REPORT TO SHASTA COUNTY RTPA

SUBJECT		MEETING DATE	ITEM NUMBER
Consider 2011/12 Transit Needs Assessment and Conduct 2011/12 Unmet Transit Needs Hearing		2/22/2011	7

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the board:

1. Consider the 2011/12 Transit Needs Assessment (TNA) that discusses transit needs and performance within Shasta County;
2. Hold a public hearing and take testimony on unmet transit needs in Shasta County;
3. Direct staff to present the information generated from today's hearing to the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) for formulation of their recommendation; and
4. Direct staff to prepare written responses to comments and transit funding recommendations for final board action at the April 26, 2011, RTPA meeting.

SUMMARY

The RTPA distributes Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds for public transportation and other uses. The unmet transit needs process is conducted annually prior to making TDA allocations. The 2011/12 TNA finds that the current level of transit service remains reasonable to meet. System expansion is not viable at this time.

DISCUSSION

TDA Funding and Allocations

TDA funds consist of two funding sources: 1) the Local Transportation Fund (LTF), derived from one-quarter cent of the general sales tax collected statewide; and 2) State Transit Assistance (STA), now derived from the sales tax on diesel fuel. Revenue collected is returned to RTPA's to fund transportation priorities as follows:

1. TDA administration;
2. Up to 2% for pedestrian and bicycle facilities (optional);
3. Up to 5% for community transit services;
4. Public transportation; and
5. Other eligible uses, including streets and roads.

Prior to making TDA allocations, the RTPA performs an assessment of existing TDA-funded transit services and the feasibility of expanding these or other services. A public hearing is held to determine if there are any "unmet transit needs" that are "reasonable to meet" consistent with TDA law. TDA-funded transit services in Shasta County are: the Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA), providing fixed-route and complimentary paratransit service; and the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA), providing specialized community transit service through Shasta Senior Nutrition Programs.

By RTPA resolution 00-21, an "unmet transit need" must be for a defined population group and necessary for the maintenance of life, health or physical and mental well-being. Primary and secondary school transportation and services with destinations outside out of the county are not eligible for TDA funding.

When funding is available, new or expanded transit service can be required under TDA statutes if the RTPA determines that they are "reasonable to meet." In order for a transit need to be found "reasonable to meet," it must be demonstrated that:

1. The subsidy required to meet the need will not exceed 80% of the operating costs in the claimants urban area, and 90% in non-urban areas (the subsidy maximums may be determined on an individual route or service area basis);
2. The proposed expenditure of TDA funds required to support the transit service does not exceed the authorized allocation of the claimant, city or county;
3. The service proposed to be funded will not compete with existing private service; and
4. Where transit service is to be jointly funded by two or more local claimants, the agency cost-sharing must be equitable. Proposed expenditures must conform to the Regional Transportation Plan.

The SSTAC prepares a recommendation based on the TNA and comments received during the public hearing and public comment period. At the April 26, 2011, RTPA meeting, the board will review responses to comments and determine what unmet needs are "reasonable to meet" for each claimant jurisdiction.

Revenue is apportioned to the jurisdictions based on population. Public transit expenses are apportioned based on a 80% service hour/20% service area population formula. The jurisdictions have discretion over how remaining funds are used and may choose to fund additional transit services that do not meet the RTPA's minimum criteria. Typically these "spillover" funds are used for local streets and roads. An annual budget is prepared (TNA Appendix B, page 33) before any funds are disbursed.

Transit Performance

Funds allocated to RABA are subject to a ratio of fare revenue to operating cost (farebox ratio). In 2008/09, the RTPA approved a temporary farebox ratio reduction that coincides with RABA's 7-year financial plan through the year 2014/15. For fiscal year 2009/10, RABA's combined farebox ratio was 15.18%, falling short of the RTPA's temporary farebox ratio target of 16.2%. RABA hopes to attain the 16.7% goal in 2010/11.

CTSA services are not subject to farebox ratio requirements, but must meet performance criteria of: 1) a TDA subsidy of less than $20.87 per passenger trip; and 2) a service hour cost not to exceed $48.70 per service hour. The CTSA substantially meets these standards.

All jurisdictions are meeting their transit obligation. Redding is approaching a point where TDA revenue is no longer able to sustain the current level of transit service provided within Redding's jurisdiction. RTPA and RABA staff continue to monitor funding levels monthly in order to continue the current level of service. If the current economic trends continue, transit service cuts, new service models and/or fare increases may be needed.

The county operates Burney Express under contract with RABA. In 2009/10, ridership on Burney Express decreased by 1,250 passenger trips, or 23.71%. This increases the TDA subsidy to $22.96 per passenger trip and decreases the farebox ratio to 13.69%. The county may consider a fare increase to maintain a minimum 10% farebox recovery.

Public Hearing
A public hearing is needed to take testimony from citizens and interested agencies. Advertisements began on January 6, 2011, by the following methods:

- Unmet needs hearing flyers emailed to social service providers for distribution to clients.
- Flyers placed in RABA fixed-route and demand-response vehicles.
- Legal and display ads placed in local newspapers.
- Notices of unmet needs hearing posted on RABA and the RTPA websites.

Comments will be accepted until March 1, 2011.

ALTERNATIVES
The board could choose to not accept the TNA and direct specified revisions. This could delay the TDA budget and payments for 2011/12.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT
The 2011/12 TNA was developed in consultation with the SSTAC, CTSA and RABA. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) concurs with the staff recommendation.

FINANCING
Today's action and approval of findings in April will provide the 2011/12 budget for annual TDA claims by the various jurisdictions.

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DSL/ACJ/jac

Attachments: 2011/12 Transit Needs Assessment