

Mono County Local Transportation Commission

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February 10, 2025

TO: Mono County Local Transportation Commission

FROM: Aaron M. Washco, Planning Analyst

SUBJECT: Unmet Transit Needs Outreach Process

RECOMMENDATIONS

Receive staff report and provide any desired direction to staff.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Unmet Transit Needs outreach and adoption are required annually by the state and budgeted by the LTC.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

N/A

POLICY CONSISTENCY: Consistent with State law requirements for the unmet transit needs process and the annual public hearing for citizen participation.

BACKGROUND

State law provides for a Citizen Participation Process that requires the Mono County Local Transportation Commission (LTC) to hold at least one public hearing to ensure broad community participation and solicit the input of transit-dependent and transit-disadvantaged persons, including the elderly, handicapped, and persons of limited means. A public hearing on unmet transit needs is also required prior to the LTC allocating any funds not directly related to public transportation services, specialized transportation services, facilities provided for the exclusive use of pedestrians and bicycles, or any allocation for purposes subject to subdivision (f) of Public Utility Code (PUC) § 99400. The purpose of the unmet needs hearing is to solicit comments on unmet transit needs that may exist within Mono County and that might be reasonable to meet by establishing or contracting for new public transportation or specialized transportation services or by expanding existing services.

LTC Resolution 98-01 (Attachment A) defines "unmet transit needs" and "reasonable to meet" transit needs as follows:

- **Unmet Transit Needs:** A need of the Mono County elderly, disabled, low income, youth, and other transit-dependent groups for transit service that is currently not available and, if provided for, would enable the transit-dependent person to obtain the basic necessities of life primarily within Mono County. "Necessities of life" are defined as trips necessary for medical and dental services, essential personal business, employment, social service appointment, shopping for food or clothing, and social and recreational purposes.
- **Reasonable to Meet:** Transit needs for the necessities of life which pertain to all public and/or specialized transportation services that:
 - a. Can be proven operationally feasible;

- b. Can demonstrate community acceptance;
- c. Would be available to the general public;
- d. Can be proven to be economical; and
- e. Can demonstrate cost effectiveness by meeting current fare box revenue requirements of the Mono County LTC within two years.

DISCUSSION

The LTC’s Unmet Transit Needs process begins with hearings conducted in the spring so that a determination may be made prior to the reporting deadline of August 15 of the fiscal year of the allocation. Working within their role as the Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA), Eastern Sierra Transportation Authority (ESTA) staff and LTC staff create a schedule with adoption occurring in May or June because State Transit Assistance (STA) and Local Transportation Funds (LTF) allocations occur in June.

An additional requirement of the Citizen Participation Process and unmet transit needs process is the LTC must consult with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) on transit needs in Mono County. SSTAC members are appointed by the LTC to ensure a broad representation of social service and transit providers representing the elderly, the handicapped, and persons of limited means (see Attachment B).

To begin the unmet needs process, SSTAC reappointments will be scheduled for the February or March LTC meeting. In March, staff will convene the SSTAC to discuss unmet transit needs identified by their agencies and constituents. In addition, throughout the months of February and March, the combined CTSA and LTC staff will conduct public outreach by attending each of the County’s Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) and June Lake Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings. ESTA will also attend public workshops with the Town of Mammoth Lakes’ Planning and Economic Development Commission to receive input. Finally, to meet the public hearing requirement for both the Citizen Participation Process and unmet transit needs, and facilitate public input on transit and transportation needs, the LTC and SSTAC will hold a joint public hearing on April 14, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in Mammoth Lakes with videoconferencing in Bridgeport. Public notices of these hearings will be published in accordance with state law in local newspapers, and flyers printed in both Spanish and English will be posted in County offices. Tribes will also be invited to participate.

Based on input from the April public hearing, the unmet transit needs analysis will be revised and responses will be provided to other transportation issues raised. Before June 30, 2025, the LTC must adopt, by resolution, a finding that (a) there are no unmet needs, (b) there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet, or (c) there are unmet transit needs, including needs that are reasonable to meet. If the LTC finds that there are unmet transit needs, including needs that are reasonable to meet, then the unmet needs shall be funded before any LTF allocation is made for streets and roads. It should be noted that the law specifically prohibits comparing unmet transit needs with the need for streets and roads. It should also be noted that the LTC has not allocated any funds to streets and roads for at least several years.

