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MINUTES

NORTH COUNTY TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A committee of the Santa Barbara County
Social Service Transportation Advisory Council

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

CCWA – Conference Room
255 Industrial
Buellton, CA

Members Present

Joe Rye (Chair) (arrived @ 11:30 AM)	City of Santa Maria – SMAT
Polly Bleavins	Families and Children Commission
Dan Brazil	SYVT Transit – MV Transportation
Matt Dobberteen	Santa Barbara County, PW/Transportation
Cathy Farrar	Transit User – COLT
Renee Hoskinson	Community Partners in Caring (CPC)
Rick Hummel	LOVARC
Pat Mickelson (left @ 11:45 AM)	CalTrans, District 5
Dean Palius	SYV People Helping People
Barry Stotts (arrived @ 11:30 AM)	Community Action Network
Bruce Wilkins	Area Agency on Aging

SBCAG Staff

Ruth Garcia	SBCAG
Michael Powers	SBCAG

Others Present

Sam Corbett	Urbitran
Elizabeth Rodriguez	Santa Maria Times
Jessica Sheeter	COAST

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Due to the late arrival of Joe Rye, NCTAC Chair, Rene Hoskinson acted as interim chair for the March 30, 2004 NCTAC meeting. Ms. Hoskinson called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM and initiated a round of introductions.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Rene Hoskinson asked for public comment. Ms. Hoskinson announced that Jim Talbot and Kirk Spry will not be able to attend today's meeting. Ms. Hoskinson stated that Mr. Talbot and Mr. Spry are working on a program to resolve the issue of funding for transportation to work and medical appointments services for disabled clients of the local social service agencies. Rick Hummel stated that the Tri-Counties Regional Centers are appealing the cap on transportation funding recently established by the County Department of Social Services in response to the state's budget crisis. Mr. Hummel stated that social services agencies are requesting a 12% increase above the current cap.

Ruth Garcia introduced Jessica Sheeter, executive director of the Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST) and welcomed her to the meeting.

3. MINUTES

Following a motion by Bruce Wilkins, seconded by Kathy Farrar, the NCTAC Minutes of March 9, 2004 were unanimously approved, with Pat Mickelson abstaining.

4. INTERCOMMUNITY TRANSIT SERVICE

Michael Powers presented an overview of the process involved in the development of the intercommunity transit service draft implementation plan. Mr. Powers presented background information, the process in choosing a consultant and the consultant choice, and participation by the transit advisory committees and the technical advisory committee (TAC)¹, and the public outreach process in plan development. Mr. Powers stated that the service plan would be brought to the SBCAG Board in April, and the funding application through the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) process would likely be brought to the SBCAG Board in May. Mr. Powers introduced Sam Corbett, the project manager for Urbitran.

Sam Corbett gave an overview of the intercommunity transit service implementation plan and the process of its development. Mr. Corbett provided information on the stop locations, routes and schedules, service administration, number and types of transit vehicles, fares and transfers, funding, parking and performance measurements. Mr. Corbett also discusses the public participation element, which included interviews, open-houses and drop-in sessions. Mr. Corbett stated that 55% of those interviewed at the

¹ Members include representatives from COLT, SBCAG, SMAT, County of Santa Barbara and Vandenberg Air Force Base.

drop-in sessions stated that they would use the intercommunity transit service. Overall, respondents stated that an immediate start and aggressive marketing of the service was very important. Respondents also stated that vehicle comfort and short trip durations were important in the success of the service.

Following his presentation, Mr. Corbett received questions from NCTAC members. Bruce Wilkins asked about the route that the Vandenberg Air Force Base Shuttle will take. Mr. Corbett stated that the shuttle will complete a full loop of the main Cantonment area, leaving the main gate traveling in a counter clockwise direction, stopping at all major buildings. The loop is approximately five miles, with 30 minute trip duration. Mr. Wilkins stated that with the 100% ID check currently in progress at VAFB, the shuttle service will be a time saver for the passengers (as opposed to those traveling in privately owned vehicles being checked at the Main Gate).

Rene Hoskinson voiced support for leasing transit vehicles for faster service implementation (as opposed to the time it would take to complete a vehicle procurement transaction). Following a motion by Ms. Hoskinson, seconded by Bruce Wilkins, NCTAC unanimously approved the service implementation plan and expressed support for the leasing option to expedite service implementation.

5. TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT (TNA)

Prior to the presentation of the Transit Needs Assessment, an update to the “findings” along with a letter of response from the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District were distributed to all in attendance. Additional copies of the Transit Needs Assessment were available as well.

