

Mono County Local Transportation Commission

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MINUTES

April 13, 2015
(Adopted May 11, 2015)

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Larry Johnston, Fred Stump, Tim Fesko

TOWN COMMISSIONERS: Jo Bacon, Sandy Hogan, Shields Richardson

COUNTY STAFF: Scott Burns, Garrett Higerd, Gerry Le Francois, Paul Roten, Wendy Sugimura, Jeff Walters, C.D. Ritter

TOWN STAFF: Grady Dutton

CALTRANS: Ryan Dermody, Brent Green, Cedrik Zemitis

ESTA: Jill Batchelder

SSTAC: Charles Broten, IMACA; Laurel Martin, Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra (DSES); Beth Himmelhoch, Inyo-Mono Association for Handicapped (IMAH); Rick Franz, Caltrans

GUESTS: Tim Alpers, District 3 Supervisor; Chris Lizza, business owner; Michael & Nancy Pinizzotto, business owners; Tony Dublino by videoconference

- 1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Fred Stump called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. at the Town/County Conference Room, Minaret Village Mall, Mammoth Lakes, and attendees recited the pledge of allegiance.
- 2. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Ryan Dermody introduced new District 9 Director Brent Green.
- 3. MINUTES:**

MOTION: Approve minutes of March 9, 2015, as amended: 1) Item 7B: Madera ~~might~~ will benefit... 2) Item 8E: Beauchamp ~~worked commuted~~ every week ~~to build along this~~ route.
(Hogan/Johnston. Ayes: 6-0.)

Clarification of minutes approval: "Mono County Counsel advises all County Commissions and Boards that a person must either have been present at the meeting, or have listened to the audio of the meeting, to be eligible to vote on approval of the minutes."

Scott Burns noted disagreement among legal counsel. Invite Stacey Simon to address at future meeting.

A. PUBLIC HEARING, Unmet Transit Needs: Wendy Sugimura welcomed Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) volunteers. Annual process achieves efficiency by combining with Unmet Transit Needs for elderly, disabled, low-income, youth for basic necessities such as medical, dental, business, appointments, food, shopping, clothing, and education. Reasonable to meet = operationally feasible, available to general public, cost-effective. ESTA is going to Regional Planning Advisory Committees (RPACs) for input. Still need Long Valley RPAC and June Lake CAC. Needs were compiled in matrix, requesting more input. Town held its hearing, and had nothing further to add.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING:

Laurel Martin, DSES, wanted connection Bishop/Mammoth on weekends, and between intermediate points (Convict, Millpond).

Beth Himmelhoch, IMAH, also wanted Bishop/Mammoth on weekends.

Charles Broten, IMACA, noted transit-dependent people at least once/week need to get to shopping area. Need for safety net still exists. Benton-to-Bishop bus? *Tuesday and Friday 8:30 and 2:30*. No services within June Lake. *US 395 route stops at junction*. Lee Vining or June Lake to Mammoth? *North morning, south evening*. Broten: List as unmet transit need. *Bishop to Millpond is Dial-A-Ride route*. Cost? \$3.20/trip. Non-

emergency medical transport has volunteer driver setup: Mono resident, recruit own driver, people reimbursed 23.5 cents/mile. Contact info on website. **CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING.**

DISCUSSION: Johnston: Commuter route for Lee Vining or June Lake? Vanpool program not currently utilized; need eight people with same travel pattern, per/passenger charge for vehicle use (less than public transit routes). More economical with more people. Johnston: People haven't taken advantage of it? Don't want to do it? Surveys didn't get large enough group to warrant vanpool. Johnston: Bus service June Lake to Mammoth? Usually mid-December till mountain closes, mainly workers. Guaranteed by June Mountain Ski Area, open to public. No summertime service. Hogan: Subsidy cover nearly all cost? Yes.

Sugimura: A hearing will be held prior to adoption by LTC so input can be analyzed. Will continue to take public input, present final matrix at May meeting, adopt resolution, file paperwork with state. Comments will be in agenda packet. Thanks to SSTAC for serving and appearing today.

4. ADMINISTRATION

A. **Resolution of Appreciation to Caltrans R15-1000:** Scott Burns noted Commissioner Stump's request is memorialized today. Stump read aloud the resolution, and Brent Green acknowledged.

MOTION: Approve Resolution of Appreciation R15-1000 to Caltrans. (Stump/Bacon. Ayes: 6-0.)

