

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS
ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: Public Works *mbd*

BOARD AGENDA # B-10

Urgent Routine

AGENDA DATE May 5, 2009

CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES NO
(Information Attached)

4/5 Vote Required YES NO

SUBJECT:

Approval to Accept the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Accept the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan.
2. Authorize the County Transit Manager to forward the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan and supporting documents to the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) for their consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no impact to the County general fund. The Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Study was made possible through \$175,000 of funding provided by the Stanislaus Council of Governments. If the needs identified in the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Study are found to be "Unmet Transit Needs that are reasonable to meet" under the Transportation Development Act and StanCOG's Unmet Transit Needs guidelines, there could be an impact to the amount of Local Transportation Funds (LTF) available for public transit services throughout the County.

BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2009-303

On motion of Supervisor Monteith, Seconded by Supervisor Grover

and approved by the following vote,
Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Chiesa, Grover, Monteith, and Chairman DeMartini

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: None

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

- 1) Approved as recommended
- 2) Denied
- 3) Approved as amended
- 4) Other:

MOTION:

Christine Ferraro

ATTEST: CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No.

Approval to Accept the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan

DISCUSSION:

In March 2008, a group of citizens representing agencies and organizations who provide services to County seniors brought their concerns about senior transportation to the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors. Subsequently, the Board at their March 25, 2008 meeting formed an Ad Hoc Senior Transportation Committee to address the group's concerns. Supervisors Grover and Monteith were appointed to the Ad Hoc Senior Transportation Committee with the County Department of Public Works Transit Division overseeing administration and providing necessary staff support.

It was determined that to best address the concerns, it was important to determine what the senior's transportation needs were. Since people with a disability share many of the same transportation challenges, it was decided to conduct a countywide transportation needs assessment study for seniors and persons with a disability.

With funding from the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG), HDR Engineering, Inc., was selected to conduct the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Study ("Study") that focused on seniors and persons with disabilities to quantify and qualify what the needs were and then develop a strategy to help meet those needs.

A Project Oversight Committee (POC) comprised of agencies representing seniors and persons with a disability was formed to help guide the project. The Project Oversight Committee was comprised of representatives from the Stanislaus County Commission on Aging, the Society for Handicapped Children and Adults, the Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living (DRAIL), AARP, Catholic Charities, Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC), StanCOG, the Department of Aging and Veterans Services, Community Services Agency and City of Modesto and County Transit staffs.

The Study used demographic analysis and surveys to help determine what the transportation needs were in Stanislaus County. Eight hundred and twenty-four (824) agencies, caregiver organizations, Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs) and churches were contacted for their input and 3,975 individual surveys were sent out to gather information about the transportation needs. One thousand two hundred forty-eight (1,248) completed questionnaires were returned for a 31.4% return rate. Extensive input from the Project Oversight Committee helped guide the project. The final study document, the Recommendations and Implementation Plan ("Plan"), includes an Executive Summary, a summary of the technical information from the Study's technical memorandums and recommendations, and an implementation plan based on the Study's findings.

The Study found that, while most seniors and persons with disability use their own vehicles or get rides from family or friends to meet their transportation needs, and that while Stanislaus County is well served by its public transit operators and social service transportation providers, there is still a gap in services for those who need more specialized transportation, such as assisted transportation. Assisted transportation can include going into people's homes to assist them in getting ready to be transported, physically helping them in and out of vehicles, and accompanying them into offices and stores.

Approval to Accept the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan

The Study recommends using different “streams” to address the situation. One of the streams is to develop a program to help better educate seniors and persons with a disability about what transportation services are available throughout the County. The Study recommends a take “Public Transit First” approach to get residents onto existing public transit services to minimize new expenditures for transportation. The Study found many people aren’t aware of what transportation services exist and are also intimidated to use them. This could be improved by showing residents how to use public transit by doing travel training and could include a “Take a Bus with a Buddy” type program. This would enable an inexperienced rider to take a trip on public transit with an experienced rider who would show them how to use the public transit systems in the County. This would help eliminate barriers to using public transit.

For those who can't use public transit due to mobility issues or who may live outside current transit service areas, the Study looked at peer examples in the State to help provide possible options for those riders. The Study found good examples of volunteer driver programs in Riverside and Contra Costa Counties that are being used to help fill these transportation gaps. The Study recommends the development of a more extensive volunteer driver program than what currently exists in Stanislaus County as another stream to address the transportation needs.

The third stream that the Study recommends is the development of a mobility center where a senior, a person with a disability, or any County resident could call in to get transportation information, a “one-stop transportation information center”. This center could direct them to public transit options first and, for those who can't use public transit, the center could act as a “broker” and, based on the rider's transportation needs or travel limitations, direct them to the volunteer driver program or non-profit transportation options that are available. The center could help coordinate the non-profit transportation service so that more people could get rides per vehicle thus lowering the transportation costs to agencies.

To fund the findings and recommendations, the Study identified potential Federal, State and agency funding available to help address the needs. Due to the State's budget crisis and their use of the State Transit Assistance funds to balance the budget for the next five years, State transit funds could be limited in the near future. Taking advantage of other sources of funding will be important in getting some aspects of the program moving forward.

The Study also recommends the formation of a Transportation Advisory Committee to work with StanCOG on the Study's findings. The committee could be comprised of many of the agencies that worked with the County on the Study. The Committee will be a key element in developing a sustainable plan that is designed to meet the transportation needs of Stanislaus County residents.

