

Transit Paratransit Coordinating Committee

MEETING AGENDA

January 19, 2010, 2:00-3:30 PM

Sonoma County Transportation Authority
SCTA Large Conference Room
490 Mendocino Avenue, Suite 206
Santa Rosa, California 95401

ITEM

1. Introductions
2. Public Comments on Items not on the Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes, November 17, 2009 ---DISCUSSION/ACTION*
4. Approval of the Agenda --- DISCUSSION/ACTION
5. January Election of TPCC Officers*
6. Reports
 - 6.1. Transit Agencies
 - 6.2. Other Agencies
 - 6.3. SCTA
 - 6.3.1. News Links of Possible Interest*
 - 6.3.2. Status of Community Based Transportation Plans*
 - 6.3.3. Status of Funding Programs
 - 6.3.4. TPCC Meeting Dates for 2010*
7. Other Business / Comments / Announcements
8. Adjourn ---ACTION

*Materials attached.

The next **SCTA** meeting will be held **February 8, 2010**
The next **TPCC** meeting will be held **March 16, 2010**

Copies of the full Agenda Packet are available at www.sctainfo.org

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**TRANSIT PARATRANSIT COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING
 MINUTES
 November 17, 2009**

ATTENDEES

Battenberg, Dennis	TPCC Chair
Brown, Beryl	Earle Baum Center of the Blind
Brown, Robert	Becoming Independent
Burge, Gail	Petaluma People Services
Cuneo, Bob	Senior Representative to TPCC
Gaffney, Jon	Whistlestop Wheels
Henzerling, Larry	TPCC Vice Chair & Disability Services & Legal Center
Ivory, Michael	Santa Rosa CityBus
Linn, Alice	Citizen
Morrison, Mardell	City of Santa Rosa
Rye, Joe	City of Petaluma
Saip, Rabon	Area Agency on Aging

SCTA staff present: Lynne March, Nina Donofrio.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dennis Battenberg at 2:03 p.m.

ITEM

1. Introductions
 Round table introductions were made.
2. Public Comments on Items not on the Agenda
 There was no public comment.
3. Approval of Minutes, Sept 15, 2009/DISCUSSION/ACTION*
 The minutes of September 15, 2009 were approved as submitted.
4. Approval of the Agenda --- DISCUSSION/ACTION
 The agenda was approved as submitted.
5. January Election of TPCC Officers*
 Ms. March reminded the Committee that this will be coming up at the next meeting and invited nominees.
6. Reports
 - 6.1. Transit Agencies

Sonoma County Transit:

Jim Wagner of Sonoma County Transit reported that a 15% reduction in services was implemented June 28. He noted that ridership year-to-date is down 12.26% for paratransit service and is down 15.65% for fixed route service. He observed that, given the reduction in service, these figures are actually not as high as would be expected. For September, paratransit ridership decreased by

11.34% and fixed route service was lower by 13.62%. In October, paratransit service was down by 16.27% and fixed route service was down by 17.04%.

Significant changes include eliminating bus service on the seven major holidays. Other holidays will have limited service (Saturday schedule). The day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve bus service will be on a limited (Saturday service) schedule.

Currently, a significant change is the newly opened Veterans Administration Medical Center on Airport Boulevard. Staff is looking at options to improve service to this area, including revisiting the possibility of having Route 62 put back in service (this route was eliminated in June).

New buses are anticipated to be delivered, with an initial demonstration bus scheduled to be ready in February. By mid-year, staff anticipates delivery of new CNG vehicles, which will replace some of the older buses in the fleet.

There is a new Paratransit Policies Handbook, which outlines limitations of what passengers may transport when shopping. The County is instituting Mandatory Time Off during the holidays, which will result in significantly reduced County staff during this time; other than Christmas and New Year's Day there will be full paratransit service.

Discussion ensued regarding the interior lighting of buses at night. Some routes have magenta interior lighting because of visibility issues with increased glare from headlights and the reflection of the pavement at night in the rain.

