

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Approved MINUTES

Monday, April 4, 2011

Round Valley Library Commons Community Room

23925 Howard Street, Covelo

The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) meets as the Board of Directors of:

Mendocino Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and

Mendocino County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE)

1. Call to Order / Roll Call . After the Board members' bus tour of Round Valley transportation projects (9:00 a.m. to approximately 12:15 p.m. followed by lunch), the meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. with Directors Cheryl Willis (PAC), Lauren Sinnott, Larry Stranske, Dan Gjerde, John Pinches, and Kendall Smith present; Chair Gjerde presiding. Director Mari Rodin was absent. Director Susan Ranochak was excused.

Staff present: Phil Dow, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy Director for Administration; Loretta Ellard, Assistant Executive Director; and Nephele Barrett, Senior Planner.

2. Convene as RTPA. The Chair gave a brief explanation of today's tour and thanked Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) for providing the driver and vehicle.

3. Recess as RTPA - Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee.

Public Expression. None.

4 - 8 . Regular Calendar.

4. Public Hearing: Adoption of Resolution Approving Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Grant Program Regional Priority List. Mr. Dow introduced this program. Nonprofit services for the elderly and people with disabilities are eligible. Ms. Barrett reported on the two grant applications received. Willits Seniors, Inc. applied for a small replacement bus and communications equipment for it. Redwood Coast Seniors, Inc. applied for one medium-size bus. Both would accommodate wheelchairs. The State waived the 20 percent local matching funds, providing a system of "toll credits" in lieu of the usual match. MCOG's Local Review Committee met last week to review and score the applications according to criteria established by the program. A draft resolution with results of scoring were handed out. Copies of the applications are available by request. Staff then answered questions.

- What are the chances of a grant award for the small bus? (Stranske) Willits' score of 81 has good chance; often scores as low as 70 are funded.
- What are the scoring criteria? (Pinches) Local and State criteria are the same, very specific. In case of more than a few points difference, an appeal process is provided. Mr. Dow related his experience of many years of involvement with this program and how it has evolved; he believes the process is fair.

The Chair opened the public hearing at 1:45 p.m. Ms. Barrett described how the applications are derived from the established program priorities. She also noted that Marilyn DeFrangé of Ukiah Senior Center generously gave her time and experience to assist the applicants. With no one else wishing to speak, the hearing was closed at 1:46 p.m.

Upon motion by Pinches, second by Smith, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (6 Ayes – Willis/PAC, Sinnott, Stranske, Pinches, Smith, and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 2 Absent – Rodin and Ranochak): IT IS ORDERED that the following resolution is adopted.

Resolution No. M2011-05
Approving Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Section 5310 Grant Program Regional Priority List
(Reso. #M2011-05 is incorporated herein by reference)

5. Discussion of Round Valley Transportation Plans and Projects. Mr. Dow reviewed sites visited on the morning tour, including:

- State Route 162 to Covelo, North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) tracks in Eel River Canyon, motorist aid call boxes installed by SAFE, and scenic overlook at Inspiration Point;
- Terminus of 162 at start of Mendocino Pass Road/Forest Highway 7;
- Downtown streets considered for grant funding of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, with trip generators including schools, tribal centers, shopping, and residential neighborhoods; and
- Round Valley Airport.

He described the Caltrans Environmental Justice grant study completed previously, awarded to the Tribal Health Center on behalf of the tribes. MCOG participated in the study, which included a charrette process to elicit public input. Five priorities emerged, including bicycle and pedestrian non-motorized transportation. A second phase, applied for last week, would focus on those priorities.

Ms. Ellard described the first grant's product and goals of the next phase, including work with a consultant to evaluate technical feasibility of the already identified priorities. She itemized the funding requested for such aspects as conceptual design and cost of proposed improvements. She credited Mr. Jesse Robertson, Associate Planner at Caltrans District 1, with significant assistance with the grant application. Numerous letters of support were received.

Discussion and comments on the tour included:

- The opportunity to see Round Valley is appreciated. The charrette training and process is valuable. More use of Internet and social media to involve the public is suggested. (Gjerde)
- There are various funding sources available under Caltrans' budget and ways the District can help with the E. J. grant project. (Willis)
- This is the first visit to Covelo--and Dos Rios--for several of the MCOG directors. Now they will better understand the discussion when these issues arise. (Dow)
- Director Pinches contributed local history on the way here. Mr. Howard Dashiell, Director, Mendocino County Dept. of Transportation, presented useful information on the tour. (Gjerde)
- Improvements to Forest Highway 7 would provide more access to the area for recreational snow sports and other tourist destinations, not only in Round Valley, but also countywide. Fixing up this road from the Mendocino side of the county line is a good idea. (Pinches)

No action was taken.

