



**INYO COUNTY
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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Clint Quilter, Executive Director

MINUTES

INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

April 16, 2015

9:00 a.m. Doug Thompson called the meeting to order.

ITEM NO. 1 Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

Rick Pucci
Bob Kimball
Doug Thompson
Mark Tillemans
Laura Smith
Pat Gardner

Others Present:

Ryan Dermody, Caltrans
Rick Franz, Caltrans
Marilyn Mann, Inyo County
Jill Batchelder, Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA)
Beth Himelhoch, IMAH
Quanah Mason, IMAH
Dave Grah, City of Bishop
Dan David, Northern Inyo Hospital
Denise Hayden, Inyo County

ITEM NO. 2: Public Comment

None

ACTION ITEMS

Staff proposed to add Item No. 4A to the Agenda. This item would authorize the Executive Director to sign a letter approving the completion of a Needs Assessment by the California State Association of Counties (CSAC). This item arrived after the agenda was published. CSAC is requesting the letter and approval resolution be sent before May 1st. The Commission was unanimous in choosing to place this item on the agenda.

ITEM NO. 3: Secretary of the Local Transportation Commission – Request approval of the minutes of the meeting of March 18, 2015.

Motion to approve the March 18, 2015 minutes was made by Bob Kimball and seconded by Laura Smith. Motion carried 6-0

ITEM NO. 4: Request Commission 1) receive meeting notes from the annual Social Services Transit Advisory Council (SSTAC) meeting and 2) conduct a public hearing to gather input on unmet transit needs.

(Jill Batchelder sat in for Courtney Smith) Staff recommends that your Commission receive the annual Social Services Transit Advisory Council (SSTAC) meeting notes and conduct a public hearing to gather input on unmet transit needs.

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. Documentation regarding the unmet need and the person's residential address must be provided in a letter addressed to the Executive Director of the ICLTC or by testimony at a public hearing held for the purpose of determining unmet transit needs. 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 of 10% of operating costs; and, it is transit service for essential intra-county purposes which are defined as medical or dental services, shopping, employment, personal business, or social services appointments; or it is transit service for essential inter-county purposes which purposes are defined as medical or dental services or social service appointments not available in this county or the out-of-county destination it the closest location where the services are available to the origin of the trip; and the origin and/or destination of the trip are within two miles of the established area of operation or cohesive community.

There was a SSTAC meeting held on February 23, 2015 and there were some topics that were discussed and some needs were also brought to this meeting. Some of the needs

discussed were weekend service for the Lone Pine to Bishop route timing of the hours for the Bishop to Mammoth Lakes route, evening transportation around Bishop on weekday evenings, transit service to the Rural Health Clinic and weekend Dial-a-Ride service in Bishop. In the past when items were brought up Eastern Sierra Transit has been able to accommodate some of them with no cost or modifications to existing routes. Some of those have included having the Mammoth Express stop in the Rovana and Round Valley areas, continuing the Highway 395 route to Lancaster; having longer layovers in Ridgecrest so that people can attend medical appointments; one day travel for Lone Pine residents to Reno; an extension of the Bishop Dial-a-Ride service now goes into the Wilkerson area and that also includes the Keough's area; and finding additional grant funds for non-emergency medical transportation. One additional caveat to this is that none of the transit funds can be used for streets or roads.

Doug Thompson opened the public hearing and asked Beth Himelhoch from IMAH if she had anything and she did not. Doug then asked the audience if there was anything that anyone would like to add.

Dan David, registered nurse with Northern Inyo Hospital stated that he has lived in the Bishop area for over 19 years and after having talked to Denise Hayden, the hospital (he works in case management at the hospital, social services, discharges, etc.) there are a couple of issues that the hospital has with unmet transit needs. The hospital used to transfer patients to the Bishop Care Center by using a wheelchair or a gurney and pushing them across the street. With the changes of Medicare and Obamacare the rules and regulations are changing. If you have a patient that is getting discharged from the hospital and needs to go to a nursing home they (Medicare) is not paying for the transportation bill and they are saying that it is not medically necessary for them to have to be transported to that facility. So, in the past hospital staff would take them over and it was not a problem. The current administration at both the Care Center and the Hospital feel that this is a liability issue. They want the staff to come up with a plan to get the patient over to the Care Center. Sometimes the patient has family that can do that, many don't have family around. The hospital tries to work with the ambulance to transport them. Occasionally the family will get the bill for the ambulance and this is quite a high charge. It is approximately a \$600 ambulance ride from the hospital to the Care Center.

