



**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**

February 23, 2018

Meeting called to order at: 10:03 AM

IN ATTENDANCE:

Courtney Smith, Inyo County LTC Staff
Rick Franz, Caltrans District 9
John Helm, ESTA
Beth Himelhoch, Inyo-Mono Agency for the Handicapped
Clint Quilter, Inyo County LTC Executive Director
Joan Stathem, ESTA Rider
Dan David, Northern Inyo Hospital
David Weaver, Assistant Transportation Planner, Bishop Paiute Tribe
Marilyn Mann, Inyo County HHS
Keri Oney, Inyo County HHS
Denise Hayden, Inyo County LTC Staff

Courtney Smith started the meeting by introducing himself and explaining that the Social Service Transit Advisory Council (SSTAC) is the kickoff to the annual allocation of Transportation Development Act funds. If you look at the history, this group is looking specifically for unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet. This started back in the day when all of the transportation funds were not being allocated to transit and some of the funds were still being allocated to the Road Department. This is no longer the case; the LTC has been allocating all of the Transportation Development Act funds for transit for the last 15 years or more. This meeting is required to be held to look for unmet transit needs

but what it has really become is a discussion and a chance to look at the transit system as a whole and to have the transit providers discuss the changing needs of the area. All parties are encouraged to identify transit needs.

Dan David – Northern Inyo Hospital (NIH): started with this group in 2015 and he presented the unmet transit needs for the hospital. He has been at the hospital for 20 years; he grew up in the valley and has always recognized the need for medical transportation at the hospital. When the needs were presented in 2015 the hospital was pushing patients across the street to the nursing home in gurneys in the cold. They recognized that there has been a huge need for this type of service and he is happy to say that the hospital now has two vans that have been donated. They have a volunteer service and Rosie Graves has lead this group with the transportation services for the hospital. Since July of 2016 at the start until December 2017, NIH has driven 21,426 miles for patients. They have served 831 patients and a total of 914 hours on the road. NIH limits transportation strictly for patients with medical needs within a 100 mile radius. The drivers cannot go into Nevada so they cannot take patients back into Tonopah. There are a large amount of patents from Tonopah, Dyer, and Fish Lake Valley that NIH can't drop off at their home or into their houses. This is still a problem and NIH doesn't know how to get around this requirement. Dan said that he is not familiar with the rules and regulations involved in crossing state lines. It is a hindrance with the Nevada patients. It was noted by the group that this is also a problem with the ambulances. They will meet an ambulance from the other side at the state line to transport a patient.

Just for the month of January NIH drove 2,212 miles. That is the highest month so far and was for the transportation of 77 patients. It is getting to the point that NIH is considering hiring a transportation coordinator because volunteers aren't always available. Volunteer drivers choose the hours that they want to work and that doesn't necessarily coincide with the needs of the patients. Dan was asked what the most common type of transportation was being requested. Dan explained that NIH did not have Urology services for a while so they were transporting patients to Mammoth. The majority of the transporting is done in town. NIH also goes to Benton a lot because their patients do not have rides to Bishop or rides back. When they go to Mammoth it is more difficult because the driver has to wait for the patient to finish their doctor visit to be done so that takes a driver out for about two hours or longer while they do that. NIH is partnering with Glendale Memorial Hospital now to do a lot of Telemedicine. NIH is also bringing in a new Cardiologist and Urologist. NIH is talking about expanding transportation services to link to Glendale. If NIH needs to send someone out to Glendale Memorial then NIH will not have a way to return the patient to Bishop. The vans are wheelchair accessible and the staff wear body cameras in case there are any issues or problems. Rosie has created a great program with tracking and logging. NIH would love to see it expanded even more in the future. One problem that they are having is when a patient is picked up from their appointment they will ask the driver if they can swing by the store for the patient to be able to pick up some groceries or to the drug store for their medication. NIH is trying to keep these trips to only medical related and at the same time trying to work with ESTA to bridge the service for these extra types of trips for the patients.

Pioneer Home Health was here last year and it was discussed about partnering with the hospital at that time. The hospital has not done a lot with Pioneer but the hospital has just partnered with Pioneer so there is a possibility that this service will expand into home health as well.

John Helm asked if the hospital was able to accept any kind of Medicaid funding. Dan said there is transportation serviced for Medicaid customers. On the back of their card is a number for them to call and they provide that service. The hospital has not joined in with that service to be able to get that reimbursement. The hospital's service is all volunteer for patients that have been discharged and need to go home. Perhaps the patients came in by ambulance to the ER and are now discharged at 2:00 a.m. and they have no way to get home. The hospital vans run 24 hours a day. If there are volunteers on duty they can get a ride. If there are no volunteers they might have to wait a while until a volunteer arrives to take them home. That is the difficult part is finding the volunteers. It is really a nice service and hopefully we can continue to expand it.

There is new leadership at the nursing home and the hospital has not expanded their service to the nursing home. When they first obtained the van the idea was to share the van for the various services in town. The nursing home has not used it so far. Toyiabe had a couple of vans of their own so they haven't needed the hospital vans nor has the Pine Street nursing home. These are still potential ideas for other agencies that could possibly use this service.

