

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Unmet Transit Needs

MEETING DATE: October 6, 2007

AGENDA ITEM: 5

STAFF CONTACT: Michael G. Powers

RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss options and provide direction on outreach efforts for 2008 transit needs process.

DISCUSSION:

As part of the Transit Needs Assessment for 2008, SBCAG must prepare a Public Outreach Plan to receive comments for new or expanded transit service in Santa Barbara County. Public outreach activities in previous years have included the following:

- Public Hearings at SBCAG Board Meetings in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria in January and February
- Focus Group Meetings with local social service agencies
- Opportunity for input through telephone, email and sbcag.org online public input form
- On-board surveys to riders on local and interregional transit services

In addition, this past year staff conducted workshops for Transportation Connections Plan in each region of the County. The outreach effort resulted in public comments on unmet transportation and transit needs.

As part of last year's transit needs assessment, the cities of Lompoc and Santa Maria held public workshops in their respective communities to discuss schedules, routes and desire changes to public transit services. A representative from the County of Santa Barbara was on hand at these workshops. It is recognized that new routes and expanded services may have budgetary impacts and were considered in the context of available resources and competing transportation needs.

Member Agencies

Buellton ■ Carpinteria ■ Goleta ■ Guadalupe ■ Lompoc ■ Santa Barbara ■ Santa Maria ■ Solvang ■ Santa Barbara County

As a follow up to these workshops, representatives from the cities of Lompoc and Santa Maria and the County of Santa Barbara met with SBCTAC in January and February to discuss both the input received from the public regarding expanding transit service. Local agencies should apprise SBCTAC of the schedule for the public workshops this fall and work more effectively to involve SBCTAC members in the outreach for these workshops.

SBCTAC considered some issues associated with outreach at the conclusion of the 2007 Unmet Transit Needs Cycle. One important recommendation was improved outreach to the Spanish language community. Staff will prepare enhanced public outreach notices in Spanish and outreach to specific Spanish language radio stations. Another suggestion was improved outreach to VAFB. SBCAG staff vacancies have limited our outreach activities. Staff would appreciate suggestions on outreach to VAFB.

The SBCAG board will continue to have its annual unmet transit needs public hearing in North County as mandated by state law. This will occur in Santa Maria on January 17, 2008.

Staff believes that the annual extensive public outreach program on schedule changes by SBMTD has developed to the point that it is sufficient to identify most if not all unmet transit needs in the south coast and additional outreach by SBCTAC is unnecessary. Staff recommends that SBCTAC request the SBMTD staff member to SBCTAC report on the input received at these workshops during the January or February SBCTAC meeting so SBCTAC could provide SBCAG and hence SBMTD with its recommendations on service changes. This would avoid the need for duplicative outreach efforts by SBMTD and SBCTAC.

As the case with every year, it will be most important for SBCTAC members to help publicize and participate in the Transit Needs Assessment public outreach efforts at the local and regional level.