

**SAN BENITO COUNTY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

March 18, 2014 1:00 P.M.

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Gomez, Vice-Chair De La Cruz, Director Boch, Director Botelho, and Director Scattini

STAFF PRESENT:

Deputy County Counsel, Shirley Murphy; Executive Director, Lisa Rheinheimer; Transportation Planner, Veronica Lezama, Transportation Planner, Betty LiOwen; Transportation Intern, Regina Valentine; Secretary, Monica Gomez

OTHERS PRESENT:

Pauline Valdivia, Jovenes de Antaño; Belynda Johnson, Joe Rye, Doug Langile, Majic Consulting Group; Evelia Meza, Spanish Interpreter

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Gomez called the meeting to order at 1:06 P.M.

A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

Upon a motion duly made by Director Botelho, and seconded by Director Scattini, the Directors unanimously approved the Certificate of Posting.

1:00 P.M. Public Hearing (Or As Soon Thereafter As the Matter May Be Heard)

TRANSPORTATION ITEMS:

1. Unmet Transit Needs Hearing – Lezama

- a. **RECEIVE** Report on Unmet Transit Needs Hearing
- b. **OPEN** Public Hearing
- c. **CLOSE** Public Hearing
- d. **DIRECT** Staff to Return to Council of Governments with Recommendation.

Ms. Lezama presented the item. She noted that this was the first of two public hearings. The second hearing will take place at the Council of Governments Board meeting Thursday, March 20, 2014 at the Board of Supervisors Chambers at 3:00 p.m.

Ms. LiOwen provided an overview of the services provided by County Express and Jovenes de Antaño.

Staff requested that the Board break out into small groups and interact with the members of the public to receive their input about the transportation services offered by the Local Transportation Authority.

Chair Gomez introduced each Board member and opened the public hearing at 1:13 p.m.

The Board and staff broke out into 5 small groups and engaged with members of the public who were seated at tables. Staff and Board members asked each group to express any questions or concerns they had about the County Express or Jovenes de Antaño services.

Executive Director, Lisa Rheinheimer, reported out on Table #3 comments:

Grace reported that she had great service last year from Jovenes de Antaño and now she is lucky to have her son provide her transportation.

Valerie talked about some transportation enhancements between San Juan Bautista and Hollister and getting people to places such as the YMCA and the new Skate Park. She mentioned the need for a stronger connection in terms of transit services between Hollister and San Juan Bautista.

Veronica Lezama reported out on Table #4 and Table #5 comments:

Maria reported that she primarily uses the Jovenes de Antaño service and she had very positive feedback. The Jovenes de Antaño buses are always on time and she has not had any issues with the drivers.

A gentlemen talked about the need for service to Santa Ana Valley and San Francisco. They also wanted to acknowledge a Jovenes de Antaño driver named “Marcos.” They stated that Marcos is an “excellent driver”.

Regina Valentine reported out on Table #2 comments:

Roman Rodriguez had a question about the percentage of disability to be eligible for the ADA Paratransit service. Staff was able to explain the ADA Paratransit eligibility process. Mr. Rodriguez also asked why there was no transportation services specifically for Veterans. Staff explained that there are connections from Hollister to San Jose and the VA will connect from Palo Alto to San Jose, however the rider would have to check specifically with the VA about their services.

Lynn Overtree requested that we provide service to Watsonville and make connections to Santa Cruz Transit. Ms. Overtree provided a proposal with recommended routes and a letter explaining a need for the service. The information will be forwarded to the Executive Director.

Betty LiOwen reported out on Table #1 comments:

There was a request to provide service from Hollister to Los Baños. There was discussion about how important public transit is to improving the environment. There was discussion about the need to increase transit marketing to Hollister residents and provide additional token vendor locations. There was a request to bring back the midday fixed route service in Hollister. Staff received positive feedback about the County Express drivers. Staff needs to work on clarifying service boundaries for the specialized transportation services. There was a question regarding transportation for local veterans. Ms. LiOwen mentioned that the VA provides transportation locally however; clients need to contact them directly for more information.

Ms. Lezama stated that staff and the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council will review all of the comments received and provide a recommended determination of Unmet Transit Needs to the Council of Governments Board of Directors in June.

Chair Gomez closed the public hearing at 1:37 p.m.

The Board thanked the members of the public for their time and for providing feedback about the Jovenes de Antaño and County Express services. Chair Gomez directed staff to report back to the Board with a recommendation at a future meeting.

Upon a motion made by Director De La Cruz, and seconded by Director Botelho, the Directors directed staff to report back with a recommendation at a future meeting. Vote: 5/0 motion passes.

2. DISCUSS Development of the San Benito Short-Range and Long-Range Transit Plan – Lezama

Ms. Lezama reported that as part of the development of the Short-Range and Long-Range Transit Plan, the Local Transportation Authority in collaboration with Majic Consulting concluded its analysis of the existing transit services provided by County Express and the Specialized Transportation Services.

