



INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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Doug Wilson
Executive Director

TO: Inyo County Local Transportation Commission

FROM: Courtney Smith, Transportation Planner

DATE: May 21, 2008

SUBJECT: Unmet Transit Needs Findings - Recommendations

I have reviewed the information presented at the March 19, 2008 and the April 16, 2008 Unmet Needs Hearings. I have also reviewed the information provided by the Social Service Transit Advisory Committee. Finally, in order to evaluate the items presented, I have reviewed the definitions of "Unmet Transit Need" and "Reasonable to Meet." The definitions for the mentioned items were adopted by the ICLTC on May 23, 1995 and are as follows:

An Unmet Transit Need exists if an individual or individuals of any age or physical condition are unable to transport themselves from one location to another. An Unmet Transit Need is, at a minimum, those public transportation or specialized transportation services that are identified in the Regional Transportation Plan and that have not been implemented or funded.

A documented Unmet Transit Need is reasonable to meet if:

A service can be provided which meets a minimum farebox ratio of 10% of operating costs; and

- a) It is transit service for essential intra-county purposes which are defined as medical or dental services, shopping, employment, personal business, or social service appointments; or,
- b) It is a transit service for essential inter-county purposes which are defined as medical or dental services or social service appointments not available in this county or the out-of-county destination is the closest location where the services are available to the origin of the trip; and,

The origin and/or destination of the trip is within two miles of the established area of operation or cohesive community.

2008/2009 Unmet Needs Hearing Context

In 2006-2007, Inyo-Mono Transit used all of the TDA funds allocated to Inyo County, Mono County, City of Bishop, and Town of Mammoth Lakes. In 2007-2008, there may be a reduction in TDA revenues. It is thus not clear that the Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA) will be able to respond to unmet transit needs that will cost addition money to provide. In fact, ESTA may not be able to continue all of the transit services that it currently provides. ESTA is in the process of completing a Short-Range Transit Plan that will help them evaluate their service as a whole. It is because of these circumstances that the findings below recommend that ESTA should (not shall) investigate serving those unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.

The Unmet Transit Needs hearing are only necessary if a transportation planning agency allocates TDA funds to local streets and roads. The Inyo County LTC has not allocated any funds for local streets and roads in the last five years. Staff chose to continue with the unmet needs hearing process to get feedback on the state of the transit system.

Testimony Presented at the Unmet Transit Needs Hearing on March 19, 2008 at Bishop, California:

Kathleen Sheehan, Bishop Police Chief:

1. Kathleen Sheehan stated that there is a need for transportation at night from drinking establishments to help prevent drunk driving, especially on Thursday nights. She noted that currently there is late-night bus service on Friday and Saturday, but with a limited service area.
2. There are people at the bars that need transportation at night to outlying areas around Bishop such as Chalfant Valley, Aspendell, Wilkerson, and Round Valley.

Executive Director's Recommendations:

1. This is technically a coordination issue and not an unmet need since the service already exists. However, staff acknowledges that this coordination issue should be addressed. Combined with the need expressed by Cerro Coso College, there is the possibility that this service might meet minimum farebox. It is recommended that ESTA keep their Dial-a-Ride Service available in the Bishop area and to Cerro Coso College Monday through Wednesday until 10:30 p.m. and on Thursday until 11:30 p.m.
2. It is not anticipated this service would meet Farebox at this time. This need is not reasonable to meet with Dial-a-Ride service.

Deanna Campbell, Cerro Coso College:

1. Deanna Campbell stated that a need exists for evening transportation to and from Cerro Coso College, which is located approximately five miles out of town. She noted that 70%

of the classes begin after 4:00 p.m., and enrollment has been low because of transportation problems. She is particularly seeking transportation Monday through Thursday nights at 10:00 p.m.

Executive Director's Recommendations:

1. See response No. 1 to Ms. Sheehan's unmet transit needs request. It is recommended that ESTA keep their Dial-a-Ride Service available to Cerro Coso College and in the Bishop area Monday through Wednesday until 10:30 p.m. and on Thursday until 11:30 p.m.

