



INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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Michael Errante, Executive Director



MINUTES

INYO COUNTY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

On-line Only

All members of the public are encouraged to participate in the discussion of any items on the Agenda. Questions and comments will be accepted via e-mail to: jkokx@inyocounty.us. Any member of the public may also make comments during the scheduled "Public Comment" period on this agenda concerning any subject related to the Inyo County Local Transportation Commission. PUBLIC NOTICE: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Transportation Commission Secretary at (760) 878-0201. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the Inyo County Local Transportation Commission to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (28CFR 35. 102-35. ADA Title II).

January 18, 2023

9:01 a.m. Open Meeting

1. Introductions
2. Roll Call

Commissioners Present:

Stephen Muchovej
Celeste Berg
Doug Thompson
Jose Garcia
Jennifer Roeser
Scott Marcellin

Others Present:

John Pinckney Inyo County Public Works
Michael Errante Inyo County Public Works
Nora Gamino City of Bishop Public Works Director
Justine Kokx Inyo County Public Works
Neil Peacock Caltrans
Juven Alvarez Caltrans
Jill Tognazzini Caltrans
Catharine Crane Caltrans
Jenny Park IMAH

Adam Barnett USFS
Phil Moores ESTA Executive Director

3. Public Comment

No Comment

ACTION ITEMS

1. 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.

***Motion to nominate Celeste Berg as Chair was made by Commissioner Muchovej and seconded by Commissioner Roeser. All in favor.**

***Motion to nominate Doug Thompson as Vice-Chair was made by Commissioner Muchovej and seconded by Commissioner Roeser. All in favor.**

2. Consent Agenda

- a. Staff of the Local Transportation Commission - Request your Commission authorize the February 15th, 2023, meeting during a state of emergency to be conducted virtually, in accordance with AB 361.
- b. Staff of the Local Transportation Commission - Request approval of the minutes of the meeting of November 16, 2022.
- c. Staff of the Local Transportation Commission - Request approval of the minutes of the Special AB361 meeting of December 15, 2022.

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS

3. Adam Barnett Public Services Staff Officer of the US Forest Service, Inyo National Forest was available to discuss trailhead capacity and improvement issues with the LTC.

Commissioner Roeser asked Adam how the USFS is using deferred maintenance funding to address the overflowing parking problems, inefficient use of space and environmental concerns related to the parking along the sides of roads.

Adam talked about the Great American Outdoors act funding that is being used to renovate parking lots at potentially up to 40 trailheads. Yes, they are looking at designing the parking spaces more efficiently, but in general, parking will still be problematic during busy periods.

Commissioner Muchovej asked if there is a list of specific projects coming down the pipeline that will impact trailheads? Do you have priority lists? Adam replied, yes, and he will share this with the Commission.

Vice Chair Thompson brought up the complexity of trailhead capacity at Whitney Portal, Horseshoe Meadows due to the JMT and PCT hikers parking for several weeks. The issue is further complicated by 200 Whitney permits issued per day, and the locals wanting to enjoy a picnic; there's no parking on the weekends. There is a lack of transportation options to get to the trailheads.

Commissioner Muchovej added that ESTA has been providing some trailhead services, but does the Forest Service have any plans to get more involved in shuttle services?

Adam replied that the USFS has minimized bureaucratic barriers to private shuttle services. They have new traffic data as a part of the SCE hydropower relicense project, the 2013 alternative transportation plan is still valid and should be re-visited.

Commissioner Roeser appreciates the simplifying of the bureaucratic process, and asked if he knew of any resources that could help with increasing shuttle services. Adam referred to some small communities that have tackled the issue, see the City of Sedona and Aspen. These are affluent communities with access to funding, but the Federal Highway Administration might have some funding for alternative transportation.

Commissioner Roeser is super excited to see trailhead kiosk updates occurring.

Commissioner Muchovej asked about parking enforcement, who enforces overnight vs. day parking?

Adam replied that the USFS law enforcement is responsible for enforcement if there is adequate signage. Staffing is an issue, 2 million acres, and 2000 miles of roads.

Vice Chair Thompson brought up the parking signage at the Portal restricting parking day, overnight, 3 days, etc. That helped, but that signage is now gone. Need a whole package of shuttle services, seven days, up and down 395. This is needed to feed the whole local economy. Having limited cell service also complicates the logistics of using a shuttle service. Sometimes people arrive a day early or late, how do they get down. He tells them to hook up with another person coming off the trail.

Commissioner Roeser added that perhaps encouraging traffic to different trailheads could be an option, but some of the dirt trailheads are kind of a mess and need to be rehabbed.

Adam agreed, and mentioned that social media and the Instagram "craze" have been a powerful force in directing people one way or another. We're seeing this at Big Pine Creek, North Fork, and Big Pine Trailhead, for example.

