



**Santa Barbara County Transit Advisory Council
(SBCTAC)**

MINUTES

Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Buellton City Council Chambers
140 West Highway 246
Buellton, CA

SBCTAC Members Present

Jim Talbott (Chair)
Barry Stotts
Ed Zoost
Richard Fernbaugh
Victor Suhr
Howard Kraus
Bea Merwin
Julie Kahn
Austin O'Dell
Vibiana Saavedra
Tully Clifford
Rick Hummel
Cathy Farrar
Petra Löwen
Cynthia Boche
Dean Palius
Julie Guzman
Kirk Spry
Ernesto Paredes

SMOOTH
Community Access Network
SMAT/RAC
COLT Transit Agency - Lompoc
South Coast Transit User
R&D Transportation
Community Partners in Caring
Transit User – South County
SMAT
Farmworker Population Representative
Santa Ynez Valley Transit
LOVARC
Transit User – North County
Independent Living Resource Center
SBMTD – Transit Agency
Santa Ynez Valley People Helping People
Transit User – South Coast
Vocational Training Center
Easy Lift – CTSA

Others Present

Michael Seden-Hansen
Ashley Payne

Breeze Bus
Community Partners in Caring

SBCAG Staff

Gregg Hart

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Talbott called the meeting to order and initiated a round of introductions.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Talbott asked for public comment and there was none.

3. MINUTES

Following a motion by Austin O'Dell, seconded by Julie Guzman, the minutes of August 10, 2007 were approved.

4. MEASURE D RENEWAL

A. Receive status report on Measure D Renewal effort.

Gregg Hart described the current status of the renewal effort and the work of the two subcommittees including the two draft investment plans that would be discussed tomorrow, September 12, 2007.

Ernesto Paredes asked how the amount allocated to specialized transit was determined. Gregg Hart replied the amount was an increase over the allocation in the current measure. The allocation included in the south county subregional committee draft investment plan was half of the total allocated countywide in Measure D-2006.

Dean Palius commented that the local flexible funds are not allocated by transportation category and asked why the Solvang and Guadalupe projects are defined as Regional Projects. Gregg Hart replied the North County Measure D Policy Development Committee draft investment plan was originally created by staff from the City of Santa Maria in consultation with the public works staff of the other north county jurisdictions.

Austin O'Dell commented the flexible local program can be spent on any eligible projects and that 22.8% of the regional program is transit funding. Dean Palius responded that is only 5% of the total funding however and stated SBCTAC should insist on some percentage of the local flexible funds be allocated specifically to transit.

Vibiana Saavedra stated she was concerned about regional projects that were not funded. TDM is the most cost-effective transportation investment and it's not funded at all in the north county investment plan. The lack of any identified funding for specialized transit was a takeaway from the existing measure. She added the rural highway safety program should also be funded considering the number of deaths on Highway 166. She suggested a bikeway project on the Santa Maria River levee that could take bicycle and pedestrians off 166. She also noted there was no specific funding for safe routes to school despite the lack of sidewalks in many parts of Orcutt.

Barry Stotts also noted there was no money for safe routes to school. He commented that Highway 166 will soon have 10' shoulders for bicycles as part of the safety improvement project that will soon be underway.

Rick Hummell asked why the two plans are so different. Jim Talbott responded there are cultural differences north to south county and development is at a different level as well. The north county is more rural and less dense than the south.

Tully Clifford stated there have not been any regional safe routes to school projects funded by Measure D. Local agencies have done safe routes to school projects with their local flexible funds. Solvang will identify how its local funds will be spent.

Vibiana asked how the shifting of public transportation funds to the state general fund will impact local transit agencies. Austin O'Dell replied the final budget trailer bills have not yet been signed, but the result will likely be a reduction in the expected funding to local transit agencies. He added the loss of funding won't affect current service levels because the funding cut is applied to a future anticipated funding increase.

Jim Talbott inquired hadn't the voters enacted a constitutional protection against this kind of budget raid. Austin O'Dell replied the legality of the transfer is subject to legal challenge.

B. Consider Update to Measure D Reauthorization letter.

Cynthia Boche stated she would like SBCTAC to support guaranteed funding for MTD. She also expressed support for the previous comments that SBCATAC should be advocating for a greater share of regional funds for transit and other transportation alternatives.

Barry Stotts indicated the previous letter SBCTAC had sent raised the issue of the need for funding for specialized transit.

Cynthia replied can we recommend 25% of local funds be allocated to transit. Tully Clifford responded we should recommend local agencies identify what they plan to spend their Measure D funds on specifically. Austin O'Dell stated it would be difficult to see 25% being acceptable but perhaps a lower percentage could be considered.

Bea Merwin added the projects that are not funded which serve the elderly and disabled need to be funded. Vibiana Saavedra added this plan is only a draft. As SBCAG's transit advisory committee, we need to advocate for those projects that are not funded. The minimum should be the preservation of the status quo.

Jim Talbott stated the committee needs to start thinking about the tradeoffs required to find funding for the currently unfunded projects. He asked is TDM funding as important as specialized transit. Kirk Spry stated he understood the political realities but SBCTAC needs to keep putting the public transportation needs of the community in front of the decision makers.

Ernesto Paredes commented if funding for specialized transit was not included in the investment plan it would be an outrage. Specialized transit is the only original measure D program proposed on the south county plan. The need today and into the future is so much greater than in 1989 because of the county's aging population demographics.

