

# STAFF REPORT



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| <b>MEETING DATE:</b>  | <b>February 23, 2021</b>                                                                                           |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>       | <b>Review Fiscal Year 2021/22 Annual Transit Needs Assessment and Preliminary Recommendations (Public Hearing)</b> |
| <b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>   | <b>11</b>                                                                                                          |
| <b>STAFF CONTACT:</b> | <b>Daniel Wayne, Senior Transportation Planner</b>                                                                 |

## **SUMMARY:**

Each year SRTA assesses and makes determinations regarding unmet transit needs in the Shasta Region. The Draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2020/21 Transit Needs Assessment was posted to SRTA's website on January 22, 2021, (see link at the end of this report) and advertised in the newspaper. A public hearing is required. Final unmet transit needs recommendations will be presented in April, alongside the FY 2021/22 Transportation Development Act (TDA) budget, for consideration by the board of directors.

Due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Unmet Transit Needs process has shifted from efficiencies and farebox recovery to public safety and maintaining essential services. Although the pandemic has negatively affected ridership and revenue, present services provide essential mobility for transit dependent populations and should not be discontinued without an alternative in place. Options and recommendations for improving performance, including possible alternative public transportation service delivery strategies, are included in the 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan (see Agenda Item #16 of this agenda for project status).

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the SRTA Board of Directors:

1. Hold a public hearing to receive public comments on unmet transit needs findings;
2. Provide any further direction to staff regarding preliminary FY 2021/22 Unmet Transit Needs recommendations, as documented in the Draft FY 2021/22 Transit Needs Assessment (available through the link at the end of this staff report); and
3. Direct staff to prepare responses to any additional public comments received.

## **DISCUSSION:**

**Background** – As a recipient of Local Transportation Funds (LTF), SRTA is required to administer the annual unmet transit needs process. The purpose of this process is to identify potential unmet transit needs and certify that all reasonable-to-meet transit needs have been met. This certification must be performed prior to allocating any residual LTF funds to local streets and roads or other eligible uses. Key elements of the transit needs assessment include:

- An assessment of likely transit-dependent populations and the adequacy of existing transit services in meeting their needs;
- Public outreach to determine if there are any unmet transit needs; and
- A preliminary assessment to determine if any such needs are consistent with SRTA's adopted reasonable to meet definition (see Appendix 2 of the attached Transit Needs Assessment).

The Draft FY 2021/22 Transit Needs Assessment has been conducted in accordance with the TDA. Key findings are highlighted below.

**Public Transportation Performance** – Select performance metrics and trends for the region’s public transportation services are shown below. Additional detail and analysis is provided in the full FY 2021/22 Transit Needs Assessment report (available through the link at the end of this staff report).

**RABA Fixed Route and Demand Response Service Performance**

| Performance Measure           | FY 2019/20 | FY 2019/20 vs. 2018/19 | 5-Year Average |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Total Number of Trips         | 545,490    | -79,657                | 666,830        |
| Operating Cost/Passenger Trip | \$10.35    | +\$1.45                | \$8.32         |
| Operating Cost/Service Hour   | \$110.99   | +\$10.62               | \$97.96        |
| Passengers/Service Hour       | 10.72      | -0.56                  | 11.88          |
| Farebox Recovery              | 11.34%     | -2.37%                 | 15.5%          |

**Burney Express Service Performance**

| Performance Measure   | FY 2019/20 | FY 2019/20 vs. 2018/19 | 5-Year Average |
|-----------------------|------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Total Number of Trips | 5,224      | +243                   | 5,696          |
| TDA Subsidy Per Trip  | \$48.54    | +\$3.57                | 38.97\$        |
| Farebox Recovery      | 7.71%      | -1.02%                 | 10.08%         |

**ShastaConnect**

(Operated by Dignity Health Connected Living (DHCL) Under Contract with SRTA)

| Performance Measure  | FY 2019/20 | 3-Year Average | Contract Goal |
|----------------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| TDA Subsidy Per Trip | \$22.43    | \$21.20        | \$21.20       |

**Service Recommendations** – The following table outlines transit service requests submitted to date under the current cycle, as well as recurring requests from prior cycles. Where non-TDA grant funds can be acquired, SRTA and RABA have been successful in responding to these needs. Examples include ShastaConnect On-Demand transit, Crosstown Express, and Cottonwood Express (discontinued due to low ridership). Intercity bus service is also in development using grant funds. Given, however, the drop in transit performance in the region for FY 2019/20; lack of FY 2021/22 cycle public requests; downward performance trend over multiple years; and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, no new TDA-funded services are recommended at this time. Requests will continue to be tracked and alternative transit service delivery strategies will be presented as part of the 2040 Long-Range Transit Plan (see Agenda Item 16).