Andrew Stevens, Northern Inyo Hospital:

Andrew Stevens, emergency room nurse manager, stated that the hospital occasionally needs Dial-a-Ride transportation at night for outpatients, emergency room patients, or patients who were admitted for observation only. He said this occurs approximately 5 or 6 times per week.

Executive Director's Recommendations:

1. It is not expected that a Dial-a-Ride service would meet minimum farebox during these late hours. The proposed extension of the Bishop area Dial-a-Ride service will assist some.

Richard Cervantes, 5th District Supervisor:

Richard Cervantes stated that the bus schedule that is posted at the Lone Pine Senior Center is often missing. He said there is a need for the schedule to be placed in the lockable display board.

Executive Director's Recommendations:

This is not an unmet transit need. However the comment is duly noted. County staff will work with ESTA and Statham Hall to place the ESTA schedule inside of this display board.

**Testimony Presented at the Unmet Transit Needs Hearing
on April 16, 2008 at Independence, California:**

No new unmet transit needs were presented at this meeting.

Testimony Presented at the Social Services Transit Advisory Committee Meeting on February 27, 2008 at Bishop, California

Lucy Alarid, Northern Inyo Hospital:

1. Lucy Alarid, Patient Advocate, said that patients are sometimes discharged from the hospital as late as 1 or 2 a.m. These people do not always have a way home, and may have to wait in the lobby until regular bus service begins the next morning.

Executive Director's Recommendations:

1. It is not expected that a Dial-a-Ride service would meet minimum farebox during these late hours. The proposed extension of the Bishop area Dial-a-Ride service will mitigate this need for the hours it may be extended. The hospital should keep in mind that patients having difficulty going from the bus into their house should have a hospital aid along with them.

Susie Decker, Eastern Sierra Friendship Center:

1. Susie Decker said she has been having trouble arranging transportation for her Alzheimer clients. Sometimes ESTA does not have a vehicle available for Dial-a-Ride service.

Executive Director's Recommendations:

1. This is a coordination issue and not an unmet transit need. It is recommended that Ms. Decker work with ESTA staff to resolve any inconsistencies in providing prompt Dial-a-Ride service. ESTA is working to make their Dial-a-Ride service as efficient as possible. If the wait time for Dial-a-Ride services continues to grow, this could be considered an unmet transit need. ESTA should present a semi-annual report on how much backup there has been during the daytime Dial-a-Ride service in the Bishop area.

Yvette Mason, Veteran Service Office for Inyo-Mono Counties:

Yvette Mason submitted a letter on behalf of the Veteran Service Office for Inyo-Mono Counties. This letter raised the following concerns:

1. The Reno Route is not entirely satisfactory for Bishop-area Veterans because they need to make arrangements for a minimum of a one-night stay in Reno and they have to make arrangements for transportation to and from the Reno Airport.
2. The Veteran Services office uses IMAAA whenever possible. However there are the following limitations with that service: the service is only available 2 Thursdays a month, it's not available if a holiday falls during the week, it is not available if no driver is available, and not all VA clinics or specialty offices are open on Thursdays.

Executive Director's Recommendations:

1. Inter-county transportation to medical appointments is an unmet transit need. However, it is difficult to provide roundtrip transportation to a location that is almost a 5-hour bus ride from Bishop. LTC staff is investigating using the Rideshare service that Mono County uses to provide transport to areas out of the County. It should be noted a Rideshare would rarely provide roundtrip one-day transportation to Reno given the long distance between Inyo County and Reno. Additionally, it is unclear if Rideshare would provide a significantly more flexible service in Reno. This is especially the case because the airport is a local hub for transportation services.
2. IMAAA staff should investigate the feasibility of service to Reno one a day a month on a day besides Thursday. IMAAA is currently considering expanding their service to VA facilities with a new van purchased through Proposition 1B transit and Transportation Development Act funds.

attachments: -Letter from Cerro Coso College re evening transportation
-Letter from Yvette Mason on the Inyo-Mono County Veteran's Service Office