



# UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS REPORT

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Lake Tahoe Region

El Dorado and Placer Counties

March 2024

## Unmet Transit Needs Process

Each year, pursuant to the California Transportation Development Act (TDA), the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), performs the unmet transit needs process. The goal of the process is to identify any unmet transit needs and ensure those that are reasonable to meet, are met before TDA funds are expended for non-transit uses, such as streets and roads. Currently, all TDA Local Transportation Fund (LTF) apportionments available for public transportation in the Lake Tahoe Region are utilized for transit services only.

During the unmet transit needs process, TRPA consults with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), hosts public workshops, and conducts a public hearing to assess the size and location of potentially transit dependent groups and analyze the adequacy of the existing transportation systems in providing services to transit dependent groups. TRPA is also required to adopt a definition for unmet transit needs and reasonable to meet. The TRPA Governing Board adopted the following definitions:

- **Unmet Transit Needs** – Those public transportation improvements which have not been funded or implemented but have been identified through public input, the annual unmet transit needs hearing, and transit studies in the claimant’s jurisdiction to be identified for implementation in the Regional Transportation Plan.
- **Reasonable to Meet** – New, expanded, or revised transportation service to the public that offers equitable access, can be implemented within the first five-year phase of the Regional Transportation Plan, is technically feasible, would be accepted by the community, can be funded within the five-year time period, and is cost-effective.

Beginning in October 2023, TRPA, Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit (TART), and Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) staff held pop-up booths and attended community and stakeholder meetings to solicit feedback from the public. TRPA released an online survey on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, which remained open through October 31, 2023. The survey, in English and Spanish, asked respondents to identify trips they’d like to make with transit that they currently cannot and any additional needs that are unmet by transit. The survey was also available in paper copies and comments could be submitted to TRPA staff by phone, email, or mail.

On the North Shore, TRPA in partnership with TART, Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA), and the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) held a public workshop following the regular Truckee North Tahoe Transportation Management Association (TNT/TMA) board meeting on October 5, 2023. The hybrid meeting was advertised in advance and accessible by transit. Attendants were encouraged to provide feedback and fill out a paper or digital survey. The survey was also sent out digitally through PCTPA and TNT/TMA channels to North Shore community groups and riders.

On the South Shore, TRPA hosted three pop-up booths in October: at the Stateline Transit Center, Y Transit Center, and the Lake Tahoe Community College mobility hub. Staff attended a Tahoe Area Coordinating Council for the Disabled (TACCD) meeting on September 25, 2023, to solicit feedback. The TACCD serves as the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) for the South Shore. Residents and visitors were encouraged to fill out a paper or online survey, discuss issues and leave comments at all events.

Between September and October, TRPA collected 132 responses, five of which were in Spanish, on unmet transit needs in the Lake Tahoe Region. The comments and operator analysis are summarized in Appendix A. Survey responses may mention multiple comments, for example requesting transit service to emerald

bay and requesting current services to run later in the evening. Therefore, the total number of comments organized by need in Appendix A is greater than the total number of survey responses.

TTD and TART analyzed all comments to determine if they meet the definition of an unmet transit need and whether any of those needs are reasonable to meet. The comments are categorized into one of the following findings as defined by the California TDA program:

1. There are no unmet transit needs.
2. There are unmet transit needs that are not reasonable to meet.
3. There are unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet.

Should any unmet transit needs be identified as reasonable to meet, state law requires the jurisdiction to satisfy those needs before any TDA funds may be expended for non-transit purposes. Making a formal finding regarding unmet transit needs is only required if there is a request to program the TDA funds for non-transit purposes. Because all TDA apportionments are utilized for public transit services only, TRPA is not required to complete the formal unmet transit needs analysis or adopt unmet transit needs findings as outlined in the TDA Statutes and California Codes of Regulations (CCR) section 99401.5 and 99401.6. However, TRPA continues the process of identifying unmet transit needs and collecting public comments for discussions with the transit operators. Transit operators may use this information to determine potential gaps in the system, re-allocate resources as needed to fill those gaps, and to inform future plans, such as the Short Range Transit Plan.

