



Meeting of the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council

LOCATION

Madera County Transportation Commission
2001 Howard Road, Suite 201
Madera, California 93637

or via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82733898080?pwd=eDhxbHZmR3NmY2RXNnpSaFJKTnRjdz09>

Passcode: 231559

Telephone: US: +1 408 638 0968

Meeting ID: 827 3389 8080

DATE

May 1, 2023

TIME

9:00 AM

SOCIAL SERVICE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Frank Simonis, Chair	Potential Transit User Who is Disabled
Alycia Falley, Vice Chair	Representative of the Local Social Service Provider for Disabled
Rosalind Esqueda	Representative of a Transit Provider
Ellen Moy	Representative of a Transit Provider
Bertha Vega	Local Social Provider for Persons of Limited Means
Vincent Parker	Representative of Local Service Provider for Disabled
Michelle Hernandez	Representative of Local Social Service Provider for Seniors
Vacant	Potential Transit User 60 Years or Older
Olga Olivia Saucedo-Garcia	Representative of the Local Service Provider for Seniors

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS AND ADA

MCTC has adopted a Reasonable Accommodations Policy that provides a procedure for receiving and resolving requests for accommodation to participate in this meeting (see <https://www.maderactc.org/administration/page/reasonable-accommodations-policy>). If you need assistance in order to attend the meeting, or if you require auxiliary aids or services, e.g., listening devices or signing services to make a presentation, MCTC is happy to assist you. Please contact MCTC offices at (559) 675-0721 so such aids or services can be arranged. Requests may also be made by email to sandy@maderactc.org, or mailed to 2001 Howard Road, Suite 201, Madera, CA 93637. Accommodations should be requested as early as possible as additional time may be required in order to provide the requested accommodation; 72 hours in advance is suggested.

AGENDA

At least 72 hours prior to each regular MCTC Social Services Transportation Advisory Council meeting, a complete agenda packet is available for review on the [MCTC website](#) or at the MCTC office, 2001 Howard Road, Suite 201, Madera, California 93637. All public records relating to an open session item and copies of staff reports or other written documentation relating to items of business referred to on the agenda are on file at MCTC. Persons with questions concerning agenda items may call MCTC at (559) 675-0721 to make an inquiry regarding the nature of items described in the agenda.

INTERPRETING SERVICES

Interpreting services are not provided at MCTC's public meeting unless requested at least three (3) business days in advance. Please contact MCTC at (559) 675-0721 during regular business hours to request interpreting services.

Servicios de interprete no son ofrecidos en las juntas públicas de MCTC al menos de que se soliciten con tres (3) días de anticipación. Para solicitar estos servicios por favor contacte a Evelyn Espinosa at (559) 675-0721 x 5 durante horas de oficina.

MEETING CONDUCT

If this meeting is willfully interrupted or disrupted by one or more persons rendering orderly conduct of the meeting unfeasible, the Chair may order the removal of individuals who are willfully disrupting the meeting. Such individuals may be arrested. If order cannot be restored by such removal, the members of the SSTAC may direct that the meeting room be cleared (except for representatives of the press or other news media not participating in the disturbance), and the session may continue.

RECORD OF THE MEETING

SSTAC meetings are recorded. Copies of recordings are available upon request, or recordings may be listened to at the MCTC offices by appointment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

If you are participating remotely and wish to make a comment on a specific agenda item during the meeting, please use the “Raise Hand” feature in Zoom and you will be called on by the chair during the meeting. You can also submit your comments via email to publiccomment@maderactc.org. Comments will be shared with the SSTAC and placed into the record at the meeting. Every effort will be made to read comments received during the meeting into the record, but some comments may not be read due to time limitations. Comments received after an agenda item will be made part of the record if received prior to the end of the meeting.

Regarding any disruption that prevents the SSTAC from broadcasting the meeting to members of the public, then (1) if public access can be restored quickly, the meeting will resume in five (5) minutes to allow the re-connection of all members of the SSTAC, staff, and members of the public; or (2) if service cannot be restored quickly, the meeting shall stop, no further action shall be taken on the remaining agenda items, and notice of the continued meeting will be provided.

