



Mendocino COGnizance

News from

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

Issue #8
Summer 2003

Regional Transportation Plan Adopted

At the May 5 meeting, MCOG's Board of Directors adopted the Final 2001 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), along with the required Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

After nearly three years of public outreach, from the summer of 2000 through March 2003, MCOG completed this major rewrite of the plan. Individual citizens were consulted by way of this newsletter, MCOG's web site, a booth at the county fair, survey questionnaires, radio public affairs shows, information tables at public meetings, distribution of the draft plan and draft EIR, MCOG board meetings, and a public hearing.

"As we concentrated on resolving other priority issues, we picked up and dropped the RTP several times over this three-year period," admitted Executive Director Phil Dow. "In retrospect, this provided an unprecedented window of opportunity for public review of the plan."

Others involved in the process included MCOG's Technical Advisory Committee of planners and engineers, local agencies, tribal governments in Mendocino County, and other affected agencies identified by the State's clearinghouse.

The RTP's Overall Mission Statement is to "Provide well-maintained access facilities representing a balance of modes that reflect unique county transportation constraints and demand characteristics, while at the same time supporting and encouraging economic development, sustainable community life, and environmental preservation."

Public comments included the desire for more transit services, bicycle facilities, and support for rail, as well as a concern with growth and environmental impacts.

MCOG staff reviewed all comments received and incorporated them into the RTP document wherever feasible. In addition, all comments to the EIR received a written response in the final EIR, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Of course, the State's RTP Guidelines and CEQA process were followed throughout. MCOG contracted with a consulting firm, Leonard Charles & Associates, to prepare the EIR.

A number of projects included in the RTP are major road improvements, or improvements to other transportation facilities, so an Environmental Impact Report was required. The EIR discussed the impacts of the projects in general, since the actual impacts cannot be predicted without detailed designs of the proposed



Hare Creek
Bridge in
Fort Bragg
on coastal
Route 1.

MCOG Highlights of 2002/03

FY 2003/04 Budget Adopted - See story Page 3.

Willits Transportation Sales Tax Initiative

The City placed a measure on the ballot for a special election on June 3 that was approved by 75% of those who voted. Willits joins other California "self-help" local governments that raise their own dedicated half-cent sales tax revenues to repair streets and roads. MCOG has explored this idea since 1999, working with the member jurisdictions.

Tribal Government Consultation - MCOG has continued to work with the ten sovereign tribes in Mendocino County and with Caltrans to find ways of collaborating on transportation planning.

4th Annual Walk & Roll Festival - Once again we cosponsored this event "to celebrate and promote walking, bicycling, and other diverse transportation choices for a healthier Ukiah Valley." See photos and poster contest winners at www.mendocinocog.org.

2003/04 Calendar

Board Meetings

1st Monday at 1:30 p.m., ten months a year, at Ukiah City Hall, 300 Seminary Avenue. Planned highlights and recurring actions (subject to change):

- June 2** Adopt 2003/04 RTPA Budget
Adopt 2003/04 Planning Program
Make Annual Finding of Unmet Transit Needs
- July** No meeting in July
- Aug. 4** Award Contract for Triennial Performance Audit
Award Contracts for Annual Fiscal Audits
Wine Country Interregional Partnership Workshop
- Sept.** No meeting in September unless called
- Oct. 6** TAC Recommendations:
2003/04 Planning Work Program Amendment
- Nov. 3** Regular business
- Dec. 1** SSTAC Recommendations:
2004/05 Unmet Transit Needs - Public Hearing
Adoption of Social Services Transportation Action Plan
- January** No meeting in January
- Feb. 2** Elect Officers & Appoint Committee Members
- Mar. 1** Accept Completed Audits
- Apr. 5** Executive Committee Recommendations:
Draft 2004/05 Budget
TPC Recommendations:
Transit Performance, Unmet Transit Needs

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, California Western Railroad, Mendocino Transit Authority, local airports, and others. Projects involve planning, capital improvements, rehabilitation and maintenance, fleet replacement, and intermodal transit centers.