## Unmet Transit Needs Findings

Transit operators reviewed and responded to all comments received during public outreach. Responses and the ability of the operators to address transit needs are based on widespread community need, short-term feasibility, and funding restraints. Because all TDA funding is already used towards transit operations, most needs are unreasonable to meet without additional funding. If more funding or resources become available in the future, operators can refer to the record of unmet transit needs to help determine service priorities. The following is the list of the top requested needs identified by individuals and community groups:

## Service Expansion and Operational Improvements

- **Increase frequency and reliability**

ANALYSIS: **TART:** 30 minute service on TART's regional routes is included in the TART systems plan, with seasonal offerings currently being funded, however continued lack of sufficient bus driver staffing has delayed implementation. **TTD:** Increasing frequency would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.

2023 Recommendation: This is an unmet transit need that is not reasonable to meet at this time. Increasing frequency and reliability was also identified as an unmet transit need in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2022.

- **Public Transportation options between North Shore and South Shore, connecting TART and TTD services**

ANALYSIS: **TART:** Service between North Service between North Lake Tahoe and South Lake Tahoe is not in the TART Systems Plan and is not a service priority for Placer County. **TTD:** TTD agrees that

connections between North Lake Tahoe and South Lake Tahoe are desirable. This would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.

2023 Recommendation: This is an unmet transit need that is not reasonable to meet at this time. This was also identified as an unmet transit need in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2022.

- **Service to or in Meyers or North Upper Truckee neighborhoods.**

ANALYSIS: TTD operated this service in late 2018 and early 2019. Due to extremely low ridership, it was discontinued. Service to Meyers will be periodically re-evaluated in various planning efforts.

2023 Recommendation: This is an unmet transit need that is not reasonable to meet at this time. Service to Meyers was also requested by the public in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2022.

- **Extended service hours: service later at night and earlier in the morning.**

ANALYSIS: **TART:** TART fixed route Peak season service is scheduled to run until 2am and non-peak season service until 10pm. TART Connect lakeside zones are offered in the evenings until 12am (midnight) during peak season and 10pm during non-peak season. TART fixed route provides a 6am service along the North Shore between Crystal Bay and Tahoe City with a 6:30am departure from Tahoe City to the West Shore. Longer service days would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas. **TTD:** Longer service days would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.

2023 Recommendation: This is an unmet transit need that is not reasonable to meet at this time. Extended service hours, primarily for the purpose of travel to employment, has also been identified as an unmet need in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2022.

- **Service along SR 89 Recreation Corridor to Emerald Bay. Stops requested include Camp Richardson, Pope Beach, Baldwin Beach, Fallen Leaf Lake, and Tallac trailhead.**

ANALYSIS: TTD agrees that additional connections recreation sites are desirable. However, this would require shifting existing resources and create service reductions in other areas. In addition, infrastructure improvements must be made at Emerald Bay before transit service can serve the area effectively.

2023 Recommendation: This is an unmet transit need that is not reasonable to meet at this time. This was also an unmet need unreasonable to meet in 2022. Service to Emerald Bay was provided seasonally by the Emerald Bay Trolley in previous years.

- **Provide more real-time information on routes and operations.**

ANALYSIS: **TART:** Up to date schedule and route alert information can be found at TahoeTruckeeTransit.com. The real-time information provider is currently being evaluated. **TTD:** TTD is migrating AVL and predictive analysis service from Swiftly to Synchromatics. This process should be complete by mid-summer 2024 and result in better information. Additionally, LCD screens are being installed at the transit centers to display real time information as well.

2023 Recommendation: This is an unmet transit need that is reasonable to meet. The need for real-time information was also identified in 2016, 2017, and 2022.

## Findings and Conclusion

Operators reviewed all comments received during the 2023 unmet transit needs process. Staff found that there are unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet. There were seventeen unmet transit needs for TTD's operational area and twelve unmet needs for TART's operational area, one of which is deemed reasonable to meet at this time. This need, requested by approximately eleven comments, was for operators to provide more real-time information on routes and operations. TART responded that up to date schedule and route alert information can be found at [TahoeTruckeeTransit.com](http://TahoeTruckeeTransit.com). TART is also currently evaluating the real-time information provider and looking to integrate real-time information on fixed route buses into the TART Connect app. TTD is migrating automated vehicle location (AVL) and predictive analysis service from Swiftly to Synchronomatics. This process should be complete by mid-summer 2024 and result in better information. Additionally, LCD screens are being installed at the transit centers to display real time information as well. A similar need for TTD to expand communication when service changes was also identified in 2023 Unmet Transit Needs as reasonable to meet. Since then, TTD has hired a Public Information Officer to assist with disseminating information.