Agenda

Item	Description	Enclosure	Action
1.	Call to order		
2.	Public Comment		
3.	Minutes of the January 30, 2023 SSTAC Meeting	Yes	Action
4.	Unmet Transit Needs Comment Analysis and Recommendation to the MCTC Policy Board	Yes	Action
5.	Appoint SSTAC Representative to attend MCTC's May 17 Board Meeting	Yes	Action
6.	Discuss Future Meetings August 7, 2023 at 9:00 am November 6, 2023 at 9:00 am February 5, 2024 at 9:00 am April 29, 2024 at 9:00 am	No	Discussion
7.	Miscellaneous	No	Discussion
8.	Adjournment		

Social Service Transportation Advisory Council

MINUTES

DATE

Monday, January 30, 2023

The regular meeting of the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council held Monday, January 30, 2023 via Zoom and was called to order by Chair, Frank Simonis, at 9:13 am.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Frank Simonis, Chair, Potential Transit User Who Is Disabled
Rosalind Esqueda, Representative of a Transit Provider
Monty Cox, Representative of a Transit Provider, Madera County
Marisol Rivera, Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for Persons of Limited Means
Vincent Parker, Representative of the Local Social Service Provider for Disabled
Michelle Hernandez, Representative of the Local Social Service Provider for Seniors
Alycia Falley, Representative of the Local Social Service Provider for Disabled

STAFF PRESENT:

Nicholas Dybas, Madera County Transportation Commission
Evelyn Espinosa, Madera County Transportation Commission
Jeff Findley, Madera County Transportation Commission
Sandy Ebersole, Madera County Transportation Commission

VISITORS PRESENT:

David Huff, City of Madera

I: Call to Order

Meeting started at 9:13 AM.

II: Public Comment

No public comment received.

III: New Member Orientation

New members of the SSTAC were informed of roles and responsibilities of the SSTAC and were read the current SSTAC bylaws.

IV: Election of Officers

Frank Simonis elected 7-0.
Alycia Falley elected 7-0.

V. Approve Minutes of the November 17, 2022 SSTAC Meeting

Approved 7-0

VI. Unmet Transit Needs Comment Analysis

The SSTAC reviewed four comments that were found to be UTN at the previous meeting but left indeterminate on whether they were Reasonable to Meet or not. As all four comments related to the City of Madera, David Huff came to provide input to the SSTAC on whether the comments were reasonable to meet. Two of the four comments were found to be reasonable to meet. The recommendation will be shared with the MCTC Board along with any future comments at the May MCTC Policy Board Meeting.

VII. Upcoming UTN Workshops in February

MCTC will begin scheduling a number of workshops throughout Madera County in anticipation of the Unmet Transit Needs hearing at the April MCTC Policy Board Meeting

VIII. Discuss Future Meetings

Monday, May 1, 2023 at 9:00 am was tentatively selected as the time for the next meeting. Unmet Transit Needs from the April

IX. Miscellaneous

Monty Cox has become the newest member of the SSTAC, replacing Ellen Moy for Madera County. Marisol Rivera filled in as a temporary replacement for Bertha Vega at Madera County Workforce.

IX: Adjournment

SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 9:47 AM

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	ALL	ALL	B. Residents and transit users report a need to expand rate assistance programs to provide free rides to people who are unable to pay their bus fare but who have transit needs nonetheless. This need was raised during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many transit users have experienced additional financial hardships.									Same as 22-23, 21-22
	County		C. Residents and transit users report a need for street lighting in La Vina, Fairmead, and Madera County to ensure transit users' first and last miles are safely lit.									Same as 22-23, 21-22
	City of Madera		D. Residents and transit users continue to elevate the need for wastebaskets at bus stops in the City of Madera.									Same as 22-23, 21-22, repeated, see comment 43
	County		E. Residents and transit users in unincorporated communities have identified streets that need repavement and clean mobility infrastructure like sidewalks, crosswalks, and street lighting in order to facilitate their first and last miles, and thus, their use of public transit. A few examples that were elevated in our conversations were sidewalks and street lighting along Avenue 9 and within the subdivision of homes located in La Vina, and road repavement to Rd 26 in Madera Acres, Rd 29 in Parksdale, and Valerie Avenue in Madera Acres. One of the reasons it is critical that communities have sidewalks to connect residents to bus stops is to ensure ADA accessibility for transit users who use wheelchairs.									Same as 22-23, 21-22
	County		F. Residents from Fairmead and Madera County report the need for speed reduction infrastructure near schools for the safety of children. For instance, residents in Fairmead have been asking Madera County and MCTC for speed bumps or other similar speed reduction infrastructure in front of Fairmead Elementary school on Ave. 22 3/4.									Same as 22-23, 22-23
		All	G. Resident and transit users report the need for electronic bus signs on buses and at bus stops. At bus stops, an electronic sign should indicate the estimated time of arrival of the bus and its destination along its current route, and electronic signs on the buses should confirm the direction in which the bus is traveling along its route with its final destination. Residents report that this will greatly improve the user-friendliness of public transit in Madera County and encourage ridership.									Same as 22-23, 21-22, 20-21, repeated, see comment 47

