

REPORT TO SHASTA COUNTY RTPA

SUBJECT	MEETING DATE	ITEM NUMBER
Consider 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment and Conduct 2002/03 Unmet Needs Hearing	02/26/02	5

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Agency:

- 1) Consider the 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment which generally discusses transit needs 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 Committee (SSTAC) and claimant agencies for formulation of their recommendation; and
- 4) Direct staff to prepare recommendations, written responses to comments and draft findings in anticipation of final Agency action at the April 23, 2002 RTPA meeting.

SUMMARY

Annually, the RTPA is required to address the issue of unmet transit needs. This is a prerequisite to making annual Transportation Development Act (TDA) allocations in each jurisdiction. Generally, the unmet transit needs process involves a three-part review as follows:

- 1) A general assessment of transit needs within Shasta County jurisdictions in accordance with §99401.5(B) of the TDA and as provided in the 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment;
- 2) A public hearing to consider specific unmet transit needs; and
- 3) Participation by the SSTAC, including a recommendation to the RTPA regarding unmet needs which are reasonable to meet. The SSTAC meeting is scheduled for March 28.

DISCUSSION

2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment

The attached 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment meets the requirements for Part One of the unmet needs process outlined above. The report concludes that the system's ridership is growing but fell below the minimum adjusted 19% farebox ratio approved by the RTPA. The 2000/01 RABA farebox ratio calculation is 18.88. The 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment is intended to provide background information when reviewing more specific transit needs identified at the public hearing and when considering the SSTAC recommendation. Final action by the Board on the 2002/03 transit needs and proposed TDA allocations to claimant agencies is scheduled for Tuesday, April, 23, 2002.

The 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment concludes that generally, public and private transit operators serve the primary areas of high transit demand as well as many other specialized transit needs throughout the county. TDA-funded transportation services are currently operating consistent with

established performance standards, including those found in the "unmet needs" and "reasonable to meet" definition.

Where funding is available, new or expanded services can be required under the Transportation Development Act where an "unmet transit need" is found "reasonable to meet" by the RTPA. Where services do not meet the TDA criteria, the service may still be provided with TDA funds under one of the following conditions:

1. The service is approved by the RTPA as a Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA) service which meets the criteria for services; or
2. The service is funded at the discretion of the individual cities or the county.

Again, it should be noted that this general assessment is intended to provide background information when reviewing more specific transit needs during today's public hearing and when considering the SSTAC recommendation.

TDA Fund Claims

One of the duties of the RTPA is to distribute TDA funds, including those deposited in the Local Transportation Fund (LTF). These funds are derived from $\frac{1}{4}$ cent of the 7-1/4 cent retail sales tax raised within the County and are returned by the State to the RTPA for apportionment to eligible claimants on the basis of population.

Attachment A shows last year's TDA budget adopted for FY 2001/02, the proposed disbursements off the top, and the remainder of the individual claimant apportionments available to the local jurisdictions based on population.

TDA Funding Priorities

The first priority for claiming funds from a claimant's apportionments is for public transit under Article 4. The amount that is available for each claimant is limited to the amount representing that claimant's population-based apportionment. (See PUC §99230-99231.2; Title 21 California Code of Regulations Sections 6649 and 6655.) In Shasta County, an 80% service hours/20% population-based cost sharing formula was agreed to and adopted as the most equitable distribution of transit costs among claimants.

After the allocations for Article 4 (Transit) are made, disbursements may be made under Article 8 which can be used for miscellaneous claims such as pedestrian or bicycle facilities or for streets and roads claims of the cities and County. Exhibit B is a summary of LTF allocations, purposes and priorities from the Caltrans TDA Manual.

To approve a claim for streets, roads or other purposes under Article 8, the RTPA must make a finding for each claimant jurisdiction that 1) there are no unmet transit needs, or 2) there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet. The cities and the County have full discretion over how

Article 8 funds are used and may choose to fund additional transit services which do not meet the RTPA standards as discussed below.

Definition of "Unmet Transit Needs" and "Reasonable to Meet"

The definitions of "unmet transit needs" and "reasonable to meet" (Transit Needs Assessment, page 3) are established by RTPA Resolution 00-21. Accordingly, a jurisdiction's "unmet need" must be for both of the following: 1) for a defined population group; and 2) necessary for maintenance of life, health, or physical and mental well-being, which excludes primary and secondary school transportation needs.