Beth Himelhoch – IMAH There is still a need for IMAH's adult clients that live in Lone Pine to come to Bishop for social events in the evening and on the weekends. This would be particularly important on the weekends but Beth understands that there is just not enough funding for that. IMAH has been able to provide this service on the weekend but it is not reimbursable. They also have clients that live in Big Pine but they have employees that live in Big Pine and quite often they will bring the client to Bishop. Beth went on to explain that their clientele do not drive so once they get home during the week they are stuck there for the entire weekend. Dan David asked if it would work if there were volunteer drivers that they could work with the hospital vans. The drivers would have to go through the training, etc. The hospital vans were given for medical reasons and are also non-reimbursable but it might be able to work something out. Dan said the hospital would be open to something like that to help out. They are donated vans from people that wanted to help with transportation services. He would have to check with his boss and work out the details. Manzanar National Historic Site staff has contacted Beth and said that they do need some help with transportation for seniors and disabled for the pilgrimage. Manzanar and Beth have an established relationship because they hired one of IMAH's adults and he is now working on his second year and it has been a great partnership. Bernadette at Manzanar came to Beth and said that they need help with the pilgrimage on site. IMAH said that they will be able to donate two of their buses for seniors and those that are disabled only. This is still in the planning stages but IMAH will donate the use of their two buses and the drivers to do the loop at the pilgrimage. John Helm asked if the passengers could travel on public transportation on the weekends. Beth felt

as though they could. Some of their clients with disabilities would not be able to but those in Lone Pine would definitely be able to use public transportation. John asked if this would be the case for Mammoth as well. Beth noted that there were also clients there who are able to ride on public transportation.

Dan David asked if this would be something that we could bring Mono County into and Courtney explained that IMAH covers both Inyo and Mono Counties. Rick Franz joined in and stated that Mono County also has this same hearing and it should be coming up soon. He recommended that Dan David contact Michael Draper of the Mono County LTC. This might be an area that the hospital can assist with.

Marilyn Mann and Keri Oney – Inyo County HHS Marilyn noted that weekend access to transit remains an unmet need. It is such small numbers that it probably doesn't qualify as an unmet need. The Eastern Sierra Area Agency on Aging (ESAAA) still maintains their transportation service to Nevada to specialty doctors in Carson City and Reno. Keri added that it does make for a long day. ESAAA still transports quite a few people. Rick Franz asked if they are using their own vehicles and Keri stated that they are using County vehicles and ESAAA staff to drive the clients. They also provide bus passes if the client is able to use the bus. ESAAA will do an assessment of the individual to make sure that they are capable of using the bus and if they are the client is encouraged to do so. ESAAA staff provides service to those clients that are not able to use the bus system. Rick Franz added that the reason they can go into Nevada is because they are using County owned vehicles. Marilyn added that they also go to Loma Linda and Lancaster to the south. When this program first started clients wanted to go shopping or stop here and stop there. ESAAA had to put a limit on this type of service.

Dan David joined in and said that the hospital does purchase bus passes from ESTA to give to the patients additional flexibility. Keri said that they will call the clients family to let them know that there is a need for the person to go shopping or go elsewhere to see if the family could help. Marilyn Mann commented that the accommodation that ESTA has made has been phenomenal, HHS truly appreciates their work. Keri noted that HHS can give the driver the bus pass and the bus will then go and pickup up the client. It saves the client from having to come and get the pass to use. ESTA drivers are very nice to work with. Beth Himelhoch noted that ESTA has requested that everyone continue to send their needs to ESTA. ESTA has always found the funds to be able to help everyone. John Helm noted how important it is that all of the needs are noted in an open forum like this. The funds might not be available right now but if the need is known and then funds do become available it may be possible to meet those needs at a later date. Marilyn commented that if it would be possible for a later pick up and drop off during the day it would be helpful.

Dave Weaver, Assistant Transportation Planner for the Bishop Paiute Tribe: The Tribe is currently working on a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant. They have held a few community meetings and sent out surveys to try to determine what the needs are on the reservation. The Tribal Elders use ESTA Dial-A-Ride services quite a bit. It was

unfortunate last month that there was a break in at the Public Works Department and they discovered about \$6,000 worth of bus passes had been stolen. They will be contacting ESTA to repurchase more bus passes to replace the stolen passes. John Helm encouraged Dave to contact ESTA regarding the passes that were taken. ESTA keeps a record of the pass numbers so the stolen passes can be turned off so that they will not be valid.

Dave is currently working with the tribal members to understand their transportation needs. The Bishop Tribe has a bus and a couple of vans. Their issue is finding enough volunteers to drive the vehicles. There are a couple of certified drivers though they are hoping to get more. Dan David asked if the Bishop tribe works with the Big Pine tribe. Dave explained that he basically works with the Bishop tribe and that he uses all kinds of social media to get the people to come to the meetings. It's not always easy to get people to come out to a meeting. The Bishop Tribe is hoping to get their buses back into action to provide services to tribal members and elders. Dave explained that he is signed on to hold this position until February 2019. He is planning on attending the LTC meetings and being an active part of the community to help the tribe.