Commissioner Muchovej asked does it fall under the purview of the Forest Service to address the horrible parking issues at the Buttermilk Country? Even five years ago, it was uncommon to see a couple of cars parked along the sides of the roads, now it looks like two lanes of parking on either sides of the brush. Is there an effort underway in conjunction with ESSRP to address the impacts?

Yes, great question. So, there's a mosaic of ownership in the Buttermilk area. The Forest Service is definitely part of it. But the BLM and DWP are also major landowners in the area. There is some funding that went to the SCOG, but its money provided originally by DWP for planning work in the Buttermilk area, recreation planning, and that are being used to replace the toilet at the Buttermilk area's major parking area there. So, there's definitely an interest among partners, including DWP to do recreation planning and the really the greater Buttermilk areas to address the increase and dispersed camping and climbing. They have received funds to initiate that planning work. They've been working on the toilet replacement part so far.

Commissioner Roeser asked if there are plans to improve the dirt parking lots at trailheads, for example, Shepherd's Pass?

Adam replied that right now, the initial scope had 10 paved trailheads, and 30 aggregates and 11 native surface lots. But things have changed in terms of what they can afford to do. They are prioritizing the most heavily used with the biggest issues, like Onion Valley.

Commissioner Muchovej pointed out that the road conditions to access the dirt trailheads are so bad that people are avoiding them at all cost, now.

Chair Berg also brought up the funding behind the climbing rangers (DWP and ECN), and the commonalities with the Forest Service in terms of infrastructure needs, and enforcement, everyone is spread thin.

4. Caltrans Presentation of Projects in Inyo County

Neil Peacock and Jill Tognazzi of Caltrans presented their upcoming project plans for Inyo County.

The presentation prompted many questions from the Commissioners regarding complete streets features along Line Street near Main Street, beautification components such as trees to enhance the pedestrian experience near the DMV, pedestrian crossings along North Sierra Highway and near Manor Market, the traffic rules for pedestrian hybrid beacons, and turn lanes at the golf course.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

5. FY2021-2022 City of Bishop Pavement Management Report

Justine summarized the fiscal year pavement management report for the City of Bishop. In a nutshell, the average PCI for the city is 52.5, which is in the Poor category.

Also included is a memo from the Rural Counties Task Force that quantifies the disparity between urban and rural counties in terms of the amount of funding and the condition of PCI. Rural counties fall far below in both categories. The memo also talks about the importance of utilizing the PCI data to prioritize pavement repair to save dollars in the long term.

Commissioner Muchovej asked for clarification on the graph that showed an example of a city that needed to spend \$38 million to "catch up" to an overall PCI of over 70. in the City's report.

Joh replied that it was included to illustrate the cost savings of focusing repair efforts away from a “worst first,” to a more proactive approach.

Commissioner Muchovej was curious about the PCI values in the other municipalities, such as Independence, Lone Pine, and Big Pine. Justine will provide the latest Pavement Management report for Inyo County to the Commissioners.

6. FY2022-2023 Q1 Overall Work Plan and Rural Planning Assistance invoice

Justine briefly described the first invoice of FY22-23. Right on track with RPA spending so far.

Commissioner Muchovej asked about the PPM funds, showing only 7% expended.

Justine replied that because the PPM funds are allowed to be spent within three years, and the RPA funding is only for the current year, we prioritize expending RPA first, then begin to dig into the PPM funding.

7. FY2020-2021 Financial Transactions Report

Vice Chair Thompson mentioned that the TEA funds are still not expended. Those funds should have gone to the City long ago for the Siebu to School project.

Justine will investigate it and work with Nora to figure out how to get these funds to the City.

8. ESTA Report

Phil provided a report on ESTA. November was a little better than October in terms of ridership. He is always a willing partner with the Forest Service to provide shuttle service to trailheads, however he is going to recommend discontinuing the Bishop Creek shuttle. Only 2 passengers per hour. Can't justify the cost.

Commissioner Roeser appreciates the situation and would like to look for ways to continue that operation. Wonders if promotions and outreach might help it be more effective. If we could help ESTA get information out there.

Commissioner Muchovej wonders if we're taking the wrong approach. Rather than targeting the PCT and Thru hikers, why not target the fishing guides. A more regular stream of people up to the Bishop Creek area, and on a daily basis.

Phil believes there are two issues. Red Meadow works because there's a restriction on automobiles, also people just tend to want their vehicles. The cost is high to run that type of operation, it's cheaper to drive a car, people don't care about crowded parking. It's a tough nut to crack, but it needs the Forest Service to commit to it.

Vice Chair Thompson said we need to get everybody at the table at the same time. Maybe the LTC could call everybody into one meeting, and have Phil present the issues. Only 5-day service along 395, we've limited that capacity. Can't be piecemeal, maybe get the businesses to put in money?

Phil said that's a TOT type of revenue, and it can be looked at. Phil is looking at weekend service. It's a high priority. Maybe next grant cycle. Willing to stick his neck out, and it's worth the risk.