In order for a transit need to be found "reasonable to meet," it must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Agency that: 1) the service subsidy required to meet the need will not exceed 80% of operating cost in the claiming jurisdiction's urban area and 90% in its nonurban area (the subsidy maximums may be determined on an individual route or service area basis); 2) the service proposed to be funded will not be in direct competition with existing private service; and 3) where transit service is to be jointly funded by two or more of the local claimants, that the resulting inter-agency cost sharing is equitable. Also, proposed expenditures must be in conformity with the Regional Transportation Plan.

Public Hearing

This public hearing was advertised beginning January 12 and the written comment period will extend to March 1, 2002. Comments received to date are summarized in Attachment C.

Recommendation

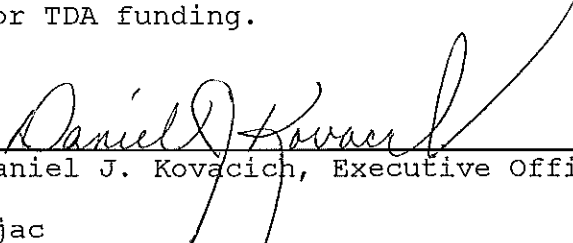
In proceeding, the Board should conduct a public hearing to take testimony from the public and interested agencies, then close the public hearing. Staff would then prepare responses to all comments. At the April 23 meeting, the RTPA will review responses to comments and determine for each claimant jurisdiction what unmet needs are reasonable to meet and adopt formal findings as the basis for the 2002/03 claims.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment has been reviewed by the Redding Area Bus Authority, the CTSA, Caltrans, the Cities of Anderson, Shasta Lake and Redding, and Shasta County, and the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee.

FINANCING

The Agency review and final approval of findings in April will provide the basis for Agency evaluation of the annual claims of the various jurisdictions for TDA funding.



Daniel J. Kovacich, Executive Officer

/jac

UTN Public Hearing/Item #5
February 26, 2001
Page 4

Attachments: Public Comments Received to Date
 * Letter from Mike Evans, Chair, SSTAC
 2002/03 Transit Needs Assessment

SUMMARY OF 2002/03 UNMET NEEDS COMMENTS

COMMENT #	NAME ADDRESS	PHONE EMAIL MAIL	COMMENTS
PH-1	Mike Evans SSTAC Anderson, CA 96007	Public Hearing Feb. 26, 2002	• Extension of RABA's Cottonwood, Airport Road, Intermountain trial express routes from 1 to 2 years • Supports farebox ratio to 16.5% • Monthly passes kept at current price or lower • Request Sunday bus service & extended evening hours • Bus benches & stops/shelters some not handicapped accessible, some not visible • RABA needs more promotion • Request bus service to Happy Valley, Palo Cedro, Bella Vista
PH-2	Shelly Anderson On behalf of disabled community	Public Hearing Feb. 26, 2002	• Request Sunday bus service & extended evening hours
PH-3	Isabelle Cordova Far Northern Reg'l Ctr PO Box 492418 Redding, CA 96049	Public Hearing Feb. 26, 2002	• Request Sunday bus service & extended evening hours • Possibly could work with taxi cab's & subsidize
PH-4	Sandra Van Larsen Ind Living Svcs of N Ca 1411 Yuba Street Redding, CA 96001	Public Hearing Feb. 26, 2002	• Request Sunday bus service & extended evening hours • Request bus service to Lakehead
PH-5	Melinda Brown People Of Progress 1242 Center Street Redding, CA 96001	Public Hearing Feb. 26, 2002	• Supports farebox ratio to 16.5% • Extension of RABA's Cottonwood, Airport Road, Intermountain trial express routes from 1 to 2 years • RABA needs more promotion
L-1	Mary Onwiler	Public Hearing Feb. 26, 2002	• Letter requesting the Airport express trial route be hourly • Signs marking all stop locations on Airport Road • Advertisement within the RABA bus system
L-2	Mike Evans SSTAC Anderson, CA 96007	Letter dated Feb. 12, 2002	• Extension of RABA's Cottonwood, Airport Road, Intermountain trial express routes from 1 to 2 years • Supports farebox ratio to 16.5% • Monthly passes kept at current price or lower • Request Sunday bus service & extended evening hours • Bus benches & stops/shelters some not handicapped accessible, some not visible • RABA needs more promotion • Schedule enhancements & improvements • Request bus service to Happy Valley, Palo Cedro, Bella Vista
L-3	Robert M. Montrees	Letter dated Jan. 9, 2002	RABA Service Improvements
L-4	Ms. Lois Hansen	Letter dated Sept. 7, 2001	Bus service to Lakehead

