
Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)

MEETING AGENDA
February 11, 2025
Tulare County Association of Governments
210 N. Church St, Ste. B
Visalia, CA 93291

10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
In-Person Meeting

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the California Ralph M. Brown Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, including auxiliary aids, translation requests, or other accommodations, or to be able to access this agenda and documents in the agenda packet, please contact the TCAG office at 559-623-0450 at least 3 days prior to the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons wishing to address the Council on items within its jurisdiction but not on this agenda. Unscheduled comments are limited to 3 minutes.

Note: Prior to action by the Council on any item on this agenda, the public may comment on that item.

ITEMS FOR ACTION AND DISCUSSION:

- I. Welcome & Introductions.**
- II. Action: Approval of Minutes**
 - a. November 12, 2024 (Pages 4-7)
- III. Information: Unmet Transit Needs Definition, revised 2024 (Pages 8-11)**
- IV. Discussion : 2025 Unmet Transit Needs Outreach**
- V. Information : Microtransit Update**
- VI. Discussion : Transportation Planning & Coordination**
 - a. Cross Valley Corridor Phase I Operations Plan
- VII. Transit Provider Updates :**
 - a. Visalia Transit
 - b. Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA)

VIII. Social Service Provider Updates :

- a. Optional updates from those in attendance

IX. Other Items/Future Agenda Item Requests

- X. **Adjourn.** The next meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2025, at the Tulare County Association of Governments Office, 210 N. Church St., Suite B, Visalia, CA, 93291 at 10:00 a.m.

Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) Members
of the
Tulare County Regional Transportation Planning Agency (TCAG)

<i>Vacant</i>	Representative of Potential Transit User 60 Years of Age or Older
Rebecca Donabed ² – Chair	Representative of Potential Transit User who is Disabled
Lia Hanner ¹	Representative of Potential Transit User who is Disabled
Michael Esquibel ²	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for Seniors/Social Service Transit Provider
Dayna Wild ²	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for Seniors/Social Service Transit Provider
James Alves ³ – Vice Chair	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider to People with Disabilities/ Social Service Transit Provider
Nikki Scholl ³	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider to People with Disabilities/ Social Service Transit Provider
<i>Vacant</i>	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for Persons of Limited Means
Teresa Ortega ²	Transit Operator Representative
Caleb Bowman ¹	Transit Operator Representative
<i>Vacant</i>	Representative of Potential Transit Users from Local Youth

¹ indicates term ending June 30, 2025.

² indicates term ending June 30, 2026.

³ indicates term ending June 30, 2027.

SSTAC Chair – term ending June 30, 2025.

SSTAC Vice Chair – term ending June 30, 2025.

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TCAG Transit Staff

Giancarlo Bruno, Associate Regional Planner; GBruno@TulareCAG.ca.gov

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OFFICE ADDRESS

Tulare County Association of Governments
210 N. Church St., Suite B
Visalia, CA 93291
Phone: (559) 623-0450
Fax: (559) 733-6720
Website: www.tularecog.org

Tulare County Association of Governments
Social Services Transportation Advisory Council

November 12, 2024

ATTENDANCE LIST

Representative of potential transit user 60 years of age or over	<i>Vacant</i>
Representative of potential transit user who is disabled	Rebecca Donabed (P)
Representative of potential transit user who is disabled	Lia Hanner (A)
Representative of local social service provider for seniors/social service transportation provider	Michael Esquibel (A)
Representative of local social service provider for seniors/social service transportation provider	Dayna Wild (P)
Representative of local social service provider for the disabled/social service transportation provider	James Alves (P)
Representative of local social service provider for the disabled/social service transportation provider	Nikki Scholl (P)
Representative of local social service provider for persons of limited means	<i>Vacant</i>
Transit Operator Representative	Teresa Ortega (A)
Transit Operator Representative	Caleb Bowman (P)
Representative of potential transit users from local youth	<i>Vacant</i>

Others Present: Derek Winning, TCRTA; Angelina DeRosett, Visalia Transit;
TCAG Staff: Giancarlo Bruno

SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES

Public Comments

No public comments were received.

I. Welcome & Introductions

The Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) was called to order by Chair Donabed at 10:05a.m. on November 12, 2024. The members, staff, and guests in attendance introduced themselves.

II. Action: Approval of Minutes from November 12, 2024

A motion to approve the August 29th minutes was put forward by Chair Donabed and seconded by Member Wild. Motion carried unanimously.

III. Discussion: SSTAC Member Recruitment, Referrals

Mr. Bruno reminded the members present that there were several vacancies on the SSTAC. He noted that there were vacant seats for a Representative of Potential Transit Riders Aged 60 & Over, Representative of a Social Service Provider to People of Limited Financial Means, Representative of a Social Service Provider to Seniors, and Representative of a Potential Transit Rider from Local Youth. He implored members to encourage anyone who is qualified for these positions and would be interested in serving on the SSTAC to contact him or obtain an application from the TCAG website.

