

MENDOCINO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

APPROVED MINUTES

Monday, August 12, 2024

Primary Location:

County Administration Center, Board of Supervisors Chambers
Room 1070, 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah

Teleconference Locations:

Fort Bragg City Hall, 416 N. Franklin St., Fort Bragg
Point Arena City Hall, 451 School St., Point Arena

General Public Teleconference by Zoom

ADDITIONAL MEDIA:

[Mendocino County Video](#) or find
[YouTube link at http://www.mendocinocog.org](http://www.mendocinocog.org) under [Meetings](#)

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 and Roll Call. The meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.m. with Directors present: John Haschak, Greta Kanne, Josefina Duenas and Tatiana Ahlstrand (PAC) in Ukiah; Bernie Norvell and Dan Gjerde in Fort Bragg; and Anna Dobbins (Alternate) in Point Arena. Mike Carter joined from a location without agenda notice (not voting). Chair Gjerde presiding.

Guests: Consultants Maura Twomey and Diane Eidam of Regional Analysis & Planning Services (RAPS) were present on the teleconference as a resource for Agenda #6 and #7. Stephen Kullman of Redwood Coast Energy Authority was present on the teleconference as a resource for Agenda #15.

Staff present in Ukiah: Nephele Barrett, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO; Loretta Ellard, Deputy Planner; James Sookne, Program Manager; Michael Villa, Project Coordinator; Alexis Pedrotti, Project Manager; and Jody Lowblad, Administrative Assistant.

Staff present by Zoom: Lisa Davey-Bates, Transportation Planner.

2. Assembly Bill 2449 Notifications and Considerations. This item is to receive and address requests from Board members to participate in the meeting from a non-posted location, subject to conditions set forth in AB 2449. Due to lack of a quorum present at the primary location in Ukiah to approve a request, Director Carter did not ask to vote from his non-posted location (listed as “Absent” on roll call votes).

3. Convene as RTPA

4. Recess as RTPA – Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee

5 - 11. Consent Calendar. Upon motion by Norvell, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Haschak, Kanne, Dobbins/Alt., Norvell, Duenas, Ahlstrand and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent – Carter): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved.

5. **Approval of June 3, 2024 Minutes** – *as written*
6. **Approval of Professional Services Agreement with Dow & Associates to Provide Administrative & Fiscal Services to MCOG for Fiscal Years 2024/25 through 2028/29** – *as recommended*
7. **Approval of Professional Services Agreement with Davey-Bates Consulting to Provide Planning Services to MCOG for Fiscal Years 2024/25 through 2028/29** – *as recommended*
8. **Approval of First Amendment to Fiscal Year 2024/25 Transportation Planning Overall Work Program (OWP)** – *To carry over and reprogram planning funds unexpended in 2023/24, and add the Caltrans Climate Adaptation Planning Grant for Work Element #5, Mendocino County Sea Level Rise Roadway Impact Study (\$354,120 grant, \$45,880 local match; \$400,000 total project). Total OWP funding increases from \$970,166 to \$1,583,251, an increase of \$613,085. The Executive Director is authorized to sign certifications and a revised OWP Agreement as needed and forward to Caltrans as required.*
9. **Adoption of Resolution Approving Mendocino Transit Authority's Grant Application for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Program Annual Regional Apportionment for Transit Operating Assistance**

Resolution No. M2024-09

Approving Mendocino Transit Authority's Grant Application for
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311
Non-Urbanized Program Annual Regional Apportionment
for Transit Operating Assistance
(Reso. #M2024-09 is incorporated herein by reference)

10. **Appointments to Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)**
 - *Philip Thomas, Anderson Valley Senior Center, for "Local social service provider for persons of limited means" – appointed through April 2026*
 - *Liz Dorsey, Ukiah Senior Center, for "Local social service provider for the handicapped that provides transportation" and Sheryl Mitcham as Alternate – appointed through April 2025*
11. **Award of Fiscal Auditor Engagement for MCOG and Mendocino Transit Authority Audits, Fiscal Years 2023/24 through 2027/28** – *To O'Connor & Company, Novato, California*

12. Public Expression. Steve Henderson, a.k.a. Gizmo, spoke about trailer chain hazards and read from the pertinent California safety code section. There were some discrepancies between the code and text displayed with trailers for purchase. He noted problems with improperly installed chains that have been known to ignite wildfires. He advised that a compliant sticker be approved by State agencies such as California Highway Patrol and Caltrans, also suggesting that contractors that tow trailers in District 1 should not be funded without updating safety training best practices.

