



Clint Quilter, Executive Director

INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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MINUTES

INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**Bishop City Council Chambers
377 W. Line Street, Bishop, CA 93514**

March 16, 2016

9:00 a.m. Pat Gardner called the meeting to order.

ITEM NO. 1 Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

Rick Pucci
Doug Thompson
Pat Gardner
Dan Totheroh
Bob Kimball
Jim Ellis

Others Present:

Ryan Dermody, Caltrans
Brent Green, Caltrans
Brandon Fitt, Caltrans
John Helm, ESTA
Jill Batchelder, ESTA
Dave Grah, City of Bishop
Beth Himelhoch, IMAH
Joan Stathem
Krista Cooper, Inyo County Health & Human Services
Joshua Hart, Inyo County Planning Department
Denise Hayden, Secretary
Courtney Smith, staff
Clint Quilter, Executive Director

ITEM NO. 2: Public Comment

Joan Stathem commented that ESTA has added a third driver on Saturday's during the lunch hours for additional Dial-A-Ride coverage so the wait time for buses has shortened.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM NO. 3: Secretary of the Local Transportation Commission – Request approval of the minutes of the meeting of February 17, 2016.

The approval the February 17, 2016 minutes was tabled until the April 20, 2016 meeting due to a clerical error with the copying of the minutes (not all of the pages were printed).

ITEM NO. 4: Request Commission approve Resolution No. 2016-03 authorizing the execution of the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) and allocating \$24,715 of FY 2015 funds for the expansion of the Lone Pine Express fixed route service.

Jill Batchelder stated that in the January 2016 LTC meeting the commission approved the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) for expanding the Lone Pine Express by adding a midday route into Bishop which will allow South County residents to spend a half day in Bishop instead of an entire day. Caltrans is requesting an additional Resolution that identifies the project with the funding dollars. Just as a reminder this amount is \$24,715.00. Nothing in the project has changed since January this is more of an administrative item to approve the Resolution for the amount of funds being requested.

Motion to approve Resolution No. 2016-03 was made by Dan Totheroh and seconded by Jim Ellis. Motion carried 5-1 with Doug Thompson abstaining.

ITEM NO. 5: Request Commission approve a letter of support for a Caltrans District 9 FASTLANE grant application to fund the construction component of the Freeman Gulch Segment 1 widening project on SR 14.

Courtney stated that this FASTLANE grant application had a fast turnaround time. In Consultation with District 9 we hurried it along to get it on this agenda. The State is only allowed to bring three projects forward. The home county can submit the grant, though Kern County was not interested at this time in submitting this grant because they have some other priority projects for the FASTLANE program. District 9 moved this project for the statewide pool. There were 60 projects submitted and Freeman Gulch did not make this list. Therefore, the letter is no longer needed. The Commission was asked to not act on this item.

Doug Thompson stated that there was \$4.5 Billion dollars but there were stipulations as to who could apply for these funds. They considered types of things that we would score high on like

recreation. This funding is going to be around for five years so maybe there is something that we can do to bring up the scoring on this.

Brent Green stated that there are also other projects competing for these same funds such as the high speed rail and it's just tough to compete against that.

Ryan Dermody stated that Caltrans is actively looking for additional grant funding. The traffic count for trucks is just not there. We will keep looking and next month we will be talking about the TIGER Funding program. District 9 will continue to look for additional funding sources.

Pat Gardner stated that the Commission will not act on this agenda item.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM NO. 6: Receive a report by Inyo County Planning Department staff on the North Sierra Highway Planning Grant and provide feedback.

Joshua Hart, Inyo County Planning Department stated that Caltrans was kind enough to give Inyo County a grant to work on the North Sierra Highway plan. The City of Bishop, the Bishop Paiute Tribe, County of Inyo and Eastern Sierra Transit Authority have all expressed interest in supporting developing a broader specific plan for the corridor.