[illegible]

[illegible]



April 19, 2023
Madera County Transportation Commission
2001 Howard Rd, Ste 201
Madera, CA 93637

Submitted electronically via email to: publiccomment@maderactc.org

Re: Comments on Unmet Transit Needs in Madera County

Dear Commissioners Ahmed, Gonzales, Gallegos, Poythress, Rodriguez, and Rogers,

I am writing to provide comments as part of the 2023 unmet transit needs process. In previous years' unmet transit needs hearings, residents of the City of Madera, La Vina, and Fairmead have highlighted a long list of unmet transit needs which we are resubmitting for the public record, since -- to our knowledge-- almost none of these have been addressed. Attached, please find our comment letters submitted in years prior to MCTC for previous unmet transit needs hearings which contain a full list of the unmet transit needs of residents we partner with. We discussed this ongoing list with them this week and confirmed that these unmet transit needs are still outstanding needs.

Additionally, we urge MCTC to conduct its own culturally relevant public engagement process on unmet transit needs by directly speaking with residents in communities across Madera County and compiling a full list of unmet transit needs. We have compiled a long list of unmet transit needs, but we only work in three communities in Madera County.

Residents we work with have raised these unmet transit needs for years, and they still continue to go unaddressed, so many of your constituents feel abandoned and neglected by MCTC. In order to address these concerns, MCTC and Madera County must incorporate an equity framework in decision-making around investments for public transit funding, in order to ensure that Severely Disadvantaged Communities take priority for public transit investments. Continuing business as usual without an equity component will continue to exacerbate the unmet transit needs and other transportation needs within disadvantaged and unincorporated communities, which are often put last in line to wait for investments from their own tax dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter to the MCTC as part of this important public process. We are happy to work together wherever possible alongside Madera County residents. I



and LCJA will gladly serve as a resource to MCTC in seeking to address these unmet needs. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrea Uribe
Policy Advocate
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability



April 15, 2019

Amelia Davies
Madera County Transportation Commission
2001 Howard Rd, Ste 201
Madera, CA 93637

Re: Comments on Unmet Transit Needs in Madera County

Dear Ms. Davies,

I am writing on behalf of Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability and our several community partners throughout Madera County to provide input for Madera County Transportation Commission's (MCTC) annual "unmet transit needs" survey and public comment process. These comments arise from our many conversations with residents throughout the county regarding the existing transit infrastructures established to serve them. We at Leadership Counsel are grateful for the opportunity to provide comments on this matter because we deeply value government agencies' fervent, genuine inclusion and incorporation of public input in the planning of the County's communities. Furthermore, we especially value your consideration of public input from disadvantaged communities who are least benefited by the status quo.

The following comments are a compilation of feedback from residents in Fairmead, La Viña, and the City of Madera, and they constitute our effort to assist MCTC in receiving and incorporating public input into future transit infrastructure planning.

Unmet Need: Route and schedule improvements for the Chowchilla-Fairmead-Madera Connection to ensure a dependable and user-friendly service

The existing Chowchilla-Fairmead-Madera route establishes essential connectivity between Madera and Chowchilla transit routes with one stop in the community of Fairmead. The route runs five times per day between Monday and Friday. The community of Fairmead is not home to any commercial businesses or stores, so this route presents the only opportunity for transit-dependent Fairmead residents to access food and other essential goods. For this reason, the route and schedule must be accessible and dependable.

