

# Mono County Local Transportation Commission

PO Box 347  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546  
760.924.1800 phone, 924.1801 fax  
[commdev@mono.ca.gov](mailto:commdev@mono.ca.gov)

PO Box 8  
Bridgeport, CA 93517  
760.932.5420 phone, 932.5431 fax  
[www.monocounty.ca.gov](http://www.monocounty.ca.gov)

## MINUTES

January 13, 2014  
(Adopted February 10, 2014)

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**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:** Tim Fesko, Larry Johnston, Fred Stump  
**TOWN COMMISSIONERS:** Jo Bacon, Sandy Hogan, Matthew Lehman  
**COUNTY STAFF:** Scott Burns, Gerry Le Francois, Jim Leddy & Jeff Walters (videoconference), Garrett Higerd, Megan Mahaffey, C.D. Ritter  
**TOWN STAFF:** Peter Bernasconi, Jamie Robertson  
**CALTRANS:** Forest Becket  
**ESTA:** Jill Batchelder  
**PUBLIC:** Kelly Garcia, John Armstrong, Dan McConnell

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1. **CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Larry Johnston called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., and attendees recited the pledge of allegiance.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

3. **MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Approve minutes of December 9, 2013, as amended: Item 12, ~~fire captain~~ **Division Chief** Billy Anderson. (*Bacon/Lehman. Ayes: 6-0.*)

4. **COMMISSIONER REPORTS:** Johnston: Governor's budget decreased highway user tax rate 2014-15, so less money. Some money goes to counties/cities despite debt reductions. Cap & trade funding to high-speed rail. Handout on wildlife fencing. Hogan: Authority Advisory Committee met, reviewed upcoming YARTS agenda items. NPS nominee who attended driving a Tesla suggested YARTS install plug-in stations. In survey of Madera regarding Fresno joining over 60% wanted bus to stop in Oakhurst. Fesko: Thanked Caltrans for opening SR 158 and Bodie Road (nice it's open, sad there's no snow). On road heavily used by cyclists at coast, cyclists rode single file right at white line on 4' shoulder, impeding vehicular passing. Some work needs to be done. (Forest Becket noted 3' law takes effect in September.) Lehman: Spoke with Supervisor Hunt on reopening Tioga. (Hogan added that Yosemite found sheet of ice beneath foot of snow, so unlikely). Supervisor Alpers is working on it too. Stump: Bike Lower Rock Creek road, clear of gravel and debris. Manual sweeping if necessary.

5. **ACTION ITEMS**

A. **Transportation Planning Grant:** Jill Batchelder described grant application for short-range transit plan, a required element for federal grants. Requires match. Deliverables? Short-range plan itself and other federal grant opportunities. Is Mono staff portion doable? Scott Burns noted update of Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is good base document that lets ESTA do most of work, extract into RTP policy. Batchelder noted ESTA works with Inyo and Mono LTCs; Inyo took lead on triennial audit, asked Mono to take lead on this. Burns indicated triennial audit was run by Inyo, will report how short-range plan is working.

**MOTION:** Approve Resolution R14-01 authorizing submittal of a FY 2014-15 FTA Section 5304 Transportation Planning Grant in the amount of \$100,000 to fund Eastern Sierra Transit Authority's (ESTA) Short-Range Transit Plan and authorize the LTC and ESTA's executive directors to sign the application and, if awarded, agreements and amendments. (*Stump/Hogan. Ayes: 6-0.*)

**B. Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP):** Gerry Le Francois spoke with California Transportation Commission (CTC) staff after submitting RTIP. Changes are highlighted. The Olancho-Cartago project increased by \$500,000 for preconstruction archaeological component. West Minaret Road funding didn't change; actually was \$775,000. Convict Road moved \$69,000 to planning approval/environmental and increased by \$10,000 for staff time. Staff will attend CTC meeting next month, but need political appointee as well. Mono never used to go, but that could be construed as not caring. Commissioner Johnston emphasized MOUs when he attended. Commissioner Bacon is not available, but Commissioner Lehman may be.

**MOTION:** Adopt Minute Order M14-01 approving technical corrections to 2014 RTIP. (*Fesko/Hogan.*  
*Ayes: 6-0.*)

## 6. ADMINISTRATION

**A. 2014-15 Overall Work Program (OWP):** Scott Burns introduced Megan Mahaffey, financial analyst. Draft OWP is due to Caltrans by end of February, so bring to next LTC meeting. Commissioner Bacon wanted to call out SR 120 separately so as not to lose it again. Commissioner Johnston recalled LTC effort into planning process, with 50 ideas or more. *LTC ideas based on commission ranking were integrated into RTP. Maybe pull some out in OWP.* Scott Burns expected draft RTP by end of month. Yosemite policy in RTP is open early/close late, not intermittent like now; define policy.

**B. Active Transportation Program (ATP):** Gerry Le Francois showed goals such as biking/walking, non-motorized, public health, etc., with 25% to disadvantaged communities (metric on how to define). Projects are due May 21. MAP-21's two-year program is set to expire. CTC will award projects to competitive rural entities (\$24 million for rurals, with required match around 12%, minimum \$30,000). School districts can apply, but have no way to match. Collaboration on eligibility is possible. Minimum is \$250,000 on infrastructure side, no minimum on other projects. Many entities are involved in guidelines; show outreach.

Applicant performance is considered, how funds are used. CTC discourages project extensions. First-come, first-served. Follow-up report due to CTC year after project is operational. Caltrans will issue call for projects March 21, recommend to CTC for programming. CTC adopts Aug. 20, 2014. Town projects are eligible. Many rurals don't have much in their general fund.

Does LTC approve submission of applications? RTIP projects selected could fit into ATP. Le Francois noted disadvantaged community problem: Mono has some, but hard to come up with; Town doesn't have any. Show interrelationships on regional basis.

