

Mono County Local Transportation Commission

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MINUTES

May 11, 2015
(Adopted June 8, 2015)

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Larry Johnston, Fred Stump, Tim Fesko (videoconference)

TOWN COMMISSIONERS: Jo Bacon, Sandy Hogan, Shields Richardson

COUNTY STAFF: Scott Burns, Garrett Higerd, Gerry Le Francois, Wendy Sugimura, Megan Mahaffey, Stacey Simon, C.D. Ritter

TOWN STAFF: Haislip Hayes

CALTRANS: Ryan Dermody, Brent Green

ESTA: John Helm

GUESTS: Brooke Bien, MUSD; Charles Broten, Head Start; Dick Whittington, YARTS

1. **CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Fred Stump called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. at the Town/County Conference Room, Minaret Village Mall, Mammoth Lakes, and attendees recited the pledge of allegiance.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

3. MINUTES

MOTION: Approve minutes of April 13, 2015, as amended when Commissioner Hogan arrived: 1) Item 7B, 2nd graph: **Clarify that response is from Batchelder**; and 2) Item 7B, third graph: **Can use reserves to buy buses.** (Johnston/Richardson. Ayes: 6-0.)

4. ACTION ITEMS

A. **Protocol for approval of minutes:** Stacey Simon introduced herself as assistant county counsel. Best practice is for voter to have been present at meeting. Accuracy is of high importance, as minutes are official documents, admissible in court as accurate and true. Recommendation is to have been present or familiarized with content by video streaming or some other way.

MOTION: Approve suggested amendment to handbook (Johnston/Fesko. Ayes: 6-0.)

B. **Unmet Transit Needs:** Wendy Sugimura cited evaluation of input. Typically don't allocate to streets. Bacon: Select all 10? Sugimura: Choose from ballpark estimates.

Johnston: On #7, commuter route from Crowley/Mammoth to Bishop for 8-5 workday in Bishop. Explanation is vanpool possibility. Surveys? Helm: One comment. New service hopefully next month. Johnston: Two largest urban areas in Mono and Inyo counties should have a two-way connection to get to work. See if demand exists. Stump: Might be build-it, they-will-come scenario. Johnston: Demand in Swall or Paradise? Stump: Yes. Helm: Surveys in past. Hogan: Surveys made vanpool available.

Green: Constraint to backing up time? Helm: Timing very early morning from Lone Pine.

MOTION: Adopt Resolution R15-03 on Unmet Transit Needs. (Bacon/Johnston. Ayes: 6-0.)

C. **Transit Security Grant Program project:** Wendy Sugimura noted safety grant proposes installing solar bus-stop lighting. Transit fencing took three years. Install before expiration next March. Depends on bond sale, when get money. Richardson: Life of Prop 1B? Sugimura: Don't actually know. Green: 2016.

Helm: Start phasing incrementally as funds become available. Richardson: Cost of each bus stop? Helm: \$1,500. Stump: Light inside or general area? Helm: Wired lighting in shelters. Four stops on Chateau are dark, difficult to see passengers. Existing poles not stout enough, so added more poles. Bacon: Remove to avoid proliferation of poles.

MOTION: Adopt Resolution R15-04 approving FY 2014-15 Cal-OES Transit Security Grant Program project. (Bacon/Richardson. Ayes: 6.)

D. **Overall Work Program (OWP) budget:** Megan Mahaffey presented midyear budget adjustment. Data come in month after quarter ends. RPA = Rural Planning Assistance funding. PPM = Planning Programming & Monitoring part of STIP cycle. Hogan: Include NPS/Yosemite? Burns: Not just seasonal, but new normal of open/close.

MOTION: Approve Minute Order M15-01 adjusting 2014-15 Overall Work Program (OWP) budget (Johnston/Hogan. Ayes: 6-0.)

E. **2015-16 OWP:** Megan Mahaffey included OWP with comments from Town, Mono, and Caltrans. Hogan: Appreciated summaries. Ongoing projects have starts/stops, staff changes, adjustments. May take a while, but don't get dropped; stay on lists.

MOTION: Approve Minute Order 15-02 adopting 2015-16 OWP (Fesko/Hogan. Ayes: 6-0.)