Mr. Wagner reported that some adjustments were made to Route 60, 44 and 14 due to the construction on Highway 101 North, as well as the closure of Commerce Boulevard and the Wilfred Avenue overpass during highway construction.

Mr. Wagner next reported that with the bus from the Veterans Administration Medical Center on Airport Drive leaving at 8 a.m., 12 noon and 4 p.m. to San Francisco, increased connections need to be made. Bus stops and benches have been moved to try to make it more convenient for these passengers. He cited the need for a second bus, but stated that additional funding is required in order to provide the necessary service.

Petaluma Transit:

Joe Rye reported that ridership for paratransit has been slow. Fixed route service ridership has some increases. Route changes were made in August, with emphasis on targeting the student market. They are also offering additional locations for buying bus passes. Student ridership has increased but the adult segment is down. No further service changes are anticipated until next summer. Staff is researching grant opportunities and additional funding. Staff will implement a planning outreach process in the spring and as a result it is anticipated that there will be a reallocation of resources.

Mr. Rye announced that new buses are on order. Two new vans for paratransit are on order; one is expected to be delivered in the spring. The second will be delivered approximately the end of the year. Four new low-floor buses have been ordered for fixed route service. These are expected to be delivered in early 2011.

Year-to-date overall ridership has decreased somewhat, but there has been a marked increase in the past two months.

Santa Rosa CityBus:

Mike Ivory reported little change in ridership. Paratransit ridership for October is up 200 riders over the previous year. October is traditionally their busiest month.

Mr. Ivory announced that CityBus is getting new vehicles. Five paratransit buses have been ordered and will be painted to match the blue fixed route vehicles. They also have ordered two new accessible mini vans. He is currently pursuing the possibility of purchasing new vehicles through Creative Bus Sales "piggy-backed" through a contract with Caltrans.

New 40 ft. low-floor buses for fixed route service were delivered approximately two months ago and are currently in service. Eight of the current fixed route fleet are hybrid vehicles and it is hoped that the 1998 vehicles can be replaced with hybrid vehicles in the next funding cycle.

Staff is currently leasing a bus for the Oakmont area through MV Transportation and is seeking to buy a new vehicle. Passengers in this area want a low-floor vehicle; a vehicle has been identified for purchase and staff is pursuing the possibility of utilizing grant funds to buy it.

Mr. Ivory announced that the contract with MV Transportation expires June 30. A new five-year contract has been drawn up and is close to being signed.

The Functional Assessment Program has been successful over the past two years. An average of 75% of those applying actually complete the program to assess their ability to ride fixed route transit. The denial rate averages approximately 2%; data shows that most opt out of completing the application and program voluntarily.

Mr. Ivory noted that he, Jim Wagner of Sonoma County Transit, and Ginny Doyle of the Area Agency on Aging have been making a concerted effort to coordinate transit service. Joe Rye of the City of Petaluma will also be working with them in this effort. Staff of all these agencies have collaborated to better coordinate transit service between the various operators.

Ms. Beryl Brown expressed the need to simplify the application process between City and County paratransit for Functional Assessment. Mr. Ivory confirmed that staff is endeavoring to do this and that it is anticipated that there will be fewer steps in the process.

In response to Ms. March's questioning, Mr. Ivory reported that the renovations for the Transit Mall are at 90% design. It is projected that the Mall will close in spring 2010 while undergoing renovation. Three different options have been identified to temporarily relocate the Transit Mall.

Mr. Henzerling inquired as to the number of passengers picked up at the Oakmont diverted route. Mr. Ivory responded that the average has been 35 to 45 per month.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding cost savings and mileage for hybrid vehicles, Mr. Ivory referred to Steve Orless, Operations Supervisor, for statistical information. Mr. Ivory estimated that hybrid buses get six miles per gallon of fuel, versus diesel bus mileage of two miles per gallon.