## 7. TRANSIT

**A. Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA):** Jill Batchelder noted ESTA conducted a Chalfant transit survey, released in September, with noticing by media, email, paper, and phone. Twenty-five surveys were completed. Most drove private vehicles to Bishop daily, so focus was on 12 likely to use public transit mostly for shopping. Price aware on fare (\$4.50 now, most said \$3-\$4, maybe family fare). Commissioner Hogan asked if a mobility manager figured out ways of getting people to use public transit. *No, but ideally a good position.* Hogan wondered whether it included cost of driving private car. Commissioner Stump requested a one-page synopsis to forward on to constituents. *ESTA will forward to Scott Burns.*

**B. Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS):** Scott Burns announced meeting today.

## 8. CALTRANS

**A. Winter closure of dry local highways:** Requested by Chris Lizza, backed by Mono Basin RPAC resolution.

Resident John Armstrong urged reopening Tioga Road. Cannot make it snow, but can open highway to generate business. Two of four ski areas on west side are closed, and China Peak has only 8" snow. Major cities with 2.5 million people have no access to best skiing in the state. Tuolumne Meadows temp remains in mid-50s, and conditions promote access to east side. Find room in \$12.8 million Caltrans budget to reopen.

Commissioner Lehman stated challenging winter affects many in Eastern Sierra. Sand icy areas, do all can for economic and recreational benefit. Commissioner Fesko saw snow crews trimming roadsides when there was no snow to plow.

Resident Dan McConnell saw a good opportunity to update criteria in general, not only this season, but an overall plan to decide last minute to reopen.

Could Mono, Town, and Mountain cooperate? Stretches are not that long. Need long-term, ongoing policy to reopen when no snow exists.

Forest Becket saw reopening Tioga or up to boundary as a big effort by multiple agencies, recreational management, etc. Caltrans has no hard policy on when roads close. Authority is delegated to maintenance area supervisors to make field calls on conditions and roadway safety, which can be reevaluated, like recent reopening SR 158 and Bodie. SR 120E and Monitor Pass might also reopen. Tioga has topographical challenges and ongoing rockfall, especially unsafe rockfall on Blue Slide. At this point, Tioga remains closed.

Commissioner Bacon noted Caltrans website defers to NPS. Is NPS in charge? Yes. Bacon suggested a conference call with NPS to work on plan of action. LTC keeps talking about it, but nothing happens.

Becket noted recreation access could create other issues if road closed when people were back there.

Commissioner Johnston suggested staff write a letter about managing Tioga by weather conditions instead of calendar dates. Why close road at lowest point? Rockfall could be mitigated. Open road to Ellery Lake or boundary. Commissioner Bacon saw it also as a park issue because people would cross boundary.

Becket stated Caltrans evaluates safety regardless of local pressure, and he perceived a self-serving aspect. Fesko disagreed, saying people are willing to come long way around to get there. Everything is political, so get our "political" to push Caltrans' "political."

Commissioner Stump recalled lower gate being open many dry years. What changed over time? People hurt? Equipment damaged? ~~Empowered people have right to make decisions.~~ **Caltrans employees are empowered to make decisions.**

Jeff Walters described issues as rockfall and shaded roadway beyond Olmsted Point. He offered to contact Lew Summerfield at NPS, but indicated it's a big task to open and manage the road.

Commissioner Hogan saw no hard criteria by NPS or Caltrans. Lehman thought other entities could help. Johnston requested that staff write a letter to Caltrans and NPS.

**B. Bridgeport passing lanes:** Forest Becket saw the following projects as potential candidates for Interregional Improvement Program funds: 1) North Conway passing lanes; 2) Conway Ranch passing lanes; and 3) Bridgeport ~~passing~~ **passing** lanes (PSR 2009). Caltrans has Project Study Report from 1990s on Conway Ranch passing lanes and one on shoulder widening for North Conway. Corridor development had four lanes to Lee Vining, as far as intended. Beyond Lee Vining, Becket identified operational improvements such as shoulder widening, curve corrections, and passing opportunities. From Conway to Devil's Gate no designated passing opportunities exist for an 18-mile stretch. Wetlands are found north of Bridgeport, near sheep ranch area. Could have three lanes, with northbound passing on south end, and vice versa. Cost = \$10 million plus. Environmental mitigation = \$1.2 million. Short dual passing exists south of changeable message sign. Where to go from here? One of several potential projects that could compete for interregional pot of funds.

Commissioner Johnston recalled that LTC listed North Conway as highest priority. Scott Burns suggested revisiting potential projects. Commissioner Fesko cited no real good passing on 18-mile stretch north of Bridgeport. Commissioners Fesko and Hogan favored this over Conway. Commissioner Stump reminded that Bridgeport itself had passing lanes, but no longer does, so consider replacement north of town. Johnston still thought Conway was more important. Fesko wanted to consider cost difference. Caltrans has not really looked at gap closure, according to Becket. Hogan saw potential MOU projects, so figure out which projects. Becket suggested updated feasibility studies may be required to get a better idea of costs for comparison between projects. Passing-lane-type project could be funded elsewhere if significant safety issues were involved.

**C. Activities in Mono County & pertinent statewide information:** Ryan Dermody is Caltrans' new deputy director for planning and local assistance.

## 9. INFORMATIONAL

A. **Chalfant Transportation Survey:** See 7A.

B. **Bicycle Passing/AB 1371**

10. **UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS:** 1) election of officers; 2) road closure policies; 3) letter; 4) draft OWP; 5) report on CTC meeting; 6) budget adjust to current OWP.

11. **ADJOURN** at 11:11 a.m. to February 10, 2014.

*Prepared by CD Ritter, LTC secretary*