5. ADMINISTRATION

A. **2015 Active Transportation Program (ATP):** Garrett Higerd noted new requirements. Call for projects occurred. Last time, safe routes-to-school project was on cusp, ended up bumped off bottom. Reviewed project, repackaged to be competitive in new grant cycle, a completely competitive grant process. Mono's projects are not ranking according to its rules. Agreed not to submit project this cycle. In order to fund in future, look at new rules for ATP grants, consider other funding sources. Data not competing very well. In statewide competition, difficult for Mono to compete. Deadline June 1, so wanted LTC updated prior.

Green: Sec. Brian Kelly took program under his wing. In our area, not as good as before. Asked to explain why less competitive, he said it was not his intent. Provide specific examples.

Johnston: Partly rural nature, no staff to collect data. Need is there, but hard to justify. Higerd: Also smaller population. Even with data, fewer people. Transportation Enhancement (TE) guaranteed something like Lake Mary bike path; School Street Plaza. After reconfiguration, find a way to compete. Johnston: Some way for smaller districts to have a chance? Under TE grants Mono got lots of money. Green: Numerous hearings prior to finalization. Made commitment to get back to Kelly.

Hogan: Mini MOU with Inyo, or alternating years? Le Francois: Part of 26 Rural Counties Task Force (RCTF) comment letters. Theme was data would be piecemeal. Get copy of letter. Suburban rural counties in better position with more robust staff. Can't get hard data to compete.

Johnston: Maybe minimum allocation to each district so rurals get some money? Le Francois: Rurals felt slighted at small pot. Urbans have most people. Transportation Enhancement (TE) was through STIP, programming had LTC requesting allocation.

Higerd: Other issues arose. Match requirements changed, benefiting competitive projects. Johnston: Origin of match money? Higerd: Less match requirement works out to be population based. Richardson: Crosswalk costs same no matter how many users. Higerd: Benefit/cost ratio.

Sugimura: Population 5,000-200,000, so competing with Palmdale and Lancaster. Last application lost points on data showing increase in number of multi-modal pedestrian/bike; increased safety (just no accident data). Improving public health, participation, scored well but couldn't show change in accident rates. Addition of cost/benefit tool, match went to point system. Already on bubble. Substantial work to get over bubble.

Stump: No consideration for dealing with Highways 395 and 6. Sugimura: Not part of criteria.

Stump: Appreciated Green's raising question with director. Green: Commission-driven concept, but not with outcome.

Dermody: Need specifics in application to show why not meet criteria. Get information to Forest Becket.

B. **Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) federal exchange program:** *Continue to next meeting.*

6. **COMMISSIONER REPORTS:** **Fesko:** Hats off to Caltrans on West Walker River; shoulder work keeps traffic flowing. **Johnston:** Keep abreast of current legislation. State is trying to do something. (Green: Agency Secretary Brian Kelly indicated last decade saw most funding transportation ever received.) **Bacon:** Council approved funding for Red Line after ski area closes, trolley for Memorial weekend. **Hogan:** Attended Authority Advisory Committee for YARTS, but postponed. Traffic control by Mono Lake going well. ~~Special passes for officials?~~ **Richardson:** Electric charging stations have new unit in Mojave, well used, free by Tesla. **Stump:** Snow fell on pavement. (Green: Projects not well published, but director knew signalization installed same day. Doubled interchange.)

7. LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

A. **Head Start building relocation:** Brooke Bien, Mammoth Unified School District's business manager, gave a brief update. Haislip Hayes is project manager. On track for moving forward, working with Inyo-Mono Advocates for Community Action (IMACA) on May 22 relocation.

Charles Broten, IMACA, admitted personal responsibility for trying to do things on his own. Now school project starts, with issues still unresolved. Moving modular building – bids open today, start whenever contracts ready. MUSD wants space vacated by June 5. Found over \$200,000 from Head Start, but uncertainty exists. Behind four to six weeks, but will do best to complete project when school starts next year. Set up temporary classroom on elementary campus, closed a week to move kids out and remove playground equipment. Few days of demolition prior to moving building. Seeking possible temporary sites (college or High Country Lumber?).

Stump: How meet time frames dropping off kids at two locations? Broten: Staggered school start by 15 minutes. Only eight to nine parents involved. MUSD is giving up several parking spaces. Stump: Interfere with MHS? Bien: See how first year goes, possible adjustments midyear or next year. Maybe [start] child development classes for high school students.

