



ITEM 3

SOCIAL SERVICE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

DATE

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

The regular meeting of the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council was held Tuesday, April 29, 2025, and was called to order by Chair Frank Simonis, at 12:02 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Frank Simonis, Chair, Potential Transit User Who Has a Disability – appeared via Zoom
Bertha Vega, Vice Chair, Social Service Provider for Persons of Limited Means*
Lynda Schafhauser, Potential Transit User Who is 60 Years of Age or Older
Monty Cox, Social Service Transportation Provider for Older Adults
Nancy Ramirez, Social Service Provider for Persons with Disabilities
Cynthia Ortegon, Potential Transit User Who Has a Disability
Franklina Bogan, Potential Transit User Who is 60 Years of Age or Older*
Mattie Mendez, Social Service Provider for Older Adults

MEMBERS ABSENT

Olga Saucedo-Garcia, Social Service Provider for Older Adults

MCTC STAFF PRESENT:

Natalia Austin, Senior Regional Planner
Evelyn Espinosa, Senior Regional Planner
Jeff Findley, Principal Regional Planner
Troy McNeil, Deputy Director/Fiscal Supervisor

VISITORS PRESENT:

Lorena Mendibles, Caltrans District 6, Senior Transportation Planner, Transit Specialist
Andrea Uribe, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, Policy Advocate
Raeanne Jain, Madera County Department of Social Services, Administrative Services Officer
Geraldine Lakey, Madera County Department of Public Works, Administrative Services Officer

*appeared after roll call

1. Roll Call

At 12:02 pm, Chair Frank Simonis called the meeting to order and instructed that roll call for attendance be taken. It was determined that a quorum was present.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Approve Minutes of February 4, 2025, Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

Mattie Mendez moved to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2025, Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Meeting.

Seconded by Frank Simonis.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Frank Simonis, Nancy Ramirez, Lynda Schafhauser, Monty Cox, Mattie Mendez, Cynthia Ortegon

Noes: None

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Unmet Transit Needs Comment Analysis

The SSTAC reviewed twenty-four comments that were received during April 26, 2024 – April 24, 2025. Eight of the comments were identified as potential unmet transit needs and were evaluated using the “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” definitions.

The potential unmet transit needs that have been evaluated and the recommendations made by the SSTAC for Madera County (MCC) are as follows:

- PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION TO UC MERCED AND MERCED COLLEGE

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: This route is approximately 70 miles roundtrip and would take 2.0 hours to complete. At Madera County Connection’s (MCC) current operating expense, it will cost approximately \$200 per roundtrip to provide. To achieve the targeted Fare Box Recovery Rate of 10% and an average fare of \$1.57 per passenger, this route would require a minimum of thirteen passengers per run, with two runs per day, or 26 passengers total. There was a route in the past that was discontinued due to low ridership. MCC is interested in collaborating with the university to assess its feasibility and if there is enough potential ridership, would like UC Merced to consider contributing funding support for this route. Caltrans has suggested securing funding for a study to evaluate the need for this

service and potentially partnering with MCTC to conduct it. Additional planning and coordination will be necessary to move this effort forward.

- INCREASE THE FREQUENCY ON THE VALLEY CHILDREN'S ROUTE. THE GAP BETWEEN THE 11:51AM AND 3:15PM DEPARTURES IS TOO LONG.

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: This route is approximately 40 miles roundtrip and takes about 1.4 hours to complete. Based on MCC's current operating expenses, it costs approximately \$132 per roundtrip to provide service. In order to meet the targeted Fare Box Recovery Rate of 10%, and assuming an average fare of \$1.57 per passenger, a minimum of 9 passengers per roundtrip would be needed. However, with an average of only 3 riders per run last year, reaching this ridership level does not appear to be a realistic expectation at this time. Microtransit may offer a flexible and cost-effective solution to provide increased service in this area. MCC is currently exploring potential funding sources to support this option. Future development, The Hill, is anticipated near the hospital, which could generate additional demand for transportation services. In particular, janitorial and other hospital staff residing in Madera may rely on this service for commuting, highlighting the potential need for targeted transit solutions. MCC regularly assesses any change in service demand and will adjust accordingly.

- INCREASE THE FREQUENCY TO THE COMMUNITY OF LA VINA TO MONDAY – FRIDAY BETWEEN 7:30AM – 3:30PM OR AT 7:30AM, 1:00PM, AND 5-6:00PM. RIDERS FROM LA VINA GET STRANDED IN MADERA BECAUSE THERE ISN'T ENOUGH FREQUENCY TO GET BACK HOME AFTER APPOINTMENTS (MULTIPLE COMMENTS)

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: This route covers approximately 22 miles roundtrip and takes about 1.1 hours to complete. Currently, it requires approximately \$106 per roundtrip to operate. To meet the target Fare Box Recovery Rate of 10%, with an average fare of \$1.57 per passenger, the route would need at least 7 passengers per trip. However, the service averaged only 1.7 riders per run last year, making the goal of 7 passengers per roundtrip unlikely under current conditions. MCC will further survey the riders of this route to better understand their specific transportation needs and travel patterns to ensure that any future changes are aligned with existing rider preferences.