Dan wanted to come to the meeting today to see what this was about and to discuss the unmet transit needs that the hospital is experiencing. Sterling Heights has their own transportation van that they use to move their residents around in. Dan talked to the new Administrator at the Care Center and he (the Administrator) shared the same concerns about transporting patients from there to the hospital. Quite often those patients need to come to the hospital for IV antibiotics and their (the Care Center) staff would then bring the patients to the hospital via a wheelchair. They are in the same situation as the hospital because they do not have a vehicle to transport patients in. Quite some time ago the hospital would have maintenance workers transport the patients in the maintenance truck. The hospital does have an unmet transit need to get patients to the Care Center as well as there are a lot of people that live in Benton that

need to get to the hospital and there are patients that come in from Fish Lake Valley. Moms that come from Tonopah and Lone Pine to deliver their babies sometime have difficulties getting back home. Dan didn't have actual numbers as to how often this happens but just last week he had five discharges to the Care Center. This does not appear to be big numbers but it is a very big issue when you need to move a patient.

Another issue is late night transportation out of the ER. Again, they used to transport these folks with the maintenance vehicle but since that is no longer an option they try to keep them in the ER until the next morning when someone can give them a ride or perhaps Dial-a-Ride would be available to call. These are people of all ages that just need a ride home.

Toiyabe Indian Health Project has a transportation van and they will come and pick up their patients. Sterling Heights also has a van and both vans are wheelchair accessible. But, there is a need in the community for this type of service including the outlying areas.

Judd Symon used to be able to give the patients a ride, no problem. Now it has to be medically justified in order for Judd to pick them up, it's just not as simple as it used to be. The doctors have to write a note to justify the need for medical transportation and in certain situations they just cannot do it. In order to get an ambulance ride you have to be medically bound to a bed or have difficulty walking, etc.

Laura Smith asked Dan David if he was aware of the Nazarene Church's new program that they have started up for this exact need. The Church people invited Dan to attend their meeting at Jack's. Dan did attend and met with the leaders as well as a guy named Eddy that lives in the Aspendel area. Eddy has helped to transport patients to Benton. They are just getting this program started so it will be helpful.

Laura Smith asked Dan if the hospital has considered purchasing a van. Dan indicated that no one has talked about purchasing a van at this point. Dan agreed that this would be a great idea. Many of the patients leaving the hospital simply cannot walk, they can't sit and many just need to lay on a gurney.

Jill Batchelder pointed out that there is an FTA Section 5310 grant available that would cover 80% of the cost of a vehicle. This is a competitive grant that comes up every year. This could be used to purchase a vehicle that could access a gurney bed and a wheelchair. Dan will talk to Greg Bissonette at the hospital (he writes the hospital grants) and have him look into this. Jill said that the information for these grants comes out at the beginning of each year.

Dan indicated that there are certain rules and regulations regarding the transportation of patients (or those that have been discharged – that are no longer a patient). The patient that needed a ride to Benton last week needed help to get into the car, this person needed go get groceries at the store and they needed the groceries to be carried into the house. So, this transportation need does go beyond just a ride home.

Doug Thompson pointed out that the hospital may not want to purchase a vehicle through the 5310 grant program because of the liability issues associated with having that type of vehicle. Doug also pointed out the program that ESTA offers that will reimburse a friend for their gas if a friend can transport you to your doctor's appointments for you.

Dan David brought up the point that Judd Symons could transport (even if there wasn't a paramedic or nurse on board) just to get the patient to their home. Many times Pioneer Home Healthcare is there to greet them and help to get them taken care of once they have arrived. Pat Gardner and Laura Smith pointed out that using Judd's service with or without a nurse on board is not a good idea because it takes one of the two ambulances available out of service for emergencies while Judd is giving this person a ride.

Beth Himelhoch indicated that right now the funding with the 5310 grant funds are at 100%, you don't have to have matching funds. Doug Thompson volunteered Beth to help Dan with the grant application because she always scores 100% on her applications!

Dan shared that the future of healthcare is changing and they are starting to see it now. What is going to happen is that the larger hospitals such as Renown and Loma Linda University will be the "mother ship" and will have the smaller hospitals like Northern Inyo Hospital attached to them. They will have contract agreements between them to accept patients via medical flights. In the event that there is a patient that gets flown out this will create another transportation need to get them back home once they are released.

Jill indicated that this type of situation is happening quite frequently. She said that the patient gets flown out of Bishop to Reno and then Reno sends them on their way with just their hospital gown on and that is it. ESTA gets sweat pants and blankets from the thrift shop to have on the bus when they pick up these types of people. Northern Inyo sends the majority of the people out to Renown but depending on their illness they can get flown all over the state. This is a big problem to get them transported back to Bishop. Quite often Renown will call Dan to get his help to coordinate services on this end.

At this time, Doug Thompson asked if there were any other members of the audience that wanted to speak, there were none. Doug then closed the Unmet Transit Hearing portion of this meeting.

Bob Kimball pointed out that the LTC funding is not available for this type of transportation and that the LTC has had to depend on ESTA to modify their routes to cover this type of transportation needs. Jill Batchelder indicated that ESTA is continually looking for additional funding sources to be able to cover this type of need in the community.

ITEM NO. 4A: LSR Statewide Needs Assessment Funding Concurrence

Staff presented the Commission with an example Resolution and letter to CSAC. Staff will update the two documents to include the required information. The Inyo County Local Transportation Commission concurs with the request to contribute to the Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment Report effort led by CSAC. Inyo County Local Transportation Commission understands that the region's programming capacity of Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funding will be reduced by \$174 to cover this four-year effort, and authorized the County to appropriately direct this funding to cover our share of the costs.

Motion to approve the letter and Resolution No. 2015-03 made by Pat Gardner and seconded by Rick Pucci. Motion carried 6-0

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM NO. 5: Request Commission receive the Inyo County Local Transportation Commission Financial Audit Report for the year ended June 30, 2014.

Doug Thompson made sure that everyone had a copy of the report and discussed the best way to read this and to follow the recommendations of the staff. Doug acknowledged that hard work that goes into these reports by the LTC staff as well as Caltrans staff and that it is very well presented so that it is easy to understand.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

ITEM NO. 6: ESTA Report

Jill Batchelder presented ESTA's financial report. Fechter & Company performed the audit and the full audit is available on the ESTA website for those that are interested in reading it. There were no findings in the audit. A copy of the Auditor's report was provided to the Commission for their information. There was a change of \$715,091 in the net position. This was due in part by the total revenue decreased from the State and the fare revenues. Mammoth Mountain Ski area contract revenue was reduced due to reduced service hours and visitations (due to a lack of snow). Due to the lack of revenue they had to reduce expenditures. For the STA allocations, there was an efficiency standard in 2011 that was not met due to an aberration related to the Red's Meadow contract so that funding could not be used for operations, it is in a holding account for some capital replacement. Those are the main reasons for the change.

A future issue that ESTA was asked to be aware of is PEPRA. The State of California issued a directive to transit employers in the state who participate in CalPERS that an exemption for transit employees would affect the pension reform act that had been effective January 1, 2013 (PEPRA). The PEPRA exemption for ESTA will result in approximately \$16,000 in additional pension expense for the Authority in FY2014/15.

Future legal decisions regarding the PEPRA exemption could result in variations in ESTA's annual PERS retirement contract expense.

The next item is replacement funding for capital replacement. ESTA has been working on this and the capital replacement policy was approved by the ESTA board at the last board meeting. These funds will be used to replace the buses for Inyo-Mono Counties and the City of Bishop. Red's Meadow and Mammoth Mountain Ski Area buses that were purchased with Federal funding, there has already been a capital replacement program in place to replace these vehicles.

ESTA Operating Statistics:

January 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 they provided nearly 16,000 rides in Inyo County. The passenger count per hour is 3.37 which is up 3.19% from the previous fiscal year. The routes that are falling short are Lone Pine Dial-a-Ride, Tecopa and US 395 routes. The Lone Pine Dial-a-Ride route is one that they are watching closely. It could be that one family moved out of town and they are waiting for another family to move in. But, it is being monitored.

Ridership: Mammoth Express is down as well as US 395 routes and they are contributing that to the lack of snow, not quite as many people traveling through.

Bishop Dial-a-Ride is improving. It is currently up 6% over the previous quarter.

The ridership has been dropping on the US 395 route to Lancaster. They used to get quite a few riders out of Kern between Inyokern, Mojave and Lancaster. The ridership seems to be dropping but the fare box is not reflecting the drop because of the amount of fares being collected for that long distance route.

Eastern Sierra Transit had over \$71,000 in fares over the quarter and the fare box ratio is approaching 16%.

Short range transit plans: ESTA is in the process of updating that and they were just awarded this contract to LSC Transportation Consultants out of Tahoe this week. There will be an update soon on this.

At the CalACT (California Association of Coordinated Transportation) conference, ESTA received the 2015 Outstanding Rural Transit Agency award for the State of California. They are quite proud of this. There will be a press release in the paper soon.

ITEM NO. 7: Tribal Report

None

ITEM NO. 8: Caltrans Report

Ryan Dermody, wanted to go back to the unmet needs of the hospital and wondered if there was a possibility of partnering with the hospital in exploring the possibility if IMACA and the Tribes and Mono County getting together in a working group to explore the possibilities of what is available for this type of transportation needs. These types of transit needs seem to be mentioned more and more. Ryan has had family members being flown out of Bishop that he has accompanied and then found themselves in the same situation needing a ride back home. Ryan has offered the services of Rick Franz to head up this committee to see what funding might be available for these needs.

Brent Green wanted Ryan to mention that Caltrans is very active in the drought situation and we will soon be seeing the landscaping at the rest stops and at their regional office not being watered. They will continue to water the trees but the lawns will die back for now.

Laura Smith asked Ryan if they were going to replace the dead grasses with another type of landscaping. He said that there is not a plan in place right now.

At our last meeting the SR 168 improvements were discussed. This month it is the North Sierra Highway improvements. Caltrans has received a verbal commitment from their Sacramento branch to fund the Meadow Farms sidewalk project. They have given the go ahead to proceed with the Project Initiation Document. This does not mean that Caltrans has full funding to do the project. What the Project Initiation Document does is that Caltrans can explore the project and find out what it is going to cost. This is going to be very expensive because there are a lot of bridge extensions and a lot of things that need to happen. As it stands right now this will be 100% funded by Caltrans so they will not be asking for funds from this Commission.

Big Pine and Lone Pine sidewalks are also on the list of projects. This will be a difficult project to sell because Caltrans is looking at the performance level of these projects and how many people will utilize these sidewalks.

Overall the funding picture for District 9 is not looking good this year. Caltrans has really taken a hit in the last 5 years in the way that they are able to fund projects, it has been difficult.

At the CTC meeting to request funds for the West Line Street Sidewalk project, Ryan and Brent Green, Caltrans District 9 Director, are going to remind the Commission of what a great partner Inyo LTC has been with the State and helping with the 4-lane corridor projects. Now the County and City of Bishop are struggling with their own local projects in order to get the MOU projects on board. Caltrans needs to make sure that they keep that front and center with Sacramento.

Doug Thompson has offered to accompany Caltrans at the CTC meeting if that would help. Ryan will talk to Brent Green and get back to Doug. Ryan said that it just might help. Doug also mentioned that just because our population numbers may be low, we

make up the difference in tourism in our area and it is important to keep these funds coming so that we can keep our roads improved.

The North Sierra Highway signal at See Vee Lane is set to go to construction in 2016/2017. That is still a go with an aggressive schedule.

Caltrans Inyo/Mono project schedule was presented for information to the Commissioners. If there are any questions the project managers should be contacted.

ITEM NO. 9: City of Bishop Report

David Grah – Commenting on Ryan Dermody’s report David added that we do have a lot of local needs in the County and City and it is important to see some money go towards local roads. On Warren Street, the construction is closer to the end of this project than they are from the start. Next week the contractor will start grinding and grading for the placement of new pavement. They are planning on paving the week of April 27th. Construction has been a rough experience for businesses and people trying to get around. Those two weeks are going to be even more difficult. Once the paving is done the contractor will still be out there but the roads will pretty much be open for use.

Yesterday they started installing the street lights and it is kind of nice to see the decorations going up. They won’t turn on yet but they are going up. The City is talking about having a ribbon cutting ceremony towards the end of next month. LTC will be invited to that for all of their support on this project and all of the other projects.

Construction is a messy inconvenient process and the businesses need the City’s support and the City needs their support. Please try to keep that in mind and patronize those businesses if you can. Otherwise, stay out of the way of the construction. Thanks to everyone for their patience during this construction.

Active Transportation Program call for projects, City of Bishop hopes to submit one project and they appreciate the opportunity to work with the County on the development of that project and its submission. They will try to be on top of the finishing the Warren Street project by working through the public outreach with is very important to this project.

ITEM NO. 10: Executive Director’s Report

None (both Courtney Smith and Clint Quilter are absent). Dave Grah did express the regrets from both Courtney and Clint that they were not able to make the meeting. Dave expressed that he did enjoy sitting up front with the Commission!

ITEM NO. 11: Reports from all members of the Inyo County LTC

Bob Kimball: None

Laura Smith: We have Earth Day coming up so get out and celebrate.

Rick Pucci: None

Mark Tillemans: None

Doug Thompson: Doug passed out maps from BLM of the Alabama Hills. The BLM did a great job on these maps .

Manzanar draws about 89,000 people and Alabama Hills draws about 120,000 visitors in November through March. It's incredible. The National Recreation Area Legislation is at the House and the Senate and it looks like it might be voted on at the House in the next couple of months. So things are moving forward. State Senator Cook is working with Senator Feinstein to make some adjustments to the desert bill which will make it a little friendlier to some of the other groups.

The dryness is bad for the vegetation and the environment but great for the tourists. In the Alabama Hills, there is not a day that you don't see crowds of people. The wild flowers in Death Valley and Ridgecrest were exceptional this year.

Pat Gardner: Pat sits on the League of California Cities and there are two bills that are out that are looking at maintenance of city streets. There is SHOPP money there too and this will be a positive thing if it goes through.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

ADJOURNMENT

Doug Thompson adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The next LTC meeting is going to be held on May 20, 2015 in Bishop at the Bishop City Council Chambers.

Attest:

Clint Quilter
Executive Director

By Denise Hayden, Secretary