



**INYO COUNTY
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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Clint Quilter, Executive Director

Meeting Notes

INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Social Services Transit Advisory Council (SSTAC)

**Caltrans Headquarters
Mt. Whitney Conference Room
500 S. Main Street
Bishop, CA 93514**

March 9, 2017

IN ATTENDANCE:

Courtney Smith, Inyo County LTC Staff
Rick Franz, Caltrans District 9
Jill Batchelder, ESTA
Beth Himelhoch, Inyo-Mono Agency for the Handicapped
Clint Quilter, Inyo County
Denise Hayden, Inyo County LTC Staff

Courtney Smith started the meeting by discussing the unmet transit needs hearing process. The SSTAC meeting is the first part of the annual Unmet Transit Needs hearing process. The meeting notes from this meeting will be presented to the Local Transportation Commission (LTC) at the April and May Unmet Transit Needs hearing. This is the first step in determining the allocation of the Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds. Over the past 12 years, the LTC has only allocated TDA funds transit or bicycle and pedestrian needs. None of the TDA funds have been allocated for local streets and roads. We should begin this meeting by doing a round robin to discuss the health of the transit system and potential transit needs in the area.

LTC staff will take a look at the SSTAC membership to see if there are others that may like to attend. He is not sure why a senior members is not attending so we need to reach out for confirm that she will still participate.

Beth Himelhoch: Beth stated that ESTA does an excellent job. The item that she would like to present is regarding one of her clients that works in Manzanar. He has to be in

Manzanar at 7:00 AM and this makes it difficult because of the hours that the ESTA bus runs.

Jill Batchelder asked if the employer would be willing to work with the employee's hours and Beth explained that these employees clean the restrooms and they must be done before the business opens. Therefore the employer is not willing to change these work hours. IMAH will be having additional clients that will be getting jobs in that area and would need to have disabled transportation for nontraditional work hours for this area

Beth mentioned that IMAH may have another source of jobs for her clients that would be within the traditional work hours. Beth appreciate all of the help that ESTA has provided for her clients so far.

Beth did add that the additional routes in the Mammoth area have been very helpful to her clients because they are now able to get back and forth. There also needs to be transit service on the weekends from Bishop to Lone Pine because there are disabled riders that live in Bishop and work in the Lone Pine area. This need still exists. There is also a need for additional transit service in the Bishop area for IMAH's clients.

Jill Batchelder: ESTA has grant applications in process. The Low Carbon Transit Operations Program funds, between Inyo and Mono Counties, have decreased from last year. ESTA had about \$58,000 to work with last year and this year they only have about \$38,000. In response, ESTA has had to cut the mid-day routes and reduce the number of the transit punch passes by half. Beth asked if Jill thought that the reduction in discount punch pass tickets would affect the ridership. Jill does think that it will have an impact especially on the Mammoth Express route. All of the other routes are status quo and they don't anticipate any changes to those.

ESTA will be initiating a Bishop Creek Shuttle service this year. This will begin on Memorial Day Weekend with two trips per day going up to Lake Sabrina and South Lake. There will be flag stops along the way at Bishop Creek Lodge or Parchers Resort so if there is anyone along the way that would like a ride they can get on the bus as long as it is safe to stop. This will be available for Memorial Day weekend only and then it will begin again in mid-June and run seven days a week until mid-August and then it will be weekends only until the middle of October. This service will have a fare of \$5.00 no matter where you go. Also, you do not have to get off of the bus, you can just take a ride to take a look at the scenery if you would like.

Last year the need for non-emergency medical transportation was presented by Danny David from Northern Inyo Hospital. This past year, ESTA donated a vehicle to the hospital for this purpose. It is up and running and it goes from Mammoth and Lone Pine assisting those in need of this type of transportation. Denise Hayden noted that they have also made a few trips to Tonopah as well. They have also gone out to Benton too. ESTA also continues to provide non-emergency medical transportation through an FTA Section 5310 transit grant and they have about another 16 months available on this grant. The grant provides reimbursement to volunteer drivers for their mileage. There have been

69 participants in this program with one hundred thirty thousand miles traveled. This has been a rewarding program to administer because you get to talk to the participants.

Courtney Smith brought up a comment that Joan Stathem had mentioned at the Public Comment portion of the last LTC meeting. She is having difficulty reaching her mail box and her front door. Jill said that this is a liability issue and the ESTA driver can take their clients to their door but they are unable to unlock the door. The drivers are able to assist the rider after the rider has entered their house. They will get assistance to the bus and then off of the bus to the lobby of their doctor's office but the driver cannot check them in at the doctor's office. Some ESTA drivers were actually taking the groceries into the clients kitchens through the door though this is a huge liability for and this service had to be stopped. It is the crossing of the threshold through the door that causes the liability.

It is difficult when there are passengers that need additional assistance and the drivers want to help but these rules were put into place to protect everyone. The drivers are aware of the special needs of these individuals as well as their physical appearance, and other signs that may indicate the necessity for additional assistance. They report this to Jill and in turn Jill will report it to Adult Protective Services.

Beth Himelhoch noted that since IMAH deals with Kern Regional she invited them to come to our area and see what we have to offer here. Kern Regional was astounded to learn that we did not have rapid transit in our area and they had no idea what our area was like. Rick Franz also joined in and agreed that Caltrans runs into this same situation with Sacramento. They have no idea that the rural areas have transit needs too. Rick provided this information to Sacramento and they were dumfounded at the measured that had to be taken to make the trip from Bishop to Sacramento. It wasn't until Caltrans came to Bishop that they fully understood our area and what it takes to serve the people here.

Rick Franz made the suggestion that when Caltrans come to our area again, they need to take the public transportation that is offered to see what the riders have to do to get around.

Courtney Smith said that if there were any needs or suggestions to e-mail Courtney and he can make sure that these needs are included in the information presented at the unmet transit needs hearings.

Rick Franz asked Denise Hayden what the funding status is for the operation of the hospital bus. He noted that there might be Federal funds available that he can look into. Denise volunteered to discuss this with Dr. Kevin Flanigan, CEO of Northern Inyo Hospital and ask what the current status is for transit services.

If anyone should think of any additional needs or comments, please contact Courtney or Denise to have them added.

The meeting was concluded at 10:26 AM.