Transit needs expressed by the public in the previous year are retained for consideration in future RTP updates. See Attachment C.

The schedule below identifies the public outreach meetings LTC staff will attend to solicit input, in addition to the LTC public meetings. The schedule is adjusted each year.

<u>Date, Time</u>	<u>Task</u>
February 10 @ 9 am	LTC meeting. SSTAC reappointments (or March 10). Present “Unmet Needs Process.”

TBD	SSTAC meeting
February 5, 6:00 pm	June Lake Citizens Advisory Committee
March 6, 6:30 pm	Antelope Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC)
March 12, 9:00 am	Town of Mammoth Lakes unmet transit needs meeting
March 12, 6:30 pm	Mono Basin RPAC
March 13, 5:00 pm	Bridgeport RPAC
March 20, 6:30 pm	Long Valley RPAC
April 14 @ 9:00 am	Joint LTC/SSTAC public hearing on Unmet Needs
April 24, 9:00 am	Collaborative Planning Team meeting
May 12 @ 9:00 am	LTC meeting: Unmet Needs Resolution adoption or defer to June
June 9 @ 9:00 am	LTC meeting: backup adoption date
June 30	File Unmet Needs documentation with state

This staff report has been reviewed by the LTC Co-Executive Director.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. LTC Resolution 98-01 defining “unmet transit needs” and “reasonable to meet.”
- B. Public Utilities Code §99238.
- C. Summary and analysis of public transit requests for fiscal year 2024-25.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC TRANSIT REQUESTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-25

	RPAC	Request/Comment	Unmet Need	Reasonable to Meet/Explanation	Costs/Actions/Solutions
Unmet Transit Needs That Are Not, or May Not Be, Reasonable To Meet					
1.	Mono County Board of Supervisors (countywide)	Free fares for Mono County residents on YARTS 395/120 route into Yosemite.	Yes. There are numerous transit-dependent groups in Mono County, including the elderly, low income, and disabled, and recreation is considered to be a necessity of life.	No. Because fares are free, fare box revenue requirements would not be met. All other "reasonable to meet" criteria are satisfied.	Subsidized tickets for Mono County residents are to be funded with \$3,300 in LTF funds. County will cover remainder if \$3,300 is exceeded in 2024. For background, in 2022, Mono County residents made 46 reservations for a total cost of \$967. In 2023, reservations were booked for 38 Mono County residents at a total cost of \$638. The \$3,300 budgeted will cover 200% of 2022 reservations, plus all 2023 reservations.
2.	Mono Basin	Bus stop in front of Chevron station in Lee Vining (people run across the street from the bus stop on the east side of US 395 when the bus comes).	Yes, the creation of a new transit stop is a new transit service. This stop could serve the unmet needs population by providing transit for necessities of life.	No, the service itself does not generate revenue. No fee is collected at bus stops and therefore the fare box revenue would not be met.	Caltrans to integrate the new stop into the Lee Vining Rehabilitation project.
3.	Town of Mammoth Lakes	Evening service to grocery stores, etc., in the Town of Mammoth Lakes.	Yes. There are numerous transit-dependent groups in the Town of Mammoth Lakes, including the elderly, low income, and disabled, and shopping for food and clothing is considered to be a necessity of life.	No, because this service is already provided by the Mammoth Lakes night trolley, and additional service is unlikely to meet farebox requirements since the night trolley is free.	ESTA operates the night trolley which has stops along both Main Street and Meridian Street, as well as a stop at Von's.

