

AGENDA: January 8, 2004

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director
RE: Paratransit Services in Santa Cruz County

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Consider Commissioner Wormhoudt's letter (Attachment 1) and letters from other groups regarding Paratransit Services in Santa Cruz County (Attachments 2 and 3);
 2. Schedule a televised evening public hearing on February 5 to take testimony from the public and other interested parties on paratransit issues and the future of paratransit services;
 3. Invite the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District Board to join with the Regional Transportation Commission to hold the hearing as a joint public hearing;
 4. Invite the Community Bridges / Consolidated Transportation Services Agency Board to attend the public hearing; and
 5. Direct RTC staff to meet with stakeholders to return to a future meeting with recommendations on establishing a task force on paratransit issues.
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BACKGROUND

Seniors and people with disabilities have varying specialized transportation needs. This segment of the population is expected to grow rapidly over the next few years. Specialized transportation services in Santa Cruz County are provided predominantly by Community Bridges and its subcontractors for a host of social services as well as through contract with the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District to provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandated paratransit.

DISCUSSION

Recently a number of changes have been proposed to the ADA Paratransit services which would impact both these services and the network of specialized transportation services.

Senior citizens and people with disabilities, as well as social service providers and advocates have expressed interest in participating in discussions about suggested service changes.

At your December Regional Transportation Commission meeting, Commissioner Wormhoudt stated that she would submit a letter to the RTC in January in this regard. Commissioner Wormhoudt has submitted the attached letter (Attachment 1) outlining the issues and suggesting a course of action that includes considering the financial, legal and client implications of creating a long-term plan for the provision of transportation services to the county's most needy populations. Commissioner Wormhoudt recommends a public hearing and a taskforce. The purpose of the hearing and taskforce would be to identify the problems and work towards creation of a long-term paratransit solutions which best meet the needs of clients and service providers.

The Commission on Disabilities and SCCRTC's Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee have also submitted letters requesting that a forum be held to allow community input (Attachments 2 and 3, respectively).

Given the complexity of paratransit issues and the number of agencies involved, staff recommends that the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District and Community Bridges be involved in the public hearing and task force. Staff recommendations include close coordination with SCMTD and Community Bridges.

SUMMARY

A public hearing and taskforce are recommended to provide an opportunity to hear public input about the paratransit network of services in Santa Cruz County. The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District and Community Bridges would be partners in these efforts.

Attachments:

1. Letter from Commissioner Wormhoudt requesting an evening public meeting
2. Letter from the Commission on Disabilities
3. Letter from the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee

Prepared by: Karena Pushnik

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