PC-1	Lois Hansen	Phone Call Aug. 22, 2001	Bus service to Lakehead
------	-------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------

**SOCIAL SERVICES TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2002 REPORT TO SHASTA COUNTY
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AGENCY
1855 Placer Street, Redding, CA 96001**

February 12, 2002

Dear RTPA Board Members:

Each year it is the responsibility of the Social Services Technical Advisory Committee (SSTAC) to assist the RTPA Board in identifying Unmet Transit Needs for the allocation of Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. Recently the SSTAC met and discussed the following issues as related to new and continuing Unmet Needs. Undoubtedly further information will be forthcoming at the Unmet Needs hearing scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2002 at 4:00 pm in the City Council Chambers from both social service providers and their clients as well as the general transit using public.

1. Cottonwood Express, Airport Road Corridor and Burney Express – two year trial period:

These new services were approved as part of last year's Unmet Needs process and implementation begun as of November 1st. The trial period was assisted by funds from the Shasta County Dept. of Social Services, specifically to assist their clients who are in the transition from welfare to work.

The RABA Short and Long Range Plan developed by its own transportation consultant recommends a two year trial period for new services or routes. The SSTAC agrees wholeheartedly with this recommendation. Start-up and implementation of new routes and services requires time to grow in ridership use and to work out the 'kinks' in schedules, advertising, outreach and connectivity to the rest of the RABA system. Initially, the routes do seem to be working although the Airport Corridor route may have difficulty reaching its required 20% farebox return ratio. It is apparent that more familiarization is needed and that ridership will probably increase with the onset of spring and summer weather and economic recovery. We also would request that for purposes of evaluation of the progress being made, that the first three months of service not be counted in the analysis of overall farebox returns.

2. Lowering the farebox recovery ratio to 16.5% from the present 19% requirement:

The RABA board has recently entered into a new contract with its operating entity that includes somewhat higher costs of operation due to increased wages. As a result, they are requesting a reduction of the overall target farebox recovery ratio to 16.5% from its current 19%. The SSTAC again wholeheartedly agrees with this recommendation. A deeper analysis of RABA operating figures indicates that most routes and services do indeed achieve a 20% or better return but that the overall farebox recovery ratio is significantly affected by the cost of providing demand response service which normally only represents a 5 to 6% recovery ratio. RABA's consultant and staff have identified

scheduling and other issues as prime targets for their immediate attention to attempt to improve the efficiency of demand response services and hence reduce its impact on the overall average recovery ratio. We think they need additional time and possibly the assistance of the community at large to accomplish this goal.

3. Keep monthly pass costs at their current level and consider a 'system-wide' pass:

RABA's consultant has proposed the possibility of a system-wide pass which would enable riders from any location to utilize RABA services. The current pass system enables many very low income and disabled riders to use RABA services to access medical, employment, personal needs, and vital supportive services. These riders who are on very fixed low incomes cannot afford any significant increase in the current cost of monthly bus passes. Many are able to transition from using demand response to using the regular scheduled route service as their condition improves. Such improvements often depend on their ability to get to and from supportive services frequently and at an affordable cost.

4. Extended hours of service:

This continues to be a significant unmet need. Current route schedules prevent many who are employed in retail and service industries from using RABA buses for transportation in the early evening hours. Many employers do not end shifts until 7:00 or 8:00 pm while the last scheduled RABA buses leave at 6:30 pm. Last year the SSTAC recommended extending hours at least during the period of daylight savings time to offer this option to the many who are employed in later shifts during the spring, summer and early fall. If available, we also believe it would increase overall ridership since workers could feasibly use the service for both getting to work as well as returning home after work.

5. Sunday service:

This continues to be widely supported by a large segment of the ridership community as well as the community at large. Last year we proposed implementation of limited Sunday service on the most heavily used routes, using the Saturday schedule. We still believe this is a feasible option in terms of farebox recovery and that it would yield significant economic and social benefits to the entire community. As many are aware, workers in retail and service industries often must work Sunday shifts and many are transit dependent. Sunday service would also provide the opportunity for many more people to use the system for personal needs such as attendance at worship services, shopping, and entertainment activities which would boost economic activity at our local establishments.

