

## STAFF REPORT

**SUBJECT:** Unmet Transit Needs

**MEETING DATE:** January 21, 2010

**AGENDA ITEM:** 9

**STAFF CONTACT:** Aubrey Spilde, Michael Powers

### RECOMMENDATION:

Hold hearing and receive public input on unmet transit needs in Santa Barbara County (10:00 AM Time Certain)

### SUMMARY:

The annual Transit Needs Assessment process, as required by the state Transportation Development Act (TDA), requires SBCAG to hold at least one public hearing to receive public comment regarding unmet transit needs. Prior to allocating TDA funds for non-transit purposes, SBCAG must evaluate and make findings regarding the existence of these needs. Staff will use the definition and criteria the board approved in December 2006 to evaluate the public testimony and make recommended findings for the FY 2010-11 TDA cycle. See attachment 1 for the FY 2010-11 Transit Needs Assessment schedule.

At the hearing the board will receive public testimony—no action is required.

### DISCUSSION:

Transportation Development Act (TDA) statutes require that SBCAG hold at least one public hearing on the existence of unmet transit needs. Under the statutes, the highest priority for use of TDA funds is for transit, unless the SBCAG board finds there are no unmet transit needs or those unmet needs identified are not reasonable to meet. The purpose of the public hearing is to enable individuals to present testimony on any existing unmet transit needs.

At the hearing in Santa Maria, which is also accessible from the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room in Santa Barbara, individuals and groups can offer testimony on local, regional, and/or countywide transit needs. A Spanish language interpreter will be available to translate testimony received from Spanish language speakers to English. SBCAG will use the testimony presented at this hearing, as well as public input from transit agency workshops, surveys, e-mail, mail, and online comment form, to assist in making findings regarding the existence of any

unmet transit needs in jurisdictions planning to allocate TDA funds for purposes other than transit or bicycle/pedestrian facilities (i.e., streets and roads)

Staff published a notice of the public hearing in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* 30 days prior to the hearing (see attachment 2). Staff placed additional notices in the *Lompoc Record*, *Santa Maria Sun*, *Santa Maria Times*, Vandenberg AFB edition of the *Santa Maria Times*, the *Santa Ynez Valley News*, *Noozhawk* and posted on the SBCAG website. Staff also sent notice to Allan Hancock College, North County high schools, persons who submitted public comment last year and anyone who requested notification.

In addition, staff distributed flyers in both English and Spanish (see attachment 3) through SBCAG's Santa Barbara County Transit Advisory Council (SBCTAC) e-mail list. The list of over 80 persons includes public, transit and social services representatives, elected officials, and members of SBCTAC.

Staff distributed a follow-up press release in English and Spanish to the newspapers in early January. SBCAG staff also sent notice of the hearing to those on the SBCAG e-mail distribution list of approximately 800 contacts including English and Spanish language radio and television stations, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, and local chambers of commerce.

After the January 29<sup>th</sup> deadline for public comment, transit representatives from COLT (City of Lompoc Transit) and the County of Santa Barbara—the agencies planning, at the time this staff report is being prepared, to allocate a portion of their TDA funds for streets and roads—will meet with SBCTAC to discuss the input received and, if appropriate, the proposed method for implementing and paying for new services. SBCTAC will provide a recommendation to SBCAG on changes to transit services suggested by the public.

SBCAG staff will evaluate the public testimony using the SBCAG board's adopted definitions of "unmet transit need" and "reasonable to meet", taking SBCTAC's recommendations into consideration. Staff will present draft recommended findings to SBCTAC and the board in March or April, and final recommended findings for review and approval in April or May. The board must approve the findings before it can take action at its June meeting to allocate TDA funds for non-transit purposes.

The board is only required to make findings regarding unmet transit needs in jurisdictions that intend to claim FY 2010-11 TDA funds for non-transit purposes—North County and the city of Lompoc. Findings are not required in the south coast area served by SBMTD, nor in the cities of Buellton, Solvang, Guadalupe and Santa Maria, where local agency representatives have indicated they will be claiming all FY 2010-11 TDA funds for transit. Staff will nonetheless forward all public comments to the appropriate transit providers.

#### **COMMITTEE REVIEW:**

SBCTAC is involved throughout the Transit Needs Assessment process pursuant to PUC Section 99238. In October SBCTAC discussed options and provided direction on outreach efforts for the 2010 process, and approved the type, design, and distribution of public outreach materials. SBCTAC received presentations on and discussed the input received at the COLT and SMAT public workshops, at the committee's January 12 meeting. SBCTAC also prepared a letter (Attachment 4) for your consideration which emphasizes the progress made over the years in addressing unmet transit needs, but raises concerns about the implications of the state

budget deficit to transit funding. Later, SBCTAC will also provide a recommendation to the SBCAG board regarding the Transit Needs Assessment findings.

