



INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION



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Michael Errante, Executive Director

MINUTES

INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

On-line Only

February 16, 2022

9:00 a.m. Open Meeting

1. Roll Call
2. **Commissioners Present:**

Steven Muchovej
Doug Thompson
Jennifer Roeser
Celeste Berg
Jose Garcia
Rick Pucci

Others Present:

Michael Errante, Director
Justine Kokx, Staff
Phil Moores, ESTA
Deston Dishion, City of Bishop
Adam Weitzmann, Caltrans
Dennee Alcalá, Caltrans
Ryan Dermody, Caltrans
Kirsten Helton, Caltrans
Jeny Parks, IMAH
Marilyn Mann, Health & Human Services

3. Public Comment
None

ACTION ITEMS

4. Election of Officers - The LTC By-Laws state the Chair and Vice-Chair shall be nominated and then elected at the first meeting of the calendar year.

Commissioner Berg was nominated as Chair.

*Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Thompson and seconded by Commissioner Pucci. All in favor

Commissioner Thompson was nominated as Vice Chair.

*Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Pucci and seconded by Commissioner Roeser. All in favor.

5. Consent Agenda

- a. Request your Commission authorize future meetings during a state of emergency to be conducted virtually, in accordance with AB 361.
- b. Secretary of the Local Transportation Commission - Request approval of the minutes of the meeting of November 17, 2021.
- c. Secretary of the Local Transportation Commission - Request approval of the minutes of the special meeting of December 15, 2021.
- d. Secretary of the Local Transportation Commission - Request approval of the minutes of the special meeting of January 12, 2022.
- e. Secretary of the Local Transportation Commission - Request approval of the minutes of the special meeting of February 9, 2022.

Commissioner Thompson requested the Section #14 of the November minutes be revised to not reflect that he was part of the SNC grant.

*Motion to approve the Consent agenda with the proposed changes was made by Commissioner Roeser and seconded by Commissioner Berg. All in favor.

6. Receive invoice of Rural Planning Assistance funds for first quarter of Fiscal Year 2021-2022. Justine Kokx provided a brief summary of the Q1 RPA invoice. Majority of the \$58K was salaries and benefits due to early months of the fiscal year.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

7. ESTA Report

- ESTA FY2020-2021 Annual Report.

Phil Moores presented the ESTA Annual Report. ESTA is doing well despite the impacts of COVID during the prior year, one of the major services didn't run at all during the summer of 2020. Plans currently working on: Short Range Transit Plan, Coordinated Human Services Plan, Emissions Transition Plan. 10 new buses coming, new modern look coming as well. Looking into Micro transit system for Bishop similar to Uber, Lyft, using smart phone to track locations and arrival times of buses. Currently operating under a pure dispatch system, where you must call in, arrange a ride, bus locations unknown. Ridership was 57% down in FY2021, about 20% down now. Recovery will take about a year. Federal aid kept ESTA afloat. Ridership revenue accounts for about 20% of revenue. ESTA finished year strong and continues to be in a good position. Commissioner Thompson posed 2 questions: 1) Status of potential 7-day service between Reno and Lancaster. Phil replied that he is looking into utilizing existing grant to expand this service. Thinks that it's possible to fund. 2) Status of trailhead shuttle. Phil replied

that this could happen if the USFS were willing to partner with ESTA and take the lead, like the way they do for Red's Meadow. Without the restriction to Whitney Portal to the public, he believes people will just continue to drive. High up-front cost \$200k per vehicle. However, that partnership is not happening currently. Not impossible.

8. Tribal Report

None.

9. DVNP Report

None.

10. Caltrans Report

Quarterly report link provided in the chat

Ryan Dermody introduced himself and congratulated Chair Berg on her appointment. Talked about upcoming community-based pedestrian and bicycle related projects. He has been here over 20 years, and these projects are finally coming to fruition. Struggling with hiring, a lot of workload and resources, but lack of staff. Introduced Kirsten Helton as the Deputy District Director of Planning and Environmental for Caltrans D9. She has had a lot of experience with environmental processes. Kirsten Helton provided an update of recent Clean California Dump Days event in Bishop, had 135 vehicles pass through, 300 cubic yards. Very successful. Scheduling upcoming Dump Days in Independence and Lone Pine. Contact Mark Heckman if any questions. Two additional Clean California projects: 1) install lighting along Hwy 395 at Fort Independence, 2) Gateway monument in Independence along Hwy 395. The Olancha Cartago 4-Lane Project is heading into the 2-3rd week of construction. She has been involved with the project since the beginning. Chris Long, a landowner in Olancha requested more consistent information about the project from Caltrans, asked about the batch plant, traffic on Fall Rd. and suggested they update their website with information. Kirsten mentioned that the batch plant location was identified in the environmental document. Does anticipate traffic on Fall Rd., contractor is grading a new dirt road to access the batch plant. Kirsten agreed to update the website and get more information to the community. Denee anticipates 2-year construction project for Olancha Cartago.

11. City of Bishop Report

Deston Dishion reported continuing work with consultant and that the design kickoff meeting occurred for the E. Line Street Bridge project. Keeping project on an accelerated pace for construction by leveraging CRSSA funds in 2024.

12. Executive Director's Report

Mike Errante echoed Ryan's struggles with lack of staff. He provided various updates on County wide projects. North Round Valley Bridge has traction, all north piles are complete. By the end of next month all piles will be in, super structure work will begin. Anticipate completion by end of summer. Airport doing well. The numbers look good, Denver leg outpacing L.A. and S.F. East Coast visitors are outpacing "local" visitors. On the 26th of March flights will end.

