

AGENDA: April 1, 2004

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Linda Wilshusen, Executive Director
RE: **Paratransit Coordination Task Force and Work Plan**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission:

1. Approve the proposed Draft Paratransit Coordination Task Force composition (Attachment 4) and Work Plan (Attachment 6);
 2. Direct staff to solicit applications for the three positions and alternates appointed by the RTC;
 3. Direct staff to invite the other entities proposed to be represented on the Task Force or making appointments, to notify the RTC of their appointment by April 23;
 4. Appoint a SCCRTC Commissioner as chair of the Task Force; and
 5. Return to the May RTC meeting with nominees and further recommendations on the Task Force schedule and process.
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BACKGROUND

In February 2004, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) held a special public hearing to solicit community input about paratransit issues. Over 100 people attended that meeting. A copy of the minutes is attached (Attachment 1).

At that meeting the RTC directed staff to meet individually with various stakeholders regarding recommendations for a short-term Task Force to improve coordination of paratransit services in Santa Cruz and return to the April Commission meeting with recommendations regarding the Task Force's work program including membership, focus, timeline, staffing, facilitation and budget. Also included was direction for RTC staff to research definitions of terms such as "senior," "disability," and demographics showing aging in Santa Cruz County and examples of paratransit in peer counties.

At the March 4th meeting, the RTC approved its annual budget and work program including staff time during FY 04-05 to oversee the Paratransit Coordination Task Force process.

DISCUSSION

Following the February meeting, staff developed a list of over 200 entities associated with seniors and people with disabilities. This list was developed with input from the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (SCMTD), the Senior's Council and the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee.

A survey was then distributed to this list in order to broaden the scope of specialized transportation issues beyond those discussed at the public hearing ([Attachment 2](#)). A total of 39 surveys were returned, of which 23 were from the Cabrillo College Stroke Center students and staff. A summary of the responses is shown in [Attachment 3](#). In addition, meetings were held with various stakeholders and Commissioners/staff, including specific meetings with SCMTD and Community Bridges.

Task Force Membership

Based on the input received and discussions with community members, a list of proposed Task Force members was developed ([Attachment 4](#)). The list of 24 members includes a broad cross section of representatives including RTC and SCMTD board members, service providers, funding agencies, advocacy groups, social service providers, union representatives, County departments, residential care facilities and system users. Many Task Force members will represent a range of groups, agencies and users. For the Task Force to be successful in reaching agreement on a future paratransit coordination plan, the number of members must be limited and those appointed to serve must demonstrate a willingness to listen and consider a variety of viewpoints.

The attached list designates the entity appointing the Task Force member. **Staff recommends that applications for the RTC appointments – one from a skilled nursing/residential care facility, one from the medical community or senior housing development and one consumer of paratransit services – be announced in the newspaper and would be sent to appropriate entities.** The remainder of the members are self appointed or to be appointed by a designated agency. Staff will send out invitations with a request that these appointments be made by April 23 to be included in the May RTC agenda packet.

The manager of the SCMTD and Community Bridges would be ex-officio members. The Task Force would be convened by RTC and technical assistance would be provided by RTC, SCMTD and Community Bridges staff. Alternates would be allowed, however due to the short term nature of the task force, members would be encouraged to attend meetings for the duration to ensure consistency. **Staff recommends that the SCCRTC appoint a Commissioner as Task Force Chair at today's meeting, the chair would serve as one of the RTC representatives to the Task Force.**

Goals and Issues

A number of reoccurring themes came out of the public hearing, discussions with community members and the stakeholder survey. These themes can be summarized in three proposed goals for the paratransit system:

- The paratransit system will use funding as efficiently and effectively as possible
- The paratransit system will strive to maximize customer service and satisfaction
- Legal mandates shall be observed

Staff has attempted to group the issues and concerns under the goals as shown in Attachment 5. These goals and issues would also be the focus of separate Task Force Meetings. It is assumed that the Task Force would confirm the goals and issues at the first meeting.

Work Plan/Schedule

As shown in Attachment 6, it is envisioned that the Task Force will meet monthly for three hours over the course of 7 - 8 months. Meetings in the 3:00 to 6:00 pm time frame would accommodate seniors, people with disabilities, board members, agency and advocacy representatives. A meeting location has not yet been determined, however Commissioner and SCMTD Chair Emily Reilly is finding out whether rooms in the Civic Auditorium are available. The meetings would be open, public, noticed meetings. It is anticipated that the final plan and recommendations would be ready for the RTC, SCMTD and Community Bridges boards in January of next year.

Budget

At this time, the costs anticipated with the Paratransit Coordination Task Force are staff time, as approved in the RTC Work Program, and costs to provide snacks and rent a meeting room, if necessary. There will also be advertising costs to run notices about Task Force membership and special meetings, and printing/mailing costs for packets.

SUMMARY

Per RTC direction at the February 2004 meeting, a proposal for a Paratransit Task Force and Work Plan has been developed. It is anticipated that participants would appoint representatives in April; meetings would commence in May and continue for 7-8 months. It is expected that final recommendations would be available for the RTC, SCMTD and Community Bridges boards in January 2005.

Attachments:

1. Minutes from the Feb 04 Paratransit Public Hearing
2. Sample Survey
3. Summary of input from the Stakeholder Surveys
4. Proposed Task Force Members
5. Proposed Goals and Issues
6. Proposed Work Plan