

NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING
OF
SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Merced County Association of Governments
Conference Room
369 West 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2006 at 9:00 A.M.

1. INTRODUCTION

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY ADDRESS
ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA DURING
CONSIDERATION OF THAT ITEM.**

2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

**AT THIS TIME, PERSONS MAY COMMENT
ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA.**

**PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND
ADDRESS FOR THE RECORD.**

**ACTION WILL NOT BE TAKEN ON
ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA. IF IT REQUIRES
ACTION, IT WILL BE REFERRED TO STAFF AND/OR
PLACED ON THE NEXT AGENDA.**

<u>ITEM #</u>	<u>STAFF</u>
* 3. Minutes of the November 28, 2006 Social Services Transportation Advisory Council meeting.	
4. Other testimony: E-mail from Nyona Graves For information only.	
* 5. Unmet Transit Needs 2006 Review findings and prepare a recommendation for the January 2007 Governing Board agenda.	Larry Shankland

* Action # Attachment + Enclosure

COPIES OF THE STAFF REPORTS OR OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION RELATING TO EACH ITEM OF BUSINESS REFERRED TO ON THE AGENDA ARE ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS.

ANY PERSON WHO HAS ANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING ANY AGENDA ITEM MAY CALL MCAG TO MAKE INQUIRY REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE ITEM DESCRIBED ON THE AGENDA.

ITEM 3

SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2006

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the **SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**, was held on Tuesday, November 28, 2006 at the Merced County Association of Governments, Conference Room, 369 W.18th Street, Merced, California, and was called to order by Chair Rick Bungcayo at 11:45 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Roxanne Banks, Medi-Cab
Rick Bungcayo, Area Agency on Aging
Debbie Dunn, Human Services Agency
Dora Garcia, Transit Rider
Larnold Jones, Merced County Transit
Larry Shankland, Merced County Transit

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dan Brunger, Kingsview
Linda Reed, Disabled Transit Rider
Terry Nichols, State Department of Rehabilitation

OTHERS PRESENT

Janet Appling-Kasper, The Bus
Gwen Marshall, MCAG
Dan Newton, Laidlaw Inc
Dave Smith, Laidlaw Inc

2. Oral Communication

None.

3. Minutes of November 2,7,9,13,15 and 21, 2006 Social Services Transportation Advisory Council meetings

Dr. Roxanne Banks made a motion to accept the minutes as written.
Seconded by Larry Shankland.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Other Testimony: CHERISH, Merced College-Los Banos Campus, U.C. Merced, E-mails

The committee discussed the testimony received either by mail or email.

CHERISH:

Many of the items of concern voiced by the seniors at the CHERISH sites were items that will be addressed through already programmed bus shelters/stops. It is the intent of staff to increase programmed bus shelters from the previous (17) seventeen to (25) twenty-five, to meet those needs.

MERCED COLLEGE-LOS BANOS:

The committee discussed the growth in the City of Los Banos and the intent to expand service to meet those needs. It is felt the best way to provide this service would be to expand the current route to cover the new housing on the north east of the city as well as the site of Merced College-Los Banos and the shopping center west of the existing Route 14. Four (4) new buses would allow a reverse route to travel clockwise and counter-clockwise to provide 30 minute service to this area.

U.C.MERCED:

Three staff members from U.C. Merced attended the City of Merced public hearing held on November 7, 2006 and expressed transportation concerns regarding U.C. students and staff. They stated that currently there are an estimated 800 transit dependent staff and students. They expressed need for transportation to the campus beginning at 7:00 a.m. (classes begin at 8:00 a.m.) and running until 6:00 p.m. (most classes end by 5:00 p.m.). UC Staff estimates that 10-15 disabled students and staff are using Dial-A-Ride (DAR).

Transit manager Larry Shankland discussed the logistics of accommodating large transit buses on campus (turnarounds and a bus stop) in the event there were to be a fixed route bus that would connect to Merced College, where students could transfer to other bus routes. U.C. student ridership on the existing transit system was high during the three months (August, September and October) of the free rides program called "Spare the Air". U.C staff also discussed the need to provide extra-curricular transportation on Saturday and evenings, and how expensive CAT TRACKS is becoming.

