



Mendocino COGnizance

News from

Mendocino Council of Governments, the Regional Transportation Planning Agency
"A cog in the wheels of our transportation system"

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Transportation in 2006: Win Some, Lose Some

By now the statewide transportation funding difficulties have been well publicized, as we watch the infrastructure investments of our parents and grandparents deteriorate for lack of proper maintenance. The year 2005 saw some improvements to the situation, but it's not over yet--we still have work to do in 2006 and beyond.

Proposition 42. In 2002, the voters overwhelmingly approved this initiative to dedicate the sales tax on gasoline to transportation uses. However, a loophole in the bill allowed the State to redirect the funds to general purposes in times of fiscal crisis, which was done for the first two years. In 2005, the transportation community applied sufficient political pressure to protect the funds for one budget year, and in the year ahead it appears the State economy has improved to the point Prop 42 funds will not be raided again. Although this funding source isn't enough to solve the backlog of needs, we can celebrate our small but significant victory.

STIP. The State Transportation Improvement Program has suffered much since the brief period of prosperity from 1998 to 2000. Funding for projects programmed since then has been delayed repeatedly. The 2006 Regional TIP adopted by MCOG's Board of Directors on January 23 optimistically requests major funding for the Willits Bypass in a period when statewide funding for roadway projects is extremely constrained. However, the Regional TIP also identifies \$1 million for Mendocino Transit Authority's vehicle replacements. The transit portion of the program has a very good chance of approval by the California Transportation Commission when it adopts the STIP in April, because of the availability of public transit funds.

SAFETEA-LU Federal Reauthorization. After numerous short-term extensions of the six-year TEA21 bill, Congress has finally enacted a new bill, named "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users," signed by the President in August 2005. The good news is that California, as a "donor state," will gain a somewhat better return on the federal gas taxes collected statewide. This means that more federal funds will be directed into the STIP and into the Regional Surface Transportation Program. This new bill also contains a higher percentage for rural transit agencies such as MTA, and the popular Transportation Enhancements program will continue.



The wetlands of Willits' Little Lake Valley reached their highest flood levels in years after a big storm. - December 31, 2005

MCOG Highlights of 2005

Final 2005 Regional Transportation Plan

This periodic update to the RTP was adopted by the Council at a public hearing on December 5. - See www.mendocinocog.org

New Noyo Bridge Open

In July, Caltrans officially opened the new, seismically safe, four-lane bridge over the Noyo Harbor.

Stormy Weather

The year ended with rain, floods and mudslides, isolating many areas of our far-flung rural county and causing extensive damage in others, particularly Hopland and Ukiah.

- See photos Pages 1 and 4.

Governor's "Strategic Growth Plan." This infrastructure bond proposal is one of several on the table as of this writing meant to address several major sectors needing investment. Under the Governor's plan, transportation would receive \$12 billion of the total ten-year \$68 billion program, targeting specific projects including the Willits Bypass, Hopland Bypass, and Pacific Coast Bicycle Route. Projects to be funded from this bond issue are not distributed equally around the State, so Mendocino County's regional priorities will benefit significantly if this goes forward as proposed. Assuming the funds are additional to the STIP, this would be a windfall, although the burden of repayment would fall on future taxpayers.

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2006 Calendar

Board Meetings

1st Monday at 1:30 p.m., nine to ten months a year, at Ukiah Civic Center, 300 Seminary Avenue.

Planned highlights and recurring actions (subject to change):

- Jan. 23** Elect Officers, Make Committee Appointments
TAC Recommendations: Adopt 2006 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)
TPC Recommendations: Transit Standards Update
- Feb.** No meeting in February
- Mar. 6** Executive Committee Recommendations:
Draft 2006/07 Budget
Acceptance of 2004/05 Annual Fiscal Audit of MTA
- Apr. 3** SSTAC Recommendations: FTA Grant Applications
- May 1** TPC Recommendations: MTA Performance Review, Unmet Transit Needs, Annual Transit Claim
- June 5** Adopt 2006/07 RTPA Budget
Adopt 2006/07 Planning Program
Make Annual Finding of Unmet Transit Needs
- July** No Meeting in July
- Aug. 7** Regular Business
- Sept.** No Regular Meeting in September
- Oct. 2** Regular Business
- Nov. 6** Regular Business
- Dec. 4** SSTAC Recommendations:
2007/08 Unmet Transit Needs - Public Hearing

MCOG's Purpose

MCOG was formed as a joint powers agency in 1972, as mandated by state law, the Transportation Development Act (TDA). The Council primarily serves as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for our countywide region. Two county supervisors, a county elected official, and one council member from each of the four incorporated cities make up Board membership. A representative of Caltrans serves on the Policy Advisory Committee with the seven directors.

