

**Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's
Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee
Social Service Transportation Advisory Council
Paratransit Advisory Council Meeting**

MINUTES

**Tuesday, August 12, 2008
SCCRTC Offices, 1523 Pacific Avenue, Downtown Santa Cruz**

Members Present: Sharon Barbour (5th District), Debbi Brooks (Social Service Provider), Tom Crain (Potential Transit User - Disabled), John Daugherty (Metro), Veronica Elsea (3rd District), Shirley Forsyth (2nd District), Sally French (Hope Services), Clay Kempf (Social Service Providers - Seniors), Ben Morada (Private Operator), Catherine Patterson Valdez (CTSA - Lift Line)

Alternates Present: Donnella Bloebaum (Potential Transit User - 60+), Debbi Brooks (Volunteer Center/Persons of Limited Means), Sandra Coley (4th District)

Others Present: Barbara Flynn (Central Coast Alliance), Margaret Gallagher (Metro), Megan Lynch (Yellow Cab), Bonnie McDonald (CTSA), Angelique Milhouse (Central Coast Alliance for Health), Doug Patrick (Commission on Disabilities), Helen Sesser (Satellite Dialysis Center), Adam Tomaszewski (2nd District), April Warnock (Metro ParaCruz), Susan Willats (UCSC)

Staff Present: Lyle Broschat, Erich Friedrich, Karena Pushnik

Excused Absences: Lisa Berkowitz (Community Bridges), Virginia Butz (Potential Transit User - 60+), Michael Molesky (Social Service Provider - Disabled), Barbara Schaller (Social Service Provider - Seniors)

1. Call to Order

Chair John Daugherty called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

2. Introductions

Introductions were made.

3. Oral Communications

- John Daugherty announced that Barbara Schaller was discontinuing her membership in E/D TAC, and expressed his appreciation for her long history of volunteer work on senior's issues. He also indicated that Ms Schaller deserved formal recognition for all her past service.
- Sharon Barbour informed members that as many as four private operators were offering commercial transportation services in the area, despite the fact that they remained unlicensed. Her concern was that the services are not accessible or certified. The Committee agreed to address this concern at the next meeting.

- Karena Pushnik noted that, although it was slated to be an agenda item this month, Metro had not yet released its Short-Range Transit Plan and that the Committee would be informed of progress at future meetings.

4. Additions and Deletions

There were no additions or deletions.

5. Consent Agenda

Item 5.8.4 was pulled for discussion.

One Time Funding For Dialysis Rides

E/D TAC members expressed concern that only one of the two service providers in Santa Cruz County was receiving one-time financial assistance from the Central Coast Alliance. Barbara Flynn (Central Coast Alliance) explained that recent changes in medical ride assistance to dialysis patients had shifted the burden to Metro ParaCruz, but that the \$3 charge for this service was proving too expensive for some individuals. Ms. Flynn noted that Lift Line is the contracted provider for individuals qualifying for Title 22 rides. She also noted that bus passes are offered for use during short periods to assist members during transition, not for use on a permanent or ongoing basis. To date, no one has taken the bus pass offer. Clay Kempf added that the E/D TAC approved Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding for Lift Line to provide service for low income eligible clients, and that they should have also been included in the one-time payment agreement, but that the demand for medical rides in Santa Cruz County has greatly exceeded the funding allocated to this purpose. Helen Sessner remarked that Lift Line was way over budget and should have been included in the one time payment agreement. Ciro Aguirre noted that Metro submitted a letter of support for a New Freedom grant from Community Bridges to address this critical need for medical rides. The Alliance was encouraged to regularly attend E/D TAC meetings. No action was taken on this item.

Action: The motion (Barbour/Elsea), to accept the remaining consent agenda, was approved, with one abstention.

