

SBCTAC STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Transit Needs Assessment

MEETING DATE: March 12, 2014

AGENDA ITEM: 4

STAFF CONTACT: Andrew Orfila

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Receive summary of unmet transit needs input from SBCAG public hearing and other sources, and discuss next steps.
- B. Receive presentation by Santa Maria Area Transit (SMAT), City of Lompoc Transit (COLT), and County staff on input from SMAT and COLT public workshops.

SUMMARY:

SBCTAC is asked today to receive and discuss the input received regarding unmet transit needs.

SBCAG is conducting the annual Transit Needs Assessment as required by the California Transportation Development Act (TDA). Transit is the priority use for TDA funds, but claimants may use the funds for streets and roads if the SBCAG Board finds that there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet within their jurisdictions. Since the City of Lompoc and unincorporated North Santa Barbara County have indicated they plan to use TDA funds for streets and roads, SBCAG must perform an assessment of regional transit needs and make a determination as to whether or not there are unmet needs that are reasonable to meet within Lompoc and unincorporated North County before allocating TDA funds.

SBCAG conducted public outreach to assess transit needs. COLT and SMAT held workshops on Thursday, October 10, 2013, and Thursday, November 7, 2013, respectively. SBCAG held public hearings on January 16, 2014 and February 20, 2014. SBCAG also accepted public comment by mail, e-mail, and telephone until February 21, 2014. SBCAG staff will consult with SBCTAC and analyze the requests to determine whether or not there are unmet needs that are reasonable to meet in Lompoc and unincorporated North County. Staff will incorporate the findings into a draft Transit Needs Assessment report, which SBCTAC, TTAC, the public, and the Board will review. Staff will incorporate any necessary revisions into a final Transit Needs Assessment report. The Board must adopt the final report and findings regarding “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” before allocating TDA funds in June.

DISCUSSION:

Background

The California Transportation Development Act (TDA) provides annual funding for public transportation. Transit is the priority use for TDA funds. TDA Local Transportation Fund (LTF) monies may be used for non-transit purposes (i.e., streets and roads), but only if the SBCAG Board finds that there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.

For FY 2014-15, local agency staff in Santa Barbara County has indicated that only the City of Lompoc and unincorporated North Santa Barbara County plan to request LTF funds for non-transit purposes. Before allocating the funds, SBCAG must perform an assessment of regional transit needs, and make a determination as to whether or not there are unmet needs that are reasonable to meet within the jurisdictions of Lompoc and unincorporated North County.

Public Input & Consultation

To assess regional transit needs, SBCAG solicits public comment through a public hearing, transit agency workshops, and via mail, e-mail, and telephone. SBCAG consults with SBCTAC on unmet transit needs as required by state law.

SBCAG Public Hearing

Transportation Development Act (TDA) statutes require that SBCAG hold at least one public hearing on unmet transit needs. The public hearing occurred on January 16, 2014 and was continued to the next SBCAG board meeting on February 20, 2014. SBCAG held the public hearings at the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room in Santa Maria. A Spanish language interpreter was available at the February meeting, during which four people commented in Spanish. There were a total of nine verbal comments received at the public hearings. Attachment 1 summarizes the comments in detail.

Written Comments

SBCAG also accepted public input via mail and e-mail. Between January 28, 2013¹ and February 21, 2014, SBCAG received 5 letters (see Attachment 2), and 11 e-mails (see Attachment 3). SBCAG did not receive any telephone comments related to this item.

Transit Agency Workshops

A prior legal settlement requires that City of Lompoc Transit (COLT) and Santa Maria Area Transit (SMAT) conduct workshops on unmet transit needs, which they did on Thursday, October 10, 2013 and Thursday, November 7, 2013, respectively. The committee will hear a report of input received at the SMAT and COLT public workshops at the February SBCTAC meeting. Memoranda summarizing the input received at the COLT and SMAT workshops are attached to this staff report (see Attachments 4 and 5).

¹ January 27, 2013 was the close of public comment for the 2013 Transit Needs Assessment.

Summary of Comments

The table below summarizes the requests for new or expanded service received as part of the public outreach process. It should be noted that SBCAG received a number of comments that were not related to requests for new or expanded transit service. These are generally designated as operational improvements and will be forwarded to the local and regional transit operators for consideration. As noted above, all public comments received by SBCAG are contained in the attachments to this staff report.