Alice Linn inquired as to whether information about the Transit Mall is available on the City website. Mr. Ivory said he would check into this. Mr. Wagner added that staff projects starting construction in the spring and completing this prior to the start of school in the fall. Rabon Saip commented on the greatly improved design and signage that is planned, particularly for the vision-impaired.

Whistlestop Wheels:

Jon Gaffney reported that staff is currently implementing a mobile data terminal project and anticipates having GPS by the end of January.

Paratransit ridership is up by approximately 1% on local service and is down by approximately 25% on intercounty service.

Due to Measure A funding being approximately 9% to 10% lower than anticipated, staff found it necessary to reduce service by eliminating routes effective March 2010. This information is available on their website.

Golden Gate Transit regional service is not expected to be reduced at this point, although they are considering reducing Saturday coverage during the holidays.

Ms. March asked when Golden Gate Transit stopped serving the Sonoma Valley. Mr. Gaffney said he would check into this and let her know. She noted that a transportation study is currently under way in this area.

Ms. Linn inquired about ridership levels for the 101 Express bus service. She had originally recommended this service and expressed her appreciation that it has been implemented. Mr. Gaffney said he would check with Harvey Katz of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District and report back to her.

6.2. Other Agencies

Becoming Independent:

Bob Brown reported that they have received grant buses but all vehicles have to undergo repairs for the wheelchair lifts and backup alarm systems. The paratransit vehicles are much smaller inside than expected, and are unable to accommodate two wheelchairs and seven passengers, as ordered. Mr. Gaffney offered to refer Mr. Brown to a service used by Whistlestop Wheels that can reconfigure the vehicles to make more room.

City of Santa Rosa:

Mardell Morrison announced that an ADA Transition Plan meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2009. The agenda will address the settlement agreement between the City and the Department of Justice.

In response to Chair Battenberg's question regarding pending litigation, Mr. Wagner reported that the settlement was not awarded to individuals but went to education. Researching the system it was found that none of the claims were substantiated for the time period in question.

Area Agency on Aging:

Mr. Saip introduced himself as a new member of the Transportation Committee for this agency.

6.3. SCTA

6.3.1. TPCC Meeting Schedule for 2010*

Ms. March presented the proposed meeting schedule.

6.3.2. California Transit Association Article Regarding Transit Funding*

Ms. March reported that there is no further information at this point regarding the court ruling on transit funding or a decision as to how the funds will be distributed back to transit operators.

6.3.3. News Links of Possible Interest*

Ms. March referred to online links to news articles regarding the City of Santa Rosa settlement in disabled access litigation; the United We Ride website for news and ideas regarding transportation services for the disabled, seniors, and low income population; and closing of the Sonoma Airport in the Sonoma Valley.

6.3.4. Lifeline Transportation Program Status*

Ms. March reported that Lifeline Cycle II had Proposition 1B, STA and JARC funding; previously staff had understood that the STA and JARC funding was gone. MTC has since released additional funds from these sources; SCTA then approved a revised Program of Projects for Tier II. Included in this list is a project for Sonoma County Human Services in the amount of \$21,219 in STA funds.

6.3.5 Directory

Ms. March referred to the directory of transportation services prepared by Ginny Doyle, suggesting that it also include access to services for veterans. Ms. Doyle is still taking comments on this brochure. It is available online.

6.3.6 MTC's Regional Pedestrian Safety Summit*

Ms. March announced that this is to be held January 29, 2010 at the Joseph P. Bort Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland. Those interested in attending may wish to coordinate carpooling.

6.3.7 Status of Community Based Transportation Plans*

Ms. March reported that the MTC had previously identified four communities of concern within Sonoma County for improved transportation services. The CBTP for the Roseland area was adopted in 2007. The Lower Russian River CBTP has been posted online but still has some corrections and formatting to be made. The Healdsburg CBTP is also posted online but has not yet come before the Board for approval. Solutions coming out of the CBTP's are favored for funding under the Lifeline Program. The CBTP for the Sonoma Valley area (The Springs) is currently under way. A stakeholders meeting has been held and public outreach is being conducted, with the help of Matt Stevens of the Results Group.