Stump: Parent response? Broten: At first, didn't understand the move.

Johnston: Safety concern when starting construction during school year? Broten: Slight delay might avoid congestion. Johnston: School is out June 9, but Head Start building demolition starts with kids on site? Broten: Town will facilitate moving building at 1 a.m. Not onto highways. Johnston: Safety concerns? Bien: Working on timing of move, critical to move quickly on deadlines. Broten: OK if kids are few minutes late. Johnston: What if no grant? Broten: Would get needed money from somewhere. Money was authorized seven weeks ago, in an account. Things will move quickly for contractors. Regrets delay.

B. **Southern California Edison project status for Rock Creek Road** (*SCE presentation June 8*): Burns spoke with Deborah Hess, requested in writing, but she's in Mexico; committed to appear June 8.

8. TRANSIT

A. Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA)

1. **Audited financial statement:** John Helm noted best, non-modified report from auditor. Identified \$750,000 net increase. Formerly requested loans for working capital. Strong financial footing exists now even though revenues are down due to drought. Unbudgeted revenue last year: Bishop Paiutes received tribal project grant that helped fund existing service. Retirement among benefited staff, replace by less benefited. Cap replacement funding program in place now.

Hogan: How would Town replacement happen if it owns some of fleet? Helm: Setting aside money for Town fleet, developing grants (80 federal/state, 20% match). Town fortunate in 100% funding. Hogan: Town owned 10-12 buses and trolleys. ~~When USFS backed out, ceded ownership to ESTA.~~ Town will own part of fleet. What about new? Helm: Unknown.

Johnston: Excess ESTA funds in Inyo treasury. Consider Mono for .84% instead of .2%.

Hogan: Kids fare for Reds Meadow? Helm: Maybe need to factor in early start at Memorial Weekend, additional month of service/revenues.

Bacon: Free ticket with summer stewardship trails. Helm: NPS program where every fourth grader gets free admission to national parks. When program takes effect, ESTA will honor. Bacon: Starts 2016.

2. **ESTA activities:** Town Council approved funding for interim service through town. Nobody can remember Mountain closing prior to Memorial Day. Yesterday was final day of Red Line, so two-week period would elapse. Mountain runs connector route from village to slopes while ski area's open. Bus will run Memorial weekend.

CTC approved STIP funding for trolley for extra service during summer events. ESTA was pleased to receive recognition last month as 2015 outstanding rural transit agency.

Stump: How much money to keep Red Line open? Bacon: \$7,000. Helm: Summer trolley will start 7 a.m. instead of 9 a.m. for however long ski area's open.

Stump: ESTA in position to contribute itself, or old contractual agreement? Helm: Local Transportation Funds revenue coming in is allocated to Town and Mono.

B. Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS): Dick Whittington noted YARTS is 15 years old and his first time here in 10 years. YARTS will begin daily service from Fresno (when announced, hiker blogs lit up. Fly to Fresno, hike to Mammoth, ride bus back), but political realities in eastern Madera County precluded service there. Six runs/day, five round trips. Evening route from Oakhurst.

Stump: Oakhurst a stop despite opposition? Whittington: Working on it since 2009. Best Western manager didn't like project. Four months ago, new visitors bureau at Oakhurst didn't like it, but wanted to know about it. Manager said parking lot would make ideal stop. Stump: Why not like? Whittington: Back to 1989 general management plan that would exclude cars from park. Madera and Tuolumne backed out. Strong Tea Party contingent opposed all subsidies: high-speed rail, Amtrak. Reminded them Hwy 41 is subsidized by California taxpayers so residents don't have to pay for it. Good connectivity to Bass Lake.

Johnston: People flying to Fresno can also fly out of Mammoth. Whittington: Fly Alaska Air, ride YARTS! NPS offered gateway communities opportunity to increase service to reduce park congestion. All participated but Madera. **Whittington heard comment**, "Cars are private enterprise, bus is socialism."

In 2009, YARTS transitioned to its own buses; has 10, needs three more for peak season. Having its own buses saves 25% in operating costs. New buses need less maintenance. In today's market with snow chains, cameras cost is just under \$600,000 apiece. Match is a choker for small agencies. Working on five-year budget, try to plan ahead for expenses. Buses good 12 yr/500,000 miles. Racks less expensive than paint jobs, but last only five to seven years (\$4,300 apiece). YARTS board approved deficit budget, used money from restricted reserve (need to survive whatever happens). Going to partners Mono, Merced, and Mariposa for support. Roads were clean and dry today all way from Merced.