All TDA funds are currently used to fund transit operations, so a formal finding is not required pursuant to CCR Section 99401.5 and 99401.6. However, TRPA will continue to conduct the unmet transit needs process annually to continue coordination with transit agencies, PCPTA, the SSTAC, and the public to solicit, identify, and address transportation needs. Identified unmet transit needs will be taken into consideration during future transportation planning efforts and TRPA will continue to allocate all TDA funds only to public transportation planning and operations until all reasonable to meet transit needs are met.



Figure 1: TART Bus

## Appendix A: Summarized Comments with Operator Analysis

| Operator   | Comment   | # of Comments | 2023 Analysis   | 2023 Recommendation   |
|------------|---|---------------|---|---|
| TTD & TART | Increase frequency and reliability.   | 34            | <p><b>TTD:</b> Operational comment. Increasing frequency would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.</p> <p><b>TART:</b> 30 minute service on TART's regional routes is included in the TART systems plan, with seasonal offerings currently being funded, however continued lack of sufficient bus driver staffing has delayed implementation.</p>  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD        | Service to or in Meyers (with stops requested at Holiday Market) or North Upper Truckee neighborhoods.  | 23            | TTD operated this service in late 2018 and early 2019. Due to extremely low ridership, it was discontinued. Service to Meyers will be periodically re-evaluated in various planning efforts.  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time  |
| TTD & TART | Expanded service hours: service later at night and earlier in the morning.  | 21            | <p><b>TTD:</b> Operational comment. Longer service day would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.</p> <p><b>TART:</b> TART fixed route Peak season service is scheduled to run until 2am and non-peak season service until 10pm. TART Connect lakeside zones are offered in the evenings until 12am (midnight) during peak season and 10pm during non-peak season. TART fixed route provides a 6am service along the North Shore between Crystal Bay and Tahoe City with a 6:30am departure from Tahoe City to the West Shore. Longer service days would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.</p> | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time  |
| TTD & TART | Public transportation options between North Shore and South Shore, connecting TART and TTD services.  | 18            | <p><b>TTD:</b> Operational comment. TTD agrees that connections between North Lake Tahoe and South Lake Tahoe are desirable. This would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.</p> <p><b>TART:</b> Service between North Lake Tahoe and South Lake Tahoe is not in the TART Systems Plan and is not a service priority for Placer County.</p>   | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD        | Service along SR 89 Recreation Corridor to Emerald Bay. Stops requested include Camp Richardson, Pope Beach, Baldwin Beach, Fallen Leaf Lake, and Tallac trailhead. | 14            | TTD agrees that additional connections recreation sites are desirable. However, this would require shifting existing resources and create service reductions in other areas. In addition, infrastructure improvements must be made at Emerald Bay before transit service can serve the area effectively.  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD        | Provide more real time information on routes and operations.  | 11            | <p><b>TTD:</b> TTD is migrating AVL and predictive analysis service from Swiftly to Synchromatics. This process should be complete by mid-summer 2024 and result in better information. Additionally, LCD screens are being installed at the transit centers to display real time information as well.</p> <p><b>TART:</b> Up to date schedule and route alert information can be found at TahoeTruckeeTransit.com. The real-time information provider is currently being evaluated.</p>  | <b>This unmet transit need is reasonable to meet.</b>           |
| TTD        | Transportation to Heavenly (Cal base, Heavenly village, Stagecoach, and Boulder all mentioned).   | 10            | Heavenly Ski Resort is providing winter shuttle transportation. Heavenly village is served by route 50 and 55.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |

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| TTD | Service to Zephyr Cove and Roundhill Shopping Center.   | 5 | TTD is exploring in the SRTP whether this service can be restored by partnering with Carson City and Douglas County. Without additional partners, it is unlikely this route will be restored given federal funding restrictions. | This is an unmet transit need not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD | Service extended to neighborhoods off Pioneer Trail (Glenwood, Washoan, Golden Bear Trail, and April Dr requested). | 5 | TTD agrees that service to neighborhoods is important. However, the fiscal feasibility is yet to be determined.  | This is an unmet transit need not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD | Increase frequency of route 50 specifically.  | 4 | Operational comment. Increasing frequency would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.   | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time.    |
| TTD | Service into neighborhoods (Gardner Mountain, Keys, Sierra Tract, and Bijou requested).                             | 4 | TTD agrees that service to neighborhoods is important. In the current SRTP, an expansion of microtransit is being explored to better serve SLT neighborhoods. However, the fiscal feasibility is yet to be determined.           | This is an unmet transit need not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD | Service over Spooner Summit to Carson City.   | 3 | TTD is exploring in the SRTP whether this service can be restored by partnering with Carson City and Douglas County. Without additional partners, it is unlikely this route will be restored given federal funding restrictions. | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time.    |
| TTD | Service from South Lake Tahoe to the West Shore (Meeks Bay, Sugar Pine Park).                                       | 3 | Operational comment. TTD agrees that connections between West Shore and South Lake Tahoe are desirable. This would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.                                    | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time.    |
| TTD | Seasonal winter services. Service from Y to Kirkwood or Sierra Ski Resort in the winter.                            | 3 | TTD agrees that additional connections recreation sites are desirable. However, this would require shifting existing resources and create service reductions in other areas.   | This is an unmet transit need not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD | Increased and consistent bike storage capacity on buses to plan ahead. Bike racks capable to fit fat bikes.         | 2 | As TTD updates fleet, new bike racks are being ordered that hold three bikes with one slot specific to fit fat tire bikes. It is not anticipated that existing fleet will be retrofit due to duplicative capital costs.          | This is not an unmet transit need.                                 |
|     | Regional service from South Lake Tahoe to Placerville and to Sacramento.  | 2 | This service is provided by El Dorado Transit through their contract with the Amtrak Thruway bus service.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                                 |
| TTD | Service requested from Y Transit Center to LTCC.  | 2 | Operational comment. Service is currently provided by route 55.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                                 |
| TTD | Mobility hubs with parking at the Y and Meyers to accompany transit.  | 2 | The Y Transit Center is a City of South Lake Tahoe facility. Meyers is only served by paratransit. Currently, TTD does not have the resources necessary to build, operate, and service a mobility hub in Meyers.                 | This is not an unmet transit need.                                 |
| TTD | Stateline to Reno Airport.  | 2 | TTD agrees that additional regional connections are desirable. This would require shifting existing resources - particularly staffing - and necessitate service reductions in other areas. Private bus service is available.     | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time.    |
| TTD | Request for door to door paratransit service expanded to include seniors.   | 2 | Operational comment. Increasing paratransit resources to accommodate non-ADA qualified seniors would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time.    |
| TTD | Service between Upper Kingsbury (Tina Court, Eagles Nest) and Stateline.  | 2 | The 22 provides service from Tramway Dr to Stateline Transit Center  | This is not an unmet need.   |