Rick Franz, Caltrans: Rick works for Caltrans and focuses on transit-related issues. With SB1, the new transit bill, there may be some transit monies coming from this bill. Certain programs will receive additional funding. Beth Himelhoch explained that IMAH gets all of their buses through the Section 5310 application process. She also offered to assist anyone with the Section 5310 application process because she is very familiar with it. IMAH can only use their buses for the elderly and the disabled.

John Helm, Executive Director ESTA: ESTA staff tries to stay on top of the transit needs in our area but we don't always hear everything. This meeting provides valuable information for ESTA. ESTA has received funding from Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, which is aimed to create greenhouse gas reductions. Eligible project proposals need to show a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. ESTA has used the funds to partially fund a mid-day run from Lone Pine to Bishop. The ridership on this route has been extremely low and the route has not met the threshold required for this funding.

The Reno to Lancaster route has been running five days a week since last summer. This is a year round service. These run from Mammoth Lakes to Lancaster and from Lone Pine to Reno and back in the same day. It is looking positive that ESTA will be able to continue this service five day a week. The passenger per trip for Reno is running very strong. Lancaster is not as strong but doing well. There has been mention or a desire to have a Saturday service for these routes. This was a service that was offered years ago and the ridership was very low at that time. When there came a need to cut corners this was one of the routes that got cut. As a function of the general housing in the Eastern Sierra, especially in Mammoth Lakes, there is increased discussion about the need. Mammoth Mountain Ski area has leased some property in the Bishop area to be housing for their employees. They are operating an additional bus for their employees to transport them from Bishop to Mammoth. There has been talk about the increased need for

transportation from Bishop. It's not just a winter time thing any more in Mammoth. Summer has become very busy there. There are not enough places for employees to be housed there so there will always be a need for transportation to Mammoth. There is a possibility of partnering with Mammoth Mountain Ski area to help fund a service like this. We might be able to make this a reality. There is increasing discussion about this so it may be a possibility.

The non-emergency medical program that is offered. John explained ESTA's Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program to the group. Eligible patients are required to find a volunteer driver. The driver will be reimbursed for up to 300 miles one way or 600 miles round trip. ESTA recently secured two more years of this funding. Dan David mentioned that the hospital encourages their patients to use this service; it is a cost savings to everyone.

John mentioned that ESTA is facing a large change in personnel. John is retiring this May. Unfortunately on the heels of that two of the staff members are also leaving. They are losing their transit analyst and a member of their fiscal staff that has really helped with their computer system. ESTA has a game plan in place for the transition. ESTA is going to be reorganizing their operation. ESTA is currently recruiting to fill the vacant positions. Beth Himelhoch wanted to go on record as saying how nice it has been to work with Jill Batchelder for all of these years.

Rick Franz asked about the Bishop Creek Route. John stated that it did not meet the expectations though that was probably due largely to the heavy snow year and late opening date for fishing and area trails. John is recommending to the ESTA board that the Bishop Creek Shuttle run again this summer to give it a fair chance.

Beth asked about the morning Lone Pine run. Did outreach go out to the chamber? John said that it did and the numbers still remained low.

Joan Stathem, ESTA rider: Joan stated that she appreciates the extended night time service on Friday and Saturday. It would be nice if the week night buses could run later. If she wants to attend a week night meeting she can get to the meeting but can't get home. She doesn't mind waiting for a while. She also mentioned that it would be helpful if the bus could start earlier on Saturdays, it would be helpful. One of the meetings that she attends starts at 8:30 a.m. and the bus doesn't start until 8:30.

John Helm asked Marilyn Mann about the needs for their clients. It was mentioned that the AAA meetings are difficult for many to get to because the bus does not run that late. John asked Marilyn how late the bus would need to run to accommodate these people. Marilyn was going to check with her employment eligibility personnel to verify the time and will get back to John. John asked Joan what time would work best in the evening if they were to implement later bus routes and Joan said between 9:00 – 10:00 would be late enough. John said that ESTA will look at the feasibility of extending their week night service hours.

Beth Himelhoch asked about the Cerro Coso run. John said that they met with the college staff and determined that it was just not working. Quite often the bus would go up to the college and then there was no one there.

Marilyn also thanked John for ESTA's responsiveness in helping with the evacuation during the recent wildfire. Dan David said that the hospital was ready too. Marilyn thanked Dan for the oxygen concentrators that the hospital donated.

Dan also added that they are going to start telemedicine at the hospital and they will be providing transportation services to patients for this service. Clients will sit in front of a screen and see a doctor on the other end. This will include Cardiology and Endocrinology specialists. They might also put a surgeon down at the Lone Pine hospital.

Courtney stated thanked everyone for the turnout. We will type up notes from today and send them out for everyone, as well as pass out the notes at the April and May Inyo County LTC unmet transit needs hearings. If you should think of anything else that you would like to add, please e-mail Courtney at csmith@inyocounty.us.

Meeting adjourned: 10:52 AM