13. Presentation and Discussion: Gualala Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Project – Caltrans District 1. Ms. Barrett provided her written staff report and noted this project has been partially funded by MCOG for many years, and also by a competitive Active Transportation Program (ATP) state grant. She then introduced Ms. Katie Everett, Project Manager, who presented several slides on status of and updates to the project design due to various constraints. These included reduction of a continuous two-way left turn lane, and linear sidewalks rather than curvilinear sidewalk design.

The Chair then opened to public comment; Ms. Everett answered questions.

- Steve Henderson, a.k.a. Gizmo, asked whether a landscaping contractor would be from public or private sector. Answer: a public agency is required; an agreement with County of Mendocino is under discussion.
- Harry Mayer, Gualala Municipal Advisory Council (GMAC), asked why the curvilinear sidewalk design was being eliminated, and favored landscaping as an important feature of the project. Answer: the more expensive curvilinear option was replaced for budget reasons.
- Don Hess, GMAC, noted the community and GMAC in particular have favored landscaping as an important component from the start of this project. How will storm water runoff be handled? Concern about tire wear and toxic pollutants impacting the river, salmon and other native flora and fauna. Answer: Caltrans District 1 stormwater experts who work to meet permit requirements would need to be consulted.
- Dave Shpak of Gualala asked status of regulatory permitting for stormwater management; also was concerned about project delivery, urging completion without further delay, and appreciated overall efforts made to date. GMAC would welcome opportunities to support local public interaction. Answer: Project staff are coordinating with other agencies so the project will be ready to list at the same time as permit approvals, by November 2025.
- Tom Murphy represented Save Gualala, 1,700 supporters seeking full compliance with the County’s Gualala Town Plan of 24 years, part of the General Plan and Local Coastal Plan. He read a statement relative to a required landscaping component, as important to the local tourism economy, citing sections of the plan. The only exceptions are physical constraints. GMAC overwhelmingly favored landscaping. Understanding the County’s fiscal constraints, it is their responsibility to maintain the landscaping for the community’s sake. He strongly opposed any changes removing this component.

Ms. Barrett responded that staff-level meetings with Caltrans, MCOG and County of Mendocino are ongoing to discuss landscaping maintenance options. No action was taken.

14. Approval of Reallocation of Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Program Grant Funds.

Program Manager James Sookne reported background of this one-time, formula-based State funding for housing planning activities, and the need to reallocate among the member local agencies to expend remaining funds before they expire. Approximately \$86,000 is available to reallocate. Cities of Willits and Fort Bragg were able to expend more funds for eligible activities within the timeline. Mr. Sookne explained how staff’s recommended reallocations were calculated. State Housing & Community Development (HCD) had approved staff’s revised scope of work.

Board questions and discussion followed. Director Haschak asked about funds originally allocated for County Planning. The reallocated funding is mostly from County’s portion, as the largest share, plus \$11,000 from administrative and management tasks. Mr. Sookne explained tasks involved. County staff were not able to find more eligible work that could be completed on time. Ms. Barrett clarified that final invoicing is due to HCD in the next few weeks.

The Chair invited public comment. Staff clarified that the funding is all from State sources.

Upon motion by Haschak, second by Kanne, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (7 Ayes – Haschak, Kanne, Dobbins/Alt., Norvell, Duenas, Ahlstrand and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent – Carter): IT IS ORDERED that REAP grant funds are reallocated as proposed for a third revision, allowing MCOG to fully expend all available grant funds.

REAP Housing Grant Suballocations - Reallocated

City of Ukiah	95,448.53	For new permitting software
City of Point Arena	16,380.67	To update the ADU ordinance

City of Willits	61,403.80	Toward administrative draft of environmental document for General Plan amendment
County of Mendocino	102,105.73	For new permitting & GIS software
City of Fort Bragg	80,581.77	For a Community Land Trust and permitting software
Total REAP Suballocations	355,920.50	

15. Discussion of RuralREN-North Status and Program Implementation. Ms. Barrett reviewed her written report, with background on the original configuration of partners and the proposal now before the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to split into two regions, North and Central. MCOG has submitted comments in support of the proposal. MCOG staff has been working on details of implementation with the other three North partners (Redwood Coast Energy Authority, Lake Area Planning Council, and Sierra Business Council serving multiple counties) to keep up with timelines. Under discussion were the seven programs in the original business plan (briefly described):

- Residential Equity
- Residential Resource Acquisition
- Non-Residential Resource Acquisition
- Public Equity
- Workforce Education & Training
- Codes & Standards
- Finance Equity

Staff requested feedback from the Council on priorities for rolling out these programs. The intention is to offer all seven, however they cannot all be launched at once. The new RuralREN North would be able to customize each program to its remote rural areas, though more time will be needed to redesign those programs. The “governing partners” have identified some recommended priorities and schedule. Based on readiness, for Mendocino County staff recommends beginning with a focus on Residential Equity, Residential Resource Acquisition, and Finance programs, which tie well together, followed by Non-Residential Equity and Public Equity, and lastly Workforce and Codes & Standards. All seven programs are lacking in MCOG’s region, so need to be delivered in due course. Ms. Barrett requested Council input and noted Stephen Kullman of RCEA was present to answer questions.