5. **COMMISSIONER REPORTS:** **Fesko:** Appreciated Caltrans' working on SRs 120 and 108. Conversation with Yosemite superintendent, aware of economic impact, working on highway with no traffic, would not commit due to unpredictable weather. Hope to open by end of April. **Johnston:** Cyclists notified to avoid truck traffic on Lower Rock Creek for remediation of Round Fire. **Bacon:** Thanked agencies for readying Lakes Basin and Reds Meadow for early opening. **Hogan:** Attended YARTS Authority Advisory Committee meeting last week. **Richardson:** Lots of Teslas in town, some with bike racks. Station at Lone Pine is busy. Reno battery site in Reno by 2020. **Stump:** How contribute to road maintenance when paying no gas tax? Truck traffic operating safely at Swall Meadows, project will wrap by April 24, six teams for debris removal. Match funding for Convict Road granted by California Transportation Commission (CTC).

6. **LOCAL TRANSPORTATION:** No items

7. TRANSIT

A. Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA)

1. **Quarterly operations report:** Jill Batchelder reported 307,000 rides, 27.5 trips/hr (down a bit), \$61,000 in fares, 35% farebox. Ridership down by 5,400. Mammoth Express route down due to low snowfall, also Gray Line (route was inflated last year when Green Line was down). Most routes at or exceeding goals.

Hogan: Mammoth Dial-A-Ride (DAR) down? *People take advantage of free transit. DAR runs same hours as fixed route.* Hogan: Special needs kids still operating? *Yes, but mostly adult use down due to free routes.* Hogan: Library this quarter has bilingual story hour, kids don't pay.

Bacon: When routes reassessed, not meeting goal? *Decision on Short-Range Transit plan soon. Routes with lower production are Walker & Tecopa-Pahrump. Locally set goals, not State. State requires 10% farebox system-wide, ESTA has 20%. Farebox is higher outside rural areas.*

2. **Update of ESTA activities:** Received four bids, three competitive. John Helm is meeting on Reds Meadow shuttle, looking at weekend start-up.

Bacon: Open and then close again? *Not enough visitors to sustain service, but road will be open.*

Stump: Disappointed that no at-large representative on ESTA board, as LTC has one and handles substantially greater moneys. LTC commissioners should not have to resign to fill the board seat that Supervisor Stacy Corless resigned due to conflict of interest. *Will pass comments on.*

B. **Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS):** YARTS meets today. Budget has doubled since Fresno joined, but expenses also increased. Need reassessments. Proposed deficit budget. Mono committed \$30,000 for 2.5 months of service. When YARTS started, MMSA provided service first couple years.

Hogan: YARTS is still a one-man show set to retire in couple years. Historical perspective on ESTA? **Response by Batchelder:** *Greyhound pulled out in 2001; people always need to get out of area. Inyo-Mono Transit traveled only to Ridgecrest and Carson City three days/week. At that time, funding was a year-by-year struggle. ESTA expanded north run, added fourth day (Wednesday only day not run). Also extended south to Lancaster for Metrolink, and north to Reno/Tahoe International airport and Greyhound. Expanding days gets*

back into competitive realm. Working on funding to support. Hit growth point, then studies, analysis; remain status quo or growing pains.

Hogan: YARTS is important connector, but can't continue deficit operation; lease from VIA but no new buses. **Could use reserves to buy buses.** Lean operation, hired fiscal analyst. Think about cost of new counties, conversion to professional system.

Burns: Impetus when Inyo-Mono Transit evolved into ESTA was Town wanting transit service. Everyone sat down and had business plan prepared on how to transition. Lines of credit were extended till ESTA got on its feet. Batchelder: First five years each jurisdiction provided line-of-credit funding. Eventually self-sufficient.

Hogan: Invite Dick Whittington to speak on marketing trans-Sierra. YARTS has seven out of 10 new supervisors, some not voting yet. Lots of moving parts. Parallels with ESTA could be beneficial to YARTS. Business plan and/or update short-range transit plan. Fresno starts in June. Madera residents think it's a good idea. Pilot program funded by Fresno. Burns: Madera has come to table, gotten some support. Tuolumne is still pilot project.

8. CALTRANS

A. **Lee Vining Rockfall:** Cedrik Zemitis, project manager, noted longer closures from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. to deal with rock scaling. When installing anchor mesh on high slopes, equipment pieces need longer closures. All on west side, nothing on east. Aggressive revegetation, erosion control and reduction. Want to solve rockfall once and for all, stabilize long term. Will get notices out.

Note: *In the following paragraphs Zemitis responses are shown in italics.*

Hogan: Post fact sheets at welcome and visitor centers, County, Town, sandwich board at Vons to notify travelers. *Six portable CMS from north of Bridgeport, existing five CMS Bishop to Holbrook Junction.*

Johnston: Social media? Zemitis will check with public information officer on plans. Johnston: "Burners" [Burning Man attendees] are aware due to social media. Maybe tourism staff could publicize.

