Regular Meeting of the
Social Services Transportation Advisory Council

LOCATION
MCAG Conference Room
369 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 723-3153

DATE
Thursday October 17, 2019

TIME
12:00 P.M.

SOCIAL SERVICE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Vacant
Lynn Downum-Hanzal - Local Representative of a Transit Service Agency
Gayle Miller - Social Service Provider for Persons with a Disability
Allen Norris - Senior Transit Rider
Katherine Molthen - Transit Rider with a Disability
Christine Bobbitt - Local Representative of a Transit Service Operator
Norma Cordona - Social Service Provider for Seniors
Linda Dash - Social Service Provider for Persons of Limited Means
Diane Mejia - Transit Rider – Person of Limited Means
Marty Christman - Transit Rider – Person of Limited Means
Carrie Pitcock-Quirarte - Social Service Transportation Provider for Persons with a Disability
Chante Dobbins - Social Service Transportation Provider for Seniors
AGENDA

At least 72 hours prior to each regular MCAG Social Services Transportation Advisory Council convening, a complete agenda packet is available for review on the MCAG website at www.mcagov.org or at the MCAG office, 369 W. 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340. 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 MCAG. Persons with questions concerning agenda items may call MCAG to make an inquiry regarding the nature of items described on the agenda.

INTERPRETING SERVICES

Interpreting Services are not provided at MCAG’s public meeting unless requested at least three (3) business days in advance. Please contact Eva Garibay at (209) 723-3153 x 108 during regular business hours to request interpreting services.

Servicios de interpreté no son ofrecidos en las juntas públicas de MCAG al menos de que se soliciten tres (3) días de negociación en anticipación. Para solicitas estos servicios por favor contacte a Eva Garibay al (209) 723-3153 x 108 durante horas de oficina.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Representatives or individuals with disabilities should contact MCAG at (209)723-3153 at least three (3) days in advance of the meeting to request auxiliary aids or other accommodations necessary to participate in the public meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public wishing to address agenda items or comment on any item not on the agenda may do so during agenda item 2 – Public Comment. Persons may also address any item on the agenda during consideration of that item. Comments are limited to three (3) minutes per person. Please state your name and city or community of residence for the record. For items not on the agenda, no action will be taken. If it requires action, the item will be referred to staff and/or placed on the next agenda.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merced County Association of Governments</td>
<td>(209)723-3153</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mcagov.org">www.mcagov.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Joint Powers Authority for Merced County</td>
<td>(209)723-3100</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mercedthebus.com">www.mercedthebus.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merced County Regional Waste Authority</td>
<td>(209)723-4481</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mcrwma.org">www.mcrwma.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Merced Data Special Services</td>
<td>(209)723-3153</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mcaggis.com">www.mcaggis.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Measure V</td>
<td>(209)723-3153</td>
<td><a href="http://www.measurev-mcag.com">www.measurev-mcag.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
<td>ACTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Introductions</td>
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<td>2. Public Comment</td>
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<td>+ 3. Minutes of the September 25, 2019 Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Meeting</td>
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<td>+ 4. Unmet Transit Needs FY 2020-2021</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Natalia Austin</td>
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The regular meeting of the Social Service Transportation Advisory Council held Wednesday, September 25, 2019, at the Merced County Association of Governments conference room located at 369 W. 18th Street, Merced, California, was called to order at 12:15 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT
Lynn Downum-Hanzal, Social Service Provider for Persons with a Disability
Gayle Miller, Senior Transit Rider
Christine Bobbitt, Social Service Provider for Seniors
Diane Mejia, Transit Rider - Person of Limited Means
Norma Cardona, Social Service Provider for Persons of Limited Means
Linda Dash, Social Service Provider for Persons of Limited Means
Marty Christman, Transit Rider – Person of Limited Means

MEMBERS ABSENT
Allen Norris, Transit Rider with a Disability
Carrie Pitcock-Quirarte, Social Service Transportation Provider for Persons with a Disability
Chante Dobbins, Social Service Transportation Provider for Seniors
Vacant, Local Representative of a Transit Service Agency
Katherine Molthen, Local Representative of a Transit Service Operator

OTHERS PRESENT
Natalia Austin, GIS Analyst
Mauricio Torres, Assistant Planner
Matt Fell, Transportation Planning Manager
1. **Introductions**

   So noted.

2. **Public Comment**

   None.

3. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

   Diana Mejia moved to nominate Allen Norris as Chair.
   Seconded by Norma Cardona
   **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

   Diana Mejia moved to nominate Lynn Downum-Hanzal as Vice Chair
   Seconded by Marty Christman
   **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. **Minutes of the February 28, 2019 Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Meeting**

   Diana Mejia moved to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2019 Social Services Transportation Advisory Council Meeting.
   Seconded by Marty Christman
   **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. **Unmet Transit Needs 2020 – Public Hearing Process and Schedule**

   Natalia Austin gave a presentation reviewing the schedule of the unmet transit needs hearings and what to expect at the hearings. The definitions of unmet transit need and reasonable to meet were considered and explained. Members of the council discussed their availability to be present at the hearings and transportation to the hearings. Members also discussed bus operational issues.

   **THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE MEETING WAS ADJOINED AT 1:00 P.M.**
MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 9, 2019

TO: Social Services Transportation Advisory Council

FROM: Natalia Austin, GIS Analyst

RE: Unmet Transit Needs FY 2020 - 2021

BACKGROUND

The Transportation Development Act (TDA) provides two major sources of funding for public transportation: The Local Transportation Fund (LTF) and the State Transit Assistance Fund (STA). These funds are for the development and support of public transportation needs that exist in California and are allocated to areas of each county based on population, taxable sales and transit performance.

All counties eligible for this funding are required to establish and implement a process of citizen participation, utilizing the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) to hear the needs of transit dependent or disadvantaged persons. CA PUC Section 99238.5 (a) requires that this process provide for at least one public hearing annually.

In accordance with the Transportation Development Act (TDA), four public hearings were conducted throughout Merced County to solicit public comment regarding transit needs in Merced County. In addition, MCAG received comments from citizens regarding unmet transit needs through mail, email, phone, social media and an online survey.

If the MCAG Governing Board through the unmet transit needs finding process identifies an “unmet transit need” and determines the need is “reasonable to meet”, these transit needs must be met before any TDA funds are expended for non-transit uses, such as street and road projects. (Revised definitions of “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet” were adopted by the MCAG Governing Board on February 16, 2017 and are attached for reference.)

According to CA PUC Section 99401.5 (c), an agency's determination of needs that are “reasonable to meet” shall not be made by comparing unmet transit needs with the need for streets and roads.

The SSTAC has three options when making a recommendation to the MCAG Governing Board based on public comment and the application of the “unmet transit needs” and “reasonable to meet” definitions:

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

MCAG staff has provided all public comments received during the FY 2020-2021 unmet transit needs process for the SSTAC to evaluate and apply the “Unmet Transit Need” and “Reasonable to Meet” MCAG Governing Board adopted definitions.

If you have any questions about this agenda item, please contact Natalia Austin at (209)723-3153 x 127 or natalia.austin@mcagov.org.

REQUESTED ACTION

Recommend the MCAG Governing Board adopt by resolution a finding of fact for FY 2020-2021 with the following options:

a. There are no unmet transit needs; or
b. There are no unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet; or

Attachments: Definitions of the Terms “Unmet Transit Need” and “Reasonable to Meet”
Potential Unmet Transit Needs – FY 2020-2021
Unmet Transit Needs Public Comments FY 2020 - 2021
MERCED COUNTY UNMET TRANSIT NEED AND REASONABLE TO MEET DEFINITIONS

Unmet Transit Need:

An unmet transit need is an inadequacy in the existing public transit services for persons recognized as transit-dependent in Merced County.

Reasonable to Meet:

An unmet transit need that meets the definition above and meets all the following criteria shall be considered reasonable to meet:

Minimum requirements:

1. **Feasibility** - The proposed transit service can be achieved safely and will not violate local, state, and federal law.

2. **Funding** - The proposed transit service will not cause the transit operator to incur expenses greater than the maximum allocation of Transportation Development Act Local Transportation Funds.

3. **Equity** - The proposed transit service will benefit the general public, with particular consideration for those who rely on public transportation, seniors, and disabled persons, within the meaning of Title VI or other similar assessments.

Other areas for consideration:

4. **Community Acceptance** - There needs to be demonstrated interest of citizens in the proposed transit service such as multiple comments or petitions.