In addition, the Technical Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC) will review and comment on the draft Transit Needs Assessment and findings.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment	1	Unmet Transit Needs Assessment 2010 Schedule
Attachment	2	Public Hearing Notice
Attachment	3	Unmet Transit Needs Hearing Flyer, English and Spanish
Attachment	4	SBCTAC Letter of Comment

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**Unmet Transit Needs Assessment 2010 Schedule**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
COLT Workshop SMAT Workshops	November 18, 2009 August –September 2009
MTD Transit Talk	November 2009
Consultation with SBCTAC on public outreach	October 13, 2009
Notice of Public Hearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Santa Barbara News-Press</i> display ad (30 days prior to January 21, 2010)</li> <li>• Other display ads               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Lompoc Record</i></li> <li>○ <i>Santa Maria Sun</i></li> <li>○ <i>Santa Maria Times</i></li> <li>○ VAFB edition of <i>Santa Maria Times</i></li> <li>○ <i>Santa Ynez Valley News</i></li> <li>○ <i>Noozhawk</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Posting of notice on SBCAG website</li> <li>• Mailed notice to those who requested prior notification, North County high schools, and Allan Hancock College</li> <li>• Flyer distribution throughout North County</li> <li>• Press release to regional media, SBCAG distribution list</li> </ul>	December 2009 – January 2010
COLT, SMAT, MTD presentation to SBCTAC on workshop input	January 12, 2010
Public Hearing in Santa Maria	January 21, 2010
Consultation with TTAC and SBCTAC	February – March 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TTAC, 2/4/10 and 3/4/10</li> <li>• SBCTAC, 2/9/10 and 3/9/10</li> </ul>
Draft Transit Needs Assessment (TNA)	March – April 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TTAC review, 3/4/10 or 4/1/10</li> <li>• SBCTAC review, 3/9/10 or 4/13/10</li> <li>• SBCAG board review and public hearing, 3/18/0 or 4/15/10</li> </ul>
30-day review and comment period for Draft TNA	March – May 2010
Final TNA	April – May 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TTAC review, 4/1/10 or 5/6/10</li> <li>• SBCTAC review, 4/13/10 or 5/11/10</li> <li>• SBCAG board review, 4/15/10 or 5/20/10</li> </ul>

**ATTACHMENT 2  
Public Hearing Notice**

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of Santa Barbara County

United Way

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(805) 965-8591 ext. 120

jgoodbody@unitedwaysb.org or visit www.unitedwaysb.org/giftplanning

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**SBCAG**  
santa barbara county association of governments

**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE  
UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS**

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) is holding a hearing to receive public comment on transit needs in Santa Barbara County, as required under Section 99401.5 of the Public Utilities Code.

**The hearing will be held:**  
**Date:** Thursday, January 21, 2010  
**Time:** 10:00 AM (time certain)  
**Place:** Board of Supervisors Hearing Room  
 511 East Lakeside Parkway, Santa Maria, CA

*Remote testimony will be available at the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room, 105 E. Anapamu St., 4th Floor, Santa Barbara.*

If you cannot attend the hearing, you may still submit written comments up until Friday, January 29, 2010. You may e-mail them to [comment@sbcag.org](mailto:comment@sbcag.org) or mail them to SBCAG at 260 North San Antonio Road, Suite B, Santa Barbara, CA 93110. You may also submit comments using the online public comment form at [www.sbcag.org](http://www.sbcag.org).

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations to participate in the meeting should contact SBCAG at least three working days prior to the meeting at (805) 961-8900.

For more information, call SBCAG at 961-8900. Favor de llamar a SBCAG al 961-8900, para más información del reunión.

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**EXPLORE  
THE WORLD**

Sunday's  
**Travel**  
Section

**ATTACHMENT 3**  
**Unmet Transit Needs Hearing Flyer, English and Spanish**



## **How can the bus better serve your needs?**

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments will be holding a public hearing to learn about the transit needs of the residents of the North County. Please plan to attend and present your comments or concerns about transit service in the North County.

**When:** Thursday, January 21, 2010 @ 10:00 AM

**Where:** Board of Supervisors Hearing Room  
511 East Lakeside Parkway  
Santa Maria, California

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### **It's Easy!**

Simply come to the public hearing on January 21, 2010 by 10:00 AM. Fill out a comment card located on the table in the back of the Supervisors Hearing Room. Staff will forward your card to the Chair, who will call your name for you to come to the podium and express your views.