Johnston: Snow avalanche paths? *These are farther south, but thought about. This project was proposed as a two-season job, but contractor suggested May 4 to November as a one-season job. Though Caltrans is hopeful it would take only one season, it is premature to say so at this time.*

Johnston: Traffic signal? *Drilling, scaling as needed, flagging, button so cyclists can get through. Nothing touching picnic grounds (remain open).* May work 24/7 when K-rail is up.

Nancy Pinizzotto, business owner, noted entire town is concerned about truck traffic through town getting backed up. Cars can return to town, but what about trucks? *Trucking associations on email list know Hwy 6 route well. If traffic goes beyond queue distance, could clear queues. Can override lights if backups occur.*

Pinizzotto: How addressed at night on busy weekend? *Inspectors can ring cell phones 24/7. EMS will have key numbers so clear path. Nighttime traffic volumes very low.* Pinizzotto: Reassess timing of lights? Yes, extra hours into work plan.

Fesko: One year would be appreciated after two seasons at High Point project. *Different contractor, subs are some of best in field.*

B. **Tioga Pass:** Johnston: Open east side to Ellery Lake earlier for skating, ice climbing, cross country skiing. Gate closed, but bikes go around. Safety issues are no different.

Chris Lizza, business owner: Can bike five different directions on spectacularly smooth pavement, wide shoulders. Great [Caltrans] responsiveness last few years, yet seasonal closures persist on dry roads. Last portion is Tioga Pass, east side. Tioga is world-renowned. Patrons from Europe expecting to go over pass have no concept of usual conditions.

Lizza went up yesterday, brought photos showing lack of snow, shoulder work needed, recreational opportunities up there. Problematic [avalanche] area Olmsted Point has been dry for months. Road can open with 10' snowbanks, and right now, no snow. Runoff across road freezes. Perform shoulder work when road is open. Takes money to open no matter when, but Caltrans maintenance expense must be lower. This is extraordinary year, but let's not be slaves to calendar, but by conditions, more flexibility. Caltrans crews stopping at market take pride in opening Tioga. Feet of snow last week is all gone. Would love to see as much open as possible this week.

Nancy Pinizzotto, business owner: Exorbitant cost to open/close when no snow? Maybe only daylight hours? Open/close?

Tony Dublino: Citizen/resident/snowplay advocate. Hundreds of people echo Lizza's comments. Ultimately presents significant opportunity for economic development. Ability to cater can't be overstated. Existing policy under scrutiny is based on calendar and annual budgeting, not on snowpack and actual need. Sonora Pass is dry nearly to summit. It's embarrassing not to have it open yet to higher gates. Operational and budget

challenges exist, but real opportunity to shift courses based on actual snowpack. Really wants to ski while still have some snow; all snow above 9,000' this year. Open ASAP to get up to use the land.

Brent Green thanked commissioners for gracious welcome and resolution. He has enjoyed Mammoth for 40 years and biked Tioga Pass, which Caltrans plans to open April 15. Opening now is two weeks earlier than ever. Coordination with National Park Service (NPS): Caltrans does not gauge opening on NPS (opened earlier, stayed open later than NPS). Familiar with other routes, some operationally similar. Had unusual warm spell few weeks ago; assessed Tioga, but then storm created additional rockfall, which could happen at any time. All factors discussed over years are still applicable. Key factor in opening road is safety. Scaling = rappelling down slopes, removing rock. Can't do 1,000' cliffs top to bottom. Two Caltrans crew were killed when scaling elsewhere in the state. Policy remains same – open soon as safely can. Policy not based on calendar. Opened Crestview rest area last couple winters, benefits traveling public, safety element also. Concern was listened to and addressed.

Johnston: Budget question in low snowfall year – that money would help open pass. Green: Money was used on unmet infrastructure needs, allocated for greatest-public-good projects. Less into maintenance in low-snow winter. Demolished Crestview maintenance facility, did not have funding to upgrade. If passes are open intermittently throughout year, people could get trapped.

Johnston: Temporary opening vs. keeping open. Some logic to that, just like in fall – open temporarily till need to close. Green: Caltrans does not intend to shut down after April 15. Reminded continually of pass importance. Lack of communication sometimes. Narrowing of opening, earlier [in spring] to later [in fall].

Johnston: Overall Work Program (OWP) policy is based more on weather than date. Work with NPS.

Burns: Convene meeting of land management entities affected by road opening.

Stump: Same rationale for SR120 and SR108? Green: Different gate locations, Marine base along 108.