Vice Chair Thompson brought up the high prices of shuttle service.

Commissioner Muchovej asked about the status of the Bishop facility.

Phil reported that the Master Lease agreement between Inyo County and DWP is holding up the building. Time sensitive, don't want to lose the funding due to expiration of grant.

Neil reminded that a letter of intent is a possible workaround for this problem.

Commissioner Roeser confirmed that this is being worked on. It is the number one negotiating issue between Inyo County and DWP.

9. Caltrans Report

- Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program

Catharine Crayne of Caltrans discussed the upcoming grant opportunity for planning, climate adaptation and strategic partnerships.

10. City of Bishop Report

Nora Gamino provided the update for the City of Bishop. East Line Bridge is moving forward, alternatives analysis this month. Public meetings will be held due to impacts when they go into construction. Working with Caltrans staff to find pavement and beautification funding to coincide with beautification program.

11. Tribal Report

12. DVNP Report

13. USFS Report

14. Executive Director's Report

- Tri County MOU Update

John Pinckney provided the update. We had a meeting in early January with the Tri-County MOU partners. The MOU was started in the late 1990's. The partnership leveraged their funding to secure state funding to use interregional (ITIP) funds to help fund 4-lane projects along the 395 and 14 corridors. A lot of success. The latest carbon neutral agenda driven by the CTC and CALSTA has led to an underfunding of the ITIP funds. Therefore, no more state funding for 4-lane projects. The most recent project to move forward is the Olancha-Cartago project. The MOU expired. The major concern of staff here is that Inyo County is in a negative balance due to prior circumstances whereby

Inyo and Mono fronted 100% of the Freeman Gulch phase I. Kern County has not reimbursed Inyo and Mono. Contrary to expectations based on previous experiences, the Kern County representative, Ahren Hakimi, was very interested and committed to making the two counties whole. This was surprising and great news. The means by which this happens is unclear at this point. Ahren's primary goal is to complete Highway 58 truck climbing lanes. Ahren pointed out during the meeting that funds from the ITIP have been diverted to the SHOPP funding and therefore, truck climbing lanes are SHOPP eligible. Caltrans Ryan Dermody reported that they have committed SHOPP funding to enhance safety on the remaining two sections of the Freeman Gulch project. It was brought up in the meeting that conversations with SANDAG, Southern California agencies, SCAG, San Bernardino COG, are needed to gain their support, given that their constituents are the ones being impacted by safety issues. Ahren will approach his southern CA contacts. It's a political process. As we go in to the 2024 RTIP and STIP process, it would be helpful if Commissioners get involved. Ahren also discussed ways to get the CTC to fund some of our projects. The problem is we don't have a lot of projects shovel ready for the RTIP because we have been so focused on the Olancho-Cartago project for 25 years. We have E. Line St Bridge, and a Lone Pine Town Streets, that's it right now. Need to identify new projects to include in the RTP update and in the RTIP.

Vice Chair Thompson asked if Kern County was willing to sign another MOU. How does the MOU priority work? Continue Freeman Gulch? The money we committed to SANBAG for study between 15 and 58.

No discussions of new MOU, just continuing conversations. Thinks the next MOU priority would be the Conway Summit truck passing lane. This was next in line. They are seeking TCEP funding. It's still somewhat hazy what funding will be used to pay Inyo back. Without the state committing ITIP funding, it's no way to fund these projects, and harder to subtract our balance from the project. Kern wants to approach the CTC to try to find some of our local projects or make us whole through "alternative" channels. Not sure how that works. Further conversations are needed.

Vice Chair Thompson asked what do we do, keep communication open with Kern County?

John believes that we need to prioritize projects for the RTIP. Even if the CTC can credit our negative balance, we would still be in the red. Approx. \$10 million in the negative. If CTC insists that we move forward with the neg. balance through projects, we don't have any projects ready for a PSR.

Vice Chair Thompson mentioned how incredible it is that most of the 4 lane projects have occurred thanks to the MOUs.

John emphasized the need to transfer State Line Road to Caltrans after the FLAP grant project is completed.

Neil offered to help provide input and assistance on the RTIP by means of a special workshop.

15. Reports from all members of the Inyo County LTC

Commissioner Muchovej asked the group if there can be a discussion of changing the meeting time to 8:00 a.m. Will agendaize a discussion the next meeting.

Commissioner Muchovej asked about plans to grade the various dirt roads such as Fish Slough after the storms.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned until 9 a.m., Wednesday February 15, 2023

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

- California Road Charge Program and Pilot Project
- Social Services Transit Advisory Committee meeting and Unmet Needs meeting & public hearing
- FY2023-2024 Draft Overall Work Program due March 1st
- FY2023-2024 LTF and STA allocations estimates due March 1st
- RTP and ATP project prioritization
- MOU and negotiations Inyo County LTC, Mono County LTC, and Kern Cog