Caltrans did provide funding for a corridor plan on North Sierra Highway. This is basically from the fairgrounds to the casino. We have been talking about a specific plan for a number of years. This is a very interesting area, it is very eclectic, and there are a lot of opportunities to build upon. It might be a good place to do some smart growth there. The Caltrans grant provides us with an opportunity for a base for a specific plan and then we can leverage this funding to develop the specific plan and then do an environmental review. Once this process was complete, it may be able to streamline future permitting in the area. There is another interesting thing about the plan; there are all of these other entities, even in urban areas you don't see that many. There are even more entities who have a stake in this area including the Eastern Sierra Community Service District, Mule Days, a number of mutual water companies in the area, and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

What is a specific plan? This is a comprehensive zoning and planning document to define a geographic region. A lot of people have heard of a general plan, which is very broad where a specific plan narrows down and looks at a specific area. Specific plans analyze existing conditions, opportunities and constraints, market trends, and other topics of interest, and identify optimal future uses, infrastructure, and services to support the plan. The proposed specific plan will work to further the goals of existing plans and complement existing uses.

The benefit of a specific plan provides a long-term vision and infrastructure program for lands adjacent to North Sierra Highway. It provides coordinated planning resulting in better managed long-term development, provides short and long term market analysis to identify uses compatible with existing and planned development. It will complement the Fairground,

downtown, and other areas in the region. The EIR would provide overall programmatic environmental clearance for any infrastructure improvements that might be proposed by the specific plan, as well as potentially for future projects within the specific plan area.

The LTC has given their funding support to this grant and it is very much appreciated. It may be that staff will ask the LTC again for additional support. Joshua went on to show the proposed specific plan funding for the next five years from Caltrans, Inyo County, City of Bishop, Bishop Paiute Tribe and others in the area. If we get to year three at the end of the grant funding from Caltrans and decide that we want to pause or if we think that things are fine the way that they are and that they don't want to change things or maybe there is a plan that everyone agrees with and there aren't any environmental effects maybe we can just proceed with limited environmental review. In year three it will be the decision point to determine if we continue with years four and five.

We did receive four proposals on our request for proposals and we are evaluating them now to get a consultant on board to help with the project. We hope to choose a consultant in the next couple of weeks or month to be able to move ahead. We have some very exciting public outreach that is going to occur in the beginning stages and then we have a charrette planned. This is where we get together and everyone gets to say what they would like to see in their vision moving forward. We may also develop a planning committee to help guide us through the process and if we do I hope that one of you from the LTC would be a part of that.

Doug Thompson commented that when this idea first started that his concern was to spread the business out, the town center and then a satellite area for light industrial. When the Vons/K-Mart area first went in you saw the shift in the diversity of the businesses in this area. This will need to be addressed in the economic analysis. Joshua Hart agrees and said that this is something that they are looking into and will address it.

ITEM NO. 7: Receive an introduction by LTC staff to the Draft Overall Work Program for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 and provide feedback.

Courtney Smith stated that the Overall Work Program serves as a one year scope of work and budget for transportation planning activities accomplished between July 1 and June 30 of the State fiscal year. It is a statement of proposed work and estimates costs that tie specific available transportation planning funding to specific transportation planning activities.

The OWP particularly outlines how the ICLTC will use Rural Planning Assistance or RPA funds. RPA funds must be used for activities associated with the rural planning process. The funds should not be used for activities that go beyond the planning process or for activities that have been identified as ineligible such as project specific work involving transportation engineering, Transportation Development Act administration, and non-planning grant administration. RPA funds are State transportation planning funding included in a State Budget line item and are allocated to planning agencies based on a per population basis. In FY 2016-2017, Inyo County will receive \$230,000 of RPA fund paid to the County on a reimbursable basis. The OWP also includes a summary of likely Planning, Programming, and Monitoring (PPM) funds that are

anticipated to be expended in the coming year. Also the OWP examines the Local Transportation funds that are used for the administration of the Transportation Development Act.

In the past year, work tasks included approval of an update to the Regional Transportation Plan and at the next meeting we hope to bring forward the approval of the Active Transportation Plan. Other tasks include the submittal of grants for transportation funding and development of the 2016 STIP including a revised RTIP. In the upcoming year some of the larger tasks are: development of a Stormwater Master Plan by the City of Bishop; working with the Forest Service to obtain perpetual easements on County roads that are on Forest Service land; and the continuing with the pavement management program. It is probably most fruitful to focus your review on proposed tasks. Keep in mind that the RPA funds can only be used for planning related activities. An attachment in your packet lists eligible tasks. Please submit comments by April 23rd Staff will probably bring it back for consideration by your Commission at the May 18th meeting. The draft OWP was sent out for review and comment to ESTA, the City of Bishop and the Tribal Governments in the Owens Valley.