- 5.1 Approved Minutes from June 10, 2008 meeting
- 5.2 Received Transportation Development Act Revenues Report as of July 2008
- 5.3 Received 6/10/08 E/D TAC letter to UCSC regarding Transit Stop Accessibility
- 5.4 Received Mission Pedestrian News including Golden Sneakers Award
- 5.5 Received 7/27/08 Sentinel article titled METRO manager updates seniors on the bus system
- 5.6 Received Google Walking Map instructions
- 5.7 Accepted Governor's letter of response to Lift Line Transportation Director regarding budget cuts for transit

5.8 Received Agency Updates (other than items on the regular agenda)

5.8.1 Volunteer Center

5.8.2 Private Operators

5.8.3 Community Bridges/CTSA

- FY 07-08 (Year End) Lift Line Report

- FY 07-08 (4th Quarter) MORE Report

- FY 07-08 (3rd Quarter) Lift Line Report

5.8.4 Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO)

- ParaCruz Operations Status Report: July 08

- One-Time Funding for Dialysis Rides (*pulled for discussion, see above*)

5.8.5 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

6. Accessibility of Paths of Travel To/From Venues Frequented by the Public at UCSC

Susan Willats, UCSC Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Officer, spoke to the issue of accessibility shortcomings near the arts complex and other venues frequented by the public, explaining that the Metro route does not directly access these buildings but that UCSC operates an accessible fixed route shuttle, which operates weekdays and evenings, but not on weekends. Members suggested that information about the shuttle was not well known to the general public and that it would be advantageous for both the Metro to publish this information on their website and for UCSC to include the shuttle schedule along the route and near bus stops.

Susan pointed out that the university provides on and to campus paratransit service for students and staff, but could not provide this service to members of the general public, leaving that, instead, to the realm of Metro services.

The New Freedom grant application from UCSC would provide funding to extend bus pads and additional curb cuts on campus. If the grant is approved, UCSC staff will return to the E/D TAC for more input on priority projects.

7. Accessibility of Santa Cruz City Parking Lot #5

Sally French, of Hope Services, described the layout of this city parking lot, noting that handicapped parking spaces were on the opposite side of the lot from the pay station, creating the need to travel to the station and then back to the vehicle to insert the payment verification card. Also the pay station is isolated by a full curb, completely inaccessible to anyone using a mobility device. A representative from the Commission on Disabilities, Doug Patrick, affirmed that this accessibility problem has been among his concerns, and that the committee has addressed it in the past.

Members agreed that any letter of concern regarding this issue should contain a range of solutions, so that the city will be encouraged to act. Members asked that the letter state the following options:

- Relocate handicapped parking to an area adjacent to the pay station
- Ramp the pay station area or remove the curb
- Suspend payment requirements for handicapped parking until this problem is corrected—while informing users through appropriate signage
- Consider permanent suspension of payment requirements for all handicapped parking in this lot

Action: The motion (Kempf/Elsea), to write a letter of concern to the City of Santa Cruz, incorporating the above concerns and options, passed unanimously .(John Daugherty requested, after the end of the meeting, to change his “yes” vote to “no”)

8. Metro Fixed Route Discounted Bus Pass

John Daugherty described the history and function of the Metro (senior and disabled) discount card in meeting ADA requirements. Margaret Gallagher, Legal Council from Metro, explained that the card and card application process are being reassessed for greater efficiency. Applications are currently only processed at the Metro Centers because of the photo requirement. Metro is conducting a survey asking specific questions about the issuance of this card, and seeking user feedback on Metro policies. The survey was distributed to the E/D TAC for their feedback.

John Daugherty added that bus riders could use their Paratransit eligibility cards to obtain the same discounts. Clay Kempf noted that free access to transit service by ADA eligible individuals, would likely reduce their dependence on paratransit service. Discussion ensued about how some ADA paratransit/ParaCruz riders have conditional eligibility and that they could ride transit some of the time. The E/D TAC also support continued education about how to use transit, so that people get in the habit of using transit first.

One Committee member noted that some language describing disabilities, such as the reference to “sub average,” in the description of “Mental Retardation” in Section 12, could be rewritten to use more currently acceptable language, and volunteered to work with Peggy on suggestions. Another Committee member asked if the policy would continue that allows the children of a passenger paying discount fare to also receive the discount.

Action: The motion (Kempf/Crain), to recommend to Metro that all ParaCruz eligible passengers be given free access to Metro fixed route transit and that RTC staff include research about the status of this issue with other transit districts, passed, with one abstention.

