

Mendocino Council of Governments

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MCOG To Adopt \$17 Million Regional Transportation Program

Another cycle of funding for transportation capital improvements has been handed down by the State for regional programming. More than \$17 million of new funds is available to the Mendocino countywide region. The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) met October 1 to consider recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee and to decide which projects should receive the funds. Staff is preparing the 2002 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) based on the Board's direction. **A public hearing will be held on December 3, when the RTIP will be adopted at MCOG's regular meeting.**

"To put this in context," explains MCOG Executive Director Phil Dow, "when Senate Bill 45 designated programming authority to regional agencies in 1997, MCOG's strategy became clear. First, long-standing projects must be completed, through partnership with Caltrans. Second, local projects could be funded to address the huge backlog of local needs."

Dow believes this strategy has been successful, considering that MCOG has programmed in this way more than \$52.5 million to date. Of this amount, \$33.2 million, or 63%, has been committed to local projects. During this same time period, Caltrans has committed \$67.2 million to highway improvements in Mendocino County, showing the State's commitment to a partnership with the regional agency.

MCOG Chair Patti Campbell has made clear her support for this approach. "Our action to dedicate a huge amount of money to the Willits Bypass, thereby removing it from a decades-old priority list and supporting the spirit of SB 45, has gained us positive recognition from the State. We are now in the position of directing large sums of money to local streets and roads. This allows us to get major projects done instead of the usual piecemeal methods used in the past."

Consistent with MCOG's own adopted policy, this cycle's regional funds will be programmed by transportation mode: 80% for Highways, Streets & Roads, 5% for Transit Capital Improvements, 5% for Pedestrians & Bikeways, and 10% for Rail Transportation.

According to this formula, \$14.6 million is available for the Highways/ Streets/Roads mode. Of this amount, 60% will be awarded to regional projects by competitive applications. The winning projects to receive funds are the Willits Bypass (for MCOG's share of additional Caltrans construction costs), Gobbi and Orchard Streets Traffic Signal (Ukiah), Brooktrails Second Access Road (County), North State Street Widening Improvements (County), Franklin Street Reconstruction (Fort Bragg), and Gobbi/Oak Manor Improvements (Ukiah). The remaining 40% at about \$6 million will be distributed by an adopted formula to the County and four Cities for local projects such as repaving and reconstruction.

The transit mode funds, at \$750,000, will be programmed according to the direction of the Mendocino Transit Authority board of directors. Rail mode funds, at \$2.1 million, will go to improve rail grade crossings in each of the five County and City jurisdictions.

Bicycle and pedestrian funds are available from three different funding sources. In addition to the 5% RTIP funds by mode at over \$1 million, MCOG has awarded the second of two cycles of federal Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA) funds and two fiscal years worth of 2% Local Transportation Funds at the same time. Altogether, \$1.7 million will go to bicycle and pedestrian projects.

The top-ranked project for TEA Cycle 2 funds, rehabilitation of the rail depot on Perkins Street by North Coast Railroad Authority and the City of Ukiah, was awarded \$150,000. The other two awards go to Covelo and Talmage area pedestrian walkways.

Acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, MCOG programs or allocates various types of state and federal transportation funds to Caltrans, the County of Mendocino and the four incorporated Cities of Ukiah, Fort Bragg, Willits, and Point Arena. In addition to projects on state highways and within its five member jurisdictions, MCOG helps support transportation activities of the North Coast Rail Authority, California Western Railroad, Mendocino Transit Authority, local airports, and others. Projects involve planning, capital improvements, rehabilitation and maintenance, fleet replacement, and intermodal transit centers. For more information, call the MCOG office at 463-1859 or consult the agency's web site at www.mendocinocog.org.

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