Ms. March reported that there is considerable enthusiasm regarding the Highway 12 improvements. Phase I of this project is almost complete. Phase II is funded and is almost ready to start. In the course of conducting public outreach in this area, staff was told that the new lighting increases glare for motorists. Ms. March stated there would probably be a way to remediate the problem; Mr. Ivory suggested diffusers. Mr. Wagner added that this same problem was resolved at the County's Geyserville facility after trying three different types of lighting.

Ms. March then referred to the Healdsburg plan's solutions, noting that while these do not specifically rate maintaining existing service as a high priority, this was a perceptual issue; that respondents interpreted maintenance of the existing service to be a given.

Ms. March reported that she had checked with Caltrans on the STA 5310 program status and was told that a list would be coming out near the end of the year or in January that will provide scoring of projects that have been submitted.

7. Other Business/Comments/Announcements

Ms. March announced the formation of a second Authority as a result of legislation passed to put into place the Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority. This Authority has the same Executive Director and Board as the SCTA, with Mr. Dave Brennan as Program Manager, coordinating climate protection among various public and private sector entities. Meetings of this Authority will be adjacent to the SCTA Board meetings, which will result in a change in meeting time to accommodate the new agenda.

Ms. March next announced that SCTA Executive Director Suzanne Smith will be attending the Copenhagen conference on climate change.

Ms. Linn announced that the Leadership Institute is conducting a charette at the Steele Lane Community Center on West Steele Lane this Friday and Saturday, November 20 and 21. Tickets are available online at the Leadership Institute website, as seating is limited. She highly encouraged transit advocates to attend.

Ms. Linn added that the Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition will be sponsoring a bicycle ride in the Coddington area in the general location of the proposed SMART station. This will take place either November 20 or 21, but she was uncertain which date.

Discussion ensued regarding the issue of the location of the SMART station and Ms. Linn reported that the Coddings are suggesting another location, in Coddington.

Chair Battenberg inquired regarding the status of the proposal to consolidate all local Bay area transit operators into one agency under the MTC.

Mr. Wagner responded that this concept has been addressed sporadically for a number of years. Because of funding levels it is again an active issue and a two-year study is currently under way. Among the various issues to consider in implementing a single transit agency for the region are the various labor contracts that would need to be negotiated, infrastructure, facilities, etc.

Chair Battenberg asked Mr. Ivory about their paratransit vehicle and whether this would have a ramps or a lift. Mr. Ivory answered that this would have a ramp; the ramp can be operated manually or electrically, which is beneficial in the event of a power outage. Mr. Battenberg addressed his concerns regarding the grade of the ramp and accessibility for motorized and manual wheelchairs. Mr. Wagner added that low floor paratransit vehicles are ideal for easier access. A hybrid ramp where the battery can be charging while the motor is running would be beneficial.

Ms. Linn announced that she is considering coordinating a bus tour of the SMART station area, taking Route 17 from the Transit Mall to provide a bus rider's eye view of the logistics involved and access to/from the proposed station area. Discussion resumed regarding options for locating the SMART station. Mr. Ivory noted that this is also a land use planning issue; the closer buses can be to a loading platform the better and easier transit will be.

8. Adjourn – ACTION

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Staff Report

To: Transit Paratransit Coordinating Committee

From: Lynne March, Transportation Planner

Item: Election in January of TPCC Officers for 2010

Date: January 19, 2010

Issue:

Who shall the TPCC members elect as Chair and Vice Chair of the TPCC for 2010?

Background:

The committee's purpose is to advise the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) on the transit needs of communities of people with special needs, including elderly, disabled, and those of low income. The committee has an interest in both paratransit and fixed route transit issues.