U.C. staff questioned Larry regarding the use of Diesel Hybrid buses, as it was the desire of the U.C. to be on the cutting edge of technology and to address environmental air quality concerns. Larry was asked what type of buses he uses. Larry explained that he uses CNG (compressed natural gas) buses that are fueled using the PGE fueling station. Larry explained that State and Federal regulations does not allow the purchase of diesel vehicles.

The U.C. staff said the current transportation system (CAT TRACKS) has proven to be costly for the service provided. It is expected that, as the campus grows and more students and classes are added, the rider-ship will increase.

After U.C. staff had attended the City of Merced public hearing, MCAG staff member Gwen Marshall was contacted by Jim Seal, a transportation consultant representing U.C. Merced. He was inquiring about submitting written documentation of transportation requests. He was encouraged to submit that information either in writing or by email. He was also invited to attend the final public hearing to be held in the City of Atwater.

Executive Director Jesse Brown was contacted with a request to meet with Mr. Seal and U.C. staff to discuss the written information. In that meeting, held on Tuesday, November 21, 2006, the information attached was presented to MCAG staff and transit manager, Larry Shankland. It was pointed out that throughout the planning of U.C. Merced (estimated the past 5-7 years) meetings have been held to discuss transit issues with U.C. Merced staff.

This written request contains items not mentioned in the public hearing. The written request submitted by U.C. staff is a request for LTF funds to be given to U.C. Merced for the purchase of the following equipment to be used in the U.C. Merced transportation system. The following options are listed below:

- A: New Diesel Hybrid Bus, \$525,000 x 2 buses = \$1,050,000
- B: Regular transit bus, \$52,998 x 2 buses = \$105,996
- C: New Diesel Hybrid Bus estimated cost of \$525,000 + Regular Transit estimated cost of \$52,998 = for a total of \$577,998.

At the public hearing on November 7, 2006, the conversation was focused on ways the current transit system could provide assistance to students desiring to travel to Merced College to make connections with existing bus routes. U.C. student ridership on the **existing transit system** was high during the three months (August, September and October) of the free rides program called "Spare the Air".

Larry Shankland, transit manager, discussed the feasibility of extending the current fixed route from Merced College to U.C. Merced. This would enable students to connect with the existing transit system. This would provide 30 minute service to U.C. students and staff and connect them to existing routes throughout the City of Merced. This extension of the current fixed route will provide service without duplicating transit service. It would be a viable way to meet the needs expressed without supporting a separate competing transportation system (CAT TRACKS).

By direction of the SSTAC at the November 28, 2006 meeting, staff was directed to research costs related to providing a fixed route from U.C. Merced to Merced College with 30 minute service and extended hours from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.. Staff was also directed to research costs related to providing Fixed Route Saturday service for U.C. Merced.

EMAILS:

After reviewing the emails from Ana Luisa Vasquez and Margaret Buchmann-Garcia it was determined the issues expressed are operational concerns. These concerns will be rectified by Laidlaw management staff who were in attendance at each of the informational meetings gathering opportunities to hear “Operational Concerns”.

5. FY 2006/07 Unmet Transit Needs SSTAC: Recommendation to staff to pursue findings

Three meetings were added this year in response to suggestions from last year’s meetings, for a total of six public hearings. Staff attended (9) nine, daytime CHERISH meal sites, to receive input from the seniors who attend this program and do not go out at night.

The SSTAC reviewed the input received and directed staff to pursue the “reasonable to meet” test on the following items:

ITEM #	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
DIAL – A - RIDE		
1	Planada	Dial-A-Ride Bus assigned only to Planada area
2	City of Merced	Dial-A-Ride Bus - two extra buses needed from 1:30 -4:00 p.m.
3	City of Livingston	Dial-A-Ride Bus assigned only to Delhi, Livingston, Hilmar
4	City of Atwater	Look at re- assignment of equipment - to provide more coverage for Day Break/Day Out
FIXED ROUTE		
5	Planada	Fixed route (like Route 16 in Atwater)
6	City of Merced	Fixed route to U.C. Merced (30 minutes from U.C. to Merced College)
7	City of Los Banos	Add four (4) buses to provide reverse route, extend Route 14 to cover new housing on north east as well as new college site and shopping center west of existing 14
SATURDAY SERVICE/EXTENDED HOURS		
8	City of Merced	Fixed route Saturday service for U.C. Merced
9	City of Los Banos	Fixed route extended hours to 8:00 p.m.
10	City of Livingston	Saturday Service for DAR