Jim Talbott asked if Easy-Lift gets funding other than from Measure D and Ernesto replied affirmatively. Jim noted Easy-Lift receives direct /measure D funding but SMOOTH does not. North County specialized transit operators only receive TDA funds not Measure D funds.

Ed Zoost stated SBCTAC should focus its advocacy on our core mission. Focus on what we are getting rather than what we are not.

Barry Stotts indicated the population in North County is still growing and so are transit needs. We need to plan to meet these growing needs and status quo funding for specialized transit is not sufficient. Dean Palius responded the north county draft investment plan doesn't even have status quo funding for specialized transit.

Jim Talbott again reiterated Measure D funds in North County currently go to transit operators for ADA compliance not to paratransit providers.

Dean Palius added that we need to increase funding to the Regional Program to fund specialized transit or require the local agencies to allocate a specific percentage of local funds to transit, perhaps 20%. The local agencies also need to be more transparent with their local Measure D program of projects.

Tully Clifford reminded members of the committee the draft investment plans allocation of 77.5% to the local agencies is actually less money than the local agencies currently receive from Measure D.

Vibiana Saavedra stated from a political perspective it will be difficult to achieve but SBCTAC needs to advocate for transit. Measure D is a sales tax and everyone who pays the tax deserves to get their share. Bus riders and the elderly should not subsidize road users only. She added she wouldn't support cannibalizing other alternative transportation programs to fund other transit projects.

Jim Talbott summarized the discussion and said he understood the committee discussion to support establishing a percentage allocation for transit from the local share.

Vibiana Saavedra stated our previous letter raised the same issue.

Jim Talbott added the other item that has emerged from the discussion is increasing funding in the regional program to 25% and reducing the local share to 75% in order to have more funding available for specialized transit. Another alternative would be to reduce the regional highway projects by 10% and shift that \$10 million to transit projects.

Dean Palius suggested giving the committee the choice of how to find the necessary dollars but insisting on an increased funding level for transit. He added we should recommend allocating 20% of local funds be spent on transit and require greater specificity in the local Measure D program of projects.

Kirk Spry asked how much money 20% would represent.

Dean Palius added there should also be maintenance of effort requirement,

Austin O'Dell stated we should keep the local funding flexible.

Jim Talbott asked what the local agencies spend on transit. Richard Fernbaugh replied we get what we need. Austin O'Dell added that next year the City of Santa Maria will be spending all of its TDA funds on transit. Tully Clifford explained Solvang and Buellton spend all of their TDA funds on the Santa Ynez Valley Transit and as a result, Solvang doesn't spend any of its

Measure D funds on transit. SNAT receives \$40,000 per year from Measure D for ADA compliance costs.

Tully Clifford stated some jurisdictions will play definitional games if they are required to spend a specific percentage of their Measure D local funds on transit.

Dean Palius stated we want more money for transit. Solvang and Buellton spend all of their TDA funds on transit the other jurisdiction don't.

Vibiana Saavedra commented looking ahead 30 years, the transit needs in North County will be greater. If flexibility is important, we could agree to benchmarks over time rather than a fixed annual percentage expenditure. Gregg Hart replied Measure D-2006 contained specific target allocations for alternative transportation from the local share and the targets were flexible over time not rigid annual expenditure requirements.

Jim Talbott suggested a 10% target might be more reasonable. Tully Clifford indicated the City of Solvang has spent a large amount of its Measure D funds on pedestrian improvements in downtown and on safe routes to school projects.

Dean Palius suggested recommending that the North County investment plan contain the \$4.5 million the South County plan allocates to specialized transit and the cost of extending transit service from Lompoc to Buellton and add that combined amount into interregional transit. The committee can decide where to reduce funding to make this transfer work.

Ashley Payne supported increasing the amount for specialized transit in North County. The demographics are overwhelming. Jim Talbott agreed \$4.5 million is not sufficient and we need to define eligibility for these funds. NGO's should be eligible. Dean Palius suggested taking time to define the process. Perhaps a committee of local agencies should suggest a program.

Jim Talbott restated the committee direction. SBCTAC would recommend adding the cost of Lompoc to Buellton service and add \$6 million for specialized transit, the eligibility and allocation process to be determined by local agencies. Funds would not come from existing interregional transit funding.

Dean Palius moved and Julie Kahn seconded the motion. Motion approved with Austin O'Dell and Tully Clifford opposed.

Julie Kahn suggested there should be more money for trains.

Cynthia Boche suggested recommending the full \$129 million requested by MTD in the south county investment plan and increasing funding for specialized transit from \$4.5 million to six million.

Dean Palius made a motion recommending amending the south county investment plan to include the full \$129 million requested by MTD and to increase funding for specialized transit from \$4.5 million to \$6 million. Petra Lowen seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Gregg Hart requested clarification regarding the text of the letter that would be sent to both committees. Jim Talbott explained the committee would retain the introductory text of the previous letter, delete the first two bullet points and the last bullet point. Retain only the third

bullet point's reference to setting funding levels for transit as high as possible and including the two additional bullet points created by the two committee motions.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gregg Hart called attention to the distribution of the notice on SBCAG's intent to update the Public Participation Plan.

6. ADJOURN

There being no other business, Jim Talbot announced that SBCTAC was adjourned at 3:42 PM until the next scheduled meeting on October 9, 2007