- Agreed with staff’s assessment. Question about overlap with Sonoma Clean Power’s existing rebate and incentive programs; perhaps these could be marketed together. Also Mendocino College now serves both inland and coast areas, offering green building courses, and would be a good partner for a workforce training program. (Gjerde)
- While all the programs are needed, staff’s priorities are well thought out. Finance program could provide an immediate boost to the County’s carbon reduction efforts. Agreed with suggestion to partner with the college. (Haschak)
- The separation of a North REN will be good for the region to specifically serve rural areas. Pleased that all seven programs will be offered, and likes the direction taken so far. (Kanne)

Mr. Kullman concurred with staff’s report and added one consideration, a requirement not to duplicate programs funded by the same revenue source, i.e. ratepayer funding. The Codes & Standards program merits further scrutiny, as it closely matches PG&E programs, though a question remains whether those have been offered in Mendocino County, so there may be gaps to fill. The RuralREN partners want to seek partnerships and align well with Sonoma Clean Power’s programs, which fortunately are not funded by ratepayer charges, so the REN will add value. To date meetings with CPUC have been productive, though as yet with no clear schedule for a resolution. RCEA appreciates MCOG staff’s contributions to this effort.

Ms. Barrett noted Mendocino and Lake counties are the only entities to offer all seven programs, since utility providers offer some of them in the other regions. She expressed staff's excitement to take this on and will report at the next meeting. Chair Gjerde thanked staff for their work on this idea over the past couple of years to bring it to fruition. There was no public comment on the item. No action was taken.

16. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee – Reconvene as RTPA – Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. Upon motion by Norvell, second by Haschak, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (6 Ayes – Haschak, Kanne, Dobbins/Alt., Norvell, Duenas and Gjerde; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 1 Absent – Carter): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.

17. Reports - Information

- a. Caltrans District 1 – Projects Update and Information. Director Ahlstrand reported that on July 1, Caltrans headquarters funded the FY 2024/25 PROTECT program, including a feasibility study of the SR-128 and SR-1 junction at the Navarro River to study impacts of sea-level rise, storm surges and flooding, to begin in September. Congratulations to MCOG for the Climate Adaptation Planning grant award for a Mendocino County Sea Level Rise Roadway Impact Study. The usual Milestone report, with addition of District 1's quarterly 2024 Project Initiation Document (PID) Work Plan for Mendocino County and a map, was provided in the agenda packet. She then invited questions.

The Chair and staff appreciated the additional information and format changes, and having Ms. Ahlstrand present in Ukiah. In discussion, Director Kanne asked about two recent unplanned power outages in Willits affecting a traffic signal at SR-20, apparently without battery backup, while City-maintained signals remained functional. Caltrans will follow up.

During public comment online, Caltrans staff answered questions about projects and funding listed in the Milestone report.

Ms. Everett announced a public meeting on the Albion River Bridge project August 13 at the Grange in Albion, noting public comment on the draft environmental document closes September 9. More information: [Home - Albion River Bridge Project](#)

- b. Mendocino Transit Authority. Executive Director Jacob King reported the restoration of Route 9 evening service in Ukiah, in partnership with Mendocino College, to start August 19. Service will be hourly from 5:00 to 11:00 p.m. This meets one of two Unmet Transit Needs found reasonable to meet on MCOG's FY 2024/25 list.
- c. Great Redwood Trail Agency. Director Haschak reported GRTA met July 18 and adopted a resolution on real property rates and charges for private crossings, right of entry access, and use of land. They are recruiting for an Operations Manager, responsible for various fiscal and contracting work, as well as public property management. There was some controversy over appointment of a City representative, as Mendocino and Humboldt Counties as the largest areas of the trail did not have enough representation. The board seats are set in State statute, so a rotation agreement was made such that the appointment will shift from Sonoma County to Humboldt for the next two years.
- d. MCOG Staff - Summary of Meetings. Ms. Barrett referred to the written report.
- e. MCOG Administration Staff
- i. *Status of FY 2022/23 Local Transportation Funds Eligibility Finding per Fiscal Audit and 2024/25 Budget Allocating Resolution – Mendocino Transit Authority.* Ms. Orth