Ruth Garcia presented an overview of the transit needs assessment and findings of unmet need for 2004. Ms. Garcia reviewed the background of the process and the advisory nature of the committee, the outreach to inform the public of the process and the public hearings in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara. Ms. Garcia reviewed the criteria of “unmet need” and “reasonable to meet” as defined by SBCAG in determining findings of unmet need and reasonable to meet, and summarized policy issues. There was an in-depth discussion regarding the issue of farm worker transportation, discussion regarding issues of transit service related to agency partnerships and Santa Barbara County, and the discontinuation of the Amtrak bus service to the Lompoc Surf station.

Ms. Garcia outlined potential strategies to address farm labor transportation, such as a mixed-use system of quasi-fixed route transit to a limited number of fields near Santa Maria, with vanpools developed for those fields further from the City. Ms. Garcia also outlined preliminary discussions with the farm worker association (United Mexica Farm Workers Organization), SMAT, Traffic Solutions and agribusiness (Farm Bureau of Santa Barbara County and the Growers-Shippers Vegetable Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties). Bruce Wilkins asked about the possibility of a SMAT route to access near-by farm fields. Joe Rye discussed the possibility and stated that issues of routes and scheduling related to this issue could be reviewed within the upcoming Short Range Transit Plan for SMAT. There was also discussion regarding the barriers imposed by state legislation requiring higher standards for the implementation of

farm worker van pools (as opposed to any other business organization engaged in assisting their workers in vanpool associations).

Jessica Sheeter asked for clarification regarding “special” populations as defined by the established SBCAG criteria and the application to a large population such as the farmworkers who are an important element to Santa Maria and the County of Santa Barbara’s agri-economy. Ms. Garcia clarified the definition of “special population” as applied by staff in developing findings of unmet need and reasonable to meet. Michael Powers provided further clarification, explaining the difference for a service that is provided for general use and special use, which is not necessarily dependent upon the number of individuals being considered. Mr. Powers went on to discuss the statewide issue and regulatory barriers to providing farmworker transportation. There was general discussion regarding farmworker transportation programs in Kings, Salinas and Imperial counties.

Matt Dobberteen asked how this application of criteria would apply to commuter services. Ms. Garcia explained that this is a general population that is commuting from one geographic location to another, and is not dependent upon an identified group, employment in the same industry, or by the same employer.

Mr. Dobberteen announced that the County of Santa Barbara and COLT were working together to develop a proposal for a pilot program to serve the Bridgehouse Center, as presented at the January Unmet Needs public hearing in Santa Maria. Mr. Dobberteen stated that Supervisor Gray had expressed concern about responding to this need.

Dean Palius discussed the concern of the Santa Ynez Valley residents and the need for additional funding for Santa Ynez Valley Transit. Mr. Palius explained that although the cities of Buellton and Solvang dedicate their TDA funds to transit, the County has remaining TDA funds that could be used to help expand the system. The discussion broadened to include other areas that provide service to County residents, such as the Guadalupe Flyer and the positive impact additional TDA funding from the County would have on North County transit. Following a motion by Dean Palius, seconded by Bruce Wilkins, NCTAC members unanimously approved a request for Santa Barbara County to provide information on the financial arrangements between agencies as they relate to the use of TDA funds, specifically Santa Ynez Valley Transit. Matt Dobberteen stated that he understood the concern of NCTAC, but wanted members to keep in perspective the balance between road infrastructure and transit needs in rural areas of the county. Mr. Dobberteen also explained that this issue is an important consideration in the Measure D reauthorization.

Ms. Hoskinson stressed the need to provide transit alternatives in light of a growing and aging population. Mr. Wilkins cited the recent increase in the price of gas as a problem for persons on limited incomes and the need for transit to assist in providing transportation service.

Barry Stotts noted the introduction of medical service transportation between Lompoc and Santa Barbara by the City of Lompoc, replacing service provided by SMAT. Mr. Stotts requested that NCTAC review the issue of medical transportation needs, including access to Veteran’s Administration (VA) services at the next NCTAC meeting.

Ms. Garcia expressed her appreciation to Matt Dobberteen for the new Los Alamos service and to Joe Rye for the new SMAT Sunday service, and cited the role of NCTAC in facilitating the initiation of both services.

Following a motion by Rene Hoskinson, seconded by Dean Palius, NCTAC unanimously approved the findings of unmet need and reasonable to meet, and the Transit Needs Assessment for 2004.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ruth Garcia announced that the SBCTAC meeting would be held this afternoon, beginning at 1:30 PM at the Central Coast Water Authority Conference Room. Ms. Garcia invited all NCTAC members and visitors to attend the SBCTAC meeting.

9. NEXT NCTAC MEETING

The next NCTAC meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 4, 2004 at 1:30 PM at the Moon Room in the Ruffoni Building, Santa Maria.

8. ADJOURN

Having no other business, Rene Hoskinson adjourned NCTAC at 3:15 PM.