In order to ensure that this route is user-friendly, residents in Fairmead have identified the following needs:

- (a) The Chowchilla-Fairmead-Madera schedule must be extended to the weekends to afford transit users improved access to this essential route;



April 21, 2021
Madera County Transportation Commission
2001 Howard Rd, Ste 201
Madera, CA 93637

Submitted electronically via email to: publiccomment@maderactc.org

Re: Comments on Unmet Transit Needs in Madera County

Dear Commissioners Rodriguez, Wheeler, Ahmed, Frazier, Gallegos, and Poythress,

I am writing regarding the unmet transit needs hearing process. Our organization continues to hear from residents in Fairmead, La Viña, the City of Madera, and other communities in Madera County whose transit needs remain unmet by this agency, despite our participation in this process for the past several years. In this letter, we will list the unmet transit needs that residents have elevated to us in the past few months and request additional information from this agency regarding use of transportation and transit funding. Attached alongside this letter, I have also resubmitted our comment letters from the last two years' unmet transit needs survey process regarding unmet transit needs and comments regarding this process that we have elevated in previous years, which remain unaddressed by MCTC.

We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this important public process and ask that the feedback we have received from community members on the ground be incorporated so that all Madera County residents have access to reliable, equitable, and affordable public transportation.

I. Unmet Transit Needs

In conversations with residents from the City of Madera, La Vina, and Fairmead in the past few months, community leaders and transit users have highlighted the following unmet transit needs:

- A. Transit users in the City of Madera report up to one hour wait times for buses on occasion, and expressed the need for routes in the City of Madera to run more frequently.
- B. Residents and transit users report a need to expand rate assistance programs to provide free rides to people who are unable to pay their bus fare but who have transit needs nonetheless. This need was raised during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many transit users have experienced additional financial hardships.
- C. Residents and transit users report a need for street lighting in La Vina and Fairmead to ensure transit users' first and last miles are safely lit.
- D. Residents and transit users continue to elevate the need for wastebaskets at bus stops in the City of Madera.



- E. Residents and transit users in unincorporated communities have identified streets that need repavement and clean mobility infrastructure like sidewalks, crosswalks, and street lighting in order to facilitate their first and last miles, and thus, their use of public transit. A few examples that were elevated in our conversations were sidewalks and street lighting along Avenue 9 and within the subdivision of homes located in La Vina, and road repavement to Rd 26 in Madera Acres, Rd 29 in Parksdale, and Valerie Avenue in Madera Acres.
- F. Resident and transit users report the need for electronic bus signs on buses and at bus stops. At bus stops, an electronic sign should indicate the estimated time of arrival of the bus and its destination along its current route, and electronic signs on the buses should confirm the direction in which the bus is travelling along its route with its final destination. Residents report that this will greatly improve the user-friendliness of public transit in Madera County and encourage ridership.
- G. Residents and transit users in La Vina continue to elevate the need for more frequent routes between La Vina and the City of Madera. Currently, the bus only runs on Wednesdays and Fridays, leaving transit-dependent persons with no other means of transportation without access to basic amenities (including healthcare, food, and other emergency services) most days of the week.
- H. Lastly, residents and transit users in Fairmead have elevated the need to continue working towards installation of a second bus stop in Fairmead. As we understand it, the status of this project is pending collaboration between the Fresno EOC and Madera County Public Works. We ask that MCTC direct these agencies to continue their work on this project as soon as possible, and oversee progress to ensure this project stays on track.

II. Request for Additional Information

Lastly, our organization requests a breakdown of transportation funding (whether from general fund dollars, local tax revenue, grant funding, or any other source of revenue) and expenditures on transportation and transit-related projects during the past two years in Madera County, the City of Madera, and the City of Chowchilla. This will be helpful in order for us to better understand the transportation and transit projects MCTC & other relevant agencies in Madera County have prioritized with the funding that has been available in the last few years.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these comments and to our request for additional information. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions.

Gratefully,

Madeline Harris
Policy Advocate



May 20, 2020
Madera County Transportation Commission
2001 Howard Rd, Ste 201
Madera, CA 93637

Submitted electronically via email to: publiccomment@maderactc.org

Re: Comments on Unmet Transit Needs in Madera County

Dear Commissioners Ahmed, Medellin, J. Rodriguez, Wheeler, M. Rodriguez, and Frazier,

I am writing to provide feedback based on our continued collaboration with residents in Fairmead, La Viña, and the City of Madera on transit needs that remain unmet by MCTC, as well as some comments regarding the substance of the unmet transit needs process itself. I have attached our comment letter from last year's unmet transit needs survey process as well as the response to comments I received from you in the mail for your reference. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this important public process and ask that the feedback we have received from community members on the ground be taken to heart and incorporated so that all Madera County residents have access to reliable, equitable, and affordable public transportation.