ITEM NO. 8: Receive an introduction from Eastern Sierra Transit Authority staff on their Draft Short Range Transit Plan and provide feedback.

John Helm presented a slide presentation on the Short Range Transit Plan. The draft Plan is going to be presented to the ESTA Board of Directors this Friday. The draft was presented to the Mono LTC this past Monday. The Short Range Transit Plan is available to view on the ESTA website.

The Plan begins with an overview of our existing services. This includes a detail of the operating and financial information of the Authority. There is a breakdown of the service hours for each of the major service types. The Plan not only identifies the service hours but the passengers or percentages of the passenger trips for each of the routes as well. This comparisons enables a productivity analysis which is the number of passenger trips per hour. There are over 40 passenger trips per hour for some of the busiest fixed route services in Mammoth Lakes. For a fixed route, 40 passenger trips per hour is very good for any area. Just because some of the routes are not this high does not mean that they are not as successful. There are different demographics for each area that drastically change the ridership for those routes. This just shows how much the transit service is utilized in our region. The Plan also identifies the fare recovery ratio for each route. This shows how much of the total operating costs for each route are returned in the fares that are collected for that route.

We had a couple of great summers due to the drought. We have a very strong summer in the Red's Meadows area because we were able to start earlier and it continued to be strong all summer. There was a return of more than 100% of the operating costs for that route for the last couple years. The excess funds are going into a pot for that service so that if there was a down turn on that route or ridership doesn't meet the expectations or if operating costs increase there will be a cushion for that route to cover the added costs.

Dial-A-Ride service, by its nature, will never be able to recover its costs; you can't charge enough for that service.

One of the things that the consultant did was to breakdown service types; regional routes, local fixed routes and Dial-A-Ride. These are very different by their nature and difficult to compare. The Plan compares each types of routes with those in different areas. Some local routes do better than similar routes in other areas, some are ahead, and some are behind. This comparison is helpful.

The Plan also takes a look at a whole range of potential service alternatives. The plan started with a whole list of the services that we are offering. But then it identified a list of other alternatives that could be considered. It did not indicate things that should be done; it showed the things that could be considered as alternatives or additions. On the Highway 395 Route the Plan talks about adding service so that it is Monday – Friday for both the routes to Reno and Lancaster. The Plan also discusses weekend service in the summer to Reno and Lancaster because the service is used so much in the summer. The Plan also talks about extending service hours, especially during academic year to enhance service to the college. The Plan also talks about an outdoor recreation shuttle, in particular to service the Bishop Creek drainage area (South Lake, Lake Sabrina area) from Bishop during the summer season. The Plan also talks about making changes for hours and routes to the Mammoth Lakes fixed route service. Another thing that came up was service to special events, adding routes to Lone Pine and Independence to Bishop for the Mule Days activities. The first step just gathers a list of alternatives.

Next the Plan starts to prioritize these services. The color coding on the chart means that the route is meeting its performance standard with ridership or fare box return. If it is not color coded then it means that that particular route is projected to not meet the goals. This is a very valuable tool to use to consider each of the alternatives. There were some capital alternatives that were identified, vehicle replacement and funding for that was the first of the list. ESTA needs to continue to set aside monies for these replacements. There were some other alternatives that were discussed such as an additional stop on Highway 395 in Bishop. The only stop now is at the Vons/K-Mart shopping center and it was brought to our attention at one of the meetings that it would be helpful if there was a stop downtown by the Bishop City Hall area so that people don't have to make their way all the way to the Vons/K-Mart center to catch the bus. The Plan recommends that the Authority continue to enhance technology in vehicle location technology. The Plan recommends that ESTA find a transit hub in Mammoth Lakes to better coordinate the variety of fixed routes that take place there.