MCOG serves as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) of Mendocino County, administering the call box program. At times MCOG also is involved with housing and economic development. MCOG is a political subdivision of the State of California.

Acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, MCOG programs or allocates various types of local, 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, Mendocino Transit Authority, local airports, and others. Projects involve planning, capital improvements, rehabilitation and maintenance, fleet replacement, and intermodal transit centers.

Standing Committees

Executive Committee

Feb. 24: Budget Recommendations for 2006/07

Transit Productivity Committee (TPC)

April TBA: Unmet Transit Needs Recommendations, Review of Annual Transit Claim, and Annual Transit Performance

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

3rd Wed. monthly unless cancelled/rescheduled (refer to web site)

Social Services Trans. Advisory Council (SSTAC)

Spring: FTA transit grant applications for programs serving elderly and persons with disabilities. Fall: Unmet Transit Needs Workshop.



After the deluge: Little Lake Valley in Willits lives up to its name, with farms and ranches under water on New Year's Eve.

Transportation in 2006 - continued from Page 1

Streets and Roads Maintenance. A continuing problem, this seems to be the most difficult nut to crack. The statewide maintenance backlog is over \$100 billion. Gasoline taxes have failed to keep up with demand--actually have lost value to inflation over the years--and this system of funding is ripe for reform. There is some relief in SAFETEA-LU, which increases funds to the Regional Surface Transportation Program that MCOG chooses to pass through to the County and Cities. Meanwhile, MCOG has taken the lead to prepare and keep up a Pavement Management Program for our members to make best use of the funds we do receive. Also, MCOG led an effort to facilitate local sales tax ballot initiatives dedicated to transportation that has proved successful in Willits, Point Arena, and Fort Bragg.

2006 is shaping up to be an eventful year for transportation as momentum builds to address our backlog of safety, maintenance, and congestion mitigation needs.

2005/06 Budget Allocations

Local Transportation Fund

The MCOG Board annually allocates the locally collected quarter-cent sales tax under the Transportation Development Act (TDA), which is deposited to the Local Transportation Fund. In June, MCOG allocated just over \$3 million for 2005/06, an increase of about seven percent from last year. In order of priority according to policy, \$250,784 went to Administration of the agency; two percent to Bicycle & Pedestrian projects at \$51,637; the Planning program received \$100,000 in new funds; and Mendocino Transit Authority received \$2,528,489. In addition, \$98,281 was allocated from prior year excess revenue, leaving \$142,000 in Reserve for transit as needed.

Unmet Transit Needs

MCOG annually follows a process of identifying unmet transit needs. For FY 2005/06, MCOG found, through committee work and public hearings, that "*there are unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet through revenue-neutral service adjustments.*" Some of these are contingent upon MTA's own internal decisions to cut back some services, so the recommendations have not been fully implemented. Once again, no new services were funded, although there is always hope as we continue this annual process. All those interested in participating in future cycles are encouraged to contact MCOG.

2005/06 LTF Allocations

Administration	250,784
Bike & Pedestrian	51,637
Planning	100,000
Public Transit	2,528,489
Unmet Transit Needs	0
<u>LTF Reserve</u>	<u>142,000</u>
Total LTF Allocations	3,072,910
For Later Allocation	0

Planning Funds

Various state and federal grants and local funds comprise MCOG's Planning budget. The 2005/06 Overall Work Program funds planning projects by the Cities, County, MTA, and MCOG staff. Including projects carried over, the program will total \$765,422 (as amended November 7).

Other Transportation Funds

In addition, MCOG allocates all State Transit Assistance funds to MTA each year, at \$228,660 for 2005/06. Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds are distributed by MCOG to the Cities and County annually for streets and roads needs, at \$494,607 in 2004/05. The Transportation Enhancement (TE) program received approximately \$.6 million more than the original estimate for the six-year federal cycle. The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) has fluctuated from \$0 to \$18 million over the past several years. All funding sources together were up significantly except the STIP.