Regarding the process of the Unmet Transit Needs Survey, Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) must immediately alter its definition of "unmet transit needs" so that the Commission can be truly responsive to comments from the public. According to the response to comments document that we received last year after participating in the unmet transit needs process, MCTC's current definition of "unmet transit needs" "includes all essential trip requests by transit-dependent persons for which there is no other convenient means of transportation." This definition causes harm to communities lacking sufficient public transit options and to the region at large in a few ways.

I. "Persons for Which There is no Other Convenient Means of Transportation" are Not the Only People with Unmet Transit Needs in the Region

First, the definition operates on an assumption that public transit is a last resort for mobility wherever personal vehicles are not available (i.e. "transit-dependent persons *for which there is no other convenient means of transportation*"). As you know, the San Joaquin Valley is the most polluted air basin in the United States, and is consistently in violation of EPA standards for air quality. As the coronavirus pandemic has shown us, through significant improvements in air quality correlated with the vast reduction in vehicle miles traveled occurring during shelter-in-place orders, a significant amount of pollution in the San Joaquin Valley stems from emissions from vehicles. Rather than solely define unmet transit needs as gaps in access to essential services where no other option is available, MCTC should recognize *all* unmet transit needs in order to address *all* gaps in services that have widespread community acceptance, and move forward towards creating an effective transit system that encourages ridership and reduces



vehicle miles travelled in the region. This recommendation is consistent with goal number nine from the current Regional Transportation Plan which commits “to protect the environment and health of our residents by improving air quality and encouraging active transportation,” as well as goal number two which aims to “promote intermodal transportation systems that are fully accessible” (pg. 1-8, 1-9). Beyond the air quality benefits of reducing emissions from single passenger vehicles, we believe that planning transit infrastructure that is well designed based on community input surrounding *all* residents’ needs will draw in greater ridership, thus bringing in more fare revenue to the transit system for a greater return on investments in these programs.

II. Unmet Transit Needs Go Beyond “Essential Trip Requests”

Second, the definition limits MCTC’s understanding of “unmet transit needs” to “essential trip requests by transit-dependent persons.” Though “essential trip requests” was not defined in the response to comments document that we received and the definition is thus unclear, it appears to further limit the Commission’s understanding of “unmet transit needs.” Transit-dependent persons have the right to live full lives that are not solely limited to their homes and to essential services. MCTC should fully consider the public comments calling for greater access to public transit and other VMT-reducing mobility related to “non-essential” trips as a result.

III. MCTC’s Definition of Unmet Transit Needs is Too Narrow

Third, as indicated by the issues highlighted above, the current definition is unreasonably narrow. In fact, the Commission’s working definition is so narrowly crafted that it allowed MCTC to determine that none of the public comments received in last year’s Unmet Transit Needs process qualified as “unmet needs” that were “reasonable to meet.” These needs included requests for additional bus stops along existing routes, increased frequency of existing routes, improvements to the Dial-a-Ride hotline to make it more consistent, user-friendly, and language-accessible, hygiene improvements to buses, clear signage on buses and bus stops, and pursuit of additional funding to explore innovations to rural transit for unincorporated communities. All of these comments constitute clear needs related to the accessibility, reliability, and effectiveness of the region’s transit system, yet MCTC determined that “there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet in FY2019/20 within the jurisdiction of the City of Madera, County of Madera, and City of Chowchilla.”

As a result of these three issues with the working definition of “unmet transit needs,” the definition must be amended to include *all* unmet transit needs of Madera County residents that are reasonable to meet.

IV. MCTC Must Alter the Criteria for Needs that are “Reasonable to Meet”

In addition to changing the definition of “unmet transit needs,” the Commission must alter the criteria being used to determine if a need is “reasonable to meet” in the following ways in order to honor this important public process, meaningfully respond to comments, and work towards accomplishing the goals defined in the Regional Transportation Plan:



- A. The Commission must define “feasible.”
- B. The Commission must define what constitutes serving a “significant number of the population.” Furthermore, the definition of “significant number of the population” should be based on projected ridership should the unmet needs outlined in public comments be met, rather than on current ridership numbers.
- C. Regarding criteria (4) which indicates that unmet needs which are reasonable to meet must be “economical,” MCTC must publish and present updates to the public to demonstrate that the Commission is making every effort to pursue all relevant funding sources at the regional, state, and federal level that could meet the unmet needs addressed in residents’ comments in an economically feasible way.