### Unmet Transit Needs Requests and Recommendations

| Current FY 2020/21 Cycle                                    |                     |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No qualifying unmet transit needs requests received.        |                     |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Recurring Requests from Previous Unmet Transit Needs Cycles |                     |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Transit Service Request                                     | Unmet Transit Need? | Reasonable to Meet? | Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Whiskeytown Summer Service                                  | Yes                 | Yes                 | After debuting June through August 2017, the Whiskeytown Lake 'Beach Bus' was approved for funding by the SRTA Board of Directors for the 2018 season but not implemented because the National Park Service (NPS) intended to charge an entry fee per individual (as opposed to per vehicle), thereby rendering the service noncompetitive. These issues were resolved and this specialty service is set to return for summer 2021, as long as pandemic conditions allow.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Extended Service Hours                                      | Yes                 | Not at this time    | RABA services are not meeting the minimum farebox recovery ratio. Even with the effects of the pandemic considered, ridership and revenue have been decreasing over multiple cycles while operating costs are increasing by about 4-5% annually. Without significant increases in ridership, major changes to the service delivery paradigm, and/or changes in TDA legislation, RABA will face reduced eligibility for funding. SRTA's ShastaConnect is testing a new on-demand service delivery model. In November 2020, using LCTOP funding, service was expanded from Sunday-only service in parts of Redding to now include Monday through Friday service in all requested areas save Platina. Ridership eligibility was also expanded and reverse trip service (i.e. grocery home delivery) was added. With these LCTOP-funded services, ShastaConnect was the only public transportation service in the region to improve in performance over last fiscal year. As the service matures and the pandemic subsides, this transit service delivery strategy may continue to be considered when filling service area gaps, service hours/days gaps, and supplanting portions of conventional fixed route service where rider demand is low and cost per service hour is greater than on-demand service. |
| More Frequent Service                                       |                     |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Extended Service Areas                                      |                     |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Sunday Service                                              | Yes                 | Yes                 | After repeated and consistent requests for Sunday service, SRTA developed a grant-funded Sunday Service pilot program to serve urban areas in Redding. Service commenced in October 2019, discontinued in late March 2020 due to the pandemic, and was reintroduced in November 2020 with expanded service to Anderson and Shasta Lake. It will continue through at least June 2022. Continuation of services are dependent on ridership and funding availability.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

**Public Involvement** – The Draft FY 2020/21 Transit Needs Assessment was posted to the SRTA website on January 22, 2021, advertised, and circulated to interested individuals and organizations. Comments received prior to publication have been documented in Appendix 8 of the Draft FY 2021/22 Transit Needs Assessment, which is available online at [www.srta.ca.gov/146/Unmet-Transit-Needs-Process](http://www.srta.ca.gov/146/Unmet-Transit-Needs-Process). Comments may be submitted during the public hearing or delivered to SRTA through March 2, 2021. Instructions for submitting comments are provided in the attached public notice.

**Next Steps** – Unmet transit needs findings, including all public comments received, the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) recommendations, and final staff recommendations, will be presented along with the proposed FY 2021/22 TDA budget at the April 27, 2021, meeting of the SRTA Board of Directors.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The board of directors may suggest modifications to the preliminary unmet transit needs recommendations or the transit needs assessment document.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

The unmet transit needs process is developed in consultation with the county of Shasta, the cities of Redding, Anderson, and Shasta Lake, RABA, DHCL, and the SSTAC. Documentation of the unmet transit needs process is approved by Caltrans. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) reviewed the Draft FY 2021/22 Transit Needs Assessment. Their feedback will be incorporated into the final report.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The unmet transit needs findings govern the use of LTF for public transportation and subsequent allocations for other eligible non-transit uses (e.g., local streets and roads). The TDA budget will be provided to the board of directors in April for consideration.

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**Daniel S. Little, AICP, Executive Director**

**Attachments:**

**A:** Draft 2021/22 Unmet Transit Needs Report [www.srta.ca.gov/146/Unmet-Transit-Needs-Process](http://www.srta.ca.gov/146/Unmet-Transit-Needs-Process)

**B:** Notice of Public Notice

# NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

## Shasta Region Unmet Transit Needs

The Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) requests your input on unmet public transit needs in the Shasta Region, including any needs not being met by the Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA), Burney Express, and Dignity Health Connected Living, including Shasta Connect. **The Draft 2021/22 Transit Needs Assessment is available online for review at: [www.srta.ca.gov/146/Unmet-Transit-Needs-Process](http://www.srta.ca.gov/146/Unmet-Transit-Needs-Process).** On Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at 3:00 p.m., a public hearing will be held to review unmet transit needs. Requests for transit service and other comments may be submitted at the public hearing as well as by email, telephone, or letter, as directed below.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, all SRTA board members, SRTA staff, and interested parties will be attending public meetings remotely by telephone or videoconference. **To participate in the SRTA Board of Directors meeting and the 2021/22 Unmet Transit Needs public hearing:**

**By Zoom: Using your computer, tablet, or smartphone:** Visit <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84955985679> on the day and time of the meeting. Enter passcode: 096882. Instructions will also be available the day of the meeting on SRTA website homepage at [www.srta.ca.gov](http://www.srta.ca.gov).

**By telephone:** Dial 1 (888) 788-0099 (toll free) on the day and time of the meeting. Enter meeting ID: 849 5598 5679. If prompted for a passcode, enter 096882.

If you have technical difficulties, please call (530) 262-6190.

Public comments may also be submitted before or during the meeting. Email your comments to [questions@srta.ca.gov](mailto:questions@srta.ca.gov). Emailed comments will be accepted throughout the duration of the meeting. If possible, please submit your comments prior to the agenda item being heard to ensure timely consideration. To be read into record, written comments should be 250 words or less. Public comments may also be submitted by U.S. Mail to Administrative Associate Amy Lindsey, Shasta Regional Transportation Agency, 1255 East Street, Suite 202, Redding, CA, 96001, to arrive no later than 5:00 p.m., one day prior to the meeting.

DANIEL S. LITTLE, AICP  
Executive Director

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If information is needed in another language, contact (530) 262-6190. Si se necesita información en español, llame (530) 262-6190.