The Plan then comes up with management and financial alternatives. The Plan makes recommendations for performance standards. This is an important piece of a Short Range Transit Plan because it is an outside expert and not just us saying that this is what ESTA's goals should be. Based on their knowledge and comparison with peer agencies, the consultant brings forth performance standards that ESTA should strive to obtain. One of the interesting things that the consultant identified is how ESTA measures productivity for all of our routes. ESTA's measure for the Reno-Lancaster route really doesn't work very well. An example is someone

that gets on the bus in Lone Pine heading to Reno is on the bus for over five service hours but that still only counts as one passenger so that works out to .2 passengers per service hour which is a very low service number because they are on the bus for so long. A passenger can get on the bus in Mammoth Lakes and ride two blocks and that is a passenger trip and they have only been on the bus for a few minutes. The consultant's recommendation is for the regional service routes that ESTA switch to a service miles per hour measurement. So that same person that is on the bus for 260 miles from Lone Pine to Reno over five hours would count in excess of 50 service miles per service hour. This is an interesting idea and one that ESTA is going to look at.

The Plan recommends how often to conduct passenger surveys. Our Dial-A-Ride fares are in line with what the other agencies are charging. Interestingly enough the rural routes fares are ahead on a cost per mile rate of peer routes in other areas.

The last part of the Short Range Transit Plan makes short term recommendations. The consultant has narrowed down a list of alternatives with specific alternative recommended to be adopted. The consultant recommends making the service to Reno and Lancaster a five day a week route. ESTA staff is pursuing a new funding opportunity to implement this that just became available. The consultant is also recommending: a weekend route to Reno-Lancaster; a mid day route from Lone Pine to Bishop; a modification of a route along the Meridian corridor in Mammoth Lakes; continued expansion of the Dial-A-Ride service to the college during the academic year; and to pursue this outdoor recreation pilot program.

Capital improvement projects that were identified include: bus stop improvements in Mammoth Lakes; development of a transit hub in Mammoth Lakes; and completion of the Bishop headquarters facility. ESTA has completed Phase One at its Bishop headquarters which was paving, fencing, and lighting. Phase Two will be to construct a light maintenance area and office administrative area when time and funds allow. This is an overview of the plan. We anticipate this being approved by the ESTA Board this spring.

Pat Gardner asked if the suggestion of adding a route to the Bishop Creek Drainage area came from the Bishop Chamber of Commerce. If it did not has ESTA considered reaching out to the Chamber to those people who are requesting information about recreation areas? The Chamber keeps track of this type of information and it could be a way to get a survey done by ESTA without doing a survey. The Chamber does follow up and asks a lot of questions. John Helm did not know if this originally came from the Chamber but he does know that there were a lot of people requesting this service.

One of the other benefits that ESTA feels this will offer for those in the backcountry is a way to get back to town as well as a way for locals to get up to the Bishop Creek Drainage area and enjoy that area. Many of the schools are out and the kids don't all have that type of transportation available to them.

Doug Thompson agreed with the findings of the report noting that these are subjects that have been talked about for the last 10 years. He said that the hikers are coming out of the back

country and need a way to get back to Bishop to get supplies. Last year the trails were really packed so this will be a positive thing.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

ITEM NO. 9: ESTA Report

John Helm mentioned that they have modified the driver and scheduling on Saturday's to make sure that there is another vehicle during the lunch hours. The Saturday ridership has really increased and with only two drivers on duty. ESTA does have to let their drivers get time off for lunch. Now there will be two bus drivers at all times including lunch. They will have the quarterly numbers in at the end of March and there continues to be an increase of ridership for the winter months. February was up 27% from the February before. All of the routes are up this year.

ITEM NO. 10: Tribal Report

None

ITEM NO. 11: Caltrans Report District 9 Quarterly Project Update

Ryan Dermody, presented the Caltrans quarterly report in a new format that includes maps and asked if the Commissioners liked it. He indicated that it does take some additional work on their end but felt that it was worth it because it was easier to read.

The Meadow Farms ADA project makes reference to what Joshua Hart from the Inyo County Planning Department was talking about earlier in the meeting. Caltrans does have an independent project aside from Josh's project to install gutter and sidewalks on both sides of the Meadow Farms area. The project is scheduled to go construction after the right-of-way process is finished. Right of way needs always take additional time.

North See Vee Lane light project is scheduled to go to construction about a year from now.

Summertime is fast approaching. If you are planning to drive to Reno from Bishop plan on a delay. There are a lot of projects happening on that northern part of the US 395 corridor.