Aside from these comments regarding the unmet transit needs process itself, I have attached comments (our letter from last year’s FY2019-20 unmet transit needs hearing) noting all of the unmet transit needs that our organization heard from residents in Fairmead, La Viña, and the City of Madera. I am submitting these comments once again for your consideration since, to our knowledge, none of these needs have been met. (That said, we acknowledge that the Fresno Economic Opportunity Commission has indicated their intent to incorporate a second bus stop in the community of Fairmead, and we look forward to continuing to partner with the community and with Fresno EOC to make that happen as soon as possible.)

Once more, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in this important public process, and please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

Gratefully,

Madeline Harris
Policy Advocate

- (b) The schedule must be updated to include more frequent routes, both Northbound to Chowchilla and Southbound to Madera; and
- (c) A second stop must be added on the Northern side of Fairmead around the vicinity of Avenue 23 to ensure that this crucial transit service is accessible to residents throughout the entire community. Provided that the only existing stop in Fairmead is located at Galilee Missionary Baptist Church on Avenue 22 ½ near Fairmead Blvd, riders who live on the other side of the community are not able to easily access the route.

While we recognize the challenges of providing successful transit infrastructure to rural communities with low population densities, we believe these suggested improvements would make the County's current and future investments in the Chowchilla-Fairmead-Madera bus route more worthwhile because Fairmead residents note that these improvements would increase ridership significantly. Currently, there are existing and potential transit users in the community who say they would use this service more consistently if it were more dependable and accessible.

Unmet need: Increased frequency of routes for Eastin Arcola-Ripperdan-La Viña Transit

The Eastin Arcola-Ripperdan-La Viña transit circuit runs twice daily on Wednesdays and Fridays only in order to connect these three communities with the transit system of the City of Madera. Currently, transit users must depart from La Viña at 9:15am and will arrive in Madera at 9:49am. They are then unable to depart from Madera en route back to La Viña until 1:00pm. On the other hand, if, for example, riders who depend on this circuit for medical appointments, which can often become extended or delayed, miss the bus back to La Viña at 1:00 pm, there are no additional returning routes until the following Wednesday or Friday.

The infrequency of this schedule results in a public transit circuit that is undependable and inaccessible for residents. Community members in La Viña note that (a) extending the circuit's schedule into the rest of the week (including weekends) and (b) implementing additional routes during the day would vastly increase ridership.

Growing and improving this particular program would not only be a worthwhile investment for encouraging ridership; rather, expansion of this circuit would also move the county closer toward its goal of "identify[ing] reliable transportation choices that support a diverse population" as outlined in the current Regional Transportation Plan (1-8).

Unmet need: Improvements to the MAX and "Dial-a-Ride" Systems in the City of Madera aimed at creating more equitable and user-friendly transit services

The following requested improvements were readily identified by transit users in the City of Madera as concrete changes that would encourage ridership, provide more equitable services, and help the city meet its goals related to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, the current Regional Transportation Plan identifies "transit enhancements" to the MAX transit system as well as "Operating Assistance" to Dial-a-Ride (DAR) as "Planned Transit Improvement" projects with funding allotments for each year beginning in 2014 until 2040

(Table 5-5). The following improvements recommended by MAX and DAR system users fall within the scope of these project descriptions.

I. Re-opening of the Walmart stop along Routes 1 and 2 in Northwest Madera

MAX riders point out that temporary closure of the Walmart bus stop at this crucial transit junction has increased barriers to public transit use, given that shoppers must cross a major thoroughfare (W Cleveland Ave) then proceed to walk an additional block to the next bus stop at the Walgreens location.

As a result, the closure makes household shopping at this location challenging and burdensome for transit users. Madera residents therefore request that the Walmart bus stop be re-installed and re-opened as soon as possible.

II. Installation of trash cans on MAX buses

MAX riders request that garbage cans be installed at the front and back of each transit vehicle in order to maintain clean and welcoming buses.

