.
- MTA bus stop at Howard Hospital in Willits – Jacob reported status of this recurring need. MTA can install this as soon as a location has been identified with authorized personnel.

Unmet Transit Needs:

- Service in Brooktrails – Jacob reported frequent transportation service requests from the new owner of the Brooktrails Lodge, who is operating rental cabins under government subsidies for indigent families and individuals. This has been problematic due to lack of access to services and other issues. Richard offered to work with the owner to see if any tenants qualify for senior center rides. The potential connection to MTA’s Laytonville/ Covelo pilot project (once per week trips) is tied to procurement of a vehicle. As noted in past discussions, this could also connect with Willits Senior Center transportation and/or MTA’s DAR. It was agreed to add to the list as “microtransit service.”
- Service in Willits’ Little Lake Valley – Expanded or microtransit service was discussed as a continuing need. Jacob recommended a reservation-based service, as it is unsafe for pedestrians to walk to a bus stop in many areas of the valley. Richard asked about a housing development project in a south Willits neighborhood. Jacob and Nephele reported MTA and MCOG worked with Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation (RCHDC) to prepare an application for a multi-family Affordable Housing/ Sustainable Communities (AHSC) state grant, which can fund transportation improvements; this was stalled due to a zoning issue. The plan identified bus stop locations such as Brown’s Corner. If RCHDC applies in a future cycle, perhaps some of these needs could be met. Richard noted new ADA sidewalks and bicycle lanes installed in this neighborhood; it was clarified the project was funded by PG&E and completed by the City and County.
- Potter Valley to Mendocino College – Nephele reported the school district now has a driver, so this is not a need currently.
- Golden Rule to-from Ukiah and/or Willits – Have there been any recent requests? Richard has not heard any, though people may have given up asking. The neighbors often assist one another.
- Wednesday service for Ukiah Senior Center – Ukiah ended Friday service and reinstated Wednesdays. Richard reported hearing they had temporarily closed all services on Fridays.

- Saturday service in Fort Bragg – Jill had not heard any requests for this locally, although Jacob had.
- Service to Noyo Harbor and downtown Fort Bragg – Nephele reported MCOG’s Noyo Harbor Multimodal Circulation Plan was nearing completion. Recommendations include expanded local service. Jacob considered this need as separate from the Saturday need. During tourist season, demand can be expected. Discussion of the City’s idea of a “fun bus.”
- Willits Local 1 route adjustment to San Francisco Street – Jacob reported this request was retracted by the originator, so is no longer needed.
- Redwood Valley/Ukiah bus stop at Tribal Health – MTA has heard no recent requests. Janet noted this had been thoroughly reviewed and found to be infeasible; Jacob concurred.
- Hopland – Nephele noted no grocery store in town. Jacob mentioned several ideas that have not appeared ready or feasible, and no new requests.
- Covelo and Laytonville mobility solution – This is part of MCOG’s SB 125 transit allocation plan, for a pilot project. Nephele and Jacob will further discuss internally.
- Transit center in Ukiah – Given funding investments to date, Nephele considered this a current need. It was agreed to specify a central location as already under consideration by major stakeholders.

Janet left the meeting for an appointment at approximately 11:20 a.m.

Nephele reviewed next steps. No further needs were identified. The draft list will be distributed to this group for review and confirmation. Any further needs can be sent to MCOG staff to report as testimony in the February 2 public hearing.

Recommendation:

Upon motion by Thomas, seconded by Baker, and carried unanimously (*5 Ayes – Baker, Rexrode, Thomas, King, and White; 0 Noes, 1 Absent –Dorsey*), the SSTAC recommended submittal of the attached list of seven Unmet Transit Needs and three Other Transportation Needs as testimony for MCOG’s public hearing.

6. Information

- a. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Program – *Status of project applications in 2025/26 grant funding cycle.* Nephele reported applications were due in October. MCOG staff worked with local agencies on applications. Jacob gave an update on the expected timeline for approvals. According to the schedule, a draft list of rural scores were due in December or January.
- b. Senior Centers Transportation Program Workshops – *Anticipated in 2026.* No dates have been suggested yet. Nephele asked those representatives present to think about any topics for the agenda.
- c. Draft 2026 Regional Transportation & Active Transportation Plan (RTP & ATP) – *Comment period open through public hearing tentatively scheduled for December 1, 2025.* Nephele reported status, noting all transportation modes are addressed. The draft plan is posted on MCOG’s website for review and comment and a public hearing scheduled for MCOG’s regular meeting of December 1. She invited all to comment or attend the hearing. In discussion, Philip reported that stakeholders in Boonville are working with Caltrans on a plan for improvements to State Route 128 from SR-253 to Mountain View Road. They have raised funds for a planner to write up their proposals in technical language for submittal to Caltrans. Nephele reported discussions with Caltrans about several related street projects involving utilities in town.

No action was taken on information items.

7. Miscellaneous / Announcements. Nephele announced Janet retires from full-time work in December, after 30 years with MCOG, so she will be recruiting. Institutional knowledge was noted and appreciative remarks made.

8. Adjournment. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:35 a.m.

Submitted by Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO

Attached: FY 2026/27 SSTAC recommendations



MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

FY 2026/27 Unmet Transit Needs
Recommended by
MCOG's Social Services Transportation Advisory Council

Identified at Annual SSTAC Workshop
(not in any order of priority)

November 13, 2025

Transit Service Needs Identified by SSTAC:

1. Microtransit service to Brooktrails, including Brooktrails Lodge
2. Microtransit service in Willits Little Lake Valley
3. Non-emergency medical transportation, including out of county (potentially volunteer driver program for out of county)
4. Saturday service in Fort Bragg
5. Expanded local service in Fort Bragg, including Noyo Harbor (visitor and local serving)
6. Covelo and Laytonville mobility solution
7. Transit center in central Ukiah

Needs Identified by Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) - *None*

TOTAL of 7 Recommended Unmet Transit Needs

Other Transportation Needs Identified by SSTAC:

1. Operating funds for all transportation services (including senior centers)
2. Bus stop at Howard Memorial Hospital in Willits
3. Information on currently available non-emergency medical services