



UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS REPORT

Fiscal Year 2019 - 2020

Lake Tahoe Region

El Dorado and Placer Counties

February 2020

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 annual 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 are utilized for transit services only.

During the unmet transit needs process, TRPA must establish and consult with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC), hold public workshops, and conduct 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 2019, TRPA, Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit (TART), and Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) staff held pop-up booths, attended community meetings, and distributed surveys to solicit feedback from the public. An online survey was released in October and remained open until December 2019. The survey, in English and Spanish, asked respondents to describe their typical travel patterns via transit and identify existing gaps in service. Respondents also had the option to provide any additional feedback in a comment box.

In addition to the survey, TRPA in partnership with TART, and the Truckee North Tahoe Transportation Management Association (TNT/TMA), organized a community meeting following the regular TNT/TMA board meeting on October 3, 2019. The meeting was advertised in advance and accessible via public transportation. On the South Shore, TRPA hosted a pop-up booth with TTD at the Lake Tahoe Community College mobility hub on October 28th. Residents and visitors were encouraged to fill out a survey or discuss issues and leave comments at both events. Residents who were unable to attend the meetings were still encouraged to relay feedback to TRPA staff via email and phone through flyers, e-newsletters, and social media advertisements.

Between October and December, 41 people filled out the survey online and 11 people filled out hardcopy surveys or left comments at the two events, totaling 52 comments. All comments are listed in Appendix A and operator responses are summarized in Appendix B.

On October 1st, TRPA held a meeting of the Resort Triangle Transportation Focus Group, which serves as the SSTAC for the North Tahoe area. The North Tahoe SSTAC was formed following the 2017 Unmet Transit

Needs report, meeting quarterly before regular meetings of the Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee (CCTT). The Resort Triangle Transportation Focus Group provided feedback for the unmet transit needs process. Comments are incorporated into the comment summary in Appendix B.

In December and January, TRPA, TTD, and TART analyzed all individual and group 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 LTF apportionments are utilized for public transit services only, TRPA is not required to complete the full 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 and re-allocate resources as needed to fill those gaps.

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 becomes 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 top needs identified by individuals and community groups:

Service Expansion and Operational Improvements

- **NEED REGULAR AND AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION TO RENO AND SACRAMENTO**
ANALYSIS: Service from South Lake Tahoe and Truckee to Sacramento is currently provided daily via Amtrak Thruway bus service. Greyhound also provides service from Truckee to Sacramento. Service from South Lake Tahoe to Reno is provided daily via Route 19x to connect with Washoe Regional Transportation Commission in Carson City. The South Tahoe Airporter also provides daily service from South Lake Tahoe to the Reno-Tahoe Airport. North Lake Tahoe residents can access the Reno airport through the North Lake Tahoe Express airport shuttle. More direct and regular connections are being explored through the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan. This is not an unmet transit need.
- **PROVIDE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS BETWEEN NORTH SHORE AND SOUTH SHORE**
ANALYSIS: Several individuals requested a public transportation option between North Tahoe and South Tahoe as none currently exist. TTD's summer-only service from South Tahoe to Emerald Bay and Tahoe City was recently discontinued due to funding restraints. Similarly, transit service between North Tahoe and South Tahoe is not listed in the 2016 TART Systems Plan and is not feasible at this

time. However, the service is still a regional priority listed on TRPA's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) constrained project list. Additionally, TTD is working on a study to provide waterborne ferry service between South Tahoe and North Tahoe and will begin seeking funding to implement the service. This is an unmet transit need not reasonable to meet at this time.

- **EXTEND SOUTH SHORE LOCAL SERVICE SPAN PAST 8:00 PM**

ANALYSIS: On November 1st, 2018 TTD reduced service hours on South Tahoe local bus routes with trips now ending around 8:00pm. South Shore employees often begin or end shifts after 8:00pm and rely on public transportation to commute. There are also some Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC) evening classes that let out around 9:00pm after TTD service to LTCC ends. The TTD Board voted at the January 2020 Board Meeting to re-extend local service to 10:00pm. This is an unmet transit need that is reasonable to meet. The extended service is anticipated to begin operating by summer of 2020.

- **PROVIDE EARLIER AND LATER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TRUCKEE, NORTH LAKE TAHOE, SQUAW VALLEY, NORTHSTAR, AND INCLINE FOR WORKERS**

ANALYSIS: Later service to Truckee is in the financially unconstrained portion of the 2016 TART Systems Plan Update. The Town of Truckee began running night service between Truckee and Northstar in December 2019 for the winter to provide connections with night service operated by Placer County. More frequent service to Truckee is fully funded but has not been implemented due to severe understaffing of bus drivers. This is an unmet transit need not currently reasonable to meet.

- **IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS FOR FIRST-MILE AND LAST-MILE TRANSPORTATION INTO NEIGHBORHOODS**

ANALYSIS: Transportation planners and operators are actively exploring more micro-mobility options like micro-transit, taxis, and relationships with transportation network companies such as Uber or Lyft, to fill first-mile and last-mile transportation gaps. Although these services are not listed in the TART Systems Plan Update or TTD's Short Range Transit Plan, TART will continue to collaborate with public or private agencies offering micro-mobility services. TTD will evaluate the services and may coordinate services in the future.

- **INCREASE TRANSIT FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY**

ANALYSIS: Higher frequency and reliability have been identified as unmet needs for several years. TART increased frequency from 60 minutes to 30 minutes on the Mainline route in 2018. They plan to increase frequency to Truckee as soon as they can fully staff their bus driver positions. TTD also increased frequency from 60 minutes to 20 minutes on Route 50 in 2019 and will begin implementing planned frequency improvements as additional funding is secured.

Findings and Conclusion

Operators reviewed all comments received during the 2019 unmet transit needs process. Comments were categorized based on available funding and resources. All TDA funds are currently used to fund transit operations, so operators have concluded there are unmet transit needs that are not reasonable to meet. The unmet transit needs process is currently an annual process, so TRPA will continue to coordinate with transit agencies, private organizations, 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.