6. Presentation: System Management Plan and Other District Activities – Caltrans District 1. Cheryl Willis, District 1 Deputy Director for Planning, reviewed the plan (summarized in the meeting materials) and reported on the District's activities in Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino and Lake Counties. The Plan covers about 20 years, involving operations and maintenance as well as systems planning, a strategic approach for highways under their jurisdiction. Since the last update in 1992, the focus has changed from new facilities to emerging challenges. These include changing environmental laws and regulations, budgetary constraints, and new approaches such as "complete streets," "context sensitive solutions," and impacts of greenhouse gas emissions. For example, the

District has worked with MCOG and the Wine Country Interregional Partnership project by developing traffic modeling tools. Stakeholders have opportunities for input into the Plan and discussion of specific local issues.

Board comments included:

- This is a good way to prioritize limited funds, using context-sensitive design and prioritizing safety improvements. It identifies cost of a project early on. Proposals can advance concurrently, like pieces of a puzzle. (Gjerde) The District staff works with communities when viewed as part of a larger plan, locals can access various funding sources. Projects sometimes get done by breaking into phases. (Willis)
- The plan's relationship to Mendocino County's Third District, where today's meeting takes place, was noted. (Pinches)
- Thanks were expressed to Ms. Willis for the approach taken and how Caltrans made use of Point Arena's Community Action Plan. The City is consistently following their plan with grant applications to implement the priorities in it. (Sinnott, Dow)
- Compliments were given for Caltrans message signs. When a traffic radar signal was requested for downtown Covelo, the District staff installed one very promptly. (Dow)
- Caltrans has been very responsive to requests from Mendocino County's Fourth District for safety improvements, and in small communities generally. (Smith)

No action was taken.

7. Presentation: Mobility Management and "E-Ride" Volunteer Driver Program - MTA. Ms. Glenna Blake thanked MCOG for inviting her on this tour. She described MTA's new programs, resulting from the recent Mendocino County Commute Transportation Study, and designed for underserved areas of the county. The usual means of public transit are not effective, efficient or cost effective in small rural communities, so MTA has chosen to move in the direction of alternatives. Recommendations of the study are starting to go into effect. One is a volunteer driver pilot project here in Covelo, named e-Ride. Ms. Blake handed out a brochure and sample voucher and explained how vouchers and dispatch will work. Funds are set aside for the vouchers during this pilot. If successful here, e-Ride will go next to Laytonville. The new Mobility Management process has been rewarding so far. These programs, while innovative, are not new ideas, having been successful elsewhere. She thanked Supervisor Pinches for his support of the program. The whole agency has been involved in training, planning, and all aspects of it.

Questions and comments included:

- Transportation to and from Round Valley has long been an unmet need. (Pinches)
- What kind of insurance is there? (Stranske) MTA has an umbrella policy for this.
- Discussion of how e-Ride will defray costs for drivers and provide rides for passengers.
- The grant that is funding the Mobility Management project expires later this year; MTA is seeking to extend it another year. Laytonville's health clinic is interested in contributing incentives for their patients to get to Willits and Ukiah for medical services when needed.
- After the pilot, MTA will have cost figures for comparison to traditional services. (Pinches)
- Discussion of liability, screening of both riders and drivers, reference checks, enforcement, and other issues. MTA is working to make the program safe.

No action was taken.

8. Presentation and Acceptance of Report: Confusion Hill Feasibility Study – County of Mendocino Planning & Building Services. Ms. Ellard introduced the issue and handed out copies of the study report, "Confusion Hill Right of Way Re-Use Opportunities Analysis." There is interest in applying for a grant to develop a Transportation and Visitors Service area at the site expected to

be abandoned by Caltrans on completion of the Confusion Hill bypass project. The next likely source of funds is the State's share of federal Transportation Enhancements (TE) funds under the upcoming 2012 cycle. Mr. Dow elaborated and stated he is pleased with the way this matter is progressing. He advised adding a schedule for funding and next steps.

Mr. Howard Dashiell, Director of Mendocino County Department of Transportation, spoke in place of County Planning & Building Services staff, who offered apologies as they were called to a budget meeting today. He noted the new bridge at Confusion Hill and noted features of the study, such as ideas for vista points, interpretive displays, and parking. He described the several alternatives identified. There is potential for a low-maintenance, high-quality experience for the public. Whether or not the site is developed, County of Mendocino will receive the relinquished road property from Caltrans.