Stump: Coordinate with ESTA? Whittington: Yes, get to McDonald's 15 minutes prior. Hikers spread word, and agencies link to each other's websites.

9. CALTRANS

A. Caltrans Strategic Management Plan: Brent Green noted philosophical change: mobility = roads, capacity increase to multi-modal. Statewide basis not big boy on block anymore, LTCs say it's their money, telling what to do. Series of studies was based on President Obama's sustainability premise. Experts of transportation agencies recommended modernizing, bold reform. Fix-it first philosophy. Level of service/pavement distressed lane miles. Mono has <5%, lowest in state. Quality of pavement is even better in Mammoth. Level of service done well. Only Olancho-Cartago is lower. Preservation, sustainability, and safety are highlighted. Mix of projects ahead of times, Mono's matched up with new direction.

Johnston: Mono and Inyo have MOUs with other jurisdictions to create projects. Given most of Mono's money away, yet have best pavement. Green: Recognized by CTC. Johnston: Some of CTC are skiers, come up here a lot. Strategic Plan is really spot on, succinct. Congrats on success.

Burns: ATP performance measures to increase complete streets in communities. Maybe District 9 could take lead in future? Green: Philosophy behind ATP was hodgepodge of programs and different pots of money, so combine into single entity that includes complete streets and safe routes to school.

Dermody: Looking at N. Sierra Highway in Bishop for sidewalks. *Caltrans full maintenance?* Dermody: **Resounding no!** Install and monitor maintenance, **work in partnership.**

Hogan: ATP regional approach should include tourism, need to get around, connectivity. Green: 60% recreation traffic. Hogan: Factor into guidelines. Summer tourism larger than winter skiing. Tourism is massive, not just small population.

B. Draft 2015 California Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan: Ryan Dermody noted transportation projects are prioritized across state. Government code requires plan. Flow chart identifies 40% MOU funding. 395/14 part of high-emphasis focus routes. Maybe lose status? Draft so far says top tier, critical, important. Up north, 395 was dropped as well as other routes. Stump: Why was Hwy 6 not identified? Dermody: High-emphasis, but not focus route. Happy have 395/14. Now it's corridors not routes; no longer highway-centric. Rails pop up in system, high-speed rail, bikes. Money into corridor since 1998, San Bernardino down by I-15. What's next? May 2015 draft to be published, submitted to CTC June 26 for adoption. Would be great if LTC wrote letter on behalf of draft.

NOTE: Chair Stump introduced "Motion to add 'urgent' agenda item":

MOTION: "I move that the LTC determine there is a need to take immediate action on letter of support for Interregional Strategic Plan, need for action came to the LTC's attention subsequently, so add to June agenda." (*Stump/Hogan. Ayes: 5. Abstain due to lack of information: Fesko.*) Support for designating 395. Work with Dermody.

MOTION: Direct staff to respond to plan supporting 395/14 corridor and mention Reno-Tahoe Industrial Park. (*Bacon/Richardson. Ayes: 5. Abstain: Fesko.*)

C. Activities in Mono County & pertinent statewide information: Ryan Dermody noted passes closed last week, but are now open. Storms lined up for next week, subject to storm closure. Still pursuing truck restriction on SR 108, in hands of BOS, draft ordinance (Terry Erlwein happy, years in the making).

10. INFORMATIONAL

A. **Sage grouse no-listing announcement:** Burns noted huge win for LTC, would have delayed road projects. Hard work ahead, based on commitment to mitigate impact. Commended Wendy for leading effort. BOS will recognize effort tomorrow. AGENDA: Senate Bill 16 to counter.

B. **ESTA earns Cal-ACT award**

C. **Gas tax hike:** Le Francois noted gas tax doesn't pay for transportation.

D. **California road charge**

11. **UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS:** 1) LTF allocation; 2) RSTP item; 3) Edison; 4) Interregional plan letter; 5) SB 16; and 6) Head Start follow-up.
12. **ADJOURN** at 11:35 a.m. to June 8, 2015.

Prepared by C.D. Ritter, LTC secretary