- gave an update to her budget report in June, noting discussions with MTA management; staff and independent experts will be carefully identifying the correct amount to be recovered and reallocated, according to a formula in Transportation Development Act (TDA) statute. Staff requests additional review by the Executive Committee and anticipates a recommendation to the Council on the October agenda. MTA Executive Director King briefly commented and agreed with staff this was a positive outcome due to the addition of federal funds in 2022/23, freeing local funds for later allocation.
- ii. *Caltrans Hopland ADA Project*. Ms. Barrett reported on programmed pedestrian improvements on US-101 in the town, with change orders to avoid severe impacts on the small local utility, noting how Caltrans has had to redesign this project since MCOG's 2015 plan. It eliminates new drainage and curb bulbouts, despite efforts with legislators and the district to find funds that could alleviate the financial burden on Hopland's utility to accommodate those improvements. Caltrans will still be able to deliver most of the high-priority benefits to the community such as improved sidewalks, pavement, crossing and slope correction. A public meeting in June was well attended with local support for the project. She appreciated the project team.
 - iii. *Miscellaneous*. None.
 - iv. *Next Meeting Date* – Monday, October 7, 2024 – *Optional Transportation Tour TBD*.
The annual board meeting calendar tentatively scheduled a tour; staff is now aiming for a November tour and meeting in Covelo as a better time to see the newly constructed trail.
- f. MCOG Planning Staff. Deputy Planner Ellard reported on the following items.
- i. *Work Element 5 – Mendocino County Sea Level Rise Roadway Impact Study*. The OWP amendment on today's Consent calendar added this grant award, as also noted by Director Ahlstrand. The \$400,000 budget allots \$385,000 for a consultant and \$15,000 for staff time. MCOG staff worked closely with Mendocino County Department of Transportation on the grant proposal, who will be a key partner. Only half of grant proposals in the district were awarded funds. Notice to proceed is anticipated in November starting with procurement of a consultant, and the project will go for about a year and a half.
 - ii. *Work Element 9 - Noyo Harbor Multimodal Circulation Plan*. Consultant selection was completed, with a contract awarded to Fehr & Peers. A kickoff meeting is planned, and public outreach will be a key component, beginning with an in-person meeting in October and likely a two-day planning charrette in April, as well as online options. The project team will be coordinating with Noyo Harbor's Blue Economy project and numerous other stakeholders. Feasibility study will include various circulation improvements and a secondary emergency evacuation route. Completion is due December 2025.
 - iii. *Work Element 10 - Update/Expand Local Road Safety/Action Plans*. This project was nearly complete. With the resulting action plans, MCOG member local agencies will be eligible for federal grants such as Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). Public workshops were lightly attended; staff appreciated the board members who did attend. The consultant contract ends August 31. Plans will be posted on MCOG's website.
In discussion, Director Haschak asked about recommendations in the plans. Staff confirmed certain projects listed and noted a requirement for ongoing review of safety issues and assessments of effectiveness, and suggested the Technical Advisory Committee conduct the reviews.
 - iv. *Miscellaneous*. None.

- g. MCOG Directors. Director Haschak reported trips to Covelo the prior week, noting work being completed on SR-162 much appreciated by locals, though causing travel delays. The County received notice of a FEMA community grant award for infrastructure resiliency. Phase I provides about \$3.5 million for Sherwood Road/Brooktrails area, and potentially another \$46.5 million for a second phase. Funds will provide home hardening, defensible space, vegetation abatement, fuel reduction. Also Sherwood Road corridor property owners overwhelmingly approved a 20-year special assessment to maintain two emergency access routes. Over five years of effort have paid off for the community.

Director Gjerde asked about status of a County sales tax for the unincorporated area in MCOG's planning program. Staff indicated it is not in the current fiscal year, while waiting for results of grant applications, though could be amended in. Discussions are underway.

Director Kanne reported a new Starbucks will open in Willits at SR-20 and Main Street; there are concerns about increasing traffic at that intersection. Also she attended one of MCOG's Local Road Safety workshops, noting Sherwood Road corridor ranks as one of the most dangerous, high-collision roads on the system. Director Haschak has spoken with the CHP commander about traffic calming measures such as rumble strips and/or radar trailer. Discussion followed on various options available, enforcement, and communications with the County Department of Transportation director. In public comment, "Gizmo" Henderson reported similar issues discussed by Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council and suggestions for potential measures.

Director Duenas commented on how the public might slow down and enjoy using the roads as a result of all the recent improvements, despite inconvenience during this work. Also she reported widespread attendance at City of Ukiah's Sundays in the Park concert series ending in August, where many successful bands have played; let them know of any other kinds of music to include. She invited all to come see the public spaces the City is working on and events such as First Friday Art Walk, to get to know one another better.

- h. California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) Delegates. Director Haschak and staff reported upcoming meetings: September 30, in person October 28-29 in Sacramento, and the annual Regional Leadership Forum March 5-7, also in Sacramento.

18. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

Submitted: NEPHELE BARRETT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Director & CFO