

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Unmet Transit Needs

MEETING DATE: April 15, 2010

AGENDA ITEM: 10

STAFF CONTACT: Aubrey Spilde

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive presentation and provide comments on the draft 2010 Transit Needs Assessment and findings of “unmet need” and “reasonable to meet.”

SUMMARY:

The state Transportation Development Act (TDA) requires SBCAG, through the annual Transit Needs Assessment process, to adopt, by resolution, findings regarding the existence of unmet transit needs and determinations on whether or not identified needs are reasonable to meet. SBCAG must adopt these findings before the agency can allocate TDA funds for non-transit purposes.

SBCAG received public input on unmet transit needs via testimony at the public hearing, transit agency workshops, e-mails, letters, and the Santa Barbara County Transit Advisory Committee (SBCTAC). Staff has evaluated this input using the board’s adopted definition of “unmet transit need” and criteria for determining whether or not a need is “reasonable to meet.”

The purpose of today’s meeting is to receive comments from the board and the public on the draft 2010 Transit Needs Assessment and the recommended findings of “unmet need” and “reasonable to meet.” Staff will make revisions to the report and recommended findings based on direction from the board. Staff expects the board to take final action on the report and findings at the May meeting.

DISCUSSION:

Attached for your review is the draft 2010 Transit Needs Assessment for Santa Barbara County. The report includes updated demographic data, social service program information, transit provider updates, and other information.

Process

Beginning in fall 2009, staff consulted with SBCTAC on the public outreach strategy and conducted a public outreach process. The following is a list of the various outreach efforts through which SBCAG collected public input:

- COLT Public Workshop, November 18, 2009
- SMAT Short Range Transit Plan Public Workshops, August & September 2009
- SBCAG Public Hearing, January 21, 2010—7 speakers
- Other comments—6 letters (including SBCTAC's letter), 25 e-mails, and 2 telephone calls

• Staff reviewed and consulted with SBCTAC and transit operators on public input received and analyzed the requests (as described below) to determine whether or not any expressed needs are unmet, and if so, whether or not they are reasonable to meet. Staff then prepared the attached draft report. Staff will bring the final report back to the board for adoption in May.

Assessment of Requests

Staff organized and reviewed all comments received through the public outreach process and included them in Chapter 6 and Appendices D through F of the attached draft report. SBCAG makes findings as required by TDA:

- for new or expanded transit service (not operational service issues¹)
- in jurisdictions not already dedicating all TDA Article 8 funding to public transportation—the City of Lompoc and unincorporated North County

SBCAG still receives comments regarding operational issues and requests for new services in the cities of Buellton, Guadalupe, Santa Maria, and Solvang, and on the South Coast (MTD's service area including the cities of Carpinteria, Goleta, and Santa Barbara, and unincorporated South County). Some of the comments related to operational issues and requests related to jurisdictions already dedicating all TDA funds to transit received this year include the following:

- More stops around Lompoc, especially H Street
- Breeze departure from Santa Maria to later than 5:20 PM
- A cement pad at the Breeze bus stop at the VAFB front gate
- Last Clean Air Express stop should be at Yanonali and State instead of Gutierrez and Nopal
- Commuter service from the South Coast to Santa Maria, Lompoc
- Weekend service from Santa Barbara to Santa Maria, Santa Ynez
- Service from Pioneer Valley High School (in Santa Maria) for special education students
- Better SMAT service in the evenings
- More direct (not through UCSB) routes from Ellwood to Goleta/Santa Barbara
- A later bus from downtown Santa Barbara to UCSB and Goleta

It is important to note that SBCAG forwards *all* comments and requests to the appropriate transit operators.

For those agencies planning to spend TDA funding on streets and roads, SBCAG must make one of the following findings:

- There are no unmet transit needs
- There are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet, or
- There are unmet transit needs, including needs that are reasonable to meet

¹ Operational issues include, but are not limited to, the adequacy or location of bus stops, minor route improvements, marketing, and service reliability.

Some of this year's requests for new or expanded service in the City of Lompoc and unincorporated North County were found to be unmet transit needs:

Request for New or Expanded Service	Source
Local	
Service to Beattie Park or River Park	Letter (ASERT card)
Additional service to Allan Hancock College	Letter (ASERT card)
Sunday service on key COLT routes	Letter, Public Hearing (SBCAN)
Extended late night service on COLT	Letter, Public Hearing (SBCAN)
Express service from Orcutt to SM	Letter, Public Hearing (SBCAN), SMAT Workshop (3)
Saturday night service from Town Center Mall to Orcutt	SMAT Workshop
Regional	
Commuter service from SYV to SM	E-mail (William twice), Telephone (Enrique)
Commuter service from SYV to Vandenberg	E-mail (William twice)
9:00 AM run on Wine Country Express	Letter (Linda)
Weekend service on Breeze (particularly on Sunday)	Letter, Public Hearing (SBCAN)
Service between Lompoc and Surf Amtrak	COLT Workshop
Service from Casmalia [to SM]	SMAT Workshop
Interregional	
Weekend service on Clean Air Express	Letter, Public Hearing (SBCAN)
Service from SM to South Coast (2-3x/wk for short trips)	Letter, Public Hearing (SBCAN)
Service from Lompoc to SB (during the day/every day)	Letter (SBCAN, Linda twice), Public Hearing (SBCAN)

Staff found none of these requests to be reasonable to meet according to SBCAG's adopted criteria. Some of the requested services were not projected to reach the required farebox recovery ratio within three years. Other requested services would have caused a claimant to incur expenses in excess of the maximum allocation of TDA funds. Several of this year's requests were for regional and interregional services, which are particularly challenging because multiple jurisdictions must work together to negotiate operating arrangements and cost-sharing agreements, and most jurisdictions already expend all TDA funding for transit purposes. It should be noted that most of the comments were identified by a very limited number of individuals or organizations and many of the requests were very general, making it challenging to analyze the need and assess reasonableness.

Therefore, after conducting the transit needs assessment for the 2010 TDA cycle, SBCAG's draft finding is that there are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.

COMMITTEE REVIEW:

Staff presented the draft 2010 Transit Needs Assessment to the Technical Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC) on April 1, 2010. Members had no questions or comments on the draft report or findings. Staff will present the draft 2010 Transit Needs Assessment to the Santa Barbara County Transit Advisory Committee (SBCTAC) on April 13, 2010 and report to the board on their input.

ATTACHMENT: Draft 2010 Transit Needs Assessment for Santa Barbara County