5. **Potential Ridership** – The proposed transit service will not reduce the existing level of transit service and will comply with safety, security and maintenance requirements. The proposed transit service will meet “new service” ridership performance standards established for the transit operator in its agency planning documents. Measurement of ridership performance may include assessing passengers per hour and passengers per mile.

6. **Cost Effectiveness** – Unless the proposed transit service is eligible for a two-year exemption period, it must not reduce the ability of the overall transit system service to meet minimum fare box return requirements as stated in the Transportation Development Act statutes or established by Merced County Association of Governments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC COMMENT</th>
<th>IS THIS AN UNMET NEED?</th>
<th>SSTAC RECOMMENDATION / DISCUSSION</th>
<th>Reasonable to Meet Requirements</th>
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<td>Feasibility Funding Equity</td>
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<td>NEW SERVICE</td>
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<td>Community Acceptance Potential Ridership Cost Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Provide service to North Merced (north of Merced College)</td>
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<td>EXTENDED SERVICE</td>
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<td>Provide additional fixed route service to Los Banos</td>
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<td>Provide additional service in Planada</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Extend service hours in the evenings so college students can get downtown after night classes end.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Increase service frequency on weekends</td>
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Unmet Transit Needs – Public Hearing

Merced Civic Center – Sam Pipes Room, October 2, 2019, 3:00PM

• No Comments
  - Adjourned at 3:30 PM

Unmet Transit Needs – Public Hearing

Merced Civic Center – Sam Pipes Room, October 2, 2019, 6:00 PM

• Julie Kelly – Rides 6 days a week. M6 is the bus to nowhere. Needs to go back to the way it was when it went to Target, Walmart, the College, and Mercy Hospital and not go to the Transpo. No reason for the bus to go to downtown just to get back to the area near Hoover school. Willing to pay the price for the M6 to go back to the way it was. The special inserts that she wears in her shoes make it hard to walk. At the corner of 26th and Glen, there is no bench for her to sit.

• Richard Cummins – Fixed route rider every day. Could buy a car but does not want to. Agrees that those that near Hoover have to
transfer 2 or 3 times now because of the inconvenience of M6. Preferred to walk a few times to Walmart instead of ride the M6 because it’s so inconvenient. More announcements and better communication should be on the buses to let passengers know about transferring to different routes. Perhaps the UC route could be modified to cover the Hoover area. Considering those riders that may be challenged – the M6 makes getting to Target, Walmart and other places so difficult. The old M6 used to go to the northeast side of Merced. This area still needs to be serviced. Will send an email regarding more route suggestions.

- Jordan Collignon – Fixed transit rider. Northeast part of Merced is not serviced when the UC route doesn’t run especially on weekends. Suggesting that the M6 run on Yosemite Ave in the Northeast area to service people there. The neighborhood by Bellevue and G is not being serviced, except for the Cat Tracks. Adjust the M1 to service that area. Many students have been complaining that the Cat Tracks buses are very packed because of lack of parking at the campus. So more students may be using the UC route. Please expand service on the UC Route to accommodate the students. Perhaps communicate with TAPS more to see where some accommodations can be made. Regarding the app: Many of the stops shown on the app are not being stopped at by the bus even when requested.

- Cindy Miiller – For many routes, the bus driver may not be signing in, so it can’t be tracked on the app. Lives near Loughborough and Austin. Would like a sign to show where the bus stops in this area. The bus drivers have a hard time seeing riders and they miss their bus because there is no sign/stop. The drivers have not
been putting down the ramps on the buses or announcing the stops. The bus drivers are not stopping when being flagged down.

- Milen Miiller – The bus drivers have not been “kneeling” the bus. So the step down is very large. The ADA announcer does not work on several buses. Needs the announcer to work because when he rides the bus by himself he will need the announcements to know when to get off the bus. Particularly BUS 172 had garbled sounds. Other times, does not announce the location at all or the announcer volume is very low. M1 – near the Housing Authority, needs a pole or something to designate the stop.