The TPCC facilitates communications between transit and paratransit users and the operators of such services. The TPCC reviews transit proposals involving Transportation Development Act (TDA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 funds. TDA funds are available for various types of transportation projects including the provision of transit and paratransit services. The TPCC is also involved in raising awareness of the many issues faced in both using and providing transit and paratransit services.

Officers:

SCTA's Ordinance No.3 requires that a Chair and Vice Chair be elected at the first meeting of the year to lead the TPCC during the calendar year. Dennis Battenberg served as Chair and Larry Henzerling as Vice-Chair during 2009, and in prior years. They have consented to be candidates for service again in 2010.

Meetings:

The TPCC normally meets the 3rd Tuesday of every other month at 2 p.m. Meetings are held in SCTA's conference room.

Action Requested:

The TPCC Membership is asked to elect a Chair and Vice Chair for 2010.

Staff Report

To: Transit Paratransit Coordinating Committee

From: Lynne March, Transportation Planner

Item: News Articles

Date: January 19, 2010

CALTRANS, DISABLED RIGHTS ADVOCATES APPLAUD AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED

California Department of Transportation, Headquarters - Sacramento
Mark DeSio, December 22, 2009

Sacramento – Caltrans has reached an agreement on the settlement of a class action lawsuit filed by Californians for Disability Rights (CDR) and California Council for the Blind (CCB) to improve access to pedestrian facilities such as curbs and sidewalks for persons with disabilities.

The proposed settlement agreement was submitted to the federal court today. The court must preliminarily approve the terms of the agreement and then conduct a hearing before it is binding. There will be a public notice period, and all interested parties and the U.S. Department of Justice will be given an opportunity to review the settlement and provide input to the court. Final court approval of the settlement is not expected before April 2010.

"This settlement is a win-win. It is a victory for all Californians – taxpayers and the disability community who have a right to equal access to all walkways," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "It would be inexcusable to continue to delay these modifications. Instead of debating this through the legal process for the next decade, costing millions of taxpayer dollars, we are taking action to get this work completed."

The terms of the settlement include the following:
Caltrans will spend \$1.1 billion for barrier removal work and other improvements on sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities over a 30-year period.

Caltrans will ensure that all pedestrian and park and ride facilities under its jurisdiction, which are newly constructed or altered after the date the settlement is approved by the court, are fully compliant with federal and state access requirements.

Caltrans will ensure that temporary routes, which are provided around and through construction along pedestrian facilities under its jurisdiction, are accessible to persons with disabilities when provided.

"Caltrans is committed to addressing the mobility needs of all Californians and takes seriously its responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act," said Caltrans Director Randy Iwasaki.

The action, filed under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), alleged that Caltrans discriminated against persons with mobility and/or visual disabilities by denying them full and equal access to sidewalks, crosswalks, park and ride lots and other pedestrian facilities owned or maintained by Caltrans. The lawsuits were filed in both federal and state court in 2006 and 2008.

To view a copy of the settlement agreement, click on the following link:

http://www.dot.ca.gov/Documents/Master_Stipulation_and_Settlement_Agreement.pdf

(A HARD COPY WILL BE AVAILABLE TO PERUSE AT THE TPCC MEETING)

Seats aren't filled on buses, trains; Transit ridership drops with economy as fewer go to work

By Marisol Bello, USA Today Article of 12/21/09

Regarding the Economy's Impact on Transit Ridership

After a record year in 2008, the number of people riding buses and trains dropped in 2009 as unemployment rose and fewer people traveled to work.

Last year, public transit ridership hit a 52-year high of 10.7 billion rides. This year, January-through-September ridership was down 4% from the first nine months of last year to 7.7 billion trips, according to new figures from the American Public Transportation Association.

The number of rides fell in 146 of 197 bus systems and in 50 of 64 rail systems from January through September, compared with the same period in 2008.

