

## **Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC)**

### **MEETING AGENDA**

**February 9, 2021**

**Tulare County Association of Governments**

**ZOOM/ CALL-IN ONLY**

**Phone: 669 900 9128**

**Meeting ID: 744 710 0343**

**Passcode: 82243742**

**10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

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. SSTAC Mission & Purpose**

- a. Unmet Transit Needs

#### **III. Recruitment & Attendance:**

- a. Vacant Position- potential applicant
- b. Expiring terms
- c. Absences; importance of attendance

#### **IV. Action: Approval of Minutes**

- a. August 11, 2020
- b. November 10, 2020

#### **V. Transit Coordination Efforts: Update**

- a. Resuming fare collection

#### **VI. Information: 2021 Unmet Transit Needs Campaign**

**VII. Information: TCAG 2022 Regional Transportation Plan**

**VIII. Transit Provider Updates**

- a. Visalia Transit
- b. Dinuba Transit (DART)
- c. Tulare Intermodal Express (TIME)
- d. Porterville Transit
- e. Tulare County Area Transit (TCaT)

**IX. Social Service Provider Updates**

- a. Updates from those in attendance

**X. Other Items/ Future Agenda Item Requests**

**XI. Adjourn.** The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 11, 2021 by teleconference only.

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

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Dan Fox <sup>2</sup> – Chair	Representative of Potential Transit User 60 Years of Age or Older
Rebecca Donabed- Vice Chair <sup>3</sup>	Representative of Potential Transit User who is Disabled
<i>Vacant</i>	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for Seniors/Social Service Transit Provider
John Mauro <sup>2</sup>	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for Seniors/Social Service Transit Provider
Mark Michaelian <sup>1</sup>	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for the Disabled/Social Service Transit Provider
Norma Verduzco <sup>1</sup>	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for the Disabled/Social Service Transit Provider
Albert Cendejas <sup>1</sup>	Representative of a Local Social Service Provider for Persons of Limited Means
Teresa Ortega <sup>3</sup>	Transit Operator Representative
Angelina Soper <sup>2</sup>	Transit Operator Representative
Carlos Garza <sup>2</sup>	Representative of Potential Transit Users from Local Youth

<sup>1</sup> indicates term ending June 30, 2021

<sup>2</sup> indicates term ending June 30, 2022

<sup>3</sup> indicates term ending June 30, 2023

SSTAC Chair – term ending June 30, 2021

SSTAC Vice Chair – term ending June 30, 2021

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**TCAG Transit Staff**

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Giancarlo Bruno, Regional Planner; GBruno@tularecag.ca.gov

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**Tulare County Association of Governments**  
**Social Services Transportation Advisory Council**

**August 11, 2020**

**ATTENDANCE LIST**

Representative of potential transit user 60 years of age or over	Dan Fox - Chair (P)
Representative of potential transit user who is disabled	Rebecca Donabed (P)
Representative of local social service provider for seniors/social service transportation provider	Violeta Tapia (A)
Representative of local social service provider for seniors/social service transportation provider	John Mauro (A)
Representative of local social service provider for the disabled/social service transportation provider	Mark Michaelian (P)
Representative of local social service provider for the disabled/social service transportation provider	Norma Verduzco (P)
Representative of local social service provider for persons of limited means	Albert Cendejas (P)
Transit Operator Representative	Teresa Ortega (P)
Transit Operator Representative	Angelina Soper (A)
Representative of potential transit users from local youth	Carlos Garza (A)

**Others Present:** Caleb Bowman, City of Visalia; Steve Bonville, City of Tulare; Rich Tree, City of Porterville; Georgina Cardenas, Calvans;

**TCAG Staff:** Giancarlo Bruno; Benjamin Kimball

**SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES**

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**Public Comments**

Mr. Bruno shared that TCAG staff has received requests from several HHSA clients who are being temporarily sheltered at the 99 Palms Inn for transit service to and from the vicinity of the 99 Palms. He noted that a few dozen comments were submitted and that he intends to forward a complete typewritten summary of these comments to the transit agencies, particularly TCaT & TIME.

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

The Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) was called to order by Chair Fox at 10:15 a.m. on August 11, 2020. Persons in attendance noted presence over the phone.

**II. Action: Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Minutes for May 12, 2020 were approved upon a motion by Member Michaelian and second by Vice Chair Donabed. Member Cendejas abstained and the remaining votes were unanimous.