Adjourned 6:56 PM
Unmet Transit Needs – Public Hearing

Gustine Council Chambers – City of Gustine
October 3, 2019, 3:00PM

- No comments
  Adjourned at 3:15 PM

Unmet Transit Needs – Public Hearing

Gustine Council Chambers – City of Gustine
October 3, 2019, 6:00PM

- No comments
  Adjourned at 6:15 PM
Hi I have a problem with ur planda bus schedule you guy need to expand their time because u have a bus come at 6:53 in the morning and then another that come to planda at 8:53 in the morning then the last bus for planda is 7:30 that is not right people have jobs and no car so it hard to get a round so I don't like planda bus schedule I hope you guys can fix that thank
Natalia Austin

From: Matt Graham <mrgraham718@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 03, 2019 10:03 AM
To: Natalia Austin
Subject: The Bus Unmet Needs Hearings - October 2019

Natalia,

Hello, I am in Turlock in Stanislaus County but I have a few more suggestions this time for THE BUS for the Unmet Needs hearings. Unfortunately though not too much notice was given this time so maybe one of them could be to give more advance notice to everyone just like how the February ones went.

I see that they plan to bring back the evening service again which is good but also for more service available or more frequent for Saturdays as well would be good and if we can get the UC route to run on Saturdays that’s the only route I know that only runs on weekdays.

I was thinking that a few of the commuters which are LB and P routes should run more often maybe to add for the LB another trip leaving Merced between the 8:15 and 12:45 bus since there is big gap and to have the LB make the Merced College trip more again too. For the P is the same thing to add another round before the 1:30 bus and the later trips to also return back to Merced afterwards. Let’s make on Saturdays there be an LB and a P leave Merced before the noon ones which is the earliest right now.

I wanted to suggest a possible new route for a Turlock express or T2 route that leaves from Merced College rather than Transpo to go to Turlock on Santa Fe this would be a faster way to go.

I do also have a few suggestions to modify some existing routes and that we should separate M1 and M2 to not overlap so much and make M1 shorter then to bring back the old M2 going south after Transpo. Maybe instead of M2 south again we could even just get rid of all south loops for Merced routes and just have a similar to route 5X route again which is the route for the entire south section instead.

M3 is a little long too so maybe to get rid of after the College going by the hospital since M4 and UC already goes there to make M3 shorter, same with south loop to shorten M3 and bring back old M2. For M6 we should bring it back to how the old M6 was still going the same way but extend to go to the hospital again and Merced College so we can have M6 go between both Merced College and Transpo.

UC route we can have keep going after stopping at the College going north to UC to keep going on M St to Bellevue to get to the UC this way is faster and we can add bus service to more north Merced this way. On the way back from the UC we can have the south loop go on G St to Amtrak instead to cover more area with this route. For W2 route I was thinking to go on Highway 59 and Cooper like the same way as W1 to get to Beachwood the same way as W1 eliminates confusion with the bus stops there and that since L already goes from Merced College to Winton to change W2 or even W1 to go back the old way several years ago through the center of Atwater and to Super Target / Walmart, maybe go south on Buhach, west on Juniper, to the Library, and back the same way the A1 goes to get to Super Target. Maybe we could also combine A1 and A2 into just a two-way loop around Atwater.

On the Merced routes smaller buses get overcrowded on those busier routes like M1, M2, M3, and M4 main Merced routes going between Merced College and Transpo, we should have it back to the old way from a few
years ago with the bigger ones on those routes again instead and maybe not so much for if any of the other commuter routes has lower ridership does not need as much of a big bus as the busy Merced local routes does and maybe for A1 if that route gets busy too. Those smaller buses that have been getting used out there lately the stop request buttons also don't work and AC doesn't work in the hot summer days like it does on the bigger ones that the AC works very good for the seats in the back.

Lastly, there still needs to be more signs at some of the bus stops but maybe we can eliminate some of the stops that has too low number of boardings to make the route shorter.

Thank you,

Matt Graham

Sent from Outlook
Good morning Mrs Austin:
My name is Rene Garza. I was forwarded this email, and as I am unable to attend the mentioned meetings, I will mention some of my comments, and ideas for the Merced paratransit, and what I have observed.
I moved here from Austin, TX, where I always used paratransit to get me to my appointments, work, grocery store, etc. One thing that I noticed, is that the fairs are a little expensive, especially for people who are on a fixed income. For my first suggestion is that maybe the paratransit can set up a monthly, all you can ride pass for a set, and reasonable price.
Second, some drivers on the paratransit should really need to be trained/re-trained in assisting some of us that have physical disabilities, like people who use walkers, who may need assistance with just having the door opened instead of having them struggle, or assisting the blind locating that same door instead of yelling directions from the drivers seat. This, by the way, happened to myself, and I ended up poking my eye with a branch, just because this certain driver did not want to get out of his seat, and assist me to the door.
Third, your website to leave comments is not accessible to where the buttons are not clearly labeled, and my screen reader can not read them.
Lastly, are there any talks of getting an accessible app where we would be able to purchase passes on our phones, and just scan them on the pass machine? This would also reduce the amount of paper.
Regards,
Rene Garza
Dear Ms. Austin,