Questions and comments included:

- Support for the proposed product; how the educational idea began; history of the area; opportunities for tourism; discussions underway to purchase additional properties in this plan; and potential partners eager to start; established local businesses in camping and kyacking interested in reciprocity to attract tourists to their businesses. (Smith)
- Concern for ongoing maintenance costs once operational; distance from County services; lack of potential as a revenue generator. (Pinches)
- "Gateway" would mostly result in foot traffic, like a county park with minimal maintenance needed. (Dashiell) Discussion of pros, cons, and options for low-maintenance trail development, including working with property owners or local businesses to maintain trash disposal and restrooms. Coordinate with County General Services and MCOG.
- Capital/management plans can identify and compare maintenance cost alternatives before funding a project. A TE project proposal could be submitted, leaving the restroom issue to be resolved during the application evaluation process. (Gjerde, Willis)
- Staff recommends requesting County Board of Supervisors to decide on a preferred re-use alternative as soon as possible to ensure eligibility for 2012 TE cycle. More competition is anticipated in 2014. Apply for the maximum project, work on maintenance issues, and modify the application later as necessary. Eligibility looks favorable. The eligible applicant is Caltrans, with assistance from County and MCOG.
- Discussion of relinquishment agreement between Caltrans and County of Mendocino.

A motion was made by Direction Smith, seconded by Director Sinnott, to accept the study and direct MCOG staff to confer with the County's Transportation director as to next steps to ensure eligibility for the 2012 TE cycle and to address MCOG's comments on draft final study.

Discussion on the motion: Agreement with the local property owners would alleviate Director Pinches' concerns on the maintenance issue. Chair Gjerde thanked Director Willis and MCOG staff for working on this. By applying for State TE funds, the project would not compete with the limited regional share of TE funds.

The motion carried unanimously (6 Ayes; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 2 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that the Confusion Hill Right of Way Re-Use Opportunities Analysis (study) as prepared by Mendocino County Planning & Building Services and Mendocino County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is accepted, and staff is directed to confer with the MCDOT Director as to next steps to ensure eligibility for the 2012 Transportation Enhancements (TE) program funding cycle and to address MCOG's comments on the study.

9 - 12. Consent Calendar. Upon motion by Stranske, second by Smith, and carried unanimously (6 Ayes; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 2 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved:

9. Approval of March 7, 2011 Minutes – as written

10. Acceptance of Executive Committee Minutes of February 28, 2011 – as written

11. Acceptance of Response to 2009/10 MCOG Fiscal Audit Management Recommendations – One prior-year and one current-year recommendation, both in progress of implementation

12. Acceptance of 2009/10 Fiscal Audit of Mendocino Transit Authority – MTA received a clean audit.

13. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee - Reconvene as RTPA - Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. Upon motion by Pinches, second by Stranske, and carried unanimously (5 Ayes; 0 Noes; 2 Absent): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.

14. Reports - Information

- a. Mendocino Transit Authority. Mr. Dow gave a report from MTA's General Manager on their federal grant for facilities improvements, in followup to last month's discussion.
- b. North Coast Railroad Authority. Ms. Ellard reported on status of the Environmental Impact Report and freight train service north to Windsor. The next phase will extend service to Willits. She handed out a map of the NCRA rail corridor, "Responses to Frequently Asked Questions Regarding NCRA and NWP Co." and a fact sheet on Railbanking from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. She then answered questions and a brief discussion followed. Chair Gjerde stated it would be unfair if Humboldt County non-motorized transportation projects had to wait ten years for a decision by NCRA on disposition of the Eel River Canyon segment.
- c. MCOG Administration & Planning Staff
 1. *Summary of Meetings*. Mr. Dow referred to his written staff report.
 2. *Miscellaneous*. Relative to MCOG's resolution of last month, Ms. Orth reported favorable news that Governor Brown signed a bill re-establishing the "Transportation Tax Swap" of March 2010, which would otherwise have expired in November as a result of Proposition 26.
- d. MCOG Directors. Director Smith reported that the Simpson Lane roundabout project on Highway 1 near Fort Bragg is in line for funding and is expected to be completed this summer. The winning contractor's bid came in well below the engineer's estimate. She called it "a real win for local transportation," noting Caltrans District 1 was very helpful in the process.

Director Pinches reported that City of Ukiah and Caltrans have agreed on relinquishment of State Route 222 (Talmage Road). He thanked his colleagues for visiting the Third District. Executive Director Dow expressed pleasure with the day's successful tour.
- e. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates. None.

15. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

Submitted: PHILLIP J. DOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Director for Administration