Mike Pinizzotto: Discussions with NPS? Green: On Friday had cleared around gate, scraped snow down to melt more quickly, NPS needs to check and maintain its facilities, not just the road.

Hogan: Crestview maintenance station is looking very good. USFS pushed for many years to clean up station, subterranean fuel tanks, etc.

C. **Activities in Mono County & pertinent statewide information:** None

9. **QUARTERLY REPORTS**

A. **Town of Mammoth Lakes:** Grady Dutton noted elementary school connector path. No grant for Lake George connector path. Airport fence information to come. Lakes Basin road rockfall concern, looking at Lee Vining rockfall project. Open Lakes Basin early, by April 17.

Johnston: Reds Meadow Road? Dutton: Meeting Friday, will email status.

Stump: Safe routes to school causing removal of Head Start building at elementary school? School district promised to report, but ever heard back. Moving on campus to half-size building? Johnston: New parking lot necessitates moving Head Start building to middle school. Stump: Conflicting reports...

B. **Mono County:** Garrett Higerd noted shrinking project list, with some projects done. Looking to future:

1) June Lake: working around events, such as June Lake Triathlon.

2) Convict Lake Road: Notice to proceed by June. Resort/restaurant owners confused on access, as events occur all summer long. Considering pontoon boat to ferry to wedding sites. Weekend work? Higerd: No weekend work all summer, no night work, no road closures, and always one lane available. Road leading to left around lake will need closure. Perimeter trail needs pedestrian access.

3) Airport Road project: 2018-19.

4) Rock Creek Road in winter shutdown, but starting on lower area. Edison not pressing on underground electrical line under road, but not ruling out in future. Keep on radar after road installed and nicely paved.

Stump: If Edison attempts to cut up new road? Higerd: Move ahead with encroachment permit ordinance update that would evaluate as project with different mitigation measures having greater teeth.

Jeff Walters: BOS understood talk last year, changed mind. Higerd: Conflict because contractor was already working. Night work never evaluated. Eliminate night work, but cutting brand new road for 8 mi of 9-mi road is unacceptable to Mono, and Edison knows that. Edison said not this year, but maybe next year.

Johnston: Letters from LTC and BOS.

Hogan: Edison had opportunity to do half if a priority. Higerd: Still likely to delay contractor and cost FHWA more money. Many problems with way it started to transpire. Set clear guidelines so we're covered. Not first underground project (i.e., Digital 395).

Johnston: Alternative energy possibility? Higerd: Proponent for long time, but cost to place conduit in ground is so high, could get equipment.

Johnston: Invite point person to LTC. Serious amount of money involved.

--- **Commissioner Bacon departed at 11:23 a.m.** ---

Stump: Need new Edison person here. Get some kind of credit with state. Caltrans as expert consultant on ridiculousness to pave road and then cut it up.

Hogan: Work with USFS on Down Canyon trail project? Higerd: Yes.

Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) project: Regional project with Town to compete well. Buzz in Sacramento to fund projects where electric vehicles are catching on. Commission by CTC looking into it.

Johnston: Blobbed-on crack-sealing at Watterson Summit affects cycling. Better to squeegee it in. Jeff Walters: Will follow through. Maybe little device to smooth out crack-seal material was not used. Johnston: Chip-seal hated by cyclists – find something better. Higerd: Inyo chip-seal in Round Valley area used finer chips. Johnston: Vehicle tires wear it in, but treatment on shoulder never gets embedded.

C. **Caltrans:** Ryan Dermody noted State Highway Operation & Protection Program (SHOPP) is not just for safety, but many categories. District 9's SHOPP has been reduced from five years ago due to funding changes.

Stump: Left-turn lane at Chalfant? Dermody: *It is on the Planning list.* Conway Summit left-turn lane? Dermody: Yes.

Johnston: Received a speed limit response from Terry Erlwain. Crestview maintenance site not centroid, maybe find joint-use site such as Lee Vining. Green: Crestview is satellite, not centroid. Evolved in 1930s; considered consolidating mid-1990s, but cost was \$30 million. Intent is for Lee Vining to remain where it is. Hogan: USFS pushed to clean up site. Looks good now.

10. **INFORMATIONAL:** No items

11. **UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS:** 1) Head Start presentation; 2) letter to Edison on Rock Creek Road; 3) Edison rep to LTC; 4) Whittington presentation (summertime); 5) unmet needs resolution; 6) OWP adoption; 7) Stacey Simon on minutes policy; 8) ESTA audited financial statement.

12. **ADJOURN** at 11:38 a.m. to May 11, 2015

Prepared by C.D. Ritter, LTC secretary