### **III. 2019-20 Unmet Transit Needs Follow-up**

Chair Fox briefly summarized the unmet needs recommendations the SSTAC made at its May 2020 meeting. He stated that though the comment requesting that the City of Tulare provide Spanish-speaking staff at its transit center was not recommended as an unmet transit need that is reasonable to meet, it was nonetheless of concern because it could represent a significant Title VI issue. Mr. Bruno informed the Chair that the TCAG Board had adopted its 2019/20 Unmet Findings at its June meeting and that this comment was not included in the findings of unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet. He added that any Title VI concerns that might exist should be addressed as quickly as possible. Chair Fox and Member Verduzco echoed this sentiment. Mr. Bonville answered that the City of Tulare employs a significant proportion of bilingual staff and that the contract with its transit operator requires that the operator employ bilingual and/or Spanish-speaking staff. He suggested that the complaint might have resulted from a one-off occurrence and agreed to follow up to make sure that assistance for Spanish speakers is available.

### **IV. Discussion: Proposed Revisions to TCAG Unmet Transit Needs Criteria**

Mr. Bruno explained that staff periodically reviews TCAG's unmet transit needs definition & criteria to ensure that the criteria remain reasonable, clear and relevant. After considering minor edits to the current criteria, staff decided to recommend reaffirming the existing unmet needs definition pending an expected overhaul of the Transportation Development Act that will likely necessitate significant changes.

Chair Fox expressed that the current criteria appears to have worked well and that he was comfortable with the decision to retain it. Member Verduzco asked if the related agenda attachment was a draft text of proposed changes. Mr. Bruno clarified that such a draft was originally proposed, but staff now recommends that the existing criteria be retained unless SSTAC members saw fit to modify it. The members in attendance agreed that the current definition is adequate.

### **V. Transit Provider Updates**

**Visalia Transit-** Mr. Bowman briefly described the measures Visalia Transit is taking to limit the spread of COVID-19. He noted that tripper buses continue to be utilized to pick up riders who cannot board the bus due to capacity issues. Vice Chair Donabed asked whether capacity for riders in wheelchairs was being limited. Mr. Bowman explained that only one (1) rider in a wheelchair was permitted on a bus at a given time due to the location of the wheel chair securement devices making it impossible to maintain social distancing when more than one wheelchair is properly secured. He added that dial-a-ride vehicles would be dispatched to help in instances where a passenger is left behind due to wheelchair capacity issues. Vice Chair Donabed also reported that some drivers have not been wearing face masks, which Mr. Bowman agreed to take action to correct.

**TIME-** Mr. Bonville reported that TIME is in the process of acquiring & fitting out driver shields to protect bus drivers from the spread of COVID-19. The city is still operating on a fare-free basis, requiring all passengers & drivers to wear masks and using primarily the rear doors on the bus for

ingress/egress. Vice Chair Donabed mentioned that she has also seen bus drivers in Tulare not wearing their masks or wearing them improperly, which Mr. Bonnaville agreed to address.

**Porterville Transit-** Mr. Tree explained that Porterville Transit continues to operate on a Sunday schedule seven (7) days a week, and is sanitizing its buses more frequently. He noted that fixed route ridership is down some 70% from pre-COVID. Porterville has recently introduced a microtransit service under the 'TransPort' name and it has proven very successful so far. Since its launch in April, there has been a roughly 400% increase in microtransit trips. Porterville is currently examining its lower performing routes with an eye toward replacing or partially replacing them with expanded microtransit offerings.

**Tulare County Area Transit (TCaT)-** Member Ortega described the tightened sanitation protocols that TCaT is currently implementing and noted that ridership has declined about 30% since the start of the pandemic. TCaT is still not collecting fares.

**Dinuba Area Regional Transit (DART) -** No update provided.

## **VI. Social Service Provider Updates**

**Family HealthCare Networks-** Member Verduzco reported that FHCN continues to offer transportation to patients and that they have implemented infection control measures to ensure the safety of their patients.

**CSET-** Member Cendejas stated that because senior centers have been shuttered since March, CSET has shifted its focus to meals on wheels and other forms of COVID-19 relief. All seniors 60 years of age and older are eligible to participate in the program at no cost, but donations are welcome. The number of meals on wheels clients has grown from roughly 300 to over 1,300 though Member Cendejas remarked that the numbers now appear to be leveling off. He added that CSET is also focused on providing rental and mortgage assistance to families to help them stay in their homes and encouraged those present to go to the CSET website for details on eligibility.

**Able Industries-** Member Michaelian explained that Able Industries facility has been closed since the beginning of the pandemic and that their buses are currently dormant. No alternative uses for their vehicles have been arranged so that they can remain available if Able Industries returns to normal operations with short notice.