4.	Mono Basin	Additional transit service to Mono City and Lee Vining.	Yes. There are numerous transit-dependent groups in the Mono Basin, including the elderly, low income, and disabled, and recreation is considered to be a necessity of life.	No; this service is currently being expanded - ESTA has recently added a Saturday 395 North route and is looking to add additional weekend service, including a 395 South route. Additional service is economically infeasible given these service expansions at this time.	Mono City and Lee Vining are both included in ESTA's Walker to Mammoth route on Tuesdays.
5.	Public Hearing / Town of Mammoth Lakes	Additional weekend services are requested.	Yes. There are numerous transit-dependent groups in Mono County, including the elderly, low income, and disabled, and essential personal business is considered to be a necessity of life.	Undetermined if additional service will meet farebox requirements	ESTA has recently added a Saturday 395 North route and is looking to add additional weekend service, including a 395 South route on Sunday.
Not Unmet Transit Needs					
1.	Antelope Valley	Transit requested to transport senior citizens for recreational "field trips."	No. This is a charter request rather than a request for additional service that would be available to the general public.	N/A.	ESTA plans to coordinate with the Antelope Valley Senior Center to resolve this transportation request.
2.	Bridgeport/Long Valley	Bike paths on or paralleling the US 395 corridor. Increase bicyclist safety.	No, not transit related. This is a general transportation request.	No, not an unmet need.	This policy is currently in the RTP, and bike paths are constructed when feasible and appropriate with Caltrans projects. Outside the Caltrans right-of-way is under the control of the property owners, usually either federal or private.

3.	Antelope Valley/ Tri-Valley	Dial-a-ride service requested to transport senior citizens to doctor's appointments when Antelope Valley Senior Center is unable to provide transportation. Antelope Valley residents are often looking to get to appointments with specialists in Carson City, Gardnerville and South Lake Tahoe. Seniors in the Tri-Valley require similar services. In general, seniors in the Tri-Valley require transportation to Bishop and Lancaster for appointments with specialists.	No. This is a charter request rather than a request for additional service.	No, not an unmet need.	Presently, residents of the Antelope Valley area can use ESTA to get into Carson on Wednesdays and Mammoth on Tuesdays. Residents in the Tri-Valley can use ESTA to get to Bishop on Tuesdays and Fridays.
4.	Mono Basin	Enhanced YARTS signage: bus stop infrastructure or enhanced signage in far parking lot at Mono Basin Visitor Center (people often wait at the Visitor Center itself), bus stop infrastructure or enhanced signage at Tioga Inn on SR 120.	No, not a new transit service.	No, not an unmet need.	LTC staff will discuss improved signage with YARTS.
5.	Mono Basin	Increased advertising of transit options. Suggestions include County social media blasts, mailers, QR codes.	No, not a new transit service.	No, not an unmet need.	ESTA will review and implement expanded outreach programs.
6.	Mono Basin	Bike path connecting Mono City and Lee Vining.	No, not transit related. This is a general transportation request.	No, not an unmet need.	The project can be added to the Regional Transportation Plan and further discussions about alignment will inform feasibility and cost.
7.	Mono Basin	Avalanche bypass route (Mattly Avenue continuing north along lake – i.e., the old 395 alignment).	No, not a request for additional transit service.	No, not an unmet need.	This project is included in the County's appropriation request. It is also being considered for CalOES funding and can be added to the Hazard Mitigation Plan update.

8.	Mono Basin	Town-to-Trails alignment for non-motorized connectivity.	No, not transit related. This is a general transportation request.	No, not an unmet need.	The Mono County LTC currently tracks the Town-to-Trails project.
9.	Mono Basin	Multi-modal connectivity from Mono City to County park and/or Conway Ranch.	No, not transit related. This is a general transportation request.	No, not an unmet need.	The project can be added to the Regional Transportation Plan and further discussions about alignment will inform feasibility and cost.
10.	Mono Basin	Multi-modal usage at Conway Ranch (e.g., a public use area/park facility).	No, not transit related. This is a general transportation request.	No, not an unmet need.	The project can be added to the Regional Transportation Plan and further discussions will inform feasibility and cost.
11.	Bridgeport	Bike path to Twin Lakes.	No, not transit related. This is a general transportation request.	No, not an unmet need.	This project was previously scoped and wetland issues were prohibitive.
12.	Public Hearing / Countywide	To make public transit more family-friendly, buses should accommodate car seats and the program should be marketed so families in the area can easily figure out how what is expected of them to ensure a family-friendly ride.	No, not a new service.	No, not an unmet need.	ESTA will review and implement a car seat policy, which will then be distributed/marketed to interested parties. At present, while ESTA buses accommodate car seats, they do not stock car seats, nor do drivers install car seats. Parents are required to bring and install their own car seats (bus drivers do not install seats due to the drivers not knowing how to install every model of car seat, the potential delays caused, and the potential liabilities).