III. Thirty-minute incremented bus service on all MAX routes

While MAX riders in the City of Madera acknowledge that some of the routes have been improved such that the bus arrives at each stop every thirty minutes, they point out that some of the routes still only provide bus service once each hour. Residents who rely on public transit note that half-hour arrival increments make the service much more dependable. This is especially important in light of riders' concerns about getting passed by bus drivers and left at their bus stops even when they are on time to their bus stops and have properly signaled for drivers to stop. While this concern is connected to transit riders' requests that drivers undergo training (see below), it also further communicates the importance of a consistent and frequent bus schedule wherein riders do not have to wait an additional hour when missing a bus.

IV. Improvements to the "Dial-a-Ride" Dispatch System

Madera county residents and "Dial-a-Ride" (DAR) users report issues with language inaccessibility and systemic inconsistencies on the dispatch system that must be addressed. First, DAR users report that some dispatchers instruct them to reserve their ride 24 hours in advance. Other dispatchers say they must give 2 hours' notice, and others still request ride reservations *one week* in advance. Not only do these inconsistent timelines for advance notice make the service impractical and unusable for most riders, they also contribute to confusion.

As a result, DAR users request training for dispatch operators in addition to consistent publishing of DAR user guidelines online to ensure an accessible and consistent system that works well for all transit users.

Additionally, DAR users report being placed on long holds in order to access the Spanish language line. On occasion, these hold times last so long that DAR users

become unable to access the ride they hoped to reserve. For this reason, residents urge MCTC to train DAR dispatchers in basic language accessibility practices and ensure that Spanish-speaking dispatchers are available during all hours of operation. MCTC should also ensure DAR access to a language line in the likely event that DAR users do not speak English or Spanish.

V. Extended MAX service operation on weekends

Residents continually note the need to expand bus services to Sundays on all routes in the City of Madera. Additionally, residents and transit users note that the current hours of operation on Saturday are insufficient and undependable, and request that the hours be extended on Saturdays to better parallel the hours of operation during the week.

VI. Mandated discrimination prevention and accessibility training for all Madera County Transit Staff

Residents report a need for drivers, dispatchers, and all other transit service staff to receive training in intercultural competency, accessibility for people with disabilities, and other elements of discrimination prevention training in order to ensure equitable access and improved service for folks of all nationalities, ethnicities, genders, incomes, ages, and ability levels.

VII. Equip bus stops and buses with route-related signage

MAX riders in the City of Madera voice a need for directional guidance at bus stops and on buses. For example, buses should be equipped with digitized signage indicating the bus's direction (eg: "Northbound" versus "Southbound"), as well as the next stop or final destination (eg: "Walgreens" or "Medical Center"). Riders have expressed that this will prevent new transit users from becoming lost or boarding the wrong bus, which will make MAX services more accessible and welcoming to new riders and in turn facilitate increased use of MAX transit.

VIII. Apply for grant funding to secure free rides for students

Residents request that MCTC follow in the footsteps of other jurisdictions like Ventura County which have launched pilot programs allowing students to ride public transit for free. Madera residents suggest that MCTC secure free transit access for children and adult students who depend on public transit to get to school each day. Free rides will be granted to students who show their student ID upon boarding. MCTC can utilize Low Carbon Operations Transportation Program funding to initiate such a pilot program.

Unmet need: Pursuit of regional funding for an electric rural rideshare program

MCTC can also utilize Low Carbon Operations Transportation Program funding in addition to Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds for the purpose of launching a rural rideshare pilot program with an electric fleet of vehicles. Unincorporated communities in Fresno and Merced Counties have launched such programs for the purpose of

expanding rural access to transit and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through community-based and community-operated pilot programs of this nature.

Lastly, since residents and transit users across Madera County readily identified unmet needs and areas for transit improvement throughout the region during our conversations, we urge MCTC to consider conducting their own formal and thorough assessment of all existing routes and potential deficiencies in Madera County. Such an assessment would allow for staff and residents to collaborate towards a more complete and transparent understanding of transit needs beyond the limited scope of the unmet transit needs survey process.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to submit comments as part of this important public process, and will gladly serve as a resource to MCTC and the transit agencies in Madera County in seeking to address these unmet needs.

Sincerely,

Madeline Harris
Policy Advocate
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability