



INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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Clint G. Quilter, Executive Director

MINUTES

INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

August 21, 2013

9:00 a.m. Bob Kimball called the meeting to order.

ITEM NO. 1 Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

Bob Kimball
Doug Thompson
Matt Kingsley
Rick Pucci
Jim Ellis
Laura Smith

Others Present:

Gail Rosander, Caltrans
John Helm, Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA)
Deston Dishion, City of Bishop
Elaine Kabala, Inyo County Planning Department
Joshua Hart, Inyo County Planning Department
Courtney Smith, Inyo County
Denise Hayden, Inyo County
Clint Quilter, Inyo County

Clint Quilter, new Inyo County Public Works Director and LTC Executive Director, was introduced to the Commission.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM NO. 3: Secretary of the Local Transportation Commission – Request approval of the minutes of the meeting of July 17, 2013.

Gayle Rosander of Caltrans made an observation regarding the July minutes. At the July 17, 2013 meeting, on page 4 of 6, Tom Hallenbeck misspoke by saying that there is going to be a final 30 or 45 day comment period on the Olancha-Cartago four-lane project environmental document. Tom Hallenbeck meant to say there is a 30 calendar day period during which the report can be subjected to legal challenge. Gayle understands that the minutes of the July 17th meeting reflect what was spoken at that meeting. She would like to see this correction added to the minutes of the August 21, 2013 meeting.

Courtney Smith stated that there were several changes he would like to see in the July minutes. On page 2, amend the first paragraph, item number 4, to read that Caltrans has brought forward a proposal to “program” and not to “construct” the construction component of Olancha/Cartago.

Item 4, at the end of the motion, it should read that the motion was carried 5-0.

Also, on page 4, Tom Hallenbeck’s name was misspelled and should be corrected.

Motion to adopt amended minutes as recommended by staff made by: Jim Ellis and seconded by Rick Pucci. Motion carried 6-0.

ITEM NO. 4: Request Commission approves Resolution No. 2013-13, a resolution allocating \$30,000 of TEA Exchange funds to the City of Bishop for the design component of the Seibu to School Project.

Courtney Smith said that the TEA Exchange funds the LTC has are left over from the transition between IS-TEA and the SAFETEA-LU federal transportation reauthorizations. The funds are kept in an interest bearing account. The LTC has given general direction to use these funds for project components that could not be funded or to help start projects. This project, the Seibu to School bike project has been a challenging project linking the Bishop Reservation and the Indian Trail with the school the school. Right now the Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds that would usually fund this project are kind of in limbo with the new transportation reauthorization. The State has frozen the equivalent MAP-21 alternative transportation funds. The City of Bishop is ready to move forward with the design of this project. Reasons to fund this request are: the City has tackled a tough project and came up with a workable solution, MAP-21 would delay this project, and the amount of funds being requested is not that large and there are sufficient TEA Exchange funds left in the account. There is currently \$237,000 still left in the TEA account. On the negative side, other projects will have to wait for MAP-21 alternative transportation funds to become available and this project will be competitive for MAP-21 funds with or without the design component being completed. With the new reauthorization in place, staff recommends that the Commission approve this allocation.

Deston Dishion of the City of Bishop gave a brief report on the project and answered questions from the Commission. Commission Jim Ellis mentioned that the City has collaborated with the Bishop Tribe. Deston Dishion said the project will provide a link with trails being improved on the Reservation and will provide residents a way to link between town and the reservation without having to go through the

school. The school is strongly in favor of the project. The project being ready to build will make it more competitive for the new alternative transportation program.

Motion to approve Resolution No. 2013-13 made by Laura Smith and seconded by Rick Pucci. Motion carried 6-0

ITEM NO. 5 Request Commission approve revised Resolution No. 2013-12, a resolution approving 1) the FY 2012-2013 Federal Exchange Program and State Match Program Agreement, Agreement No. X13-6134(015) with the California Department of Transportation in the amount of \$9,299, 2) apportioning and allocating Regional Surface Transportation Program funds to the City of Bishop and County of Inyo, and 3) authorizing the Executive Director to sign the Agreement.

Courtney Smith state that while he was preparing the invoice to the State for these funds, he noticed a discrepancy between the amount allocated via Resolution No. 2013-12 and the amount estimated to be available for allocation by the LTC. This inconsistency was carried over from conflicting numbers in the contract agreement. Caltrans headquarters staff indicated that the LTC should assume the larger amount. The resolution will revise the resolution to equal the amount of funds available and provide a small additional amount of funds to the County and City for roadway improvements.

Motion to approve the revised Resolution No. 2013-12 made by: Matt Kingsley and seconded by Jim Ellis. Motion carried 6-0

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM NO. 6 A workshop by the Inyo County Planning Department to discuss the update of the 2001 Inyo County General Plan and its Circulation Element.

Elaine Kabala gave an overview of the proposed General Plan update. The Planning Department is just starting to seek input from stakeholders and interested parties. They will hold five public meeting in the coming months and they hope to present the update to the Board of Supervisors for approval in December. New sections will be added to the update regarding access and air quality. A policy will be added encouraging the creation of a Pedestrian Master Plan.

The Planning Department will also be updating the Zoning Code as a part of this update. This will include formalizing the required dimensions of parking spaces and loading zones and setting new parking standards. Matt Kingsley asked if the parking requirements are for off-street or on-street parking. Elaine replied that the requirements will be for off-street parking.

Laura Smith asked if the Circulation includes policies regarding bicycle lanes and Elaine said that those are included in the draft document.

Doug Thompson asked if the proposed update will delete policies in support of scenic highways. Elaine Kabala said the answer is yes. Doug asked why this policy is being removed. Josh Hart explained that the deletion of this policy is based on feedback the Planning Department had received from the Board of Supervisors regarding the participation of the County in a grant application to pursue funding to initiate a planning process necessary to designate a road as a scenic highway. The Board declined to participate in the grant. Rick Pucci asked if the scenic highway designation limited economic development. Josh Hart replied that yes, there would be increasing regulatory restrictions. Doug Thompson said he believed a scenic highway designation would bring additional economic opportunity to area communities.

Jim Ellis inquired if there were new policies regarding the airport. Josh Hart stated there are not any proposed changes from the existing General Plan. Jim Ellis asked if there has been any process in getting the Bishop Airport eligible for commercial flights. Clint Quilter replied that the County currently is moving two grant applications forward to improve the airport. The County would like to move forward and to make the airport eligible to receive commercial flights. He will be meeting with the County CAO to discuss airport related issues in the next week.

The Commission thanked Planning Department staff for conducting the workshop.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

ITEM NO. 7 ESTA Report - Preliminary Cost-by-Route Analysis

John Helm of the Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA) passed out a staff report on a cost-by-route analysis of the routes ESTA provides in Inyo County. This analysis resulted from comments ESTA received on its most recent Triennial Performance Audit. The information being presented today is preliminary. ESTA's financial data is being finalized. A majority of their revenues are reimbursable grants so it takes a while to finalize the data. The cost-by-route analysis provides a meaningful measure of operating costs per route. The farebox revenue data gathered previously was based on an aggregate basis and did not provide route by route costs.

The costs to operate different routes vary tremendously. An example of a more expensive route is the service to Lancaster and a more affordable route per hour is the Antelope Valley dial a ride. The cost-by-route analysis included the following operating costs: vehicle maintenance, fuel, administrative compensation, operating salaries and benefits, and other operating costs. The analysis includes a breakdown of cost per service hour. The operating costs per service hour vary from \$40 to \$150 per hour. Their administrative expenses are applied more to federally funded routes.

Their farebox recovery ration systemwide is significantly higher than the minimum required by the Transportation Development Act. A couple of the new services they provide, the Reds Meadow Shuttle and Mammoth Mountain ski are shuttle provide a boost to their overall farebox.

Bob Kimball asked about the size of buses being used for the Bishop dial a ride. John Helm replied that they are 15-passenger cutaways. Bob asked if it would be more efficient to use vans. John said that they will have larger groups and there are certain advantages to cutaways. There are a surprising number of passengers who will load bicycles onto the bus and that is much easier on a cutaway than on a van. Also, for children a special seat may be required in a van but is not required in a cutaway.

Laura Smith asked if there was a reason for the decrease in ridership seen during the special Mule Days services. John Helm replied that there are peaks and valleys to demand that are difficult to predict. Laura then asked bus service to area trailheads and whether there is any signage at area trailheads that has ESTA and charter bus information. John asked Doug Thompson if there was any bus information at Whitney Portal. Doug Thompson replied that there is no bus information posted at Whitney Portal.

Doug Thompson reported that there are several people conducting transit service to the trailheads. For many people, the best way for hikers to get to town is to hitchhike. He is looking forward to seeing the results of the Inyo National Forest transit studies. In the past couple of years, there really has been an increase in the point to point routes such as the John Muir Trail, High Sierra Trail, and Pacific Crest Trail and that use is creating impacts. John Helm says that ESTA gets calls requesting trailhead service all the time, but don't currently provide the service. Doug said that the shuttle is worst for hikers on the High

Sierra Trail and that the situation has been made more difficult because the local rental car companies don't allow one way rentals. Laura Smith said that she would like to see information posted at area trailheads. John Helm said that he would contact the Forest Service and ask if that would be possible.

Bob Kimball asked John Helm if it's required to have 100% farebox for bus service to trailheads. John Helm said that no, the ESTA board could direct them to provide the service. There was some talk about the charter services that are now being provided to area trailheads. Doug said it is a short busy season that only lasts 7 or 8 weeks. He also mentioned that dial a ride used to provide service to area trailheads.

Jim Ellis asked John if there are links on ESTA's website to help people plan their trips. John said most of their links are to public entities. They could add links to private entities to help users. Matt Kingsley asked if ESTA's schedule is posted at area visitor centers. John said that it is. Matt Kingsley asked who canceled the dial a ride service to area trailheads. Doug thought it was cancelled sometime in the 1990s. John Helm said that ESTA providing service to area trailheads would conflict with private enterprise. Federal and State government grants don't fund public transit that competes with private services. Doug Thompson suggested that some type of public/private partnership might be a solution.

Jim Ellis asked how the new computer system is working. John Helm reported that it has been a struggle. The system has been in place and they are still challenged to smoothly implement the project. The nature of the Bishop DAR service does not merge well with the RouteMatch software. He is meeting with staff to try and resolve issues. They will then go back to the provider to try and fix problems. Service on the street is worse than four months ago. They haven't realized the benefits of the new system.

John Helm indicated that the Commission should wait to see the results of the Inyo National Forest transit studies before considering transit to the trailheads. Bob Kimball asked staff to report on the status of the Inyo National Forest transit studies.

Matt Kingsley said that he has received some feedback where transit users in Lone Pine are not pleased with the moving of the interregional service from Statham Hall to McDonalds. John Helm explained the rationale for this move. People from out of the area sometimes have difficulty finding Statham Hall. Statham Hall is not open at all times. ESTA provided notice to the media. It appears that especially the 8:30 am northbound departure has been a problem for some users. ESTA now offers a deviated call and response service to pick up passengers at Statham Hall. They are requesting a day in advance notice. It does not make sense to start the service at McDonalds and then to stop in several minutes at Statham Hall every day. That is not reasonable to transit users. Matt Kingsley noted that most of the riders live on the east side of town. John Helm said that ESTA will deviate from the standard route for transit users with disabilities.

ESTA will give a finalized cost-by-route analysis at a future meeting. Ridership has been great on the interregional routes. The bad news is that the ridership on all of the dial-a-ride routes has been decreasing. In Mammoth Lakes, this may be a result of people moving to the fixed route service. ESTA has received State grant funds for volunteer transport via a van for out of the area medical appointments. Several Commissioners expressed concern about possible misuse of this service and requested careful monitoring. John Helm reported that the service is based on a successful implementation of this in rural Riverside County. ESTA is excited to see this service implemented as there is nothing similar to this in place now. ESTA will study what other agencies have done to monitor the use of the program.

Matt Kingsley asked about the possibility of ESTA providing weekend ridership. John Helm reported that in the past when ESTA has provided weekend service, the ridership has been low.

ITEM NO. 8 Tribal Report – None.

ITEM NO. 9 Caltrans Report

Gayle Rosander of Caltrans reported that the Highpoint Curve Correction project in Mono County and the Townes Pass Rockfall project in Death Valley on SR 190 are both complete. Caltrans staff has met with the County to discuss State and Federal emergency funding to the large amount of road damaged in the eastern part of Inyo County caused by thunderstorms toward the end of July.

ITEM NO. 10 City of Bishop Report

Deston Dishion reported that the City will be opening bids on Thursday for the Wye Road intersection project. The Warren Street project is in the design phase and there are some challenging issues having to do with the relocation of LADWP utility poles. The Pine to Park Path is nearing completion of the Design phase.

ITEM NO. 11 Executive Director's Report

Courtney Smith reported to the Commission that the County's Federal Lands Access Program grant application for the reconstruction of the Whitney Portal Road was short listed. This is \$9.3 million grant application that includes about \$1.2 million of Toll Credits as a grant match. The County entered into a scoping agreement with the Federal Highway Administration. Federal Highway Administration staff is examining 1) if the project can be delivered as was submitted in the grant application and 2) refining the cost estimate for the project. County staff spent all day in the field looking at the project in more detail. The final word on whether the County received the grant should be on or before October 3rd.

Clint Quilter reported that the County is seeking about \$3.04 million in Federal emergency relief funds and \$1.05 million in State emergency relief for the flood damage caused by the flood events in late July.

ITEM NO. 12 Reports from all members of the Inyo County LTC

Matt Kingsley asked if the Whitney Portal Road project will include bike lanes from town to Horseshoe Meadows Road. Courtney Smith replied that there are some physical constraints that make that challenging. County and Federal Highway Administration staff are seeking 12-foot wide travel lanes with a fog line and a 2-foot wide shoulder. This portion of the road would be designated a bike route. The additional width and fog lines should make the road more user friendly for bicyclists.

Doug Thompson stated that he would like to see the County pursue a scenic designation on all parts of US 395. This will highlight the local area and bring funds into the community to help local businesses.

CORRESPONDENCE

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.