New Staff at MCOG

Alexis Bertozzi--"Lexi" for short--is the new friendly face at the front desk and voice on the telephone. Lexi comes to us from NCO where her grant-funded position expired, bringing with her many useful talents. She replaces Jessica,

who had a known travel bug and indeed left us for the charms of *la dolce vita* in Italy. Lexi is learning GIS software tools (Geographic Information Systems), cross training as a backup to Lisa, our resident expert. She also enjoys volunteering in the community and working with various civic groups. An experienced rider, Lexi lives in beautiful Redwood Valley where she keeps her horses.

MCOG Projects for 2005/06

The Planning program funds public projects with local, state and federal transportation revenues. MCOG staff develops and manages the program. The Technical Advisory Committee ranks and reviews project applications, which are subject to approval by the MCOG Board and Caltrans.

Transportation Planning Overall Work Program (OWP) Elements:

- 1 - Current Planning
- 2 - Long Range Planning
- 3 - Regional Bikeway Plan Update
- 4 - Road System Traffic Safety Review
- 5 - Regional Transportation Plan - 2005 Update *
- 6 - Special Studies
- 7 - Planning, Programming & Monitoring (SB 45)
- 8 - City of Willits - ADA Comprehensive Access Plan *
- 9 - City of Ukiah - U.S. 101 Corridor/Interchange Study *
- 10 - City of Fort Bragg - Main Street Merge Lane Study
- 11 - City of Ukiah - ADA Comprehensive Access Plan *
- 12 - County General Plan Circulation Element/Phase 2-B *
- 13 - City of Ukiah - Update of Speed Zone Reports: *
- 14 - Training
- 15 - City of Willits - Bicycle & Pedestrian Specific Plan *
- 16 - County Road System Right of Way Database
- 17 - (deleted by amendment)
- 18 - Wine Country IRP/Ph. 2-Origin & Destination Studies*
- 19 - City of Ukiah - Traffic Circulation Study/Phase 3
- 20 - Gualala Community Action Plan

* Indicates carryover from prior year.
For program details, contact Loretta at MCOG.

Gualala Planning Grant Underway

The residents of Gualala, "Gateway to the Mendocino Coast," have long called for transportation improvements for the community. With State Route 1 running through the small town, these needs are well known to locals. Among them are traffic calming, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and parking. Related needs are economic development and affordable housing. While several plans and studies have been conducted over the past several years, none have actually been implemented.

In 2004, MCOG responded to a request to sponsor a grant application that would build on this work and attempt to resolve outstanding issues. As a result, Caltrans awarded a Community Based Transportation Planning Grant from state funds in the amount of \$71,600. With local cash and in-kind match funds provided by the Gualala Chamber of Commerce, the total project budget is \$89,500.

According to the project's stated purpose, a Community Action Plan will be prepared that "will determine priority projects, a financial plan, and an implementation plan for making Gualala a more livable community."

Now that we've received the green light, MCOG staff has started work on the project. We expect to complete the Plan by next January and to wrap up the project in June 2007.

Currently we are seeking a diverse group of volunteer stakeholders to serve on a Community Advisory Committee that will help develop the Plan's core elements, to begin work in March. Anyone interested is invited to contact Loretta at MCOG.



A walkable downtown:

The Farmers Market is open for pedestrian traffic on School Street in Ukiah one autumn Saturday.



*U.S. 101 was flooded at the north end of Willits' Little Lake Valley, necessitating a detour east on Reynolds Highway and points south for several miles around the "lake."
- December 31, 2005*

Board of Directors

Marsha Wharff, Chair

County Clerk-Recorder/Assessor

Tami Jorgensen, Vice Chair

Willits Mayor

Dan Gjerde, Executive Committee

Fort Bragg City Councilmember

Leslie Dahlhoff

Point Arena Mayor

John McCowen

Ukiah City Councilmember

David Colfax

County Supervisor, 5th District

Hal Wagenet

County Supervisor, 3rd District

Cheryl Willis, MCOG Policy Advisory Committee

Caltrans District I Planning Chief

Alternates (by optional appointment)

Mari Rodin - Ukiah City Council

Dave Turner - Fort Bragg City Council

Holly Madrigal - Willits City Council



MCOG Staff

Administration and Planning services are under contract with Dow & Associates. Staff includes:

Phil Dow, P. E., Executive Director

Loretta Ellard, Assistant Executive Director

Janet Orth, Deputy Director for Administration

Lisa Davey-Bates, Associate Planner/SAFE Call Box Coordinator

Nephele Barrett, Associate Planner

Alexis Bertozzi, Office Assistant

Contact the MCOG Office at:

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Find email contact directory at:

<http://www.mendocinocog.org>



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