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| TTD  | Service from South Lake Tahoe to Sandharbor. Requested that service extends to October and other times of the year. | 2 | TTD provides a revenue service from Stateline Transit Center to Sand Harbor with one trip each morning and each evening during the operation of the East Shore Express.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TTD  | Service from Stateline over Kingsbury to Minden.  | 1 | This service is the existing Route 22.   | This is not an unmet need.                                      |
| TTD  | Increase availability and reliability of on-demand paratransit service.   | 1 | Operational comment. More information would be needed to understand the concern. TTD's paratransit services operate in compliance with the ADA.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TTD  | Buses that access ski areas to provide ski racks inside.  | 1 | While there are no racks, TTD allows skiers and snowboarders to bring equipment inside buses.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TTD  | Faster service from Sierra Tract to Kingsbury.  | 1 | Operational comment. Increasing frequency would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.   | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD  | Service from Al Tahoe to Stateline.   | 1 | Currently served by route 55.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TTD  | Increased frequency and reliability of routes to Carson and Gardnerville.   | 1 | Operational comment. Increasing frequency would require shifting existing resources and service reductions in other areas.   | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TTD  | Every stop should have a shelter provided from inclement weather.   | 1 | While TTD generally agrees that shelters are positive additions, there are not sufficient resources to install and maintain shelters at every stop.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TTD  | Sierra Blvd to Kingsbury Transit Center.  | 1 | Currently served by route 50 or 55 with connection to route 22.  | This is not an unmet need.                                      |
| TTD  | LTCC to Gardnerville.   | 1 | Currently being served by Routes 19x and 22  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TTD  | Safer stops - better lighting and pull-out lanes.   | 1 | Operational comment. TTD has improved lighting at the most used stops on the south shore and has funding to improve lighting at stops in Nevada in FY 2025. Pull-out lanes are generally unhelpful due to the difficulties of a bus re-entering the flow of traffic with unyielding motorists.   | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TTD  | Service requested from Y to Ski Run at 12pm.  | 1 | Operational comment. Service is provided by route 50.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                              |
| TART | Service between Incline Village and Reno.   | 3 | Service between North Lake Tahoe and Reno is not in the TART Systems Plan and is not a service priority for Placer County. Comments will be forwarded to Washoe Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) for consideration.  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TART | Faster route between Tahoe City and Truckee.  | 3 | 30 minute service on TART's regional routes is included in the TART systems plan, with seasonal offerings currently being funded within Placer County, however continued lack of sufficient bus driver staffing has delayed implementation.  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TART | Service from Tahoe City & Tahoe Vista to Alpine Meadows.  | 2 | TART fixed route service offers hourly service between Tahoe Vista and Tahoe City via the Mainline route where a connection can be made to the Hwy. 89 route servicing River Ranch and Olympic Valley. Connections to the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort can be made via the Mountaineer service or the base to base Gondola in Olympic Valley. | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TART | Service between Incline Village and Carson City.  | 2 | Service between North Lake Tahoe and Carson City is not in the TART Systems Plan and is not a service priority for Placer County.  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TART | Express bus that skips ski resorts.   | 2 | The TART Systems Plan will be updated in FY24-25, where fixed route efficiencies will be evaluated in conjunction with first mile/last mile connectivity.  | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time. |



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| TART | Need more capacity for first and last mainline buses, instances of drivers turning people away.   | 1 | TART offers increased capacity during the winter months, resulting in 30 minute headways on Mainline during peak AM and PM commute hours.   | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time.    |
| TART | Service between Incline Village and Tahoe Meadows.  | 1 | Service between North Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Meadows is not in the TART Systems Plan and is not a service priority for Placer County. Comments will be forwarded to Washoe Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) for consideration.  | This is an unmet transit need not reasonable to meet at this time. |
| TART | Service from Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe to all the Ski Resorts.   | 1 | Service from Hyatt Regency Lake is provided to the following ski resorts: Northstar via the Mainline and Highway 267 routes, Palisades via the Mainline and Highway 89 routes, and Homewood via the Mainline Route. Service to Diamond Peak is provided directly by the resort. | This unmet transit need is not reasonable to meet at this time.    |
| TART | Service from Tahoe Vista (Jester Ct) to Truckee (Truckee Airport  | 1 | Service is currently provided via the Mainline and Highway 267 routes.  | This is not an unmet need.   |
| TART | Service from Tahoe City to Palisades.   | 1 | Service is currently provided via the Hwy89 route.  | This is not an unmet transit need.                                 |
| TART | Paratransit from North Shore (Kings beach to Tahoe City) to the hospital that can be booked day of or day before.   | 1 | Service is currently provided by Placer TART Paratransit which provides service to Truckee. You may schedule up to 14 days in advance or 24-hours prior to the requested trip.  | This is not an unmet need.   |
| TART | Community desire for expanded TART connect evening service to go outside geographical area for events in Kings Beach/Tahoe City on the weekends. In the evening couldn't get back because there was no fixed route. | 1 | TART Connect within Placer County is now "zone free" beginning at 6pm daily, allowing for riders to cross zones and make resort connections by requesting one single trip (no connections required).  | This is not an unmet need.   |