Additionally, requests already programmed or planned are:

- Bus shelters (Planada, Delhi, Los Banos, Atwater, Dos Palos)
- Bus stops (Los Banos, Dos Palos, Delhi, including relocate City of Merced bus stop from R and T streets to 18th Street)
- More round trips from Planada to Merced (The Short Range Transit Plan will add a bus next year to increase from current 8 round trips, to 16 round trips)
- Designated bus stop program to take care of “flag down” concerns
- Signage (Transpo Station and bus routes)

Staff acknowledged the participation of Laidlaw management, Dan Newton and Dave Smith, by their attendance at the nine CHERISH site visits and the six public hearings. Operational concerns expressed are listed below:

OPERATIONAL CONCERNS:

- Dispatchers are rude.
- Dispatchers give out wrong information to passengers.
- Dispatchers lie about pickup times.
- Dispatchers argue with passengers on the phone.
- Dispatchers won't call routes to find out why they are late.
- If you can get a dispatcher to call a bus they are rude and treat you bad.
- DAR is taking up to 90 minutes for a pickup.
- Sometimes DAR doesn't show up at all.
- DAR is not reliable, passenger was late to public hearing.
- Need newer buses, they are always breaking down.
- Wheelchair tie-downs don't work or are missing.
- Special identification for blind riders, so they are easily identified by the bus drivers.
- Drivers forget to lower the kneeling buses.
- Paratransit buses should have ramps instead of lifts.
- Buses need higher seats and handrails (like handicapped bathrooms)

SSTAC set a meeting date of Tuesday, December 19, 2006 to review the findings and prepare a recommendation for the January Governing Board agenda.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED BY CHAIRMAN RICK BUNGAYO AT 12:55 P.M.

ITEM 4

From: Nyona Graves <gravesnyona@yahoo.com>
To: <gwen@mcag.cog.ca.us>
Date: 11/30/2006 5:48 PM
Subject: Merced Transportation Public Hearing on November 7, 2006

Dear Gwen:

Unfortunately, I did not make it to the transportation meeting for Merced on 11/7/06 because it was election day. But I would like to input my concerns to you now. Merced transportation needs to extend their weekly schedule, e.g. Monday thur Friday cut-off time 10:00pm or 11:00pm (all routes). It would take care of Merced College students that have night classes and working riders. We need transportation services on Sundays too. Hours on both weekend days should start at 8:30a.m. and end at 10:00p.m or 11:00p.m.

Many of the riders complain because they want to be able to do their personal business in a more relax fashion instead worrying about the early cut-off time of transportation. And Sundays, oh boy! It's like Merced is in a lock-down. Your riders do not have cars and the bus is their only means of transportation. Many riders would like to go to church but there is no transportation. Many of churches in our community do not provide that service.

Gwen, route 12 schedule needs to be revised. The schedule at this time causes the riders much frustration. It is always late! I have become a victim and here are the following reasons: Route 12 not showing up on time for me to get to my classes at Merced College on time. I let the class go. It too embarrassing. I told the instructor my problem and she said I am fully aware of your situation and it's o.k. But it's not! When I get to class I'm so frustrated I can't think. It is not an isolated situation it is constant. Route 12 is always about 20 minutes down in the evenings. Now I walk a lot.

Why do you allow riders to ride free for three months? I can see one month. Can't you use the monies to take care of the upkeep of the buses or get new ones. Because they are always having mechanically problems.

I appreciate you allowing me to voice my concerns. If you have a response to my email you can reply to gravesnyona@yahoo.com. Gwen I hope that my concerns will be acknowledge and good changes can come about for Merced transportation in the year of 2007.

Thank you.

Nyona R. Graves

Yahoo! Music Unlimited
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ITEM 5



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
Transportation Division

Paul A. Fillebrown
Director

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ITEM 5

DATE: DECEMBER 8, 2006

TO: SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FROM: LARRY SHANKLAND, TRANSPORTATION MANAGER

SUBJECT: UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS 2006

MEMORANDUM

Listed and discussed below are my comments and analysis of the ten (10) unmet transit needs identified during the 2006 Unmet Transit Needs meetings and hearings:

1. Atwater

More Dial-A-Ride (DAR) buses that carry four wheelchairs are needed for DayOut/Day Break program clients.