Approval to Accept the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan

If the Recommendations and Implementation Plan is approved by the Board, it is recommended the Plan and the Study's technical memorandums be forwarded to StanCOG to be considered by StanCOG as to how they would like to proceed with the Study's findings. StanCOG, as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), is responsible for the annual Transportation Development Act Unmet Transit Needs process and is also responsible for the distribution of many of the transportation funds available to agencies in Stanislaus County. As the RTPA, StanCOG is responsible for overseeing the implementation of studies and reports such as this. They will be responsible for determining how to address the needs noted in the Study. StanCOG, through their Unmet Transit Needs process, will need to determine if the needs are "reasonable to meet" under the Transportation Development Act (TDA) and StanCOG Unmet Transit Needs guidelines. To be "reasonable to meet", and fundable with TDA Local Transportation Funds (LTF), transportation services to meet the needs identified in the Study will need to meet efficiency standards adopted by the StanCOG Policy Board.

A limited number of printed copies of the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan can be obtained through the Public Works Transit Division's Customer Comment Line, 1.800.688.1884. Electronic copies of the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan are also available through Stanislaus County's Public Works Transit web site, <http://www.stancounty.com/publicworks/transit.shtm> and the StaRT Transit web site, www.srt.org. The StanCOG web site, <http://www.stancog.org>, will also contain the technical supporting documents as well as the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan.

POLICY ISSUES:

The Board of Supervisors should determine if this item is consistent with its priorities of striving for a well-planned infrastructure system, the efficient delivery of public services and effective partnerships.

STAFFING IMPACT:

There is no staffing impact associated with the Board's acceptance of the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendations and Implementation Plan. The County's role as the Study moves forward will be to work with StanCOG staff on the Study's findings. The extent of involvement will be dependent on the whether the transportation needs in the Study are determined to be "reasonable to meet".



**ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE
FROM YOUR CLERK**

BC/DH/RM: lc

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Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment

Recommendations and Implementation Plan

April 2009

Background

- March 2008 - A group came to BOS with their senior transportation concerns.
- March 25, 2008 - BOS formed an Ad Hoc Senior Transportation Committee to address the concerns.
- Decision was made to do a Senior/Person with a Disability Transit Needs Assessment.

Study Process

- HDR Engineering was hired to do the Study.
- Project Oversight Committee (POC) was formed to oversee and guide the Project.
- Deliverables Review Committee reviewed Study documents.
- StanCOG's Social Service Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) reviewed and provided feedback on Recommendations and Implementation Plan Report.

POC Membership

- POC members:

- County Commission on Aging, AARP
- Society for Handicapped Children & Adults
- Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living, Catholic Charities
- Dept. of Aging and Veteran Services
- Valley Mountain Regional Center, StanCOG
- Community Services Agency
- Modesto and County Transit Staff

Deliverables Review Committee Membership

- POC members
- City of Ceres
- Golden Agers for Progress

Study Scope

- Prepare inventory of existing transportation services.
- Public outreach - confirm needs, identify barriers and confirm available services.
- Demand estimation.
- Needs analysis.
- Define satisfied and unsatisfied need.
- Best practice review.
- Develop and evaluate potential service strategies, including potential funding sources.

Public Outreach

- 200 agencies/153 caregivers contacted for stakeholder meetings - 8 meetings held/35 participants representing 25 agencies.
- 375 agencies sent transportation services questionnaire - 25 completed.
- 8 Municipal Advisory Councils surveyed - 2 MACs completed and returned questionnaire.

Public Outreach (continued)

- 450 questionnaires mailed to faith based organizations and churches - 96 completed questionnaires returned.
- 3,975 consumer questionnaires distributed - 1,248 completed questionnaires returned (31.4% return rate).

Findings - Transportation Disabled

- 13% of County's population is aged 60 years and older.
- By 2018, the senior population will be 17% of the total population (growing by 72%).
- 5% of Stanislaus County's population and 10% of the senior population has a mobility limitation that negatively impacts their use of public transportation.

Findings - Homebound

- 7.7% (5,800 persons) of the County's senior population are defined as homebound.
- Homebound individuals generally require door-through-door assisted transportation to travel.
- Fixed route transit and dial-a-ride services cannot effectively serve this travel requirement.

Findings -Satisfied/Unsatisfied Demand

- Approximately 98.3% of senior and disabled demand is currently satisfied - private car, transit, dial-a-ride, and agency transportation services.
- Approximately 99.9% total senior and disabled demand could be satisfied with proposed improvements to transit, dial-a-ride and agency services.
- *Approximately 46,000 annual trips by seniors/disabled remain unsatisfied.*

Proposed Service Strategies

Stream 1: Increase senior and disabled ridership on fixed route and dial-a-ride services through education, marketing, and consumer orientation.

Cost Projection: \$231,000 over five years per individual agency requiring additional staff resources to implement this strategy.

Proposed Service Strategies

Stream 2: Establish a volunteer driver reimbursement program as a safety net for those trips not served by public transit or agency transportation services.

Cost Projection: \$1,910,000 over five years to cover hosting agency staff requirements and volunteer driver reimbursement budget.

Proposed Service Strategies

Stream 3: Establish a Centralized Mobility Management Office to: provide trip planning services and transit training; manage the volunteer driver reimbursement program; coordinate agency transportation services; and administer the County's ride share initiatives.

Cost Projection: \$2,897,000 over five years to cover staffing, space, and volunteer driver reimbursement costs.

Next Steps

- StanCOG to incorporate Study findings into Unmet Needs process.
 - Redefine Unmet Needs definition.
 - Develop additional efficiency standards
- Establish an Advisory Committee to work with StanCOG to implement a strategy to address Study findings.

Staff Recommendations

1. The Board of Supervisors accept the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendation and Implementation Plan.
2. Authorize the County Transit Manager to forward the Stanislaus County Transit Needs Assessment Recommendation and Implementation Plan and support documents to StanCOG for their consideration.

Any Questions?