9. Accessible Sidewalk Issues

Lyle Broschat, RTC staff, introduced the topic of accessible sidewalks, noting that the E/D TAC had previously addressed this issue on a broad basis, prior to 2003, and developed a Action Plan. Because concerns about sidewalk networks and maintenance had returned to Committee discussions, he asked for general response from members on what they might like to explore, relative to this subject. He pointed out that the latest (2008) Unmet Needs List included prioritizing the importance of safe travel paths around specific facilities used mostly by elderly and disabled individuals, and the presence of safe and continuous sidewalk networks. Because sidewalk networks are typically not planned, but rather the result of normal development requirements, and because sidewalks are traditionally regarded as the responsibility of property owners, there is a common absence of overall planning strategy, as well as confusion about maintenance responsibility.

Lyle listed a variety of optional approaches to addressing sidewalk networks, including focused evaluation of sidewalk systems that affect the mobility of seniors and disabled individuals, mapping of sidewalk networks, promotion of various types of legislation, new technologies, and pedestrian improvement plans. Doug Patrick, representing the Commission on Disabilities, spoke about the importance of adequate sidewalk networks and encouraged members to pursue this subject in terms

of establishing a model procedure for sidewalk assessment. He expressed disappointment with the current incremental practice of individual citizens filing complaints about specific sidewalk problems. Veronica Elsea spoke strongly in favor of establishing a sidewalk subcommittee and volunteered to take a responsible role in this effort.

One member pointed out an example where there is no sidewalk between the Santa Cruz Medical Center (on Soquel Ave) and 41st Avenue and that, countywide, the sidewalk network is completely inadequate. Other members added that poor design is often to blame for inadequate pedestrian systems, noting the common practice of isolating transit stops from pedestrian areas, a common situation in the construction of shopping malls.

Action: The motion (Kempf/Elsea), to form a subcommittee to examine and evaluate the countywide sidewalk network, and to consider inviting other concerned groups to participate, passed unanimously.

The initial membership of this subcommittee will consist of Veronica Elsea, Doug Patrick, April Warnock, Sally French, and John Daugherty. It was suggested that the work of this subcommittee should also include examination of how sidewalk improvements can be realistically funded.

10. Section 5310 Score Recommendation

Karena Pushnik outlined the Community Bridges' application for Section 5310 grant funds for the purchase of computer, security and radio equipment. She noted that the review committee requested that Community Bridges revise their application to provide missing data and that the recommended scores were based on the revised application. The local review committee recommended that the E/D TAC recommend that the Regional Transportation Commission approve the final scoring and then forward the application to Caltrans.

Action: The motion (Barbour/Elsea), to recommend that the Regional Transportation Commission adopt the revised application by resolution, passed, with one abstention.

11. Report on Medical Rides Provided by Community Bridges (Emergency Item)

Catherine Patterson-Valdez requested that this item be added to the agenda as an emergency item.

Action: The motion (Barbour/Forsyth), to accept this topic as an emergency item, passed unanimously.

Ms. Patterson-Valdez distributed a summary list of rides provided by Lift Line, explaining to the Committee that the demand for subsidized rides, in total, critically exceeds available funding. She stated that future grant funding may bring some relief to this situation, but that there is no assurance of receiving this funding. She asked for members' assistance in determining how to most appropriately prioritize ride requests.

Members agreed that dialysis rides were a high priority, and there was discussion about the possibility of mixed modal trips. Catherine stated that it is appropriate to request direction from the E/D TAC, since this is the advisory body that oversees funding of Lift Line. She added that demand for subsidized rides doubled in the past month.

Members generally agreed that dialysis rides and rides outside the ADA service area should be given highest priority, as well as readjusting individual application standards.

Veronica Elsea suggested that it might be counterproductive to change the standards for individual qualifications, given that funding availability/rides demand could change within a short time, and members agreed that changing standards could create confusion among the general population. It was agreed that without emergency funding available to meet current needs, Lift Line should let riders know that current financial circumstances will force short term service changes and that the system will be evaluated comprehensively if long term funding does not become available. It was also suggested that assistance from other agencies be sought.

Catherine clarified that Lift Line's Section 5317 grant application (\$625,000 per year for 3 years), if awarded, would resolve the current funding shortfall. Notification about grant awards should be received by November of this year.

12. Items for Future Meetings

- Proposed changes in Metro discount fares
- Metro Short-Range Transit Plan
- When does the taxi meter start?
- TAMC taxi study
- Sidewalks and pedestrian accessibility
- Dialysis medical rides
- Unlicensed taxi operators
- Videos of accessible sidewalk considerations

13. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm

Prepared by: Lyle Broschat, SCCRTC Staff