IV. Discussion: Bus Stop Signage & Print Materials

Mr. Bruno reminded the members and others present that a public comment was received at the August SSTAC meeting regarding the visibility of bus stop signage and lack of pavement markings for people with low vision. He added that there was also an unmet transit need found reasonable to meet related to making bus schedules and other travel information available to the public in formats that are accessible to people with visual impairments, both online and in print. He asked the transit providers present to provide an update on their efforts in this area.

Member Bowman provided an update from Visalia Transit. He informed the group that Visalia is working on redesigned signage that complies with the latest ADA requirements. The city is also redesigning its website to increase accessibility for low vision users.

Chair Donabed asked if the city was considering placing signs and schedules at a lower height to make them more visible and easier to reach for people who use wheelchairs. Member Bowman answered that the city was trying to put the schedules and QR codes at a height of 4ft or less, except in places where physical impediments prevent this. He also offered to investigate any specific stops that Chair Donabed identified as posing a challenge to people in wheelchairs. He promised to have further updates as the project progresses.

V. Information: Microtransit Update

Mr. Winning informed the group that TCRTA has proposed some changes to its current microtransit deployment, scheduled to go to the TCRTA board on November 18th. Public notices have already been disseminated. There are 3 major changes proposed to the microtransit deployment. The largest is withdrawal of TCRTA from providing intracity microtransit trips that begin and end in the City of

Visalia, though TCRTA will still provide trips to/from Visalia that begin or end in its service territory. Another proposed change is to reduce the target pickup time for microtransit from a maximum of 30 minutes after the ride is requested to an average of 30 minutes after the ride is requested. TCRTA is also proposing a reduction in the maximum number of microtransit vans deployed from 18 to 10 or 11. He plans to adjust the number of vehicles deployed based on data collected from operations. Operations data is also being used by TCRTA to analyze the cost effectiveness and productivity of their microtransit service. Mr. Winning stated that TCRTA is aiming to reach an average pickup time of about 20-25 minutes and system productivity of 3 passengers per hour.

Mr. Winning also discussed TCRTA's pursuit of reciprocal agreements with other Tulare County transit agencies to provide pickups and drop-offs in one another's territory. All three agencies are working towards putting their respective microtransit services on a single, unified app to make scheduling rides easier for members of the public.

Vice Chair Alves thanked Mr. Winning for his efforts to ensure that microtransit in Tulare County is on a sustainable footing. He described microtransit as a useful, affordable service that fills gaps in existing transportation services that are often seen by community organizations like Able Industries. He asked if there was adequate public awareness of microtransit to support strong ridership.

Member Bowman provided an update on Visalia's microtransit launch. Visalia Transit has secured approval from the city council to purchase the initial seven (7) microtransit vans and they are moving ahead with the purchase. He added that Angelina DeRossett (Visalia Transit manager) has been working with Via Technologies to set up the initial operating parameters. The target deployment date is January 2025.

VI. Discussion: Transit Planning & Coordination

Mr. Bruno shared that the Cross Valley Corridor Phase 1 Operations Plan had been completed and that the final Service & Operations Plan was delivered by consultants. He noted that TCAG is still working with consultants on project implementation and revamping the CVC Phase 1 Financial Plan considering a substantial \$59 million Transit and Intercity Rail Capital (TIRCP) Program grant award to support the project. He reminded the group that the plan calls for a high-frequency express bus service between Lindsay and the Hanford Amtrak station and future Kings/Tulare High-Speed Rail station.

Mr. Winning added that the project also includes a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) component for rapid transit service at 15-minute intervals between Visalia and Tulare down the Mooney Boulevard corridor.

VII. Transit Provider Updates

a. Porterville Transit

Mr. Bruno noted that Porterville Transit is currently conducting interviews with firms that submitted proposals for their new short-range transit plan.

b. Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA)

Mr. Winning stated that he is hoping to issue a request for proposals (RFP) for TCRTA's short-range transit plan by the end of the year. This plan will address service planning, operational, and capital improvement matters for TCRTA over a horizon of five (5) years.

c. Visalia Transit

Member Bowman shared that RATP Dev has officially taken over transit operations for the City of Visalia. They are currently working on updates to their automatic vehicle location system to improve accuracy of both information provided to riders through the Visalia Transit app and the performance data collected by these systems. Under the new operator contract, the maintenance of these systems is the responsibility of the contractor.

The city is also planning to launch a brand new, more accessible and reliable Visalia Transit app.

Mr. Bowman concluded with an update on the bus stop outside of Able Industries. He said that the road work on Riggin Ave in the vicinity of Shirk Ave is still underway. Visalia Transit is considering adding a stop on Route 17 near the intersection of Shirk Road and Sunnyview Ave or Road 88.

VIII. Social Service Provider Updates

Chair Donabed shared that Resources for Independence Central Valley (RICV) has two positions open at their Visalia office.

IX. Other Items/Future Agenda Item Requests

No future agenda items were requested.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07am on November 12, 2024.

ATTACHMENT 'A'

DRAFT 2024 Tulare County Unmet Transit Need Definition and Criteria

“Unmet Transit Need”: An unmet transit need, as identified during Tulare County Association of Governments’ annual Unmet Transit Needs Process, exists where an individual of any age or physical condition is unable to transport his or herself due to deficiencies in the existing public transportation system. An unmet need must be identified by community input through the public outreach process or identified in a Short-Range Transit Plan, Coordinated Transportation Plan, or the Regional Transportation Plan. Excluded are: 1) those requests for minor operational improvements, and 2) those improvements already funded and scheduled for implementation in the following fiscal year.