William Millar, the association's president, says Americans going to and from work make up 60% of transit use, so ridership drops as unemployment increases. Yet, he says, "the ridership fall is greater than expected because unemployment rose so quickly." The national unemployment rate is 10%. Lower ridership means more lost revenue for transit

agencies already struggling financially. Fares make up about a third of an agency's operating revenue. The rest comes from taxes and other local and state funding that has decreased dramatically because of the recession, Millar says. As a result, 89% of transit agencies have raised fares or cut service, a June survey by the association found.

Those changes could discourage riders from returning in the future, Millar says. Transit systems are struggling:

*Cleveland. Bus ridership fell 11% in the first nine months of the year, and trips on the rail system dropped 15%. Unemployment for the metropolitan area is 9.5%, but Joe Calabrese, the general manager of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, says that doesn't tell the full story. He says people with jobs are taking furlough days and working fewer hours, so they are not riding the system as often.

The agency will take in \$5 million less in fares this year and \$19 million less in sales tax revenue, Calabrese says. In response, it raised its base fare for buses and trains 25 cents in September to \$2.25, cut 12 smaller bus routes and reduced the frequency of buses on 15 other routes. Calabrese expects more cuts next year.

*Colorado Springs. Bus ridership dropped 13% from January through October compared with the same time last year, says David Menter, a transit planning supervisor. The city's economic troubles are forcing a \$6.1 million drop in its contribution to the transit agency to \$2.6 million next year. To balance its budget, Mountain Metropolitan Transit in January will eliminate evening service after 6:15 p.m., all weekend service and four of its 22 routes, including express service.

"It will have life-changing consequences for our riders who are transit-dependent or who are elderly or disabled," Menter says. "We need to consider whether we should or shouldn't have a transit system. It's that severe."

Staff Report

To: Transit Paratransit Coordinating Committee

From: Lynne March, Transportation Planner

Item: Community Based Transportation Plans

Date: January 19, 2010

Status of SCTA's CBTPs

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) identified four "Communities of Concern" in Sonoma County based on low-income status. MTC is providing funding to SCTA for the preparation of Community Based Transportation Plans (CBTPs) for each of these areas. CBTPs create transportation plans based on community input. Planning focuses on involving the target community in the identification of transportation problems, as well as potential solutions.

- 1) The Roseland Community Based Transportation Plan was adopted in 2007, and can be found on the SCTA website at www.sctainfo.org under "Reports."
- 2) The Lower Russian River Community Based Transportation Plan was the second CBTP to be completed for Sonoma County and can now be found in its final version on the SCTA website at www.sctainfo.org under "Reports." It was adopted in May 2009.
- 3) The Healdsburg CBTP is to be presented to the SCTA Board on January 11, 2010, for review and consideration of adoption. A draft version is posted at www.sctainfo.org under "Reports."
- 4) The last of the four CBTPs is currently underway. The plan's public outreach component has been conducted and finalization of The Springs Community Based Transportation Plan (for part of the Central Sonoma Valley) is anticipated in early 2010.

Each plan provides historic and demographic information; describes existing and projected conditions; analyzes existing transit services and Lifeline objectives; presents the public outreach methodology and findings; and culminates in an action plan aimed at facilitating implementation of ideas to improve transportation access and mobility for each area's low-income residents. Each CBTP includes a prioritized list of transportation "solutions."

The associated funding to MTC's CBTP Program is MTC's Lifeline Transportation Program (Lifeline). Solutions arising from the CBTP process are favored for funding by the Lifeline source.

Staff Report

To: Transit Paratransit Coordinating Committee

From: Lynne March, Transportation Planner

Item: TPCC 2001 Meeting Dates

Date: January 19, 2010

TPCC Meeting Dates in 2010

During 2010 the pattern of meeting from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of every other month is planned.

The anticipated meeting dates are as follows:

- January 19
- March 16
- May 18
- July 20
- September 21
- November 16

Your attendance at the meetings is appreciated!