This is in relation to your request for feedback regarding unmet transit needs. Here are my suggestions, which hopefully will be taken into account by the decision-makers in your organization:

1) Please make the northbound route of T Bus shorter, as it takes us around an hour and twenty minutes to get to Turlock (the southbound route takes only about an hour, which is much more tolerable).

2) As the economy is not showing any sign of improvement for people on fixed incomes, please consider lowering the price of your 31-day pass ($60 is just too much).

3) One thing I have noticed recently is how dirty the buses are even in the early morning hours (the seats are not vacuumed/disinfected and there is shoe dirt on the back of the seats facing passengers. Please make our buses more hygienic, then.

4) It seems there is no bus service to the Merced Transportation Center for people living in the Bellevue Ranch area; for example, on Mathias Way. Please make sure this is also addressed.

Regards,

Mr. Mirfakhraie
Did you participate in the February 2019 Unmet Needs Process?
6 out of 6 answered

1. Yes - 50% (3 responses)
2. No - 50% (3 responses)

Would you like to provide a new comment?
3 out of 6 answered

1. Yes - 0% (0 responses)
2. No - 100% (3 responses)

Where is your Transportation Need?
3 out of 6 answered

1. Merced - 100% (3 responses)
2. Atwater - 0% (0 responses)
3. Del Rio - 0% (0 responses)
4. Dos Palos - 0% (0 responses)
5. Gustine - 0% (0 responses)
### Time Transit Services are Used?

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<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
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### Day(s) of the Week Transit Services are Used?

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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Are there places you would like to travel to by bus but cannot?

3 out of 6 answered

1. Yes
   - 33% / 1 resp.

2. No
   - 66% / 2 resp.
Unmet Transit Needs 2020 Survey
- Additional Comments

Name of Street or Cross Street Where You Begin Your Trip?: Yosemite Ave
Where Is Your Destination?: Merced Transpo
When: Morning, Afternoon, Evening, Mon - Sun
Comments: Both TheBus and CatTracks bus service from UC Merced to the downtown area ends one hour too early before night classes end (usually 9:30pm). Therefore, it is impossible to get downtown after late night classes.

Name of Street or Cross Street Where You Begin Your Trip?: Yosemite Ave
Where Is Your Destination?: UC Merced or Merced Transpo
When: Morning, Afternoon, Evening, Mon - Sun
Comments: Yosemite Ave is a region of ambiguity for riders boarding and departing. Only the M3 and the UC route operate in the area east of G st. I understand that the bus system here operates under a flag-down system, but this system has been quite inconsistent along this stretch of road. A stop is shown on TheBus app for M3 right across from Raley's, but many drivers refuse to stop at this location when I need to board, and instead drive up to the shoulder across from the Promenade shopping center, despite having a wide shoulder to use before that point. A similar point can be made for the UC bus across from the Promenade. Further east where the UC route operates, there are inconsistencies with drivers stopping to drop off people that signal a stop request east of Paulson Ave. Many drivers seem to use only the stops at Parsons Ave and Via Moraga, even though more stops are listed on the app. Furthermore, there are bus stop signs that do not exist along the points that show up on the app, and signs like the one on near Dove Ct. that is completely covered by the tree so the bus drivers can't see it, and shoulders that have no existing signage. This part of the street seems to behave more like a stop only system and not a flag-down system, thus creating this inconsistency between what we witness in reality versus what is listed on the website. I would appreciate it if TheBus can help alleviate this problem, and if need be, I can assist you in pointing out areas along this road and other streets in Merced that have similar issues like the ones on Yosemite Ave.

Name of Street or Cross Street Where You Begin Your Trip?: N/A
Where Is Your Destination?: COVE
When: Morning, Mon - Sat
I would like to travel to: More places, but the fairs get expensive esp. when I am on a fixed income.
Comments: Fairs are expensive just to get to work, and I only work for a few hours, as I need to rely on friends to take me to the grocery store, or to a movie, but I want more independence.