This is an unmet need that is reasonable to meet through future bus replacement procurement projects beginning in the 2007/2008 fiscal year. Staff recommends replacing the older Dial-A-Ride (2 wheelchair stations) buses with Type 7 paratransit buses (up to 8 wheelchair stations) as part of future budget approvals. The older buses would be replaced at the end of their useful life cycles (approx. 5 years or 250,000 miles) . Costs for the Type 7 buses are approximately \$127,500 compared to \$108,000 for the older model Dial-A-Ride buses.

2. Merced

More DAR Buses

Two DAR Buses needed from 1:30 – 4:00 p.m. to cover peak service time.

This is not an unmet need – this is a scheduling problem that needs to be addressed by Laidlaw Transit Services, Inc. – the transit systems contracted operator. A total of 13,260 hours of Dial-A-Ride service are budgeted annually for the Merced city limits. During FY 05/06 Laidlaw operated 11,823 Dial-A-Ride hours in Merced leaving an unused balance of 1,437 hours. The request for 5 additional hours/day can easily be accommodated within

the current budget (i.e. 1437 hrs./255 days = 5.64 hours/day). Transit staff will work with Laidlaw to meet DAR needs between 1:30 and 4:00 p.m. in Merced.

**3. Fixed Route to U.C. Merced from Merced College (30 minute service)
Extended hours (from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.)**

Operating Costs	
Total Fixed Route Operating Cost per Bus Hour *system costs <i>Mon – Sat (FY 2005-2006 Costs)</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Fixed Routes	\$ 5.73
110% threshold of Average Cost per Fixed Route Passenger	\$ 6.29
Operating days per year	255
Additional operating service hours/year	2,550
Additional operating costs per year	\$172,431
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	11
Additional passengers anticipated per year	28,050
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 6.15

Finding: Reasonable to meet with the following recommendation:

Provide one bus operating every 30 minutes on a Monday through Friday basis, between U.C. Merced and Merced College through a Congestion/Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) demonstration grant for a 3 year period beginning August 2007. The CMAQ grant will cover 88.53% of total operating costs of the new route. The new bus will connect with Bus Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 10A, 11 and 12 at Merced College for a wide variety of countywide destinations.

4. Fixed Route for U.C. Merced on Saturdays

Operating Costs	
Total Fixed Route Operating Cost per Bus Hour *system costs <i>Mon – Sat (FY 2005-2006 Costs)</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Fixed Routes (Saturdays)	\$ 5.67
110% threshold of Average Cost per Fixed Route Passenger	\$ 6.24
Operating days per year	52
Additional operating service hours/year	364
Additional operating costs per year	\$ 24,614
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	11
Additional passengers anticipated per year	4,004
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 6.15

Finding: Reasonable to meet with the following recommendation:

Provide one bus operating between 30 and 45 minutes between U.C. Merced and the Merced College/Merced Mall area on Saturdays through a Congestion/Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) demonstration grant for a 3 year period beginning August 2007. The CMAQ grant will cover 88.53% of total eligible costs of the new route. The new bus will connect with Bus Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 11 & 12 at Merced College for a wide variety of countywide destinations.

5. Los Banos, Route 14 – Extend and reverse route as needed

Add four (4) new buses to provide reverse route, extend Route 14 to cover new senior housing on northeast as well as new college site and shopping center west of existing Route 14.	
Operating Costs	
Total Fixed Route Operating Cost per Bus Hour <i>*system costs Mon – Sat (FY 2005-2006 Costs)</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Fixed Routes	\$ 5.73
110% threshold of Average Cost per Fixed Route Passenger	\$ 6.29
Operating days per year	255
Additional operating service hours/year 4 buses @ 7 hrs/day	7,140
Additional operating costs per year	\$482,807
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	10
Additional passengers anticipated per year	71,400
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 6.76

Finding: Unreasonable to meet at this time.