## **VII. Other Items/Future Agenda Item Requests**

Chair Fox added that he would like an update on the current state of the transit joint powers agreement (JPA) at the November SSTAC meeting. He also mentioned that Orange Belt Stages had formally declared bankruptcy and suggested the possibility of looking into the acquisition of its local facilities for transit-related purposes.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

Chair Fox adjourned the meeting at 11:18 a.m.

**Tulare County Association of Governments**  
**Social Services Transportation Advisory Council**  
**November 10, 2020**  
**ATTENDANCE LIST**

Representative of potential transit user 60 years of age or over	Dan Fox - Chair (P)
Representative of potential transit user who is disabled	Rebecca Donabed (A)
Representative of local social service provider for seniors/social service transportation provider	<i>Vacant</i>
Representative of local social service provider for seniors/social service transportation provider	John Mauro (P)
Representative of local social service provider for the disabled/social service transportation provider	Mark Michaelian (A)
Representative of local social service provider for the disabled/social service transportation provider	Norma Verduzco (P)
Representative of local social service provider for persons of limited means	Albert Cendejas (P)
Transit Operator Representative	Teresa Ortega (P)
Transit Operator Representative	Angelina Soper (P)
Representative of potential transit users from local youth	Carlos Garza (A)

**Others Present:** Manny Correa, City of Tulare

**TCAG Staff:** Elizabeth Forte, Giancarlo Bruno

## **SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES**

### **Public Comments**

Member Cendejas noted that CSET continues to provide meal service to seniors, can be reached via 1-800-321-2462. CSET is also offering rental and home mortgage assistance to qualified applicants.

### **I. Welcome & Introductions**

The Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) was called to order by Chair Fox at 10:00 a.m. on November 10, 2020. Persons in attendance noted presence over Zoom teleconference.

### **II. Action: Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Adoption of minutes from August 11, 2020 meeting deferred until November meeting.

### **III. Information: New Transit Outreach Campaign**

Mr. Bruno detailed the ways TCAG intends to strengthen transit outreach and address the challenges presented to outreach specifically due to COVID. He noted that staff are currently examining a handful of different web-based platforms for use on outreach campaigns and following up on feedback provided by the public. He added that this will be complementary to, rather than a replacement for traditional forms of outreach and information such as print media and The Green Line.

#### **IV. Information: The Green Line Update**

Member Soper provided an update on the volume and nature of information requests received by The Green Line. She reported that, similar to ridership, the volume of calls received by The Green Line had declined about 50% since the beginning of COVID. She explained that metrics related to Spanish-language calls began being tracked approximately one month earlier and hopes to provide information on this once more complete data is available. Most calls received fall under the category of trip planning requests, especially longer trips that require connections. Green Line staff communicates directly with transit dispatchers across the county to obtain information rapidly for calls.

Chair Fox requested that subsequent updates also cover ridership.

#### **V. Transit Provider Updates**

Member Soper informed those present that Visalia is currently working on its short-range transit plan, and proposing a new route serving the industrial park to city council. She also noted that the protective barriers for drivers were being installed in anticipation of the resumption of fare collection, and that the transit center bathrooms have been opened to the public, but the lobby remains closed.

Mr. Correa had no updates but requested to be notified when the other agencies plan to resume fare collection.

Member Ortega added that TCaT continues to install driver protective barriers on its buses, has ordered three (3) new large buses, is currently working on ITS improvements, and is nearing completion of its Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility (TOMF).

#### **VI. Social Service Provider Updates**

Member Verduzco asked to be informed when fare collection will resume because Family Healthcare Networks (FHCN) typically purchases tokens and passes for its patients who require transportation assistance. FHCN continues to provide its own transportation services as well.

Member Cendejas has asked whether the passes CSET has purchased for clients to travel to senior centers and events can be used next year, in light of the closure of senior centers and lack of events this year.

Member Soper replied that Visalia Transit has committed to honoring passes issued this year when fare collection resumes. Member Ortega added that TCaT tokens and punch passes will also remain valid.

Member Cendejas concluded by noting that the CSET meals on wheels program has seen the number of clients it serves in Tulare County increase from 300 to 1,300.

Member Mauro asked the members present if HHSA could provide any information helpful to SSTAC. Chair Fox answered that the SSTAC primarily aims to assist seniors and people with disabilities with their transportation needs.

**VII. Other Items/Future Agenda Item Requests**

Chair Fox stressed the need for transit agencies to treat every unmet transit needs comment it receives seriously.

He also requested an update on the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan for the February meeting.

**VIII. Adjourn**