Executive Committee

February: Budget Recommendations for next fiscal year

Transit Productivity Committee (TPC)

March: Budget Reviews, Unmet Transit Needs Recommendations, and Transit Performance Review

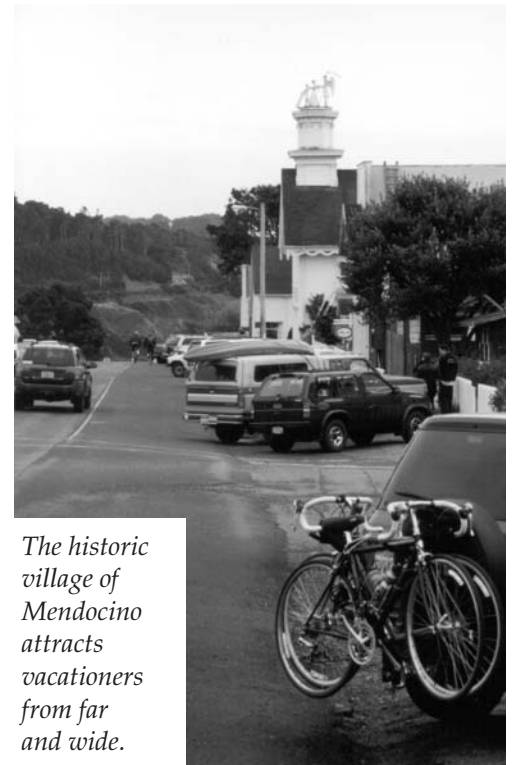
April: Review of Annual Transit Claim

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

3rd Wed. monthly unless cancelled/rescheduled, location rotated

Social Services Trans. Advisory Council (SSTAC)

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



The historic village of Mendocino attracts vacationers from far and wide.

RTP Adopted - continued from Page 1:

projects. Over the life of the plan, as projects are funded, further environmental reviews will be required to identify the impacts of those projects.

The State Clearinghouse received no comments on the EIR from agencies on their distribution list.

This is the first major rewrite of the RTP in many years, and also the first time MCOG has completed an EIR on the Regional Transportation Plan since the first one conducted by Caltrans in 1975. Recognizing this, the result was considered by most to be sufficient to serve its purpose. Certainly there is room for further refinement, and periodic updates will provide opportunities for feedback and improvement.

Regional Transportation Plans are planning documents to provide a vision of the goals, policies, objectives and strategies in addressing local transportation needs in a particular region. In rural areas, Regional Transportation Planning Agencies such as MCOG are required by State legislation to update the RTP every four years. MCOG's next RTP will be due in 2005.

2003/04 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. On June 2, MCOG allocated over \$2.7 million for 2003/04. In order of priority according to policy, \$239,955 went to Administration of the agency; two percent to Bicycle & Pedestrian projects at \$47,232; the Planning program received \$94,669; and Mendocino Transit Authority received \$2,282,939. In addition, \$12,885 was allocated from prior year excess revenue, leaving \$130,000 in the LTF Reserve for transit as needed. As expected, excess revenue was well down from the year before. Revenues for the coming fiscal year are projected to stay relatively level, decreasing about one-half percent.

Unmet Transit Needs

MCOG annually follows a process of identifying unmet transit needs, as required by TDA. For FY 2003/04, MCOG found through committee work and public hearings, that "there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet." While projects have been identified, both MCOG and MTA are reluctant to start new services that cannot be assured of funding to continue after the initial investment is made. As was the case last year, the MCOG Board agreed not to fund new services this year. The FY 2004/05 process will begin again this fall. Those interested in participating in this process are encouraged to contact the MCOG office.

2003/04 LTF Allocations

Administration	239,955
Bike & Pedestrian	47,232
Planning	94,669
Public Transit	2,282,939
Unmet Transit Needs	0
<u>LTF Reserve</u>	<u>130,000</u>
Total LTF Allocations	2,794,795
For Later Allocation	9,407

Planning Funds

Various state and federal grants comprise most of MCOG's Planning budget. The 2003/04 Overall Work Program funds planning projects by the Cities, County, MTA, and MCOG staff. Including projects carried over, and assuming all grant applications will be funded, the program will total \$909,162.

Other Transportation Funds

In addition, MCOG allocates all State Transit Assistance funds to MTA each year, at \$140,684 for 2003/04. The largest source of revenues are from State Senate Bill 45, through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), at over \$18 million to MCOG for the 2002 cycle. Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA) funds added nearly \$2 million under the six-year federal bill enacted in 1998.

Meet MCOG Staff

Loretta Ellard has worked at MCOG since 1989, starting as administrative staff, moving on to transportation planning, and eventually earning her present position as Deputy Director for Planning. She is in charge of the Overall Work Program and works closely with the Technical Advisory Committee. We often consult her as our in-house parliamentarian, since she always knows public meeting rules from her early days working for the Clerk of the County Board of Supervisors--and from countless meetings she's attended ever since. All of this and a twinkle in her eye that betrays a ready laugh and love of fun make Loretta an essential part of our team. Off duty, she keeps a busy agenda with family and church activities.