However, staff recommends adding one (1) additional bus to Route 14 to meet the eastern and western Los Banos service area extensions per the calculation below. Please note that anticipated ridership is 11 passengers per hour which is slightly higher than the 4 bus addition shown above. Staff believes that ridership gets diluted as more buses are added to a given route, thus the difference and the finding of reasonable for the one bus extension.

Operating days per year	255
Additional operating service hours/year	1,785
Additional operating costs per year	\$120,702
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	12
Additional passengers anticipated per year	21,420
Average cost per passenger for additional service	5.64

Finding: Reasonable to meet.

6. Extend bus service hours to 8:00pm in Los Banos

Operating Costs	
Total Fixed Route Operating Cost per Bus Hour <i>*system costs Mon-Sat</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Fixed Routes	\$ 5.73
110% threshold of Average Cost per Fixed Route Passenger	\$ 6.29
Operating days per year	255
Additional operating service hours/year 4 buses @ 7 hrs/day	255
Additional operating costs per year	\$ 17,243
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	10
Additional passengers anticipated per year	2,550
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 6.76

Finding: Unreasonable to meet at this time.

7. Livingston – One DAR bus assigned to Livingston, Delhi and Hilmar

Operating Costs	
Total Dial-A-Ride Operating Cost per Bus Hour <i>*system costs</i> <i>Mon – Sat (FY 2005-2006 Costs)</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Dial-A-Ride	\$ 16.08
110% threshold of Average Cost per Dial-A-Ride Passenger	\$ 17.68
Operating days per year	255
Additional operating service hours/year one bus @ 7 hrs/day	1,785
Additional operating costs per year	\$120,702
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	4
Additional passengers anticipated per year	7,140
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 16.91

Finding: Reasonable to meet.

It should be noted that Merced County Transit has only one (1) Dial-A-Ride bus in operation for the entire north county area bounded by the Merced river; state route 140; state route 165; the Stanislaus County line and the Mariposa county line. A second bus is needed to keep pace with demand in this large geographical area.

8. Livingston - Saturday Service for DAR

Operating Costs	
Total Dial-A-Ride Operating Cost per Bus Hour <i>*system costs</i> <i>Mon – Sat</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Dial-A-Ride	\$ 16.08
110% threshold of Average Cost per Dial-A-Ride Passenger	\$ 17.68
Operating days per year	52
Additional operating service hours/year one bus @ 7 hrs/day	364
Additional operating costs per year	\$ 24,614
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	4
Additional passengers anticipated per year	1,456
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 16.91

Finding: Reasonable to meet.

Currently there is no Saturday service in the north county area and there is a need.

9. Planada – One DAR bus assigned to Planada, LeGrand, Plainsburg area

Operating Costs	
Total Dial-A-Ride Operating Cost per Bus Hour <i>*system costs Mon – Sat</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Dial-A-Ride	\$ 16.08
110% threshold of Average Cost per Dial-A-Ride Passenger	\$ 17.68
Operating days per year	255
Additional operating service hours/year one bus @ 7 hrs/day	2,040
Additional operating costs per year	\$137,945
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	6
Additional passengers anticipated per year	12,240
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 11.27

Finding: Reasonable to meet.

Seniors are not utilizing services (Planada Cherish, etc.) due to a lack of Dial-A-Ride bus service in the Planada – LeGrand area. Staff believes establishing a deviated fixed route/Dial-A-Ride bus for this area similar to the Dos Palos bus will be successful.

10. Planada - Fixed Route (like Route 16 in Atwater)

Fixed Route (like Route 16 in Atwater)	
Operating Costs	
Total Fixed Route Operating Cost per Bus Hour <i>*system costs Mon – Sat</i>	\$ 67.62
Average Cost Per Passenger – Fixed Routes	\$ 5.73
110% threshold of Average Cost per Fixed Route Passenger	\$ 6.29
Operating days per year	255
Additional operating service hours/year one bus @ 7 hrs/day	2,550
Additional operating costs per year	\$172,431
Additional passengers anticipated per hour	10
Additional passengers anticipated per year	25,500
Average cost per passenger for additional service	\$ 6.76

Finding: Unreasonable to meet at this time.

There will be no need for a fixed route bus with the implementation of the Planada-LeGrand-Plainsburg Dial-A-Ride bus.

LS:dk