Ms. Lezama introduced Belynda Johnson, Joe Rye, and Doug Langile with Majic Consulting Group. They provided a Power-Point presentation on some preliminary concepts for the County Express and Jovenes de Antaño services.

Some of the objectives of the Short-Range Transit Plan were as follows:

- Strengthening Fixed Route Service
- Minimizing General Public Dial-A-Ride
- Enhancing Special Needs Transportation
- Improving Public Transportation Coordination
- Creative Solutions to Unique Needs in this County
- Maintain Financial Viability.

Director De La Cruz stated that it would be important to look at expanding the Fixed Route service in the Buena Vista Road and Calaveras School area, as well as the Bridgevale and Central Road areas. He mentioned this because there is low-income housing development coming in the near future near those areas.

Ms. Lezama stated that she would contact the County Planning Department to acquire more information about the future development plans that were mentioned by Director De La Cruz and then forward the information to the Consultants.

Director Botelho questioned the frequency of the Red-line service increasing to every ½ hour. He also inquired about when they will evaluate how successful the implementation plan is.

Mr. Rye and Ms. Lezama explained that the increase was justified due to the Social Services Departments, Employment Development Department, and the shopping centers located along the Red-line route. In addition, Ms. Lezama mentioned that part of the next phase of the project will be to develop an implementation plan and identify performance measures. The performance measures will identify whether or not the route is performing successfully and if any adjustments need to be made.

Director Boch inquired about the current number of riders using the Red-line.

Staff stated that it was difficult to determine because the Red-line does not currently run when it is most needed, during the hours of 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Chair Gomez asked the Consultants to elaborate some more with regard to scaling down the Dial-A-Ride service.

Mr. Rye stated that it appears that a lot of the Dial-A-Ride service is used to cover the 4 hour gap midday, so by providing the Fixed Route midday service the Dial-A-Ride service would not be needed during those hours. There would still be a parallel ADA service running at the time, but only for those who require the specialized service.

Regarding the Intercounty/Regional Services, the Consultants mentioned looking into other alternatives to get people where they want to go. They mentioned the possibility of a partnership with Monterey Salinas Transit to see if they can come into San Juan Bautista, or a possible partnership with the Valley Transportation Authority to strengthen connections with Gilroy Caltrain. Another alternative could be the use of vanpools as appropriate.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lynn Overtree

Ms. Overtree stated that the City of San Juan Bautista is looking to include additional bus stops in there General Plan Update. Regarding partnerships, she mentioned that the area west of HWY 101 and northeast Monterey County is not served by MST so that would be a good place for a partnership with them. This would help service the Aromas and Royal Oaks community areas.

Director Botelho stated that the connection could help provide service to afterschool activities for students at Anzar High School.

Staff mentioned that there is a designated bus stop at Anzar High School.

Mr. Langile reported on the Demand Response service. He noted that the service is dependent on the return of the midday Fixed Route service. He stated that you can then take the Dial-A-Ride, Paratransit resources and concentrate them on special needs to serve seniors, persons with disabilities, and safe rides home for elementary students.

Chair Gomez stated that by bringing back the Fixed Route midday service, we no longer are competing with the taxi service. This would put the taxi-voucher issue to rest. He stated that he would like to encourage Fixed Route ridership and thought it would be a good idea to bring back the midday service and continue to meet the ADA compliance requirements.

Mr. Langile stated that another service that would possibly work better for this County rather than a subsidized taxi voucher program, would be a TRIP Program for very remote areas. He mentioned that there are some very good examples of this service in California.

Director Botelho liked the idea of a TRIP Program. He stated that he could see this type of program working for a church group that wants to provide transportation for the elderly members of their congregation. They could reimburse volunteer drivers.

Director De La Cruz was concerned about liability issues with a TRIP Program.

The Consultants explained that the driver is the primary under the insured. In addition, what is being done currently by other counties, is that they obtain a secondary insured policy that covers above the coverage of the volunteer drivers.

Mr. Langile stated that in coordinating this type of volunteer driver service at more of a county level, the Board could establish a Mobility Management Center. People could call this center and be linked with

transportation services to fit their needs. The Mobility Center would serve as a trip advisor/broker for the County.

Chair Gomez and Director Scattini excused themselves at 2:50 p.m. to attend a meeting with the City of Hollister. Vice-Chair De La Cruz chaired the remainder of the meeting.

Ms. Rheinheimer asked for clarification from the Board regarding the addition of a route to Watsonville.

After brief discussion, the Board directed staff to analyze whether or not expanding a route to the Aromas/Watsonville area and/or Salinas is feasible. They also directed staff to further analyze the Red Line service in the downtown area.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that staff will work with the consultants on analyzing and prioritizing the needs that were addressed and report back to the Board at a future meeting.

Upon a motion made by Director Botelho, and seconded by Director Botelho, the Directors voted to adjourn the Special Joint meeting at 2:50 p.m.

ADJOURN TO REGULAR COG MEETING MARCH 20, 2014.