MCOG Projects for 2003/04

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 - Pavement Management Program Update
- 4 - Road System Traffic Safety Review
- 5 - Computerized Collision Database & Analysis System
- 6 - Special Studies
- 7 - Planning, Programming & Monitoring (SB 45)
- 8 - City of Willits: Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Comprehensive Access Plan
- 9 - City of Ukiah: U.S. 101 Corridor/Interchange Study
- 10 - City of Fort Bragg: Residential Streets Safety Plan
- 11 - Jobs/Housing Imbalance - Interregional Partnership Grant/Phase 3
- 12 - Revise Circulation Element of Mendocino County General Plan/Phase 2-B
- 13 - Social Services Transportation Action Plan
- 14 - Training
- 15 - Air Service Demand & Airport Feasibility Study
- 16 - Short Range Transit Development Plan
- 17 - City of Willits: Baechtel Road/Railroad Avenue Study - Carryover

For program details, contact Loretta at MCOG.

Wine Country Interregional Partnership Stakeholders To Meet

MCOG is moving forward with the next stage of this three-year grant program through the State Housing & Community Development Department. The Wine Country IRP and eight other interregional partnerships statewide are studying the impacts of housing, jobs, and transportation imbalances.

New correlated data from our first phase, a report of existing conditions, is bearing out anecdotal evidence of



the widening gap between wages and housing prices, and availability of housing, in the Wine Country. The problem is found to be extreme in Mendocino County.

Because the region's valley floors are oriented north-south, U.S. 101 will continue to be the key arterial link between job and housing concentrations.

This report will be an important tool in the stakeholder outreach phase of the project. For the past several months, our team has been contacting and interviewing elected officials and other stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

An important goal of the program is to establish an ongoing policy group or network that will continue working together to alleviate the problems of imbalances among jobs, housing, and transportation in the Wine Country. In forming small groups, and ultimately a policy group, our approach will be to seek linkages among related issues with which people already are involved. A general assembly of stakeholders is being planned for next January.

The four areas of expertise contributed by the consultant team are economics and planning, traffic analysis, geographic information systems (GIS), and public participation. Larry Wright of MCOG staff, who initiated and manages the project, is working closely with the team.

The program, authored by Senator Tom Torlakson and approved by the Legislature, is intended to stimulate coordinated planning efforts to avoid the negative impacts of growth. In May, MCOG staff met with the Senator at a statewide meeting of the IRPs hosted by the State HCD. We have continued to meet with the other IRPs to share and evaluate strategies and results, while recognizing both the differences and commonalities among our various regions.

To get involved, please contact Larry at MCOG.



Seaside Creek Beach on the northern Mendocino Coast is a favorite spot of both locals and visitors.

Board of Directors

Patti Campbell, Chair
County Supervisor

Richard Shoemaker, Vice Chair
County Supervisor

Marsha Wharff
County Clerk-Recorder/Assessor

Eric Larson, Executive Committee
Ukiah City Councilmember

Dan Gjerde
Fort Bragg City Councilmember

Denny McEntire
Willits City Councilmember

Leslie Dahlhoff
Point Arena Mayor

Cheryl Willis, Caltrans District I Planning Chief
MCOG Policy Advisory Committee

Alternates (by optional appointment)

Mari Rodin - Ukiah City Councilmember

Jere Melo - Fort Bragg Councilmember

Tami Jorgensen - Willits City Councilmember

Kevin Gallagher - Point Arena City Councilmember



MCOG Staff

Administration and Planning services are provided under contract with Dow & Associates.

Phil Dow, P. E., Executive Director

Janet Orth, Deputy Dir.-Administration

Loretta Ellard, Deputy Dir.-Planning

Larry Wright, P.E., Deputy Dir.-Long Range Planning

Lisa Davey, Assistant Planner/SAFE Call Box Coordinator

Nephele Barrett, Assistant Planner

Jean Roberts, Administrative Assistant

Contact the MCOG Office at:

367 N. State Street, Suite 206, Ukiah, CA 95482

(707) 463-1859, 463-2212 fax

e-mail: mcog@mendocinocog.org

Internet: <http://www.mendocinocog.org>



Mendocino COGNizance is designed and edited by Janet Orth,
published by Dow & Associates.