**You may also send your comments in writing by January 29, 2010 to:**

**Santa Barbara County Association of Governments**  
260 N. San Antonio Rd., Suite B  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110

-or by email to-

[comment@sbcag.org](mailto:comment@sbcag.org)





## ¿Como puede servirle mejor el autobús?

El Santa Barbara County Association of Governments tendrá una audiencia publica para aprender cuales son las necesidades de transito que los residentes del norte del condado tienen. Por favor asista y presente sus comentarios o preocupaciones acerca del servicio de transito en norte del condado.

**Cuando:** Jueves, 21 de Enero del 2010 @ 10:00 AM

**Donde:** Salón Board of Supervisors Hearing Room  
511 East Lakeside Parkway  
Santa Maria, California

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### ¡Es Fácil!

Simplemente llegue a la audiencia pública a las 10:00 am el 21 de Enero del 2010. Llene la tarjeta de comentarios que esta en la mesa atrás del salón. El personal entregara su tarjeta a el Encargado, quien llamara su nombre para que vaya al podio y exprese su punto de vista.

**También puede mandar sus comentarios por escrito antes del 29 de Enero 2010 a:**

Santa Barbara County Association of Governments  
260 N. San Antonio Rd., Suite B  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110  
-o por correo electronico a-  
[comment@sbcag.org](mailto:comment@sbcag.org)



**ATTACHMENT 4**  
**SBCTAC Letter of Comment**



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January 14, 2010

Re: 2010 Transit Needs Assessment

Dear Chair Carbajal and SBCAG Board Members:

As the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council for Santa Barbara County, the Santa Barbara County Transit Advisory Committee (SBCTAC) participates in the annual identification of transit needs. SBCTAC has been very involved in the 2010 transit needs assessment process. Beginning in October 2009, the committee:

- Discussed and provided direction on outreach efforts for 2010 transit needs process
- Approved the type, design, and distribution of public outreach materials
- Discussed public comment received at COLT and SMAT public workshops

SBCTAC recently met to discuss the public input received at workshops held by City of Lompoc Transit (COLT) and Santa Maria Area Transit (SMAT). COLT held an unmet transit needs workshop on November 18, 2009, while SMAT held six public workshops on its Short Range Transit Plan in August and September 2009. Based on the input received thus far, SBCTAC recommends no changes to existing transit services. SBCTAC would, however, like to stress the importance of maintaining transit service for seniors and persons with disabilities.

SBCTAC would also like to note that the transit needs assessment has led to successful new transit services in the past. The Wine Country Express, which serves Lompoc, Buellton, and Solvang, for example, began operating in August 2008 and has been quite successful thus far, achieving a 15% farebox recovery ratio in 2008-09.

In other exciting news, SMAT recently broke ground for the new Intermodal Transit Center, which it expects to open in fall 2010. COLT is also planning to build a new transit center; the agency hopes to begin the design phase in April or May. Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) is constructing three super stops, which it expects to complete by May 2010.

With regard to transit funding, the committee is also involved in reviewing and scoring grant applications for funding from the following Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs: Transportation for Elderly Person and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316), and New Freedom (Section 5317). Committee members recently served on a regional scoring committee to review the nine applications submitted to SBCAG for the FY 2009 Call for Projects.

SBCTAC is very concerned about the 2010-11 State Budget proposal Governor Schwarzenegger released on January 8, 2010. According to the California Transit Association, the proposal would "eliminate the sales tax on gasoline and diesel fuels and replace a portion of that revenue source with an increase in the excise tax on fuels, none of which would be

allocated to transit."<sup>1</sup> The "proposal would remove the funding stream that is supposed to flow into the [Public Transportation Account], effectively eliminating state funding for transit." And this comes after last year, when lawmakers eliminated the State Transit Assistance (STA) program, "the only ongoing source of state funding for day-to-day transit operations." Transit providers in Santa Barbara County may have to cut service, raise fares, or both. These changes could greatly affect local residents, particularly those that depend on transit, such as seniors and persons with disabilities. SBCTAC requests that the Board take a strong position against the Governor's proposal and/or any effort to reduce revenue to the Public Transportation Account (PTA) that reduces transit funding. SBCTAC would like SBCAG to take an active role in working with transit operators and groups such as the California Transit Association and the California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CalACT) to assist in the campaign to protect transit funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



David Damiano  
Chair  
Santa Barbara County Transit Advisory Committee

Enclosures

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<sup>1</sup> California Transit Association. (January 8, 2010). "Governor Proposes Yet Another Scheme To Raid State Transit Funding." [Press Release].  
<http://www.caltransit.org/files/resources/News%20Release%20010810%20-%20Reaction%20to%20Governor%27s%20Budget.pdf>