Middle of June, back online. Not sure which leg will come back through September. Will stop in September and will restart three flights per day in December. Doug asked about summer service for through hikers. Mike replied summer will start in June, no date yet, don't even know which flight yet. Commissioner Muchovej asked if there was a plan for parking. He finds it challenging to decipher where to park with all the trailers and boats. Mike says gradually decreasing long term parking. Working on getting funds to improve the surface of the parking lot. Deston asked about a process for shuttle services. Ashley has put together an agreement, but no business license. Commissioner Roeser followed up, the intent of raising the parking rates was to help with parking issues. Asked about deplanement numbers. Mike thinks deplanement will get to 10,000 within a year, which triggers a \$1,000,000 entitlement. Flights to and from Denver are full. Carrol Creek and Walker bridge ROW certifications are in the works. Construction will begin in this spring and fall. We are behind on some capital improvement projects due to lack of staff. Appreciates all the cooperation between the agencies.

13. Reports from all members of the Inyo County LTC

- Commissioner Thompson – Sustainable Recreation Tourism Initiative Update.
*Commissioner Thompson reported that 2 out of the 8 SRTI projects are funded. The long trail between Alpine County and southern Inyo County is going to be interesting; all entities, all agencies will be involved, will be very complicated. The critical project is the Assets Inventory Gap Analysis. The more tourism we receive the more need will be for obtaining goods, but we don't capture a lot more money because we don't produce service items other than labor. If we could shift over to product development, so we have the resource, the more tourism that comes in, the more money can stay here. Livestock feasibility study withered on the vine. We can't even buy hamburger produced locally in the County because the packing must be done by licensed slaughterhouses. Closest is in Fallon NV. We have no large bakery, no egg producer, no produce, just means we import more products for tourists. The other SRTI project is a foundation for obtaining more grants. Before you can get grants you have to have this analysis. He's been following Build Back Better. A lot of money is coming. Fire and trails are going to be big, so are roads. Campground improvement projects money came in last year. A lot of these are going to be funded into 2023. First year is a buildup. Once money is available, the background information is going to be critical. Touching on Sierra Nevada Conservancy. We tried to promote it before it was even established. Governor Schwarzenegger came to Mammoth, and from that presentation it got funded at the state level at \$54 million. Six areas were established; we were called the Whitney area. We got \$1 million. Towards the end we picked up more, but now SNC is funding different projects. But somehow all of these projects are related to transportation. It took 20-30 years for the airport services to shift from Mammoth to Bishop. Shuttle services are the type of thing that will make the airport successful. Inyokern used to provide shuttle services to contractors into Ridgecrest. Thinks Bishop could use that same model. These things are happening, but it's a slow process. Keep them on the radar. Thank you.

*Commissioner Roeser appreciated all of Doug's good points. She brought up the Scenic Byways project also as a good project that needs funding. Agreed the Assets Inventory will be critical. Through the IJA she met a good contact at Build America Better. In

addition to their grant program, they are implementing a loan program for counties, non-profits, municipalities, & cities. Low-cost loans, 2% and up to 30-75 years. Can be used as matching funds for grants. Focusing on rural and under-served communities. Partnering with USDA Rural Development Agency. Prioritizes funding for transit routes that are struggling, & electrification of fleets. IJJA also includes investments in workforce development. Perhaps the Community Business Resource Center can use this, and/or partner with City and agencies for workforce development programs.

*Chair Berg expressed thanks for the Chair nomination to Commissioner Muchovej for his awesome facilitation of the meetings. Also, thanks to John and Justine for all the meeting preparation, and to all commissioners for their continued informative updates.

*Commissioner Muchovej thanked Commissioner Roeser for the update. It would be great to brainstorm how to make use of the availability of funding. Yes, a lot of fire funding, clearly not LTC, however, burying power lines as roads get improved could link LTC to fire funding. If we could get creative in that regard.

*Commissioner Roeser Excellent point. Attended a workshop inter-governmental affairs – EPA, USDA, USFA, FCC. Exactly what they are talking about, looking for creative ways to leverage funds for seemingly disconnected opportunities.

*Commissioner Thompson - Desert Mountain RC&D was complicated, 3 counties didn't want to apply. Recognized quickly there wasn't a lot of competition for these grants, so it was relatively easy. Once we do the package, a lot of the information just transfers onto the next grants, put a "cookbook" in place, just change the first page. Keep it straightforward, do what the grant wants. The process starts with these grants and foundation studies.

CORRESPONDENCE

Request Commission receives a letter encouraging Re-establishment of Regional Rail Service Within the Eastern Sierra Corridor.

*Commissioner Muchovej. Great idea, curious as to how the LTC can support these sorts of ideas. We must think big but also need to be pragmatic. There are a lot of other things on our plates.

*Chair Berg concurred. Any ideas?

*Commissioner Roeser spoke with a Railroad Transportation Administration representative. There is funding for railroad projects if for transportation purposes rather than for freight purposes. They are literally funding up to 90%. The first step is finding a rail line willing to take it on. We should respond by saying "this is a good idea, we will put it in our file." The railroad ROW still exists in south county. If a proponent or consortium wanted to find a rail line that would want to move forward that would be the first step.

*Commissioner Thompson supported a letter of support, although, he has been involved with rails to trails projects for a long time.

*Commissioner Roeser - The SRTI Alpine to Inyo trail was one of the topmost suggested ideas and was born of a desire to convert rails to trails.

ADJOURNMENT

*Commissioner Roeser motioned to adjourn and seconded by Chair Berg. All in favor.

Adjourned at 10:05 am until 9 a.m., Wednesday March 16, 2022