6. Bus shelters, benches and handicap accessible stops:

A large number of current route and express stops have no available shelter, benches for waiting passengers and are often impossible for handicapped riders. RABA currently has a program for installing bus shelters that is very slowly making some improvements. Yet a large number of rural and major arterial street bus stops have nothing more than a bus stop sign. SSTAC recommends an aggressive program of bus stop improvements that would engage the entire community in making these improvements. Civic, fraternal, community, youth, business and faith-based organizations should be encouraged to sponsor and 'adopt' certain unimproved bus stops in cooperation with RABA staff. Some

capital funding should be allocated to assist in this effort, especially in providing basic asphalt paving for wheel-chair users and a dry, safe place to place benches for waiting passengers. Labor from work-release prisoners, Crystal Creek youth, and a variety of civic and local organizations could provide a low cost solution which would both make major improvements to the safety and convenience of passengers and probably increase overall RABA system utilization.

7. Promotional activities sponsored by RTPA and RABA:

Minimal staff time is currently available to engage in the kinds of promotional activities that are needed to improve overall system usage. Both RABA's consultant and the SSTAC believe that this needs to be addressed by a focused and deliberate outreach effort which is targeted towards the general public, employers and employee groups, perhaps a 'free bus ride' week to encourage people to try the system, and directed efforts to help people individually make the transit system work for them. We recommend adding a position with either RABA or the RTPA to perform this promotional outreach function. It is possible that additional funding support could be found in cooperation with other economic development activities in the community and/or through community groups and foundations.

8. Schedule enhancements and improvements:

The RABA and RTPA boards work mostly with staff recommendations and with recommendations and input from the SSTAC and other community groups. From the consultant's report, it is apparent that several ridership improvements are possible throughout the system. Schedule coordination, route variations and changes, fare charges, connectivity issues and the like are all important and significant concerns to the general ridership public. It is apparent that our community has a great number of transit dependent residents who are unable to use the system effectively. We would recommend a community advisory body be established to continuously monitor and assist RABA staff and the RTPA staff in identifying potential system improvements, cost savings, efficiencies, and impacts on various transit dependent residents. This broader representation would likely improve overall RABA performance and responsiveness and possibly increase ridership while improving the overall public image and acceptance of the public transit system.

9. Additional services to outlying areas:

We are aware of the unmet needs in many locales outside the fixed route RABA service area. Several local communities have no transit services including the Lake Shasta communities with their attendant tourist-oriented economies and need for workers especially in the summer house-boating period. Palo Cedro, Shingletown (formerly served by a vanpool), French Gulch and Old Shasta, Olinda and Happy Valley, all have no transit services available on a scheduled basis. The first step in determining if supplying a form of transit service is feasible requires public input, surveys, and cost analysis by RTPA staff as well as investigation of the various options available. The SSTAC committee volunteers do not have the professional expertise to investigate all the possible solutions to providing even limited services to these outlying areas. Since all lie within the unincorporated area of the county, we believe it would best be served by

RTPA staff professionals in cooperation with local supervisors within their represented districts. The results of the hearings held last year to determine the need for express services for Cottonwood, the Airport Road Corridor and Burney-Fall River are indicative of the potential success of this type of outreach. SSTAC recommends that exploratory activities be begun by RTPA staff in helping to engage the residents of these outlying communities.

Conclusion:

The SSTAC has met as frequently as needed through the year to work with both RTPA and RABA staff in assisting to implement the recent transit improvements implemented in November. Members have also assisted in outreach to their client populations to encourage usage of both these new systems and the general RABA system. We have encouraged social service providers to analyze their client needs and to summarize them for presentation to the RTPA Board and staff. Many of those presentations will be made in addition to this report and we ask that the RTPA Board consider that input carefully and thoughtfully.

Meanwhile, Proposition 42 on the current March ballot may provide substantial additional transportation funding to both Shasta County and local cities. If passed, it would significantly relieve the need of local jurisdictions to rely upon TDA funds for streets and roads. Instead, it will provide the opportunity for significant public transit enhancements and the possibility of designing and creating a public transit system that truly works for everyone.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Evans", with a stylized, flowing script.

Mike Evans
Chair, Social Services Technical Advisory Committee