“Reasonable to Meet”: Following is the TCAG definition of "Reasonable to Meet" including the recommended benchmarks for the passenger farebox recovery ratio for new transit services in Tulare County. An unmet transit need shall be considered “reasonable to meet” if the proposed service conforms to the following criteria, as applicable:

Equity

1. The new, expanded, or altered transit service will benefit the general public or is needed by seniors and persons with disabilities.
2. The proposed service will not require reductions in existing transit services that have an equal or higher priority.
3. The proposed service will require a subsidy comparable to other similar services.

Feasibility

1. Sufficient ridership potential exists for the new, expanded, or revised transit service.
2. The proposed service can be provided with the existing fleet or under contract to a private provider.
3. The proposed service can be provided with available TDA funding (per state law, the lack of available resources shall not be the sole reason for finding that a transit need is not reasonable to meet.)

Performance

1. The proposed service will not unduly affect the operator's ability to maintain the required passenger fare recovery ratio for its overall system.
2. The proposed service can meet the scheduled passenger fare ratio standards as described in the recommended benchmarks for the passenger farebox recovery ratio for new transit services in Tulare County.
3. The estimated number of passengers to be carried will be comparable to that of similar services, and/or, the proposed service provides a "link" or connection that enhances the effectiveness of the overall transit system.
4. The proposed service must have prospective providers that are available to implement the service.

Community Acceptance

1. The proposed service has community acceptance and/or support as determined by the unmet transit needs and other public outreach processes, inclusion in adopted programs and plans, adopted governing board positions, and/or other supporting documentation.

ADA Conformity

1. The new, expanded, or revised transit service will conform to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act; specifically, in that paratransit is available or can feasibly be provided within its service area.

Operational Feasibility

1. The new, expanded, or revised transit service must be safe to operate and there must be adequate roadways and turnouts for transit vehicles.

Notes:

1. Per state law, the lack of available resources shall not be the sole reason for finding that a transit need is not reasonable to meet.

RECOMMENDED BENCHMARKS FOR PASSENGER FAREBOX RECOVERY RATIO FOR NEW TRANSIT SERVICES IN TULARE COUNTY.

The state has established a basic requirement in Section 99268 of the Public Utility Code for all proposed transit services in urban areas (the Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville Urbanized Areas). This requirement is to achieve a 20% passenger fare ratio by the end of the third year of operation. A passenger fare ratio of 10% exists for special services (i.e., paratransit for seniors and persons with disabilities) and rural area services. Transit serving both urban and rural areas, per state law, may obtain a blended passenger fare ratio target. If a provider is granted a blended farebox recovery target, performance levels should be adjusted accordingly.

TCAG has established more detailed interim passenger fare ratio standards, which will be used to evaluate new services introduced in response to the unmet needs process as they are proposed and implemented, which are described below. Transit serving both urban and rural areas, per state law, may obtain an "intermediate" passenger fare ratio.

END OF TWELVE MONTHS OF SERVICE

Performance Level

<u>Urban Service</u>	<u>Special/Rural Service</u>	<u>Recommended Action</u>
Less than 6%	Less than 3%	Provider may discontinue service
6% or more	3% or more	Provider will continue service, with modifications if needed

END OF TWENTY-FOUR MONTHS

Performance Level

<u>Urban Service</u>	<u>Special/Rural Service</u>	<u>Recommended Action</u>
Less than 10%	Less than 5%	Provider may discontinue service
10% or more	5% or more	Provider will continue service, with modifications, if needed.

END OF THIRTY-SIX MONTHS

Performance Level

<u>Urban Service</u>	<u>Special/Rural Service</u>	<u>Recommended Action</u>
Less than 15%	Less than 7%	Provider may discontinue service
15-20%	7-10%	Provider will continue service, with Modifications if needed
20% or more	10% or more	Provider will continue service, with Modifications if needed

Implementation Guidance

An annual assessment of the size and location of identifiable groups likely to be transit dependent or transit disadvantaged, including, but not limited to, the elderly, the disabled, and persons of limited financial means shall be prepared before the SSTAC meets to review unmet transit needs comments collected that year.

All unmet transit needs will be placed on a two-year list, to be made available on the TCAG website. This list will be a reference for stakeholders and decision makers. This list would also be revisited during each annual unmet transit needs cycle prior to reviewing any new comments. Comments would be displayed on the list for two (2) years.

If a UTN is recommended by the SSTAC and found to be 'reasonable to meet' by the TCAG Board, the affected claimant(s), with respect to their own capacity constraints, will present a new proposed service to the TCAG Board prior to implementation of the new service.

A claimant with any available TDA funds, including LTF funds being used for non-transit purposes, will use those funds to pay for the new service.

When a proposed service crosses multiple jurisdictions, TCAG will work as a convener and facilitator with the affected claimants to determine the funding split on a case-by-case basis.