Pat Gardner asked if the construction projects on US 6 and US 395 are going at the same time. Ryan Dermody stated that yes, they can both be going at the same time.

It was asked if these construction projects are in a short window of time. The Lee Vining rock fall project is not a short window, this is a two year project and we are entering into the second year of this project. They will have the traffic light control as they did last year. They will be moving on to slopes three and four in Lee Vining. Brent Green indicated that they are concerned with the risk of birds. If there are nesting birds then they cannot do anything so this

may cause the construction to start later this year than it did last year. It might be as late as August.

Jim Ellis noted that the lighted traffic control worked well last year

Annual Average Traffic Count Date Update Traffic has been on the increase this year. We have had an increase from last winter and last summer. The transit and air service is now much better than it was in 1992; but, overall there is an increase in traffic. Areas of US 6, SR 14, and US 395 have seen increases. Downtown Bishop, Hwy 395 has seen increases likely resulting from internal circulation issues.

Truck traffic is a big issue and District 9 has put in for a truck grant to do another truck study. There are a lot of distribution centers being constructed in Moreno Valley as well as the Reno-Tahoe Industrial Center that may further increase truck traffic. It's time to dust off that old study and do it again to see what has changed.

California Transportation Plan 2040 This is the State's general plan for Caltrans and for various plans that fall under this plan. This is out for public review, it was out before and it went to the Governor's office and they want us to do it again. They are really focusing on multi modal options, green house reductions, and climate change mitigation.

ITEM NO. 12: City of Bishop Report

Dave Grah, stated that as mentioned before the right of way process can take some time. Right now the Seibu to School project is stuck in the right of way acquisition process but moving slowly forward. A new project is the Spruce - Yaney – Hanby sidewalk project; this is an ATP project. The request for proposals for consultant to do the design is due the 6th of April and we are hoping to start the environmental work in July. City staff are working in conjunction with the County with the ADA transition plans. The Public Right-of-Way portion of the City of Bishop transition plan is funded by the LTC and we are very happy about that. The field work is done and we are looking forward to getting the drafts of the report soon and move into making the key improvements in the City as a result.

Drainage planning; draining seems to be an issue with every project that we do in the City. The solution to these problems usually extends beyond the project. We've been handling it by piecemeal basis because that is about all that we can do. What we would like to do is to get a City wide look at drainage. So, we have interviews tomorrow to hire a consultant to take a look at this. We really appreciate the LTC's support on this project.

The City is happy to be a part of the North Sierra Highway project that was presented by Josh Hart. The LTC support on this project is also appreciated.

ITEM NO.13: Executive Director's Report

Courtney Smith presented the County's quarterly project update. South Bishop Resurfacing project and also Sunland Bike Lanes project are in the close out stages. West Bishop re-surfacing project, design is final and we are waiting for the CTC allocation, we are not sure if there may be a delay due to the funding woe's at the State level. The Federal Lands Access Program, Upper Rock Creek Road project is complete and they are in closeout. Whitney Portal Road reconstruction project, construction has begun on that project. There are delays on Whitney Portal Road mid-week. There will be closures there this summer. County staff is coordinating with the Forest Service to alert the recreating public. We are hoping to complete construction this year. South Lake Road Improvement Project, this project is part of the revised Regional Transportation Improvement Project; we will see if that's funded in the next few months. Dehy Park, the County is getting ready to advertise and we should move into construction in the summer or fall. The Ed Powers Bicycle project, the County has awarded this project so construction will occur sometime this year, it is moving slowly forward. There are some bridge projects that are working forward. The Highway Safety Improvement Program, the south County striping and rumble strip safety project, the request for authorization has been submitted to begin the design on that project in March or April.

ITEM NO. 14: Reports from all members of the Inyo County LTC

Doug Thompson noted that there are sight distant complaints on Tuttle Creek intersection during construction. Clint indicated that we are working on it with additional signage. Clint agrees that there is a problem but we are not sure exactly how to proceed with it at this point.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

ADJOURNMENT

Pat Gardner adjourned the meeting at 10:06 a.m.

The next LTC meeting is going to be held on April 20th in the Board of Supervisors Chambers in Independence.

Attest:

Clint Quilter
Executive Director

By: Denise Hayden, Secretary