Table 1 – Requests for New or Expanded Transit Service

Request	Category	Source	
Saturday service between Santa Ynez Valley and South Coast	Inter-regional	Doreen Farr (SBCAG Board), Holly Sierra (SBCAG Board), Tracy Farhad (Solvang Conference & Visitors Bureau), Mary Harris (Visit the Santa Ynez Valley), Mary Byrd (Santa Barbara Car Free)	SBCAG Public Hearing, January 16, 2014; E-mails; Letters
Sunday service between Guadalupe and Santa Maria	Regional	Adrian Vasquez (CAUSE)	SBCAG Public Hearing, February 20, 2014; Letter from CAUSE
Saturday service between Lompoc and Santa Ynez Valley	Regional	Linda of Lompoc	Letter to SBCAG
Weekday service between Santa Ynez and Santa Maria	Regional	Barbara Walsh	E-mail
Service from Santa Ynez to Lompoc for medical needs (dialysis)	Regional	Unknown	COLT Unmet Needs Workshop
Re-instate COLT Route 5 / Yellow Route	Local	Unknown	COLT Unmet Needs Workshop
More SMAT buses/routes needed for north-south circulation	Local	Jenny Willis	SMAT Unmet Needs Workshop
Earlier morning service on SMAT Route 2 North	Local	Mario Acosta	SMAT Unmet Needs Workshop
Reverse commute – Santa Barbara to Santa Maria	Reverse Commute / Inter-regional	Mariana Perez	E-Mail
Reverse commute – Santa Barbara to Lompoc	Reverse Commute / Inter-regional	Christina Reyes	E-Mail

Next Steps

Using the SBCAG Board-adopted definitions of 'unmet transit need' and 'reasonable to meet', staff will analyze the requests for new or expanded service within the City of Lompoc and unincorporated North County. Staff will determine if any unmet transit needs exist in these jurisdictions and, if they do, whether or not they are reasonable to meet.

In April, staff will create a draft Transit Needs Assessment report with preliminary findings on 'unmet transit need' and 'reasonable to meet'. SBCTAC and TTAC (Technical Transportation Advisory Committee) will review the report, SBCTAC will provide a recommendation to the SBCAG Board regarding the Transit Needs Assessment findings, and then staff will present it to the SBCAG Board. The Board will hold a hearing on the preliminary findings.

After incorporating any necessary revisions, staff will create a final Transit Needs Assessment report in May. The Board must approve the final report and findings before allocating TDA LTF funds for FY 2014-15. Only if SBCAG finds that there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet within the City of Lompoc and unincorporated North County may these jurisdictions use TDA funds for non-transit purposes.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SBCAG Public Hearings – Unmet Transit Needs Testimony
2. Letters
 - a. South Coast to Santa Ynez Service Letter of Support – Santa Barbara Car Free
 - b. South Coast to Santa Ynez Service Letter of Support – Solvang Conference and Visitors Bureau
 - c. South Coast to Santa Ynez Service Letter of Support – Visit the Santa Ynez Valley
 - d. Linda of Lompoc (2)
3. E-Mail Comments – Unmet Transit Needs
4. City of Lompoc Transit (COLT) Annual Transit Unmet Needs Workshop Summary
5. Santa Maria Area Transit (SMAT) Unmet Transit Needs Workshop Materials

Attachment 1

SBCAG Public Hearings – Unmet Transit Needs Testimony

January 16, 2014 Board of Directors Meeting

Director Farr

- Need service on the weekend for locals and tourists to/from Santa Barbara and the Santa Ynez Valley
- Acknowledged that the transit need may not fit the narrow parameters of “unmet need” or “reasonable to meet,” but other vital transit services have come about (such as Cuyama Transit and transit service to/from Los Alamos) through the unmet transit needs process.

Director Sierra

- Service request for weekend service between Santa Ynez Valley and South Coast.

Kenneth Wolf

- Coordinate Guadalupe Flyer with Amtrak station stops/times
- Additional coordination with local/regional transit systems and airports
- Request for additional bike racks on SMAT buses

Gabriel Zacarias

- Scheduling issues in Santa Maria have led to emptier buses
- Safety issues on buses

Janet Blevins

- General request for increased public transportation

Jim Richardson (read into the record on behalf of Tracy Farhad, Executive Director, Solvang Conference & Visitors Bureau and Mary Harris, Executive Director, Visit the Santa Ynez Valley)

- Currently no public transportation options available to visitors and locals on weekends between Santa Barbara and the Santa Ynez Valley. Request for extending the Clean Air Express Service to include Saturdays, connecting two key tourism regions: the Santa Ynez Valley and Santa Barbara.
- Organizations are chartering buses to bring customers from Santa Barbara to the Valley for conferences in 2014.
- Have experience in working with other county-wide organizations on joint marketing initiatives, will reach out to our colleagues to join us to contribute financial and marketing resources.

- Economic benefit for both the South Coast and Santa Ynez Valley with a Saturday pilot transit service; marketed as “stay another day,” - in both directions; visitors and locals would have economic and safe access to beaches and vineyards.

February 20, 2014 Board of Directors Meeting

Adrian Vasquez

- Request for Sunday service between Guadalupe and Santa Maria.
- Request for Guadalupe Flyer Saturday schedule to be the same schedule as the weekday schedule.

Eva Cedillo

- General comments re: transportation needs in Guadalupe

George Acosta

- Provide lighting near bus stops in Guadalupe, preferably LED lights.

Rosa Ladrada

- Provide bus stop shelters at the following bus stop locations:
 - Fifth St. / Tognazzini
 - Amber / Obispo
 - Main St. / Pt. Sal Dunes

Annabelle Marino

- Provide a bench at the Preisker Park bus stop
- Add a bus stop at the Santa Maria cemetery