- PROVIDE SERVICE FROM OAKHURST (ALL MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES) TO GET TO MADERA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT BY 8:00AM, MONDAY-FRIDAY FOR COURT APPEARANCES, JURY DUTY, ETC.

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: The frequency of service in Oakhurst increased from 3 runs to 5 runs, better accommodating demand. Additional runs will be considered as ridership continues to

grow. However, to reach Madera from Oakhurst by 8:00 a.m., service would need to begin as early as 4:00 a.m. from Madera, which presents challenges in terms of both operations and ridership. Sustaining a run that early in the day may not be feasible without sufficient passenger demand.

- PROVIDE LOCAL SERVICE IN OAKHURST ON SUNDAY TO GO TO CHURCH SERVICES

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: Microtransit may offer a flexible and cost-effective solution to provide increased service in this area. MCC is currently exploring potential funding sources to support this option.

- ADD A BUS STOP AT THE NEW RIVER GROVE APARTMENT COMPLEX IN OAKHURST

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: There is an existing stop at the park and ride that is within a quarter of a mile of the River Grove apartments.

- NEED AN APP TO TRACK THE BUSES IN REAL TIME AND GET UPDATES WHEN THE BUS IS LATE, HIGH TRAFFIC, ETC.

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: Riders can use MCCtransit.com to track the County's buses. The Transit App (by Swiftly) also provides the location of the bus in real-time. The schedules are also accessible on the app.

The potential unmet transit needs that have been evaluated and the recommendations made by the SSTAC for the City of Madera (Madera Metro) are as follows:

- INCREASE THE FREQUENCY OF BUSES AND SUNDAY SERVICE AS WELL AS EXPAND THE HOURS OF OPERATION IN THE CITY OF MADERA

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need.

Discussion: (Metro) Dial-a-ride service is available on Sundays. There have been some comments in the past regarding additional service on Sunday. The City of Madera conducted a Transit Plan Services Assessment that was completed in July 2023. The newest route changes that have been implemented have been based on the results of the assessment. While the City is open to ongoing consideration for additional expansion of services, at this time the requests have been very minimal. Additionally, consideration of any expansion of program changes requires a budget review to ensure financial sustainability of services.

- NEED AN APP TO TRACK THE BUSES IN REAL TIME AND GET UPDATES WHEN THE BUS IS LATE, HIGH TRAFFIC, ETC.

SSTAC Recommendation: Not an unmet transit need

Discussion: Madera Metro (City of Madera) is in the process of contracting with a vendor to work on a Micro-Transit Feasibility Study. It is anticipated that this study will include the integration of technology platforms to address the identified feedback.

There were no potential unmet transit needs that were evaluated by the SSTAC for the City of Chowchilla (CATX).

The rest of the comments received were determined to be either operational or non-transit issues. Direction was given to forward these comments to the appropriate agencies to be addressed.

Frank Simonis made a motion, recommending for Madera County for FY 2025-26: There are no unmet transit needs.

For the City of Madera for FY 2025-26: There are no unmet transit needs.

For the City of Chowchilla for FY 2025-26: There are no unmet transit needs.

Seconded by Franklina Bogan.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Frank Simonis, Nancy Ramirez, Lynda Schafhauser, Monty Cox, Mattie Mendez, Cynthia Ortegon, Bertha Vega, Franklina Bogan

Noes: None

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Appoint SSTAC Representative to attend MCTC Policy Board Meeting on May 21, 2025

Chair Frank Simonis volunteered to represent the SSTAC at the MCTC Policy Board meeting on May 21, 2025.

Mattie Mendez made a motion to appoint Frank Simonis to represent the SSTAC at the MCTC Policy Board Meeting on May 21, 2025.

Seconded by Franklina Bogan.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Frank Simonis, Nancy Ramirez, Lynda Schafhauser, Monty Cox, Mattie Mendez, Cynthia Ortegon, Bertha Vega, Franklina Bogan

Noes: None

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. Discuss Future Meeting Dates and UTN Process Schedule

MCTC proposes moving the UTN process from the spring to the fall for a few key reasons. Transit agencies start budget planning in January. If MCTC moves the process to the fall, the SSTAC's recommendations can help inform the budget. Additionally, in fall there are plenty of community events that MCTC staff regularly attend. These events are great chances to "meet people where they are" and hear what their transit needs are. The State does not lock MCTC into a specific schedule, only requiring that the UTN documentation is submitted before August 15 of the fiscal year of the TDA funding allocation. Tentative dates for the SSTAC meetings are:

- Tuesday, September 9, 2025
- Tuesday, December 9, 2025
- Tuesday, March 10, 2026
- Tuesday, June 9, 2026

SSTAC members expressed support for this proposed change. Chair Simonis directed SSTAC members to mark the new meeting dates on their calendars, noting that they can change if needed.

7. Announcements

SSTAC member, Lynda Schafhauser, mentioned community events on May 6 and May 8 taking place at the main library in Madera. The following Saturday there will be a pop-up event, the Spring Fling, at the United Methodist Church.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Frank Simonis at 1:16 PM.