



FY 2023-24

Unmet Transit Needs

Guidelines



San Joaquin Council of Governments

SAN JOAQUIN COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS
FY 2023–24
UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS GUIDELINES

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A. THE UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Mills-Alquist-Deddeh Act (SB 325) was enacted by the California Legislature to improve existing public transportation services and encourage regional transportation coordination. Known as the Transportation Development Act (TDA) of 1971, this law provides funding to be allocated to transit and non-transit related purposes that comply with regional transportation plans.

Public participation is a key component of TDA. Public meetings are held to discuss transportation needs and hear concerns. Pursuant to Public Utilizes Code 99238, Regional planning agencies are required to establish Social Service Transportation Advisory Councils (SSTAC), comprised of the transit-dependent, including disabled, elderly, and low-income representatives. SSTAC members work with local agencies in developing transit unmet needs criteria, which are used in making project approval decisions.

Additionally, the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG), as the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) determines the amount of TDA funds, including Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA) funds, available for TDA claimants. TDA claimants that are eligible for allocations include the cities of Escalon, Lathrop, Lodi, Manteca, Ripon, Stockton, and Tracy, the County of San Joaquin, the San Joaquin Regional Transit District (RTD), the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC), and the region's consolidated transportation service agency (CTSA), ACCESS San Joaquin (ASJ). Prior to disbursing these Transportation Development Act funds, SJCOG must identify any unmet public transit needs that may exist in San Joaquin County. The Unmet Transit Needs (UTN) assessment is developed to ensure that all unmet transit needs that are "reasonable to meet" are met before funds are expended for non-transit uses, such as streets and roads.

B. UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS DEFINITION

The SJCOG Board approved the following definition for an 'Unmet Transit Need' in February 2018:

Unmet Transit Needs are those trips required but not currently provided within San Joaquin County for residents who use or would use public transportation to meet their life expectations (school, work, shopping, errands, recreation, etc.).

C. REASONABLE TO MEET DEFINITION

In 2018 the SJCOG Board approved certain criteria to define the meaning of Reasonable to Meet as it pertains to an Unmet Transit Need.

The following items are the proposed UTN ‘reasonable to meet’ criteria. Representatives from various social service agencies, along with input from transit operators, developed the framework of these criteria. The SSTAC presumed that this modified version would better serve the transit-dependent community. UTN public comments are measured against the ‘UTN Reasonable To Meet’ criteria to determine if they are reasonable to meet. The criteria are:

1. **Equity:** The proposed UTN increases equity for transit-dependent populations, older individuals, persons with disabilities, and populations identified by Title VI.
2. **Operational Feasibility:** The system can be implemented safely and in accordance with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
3. **Ridership Potential:** The proposed transit service will meet ridership potential metrics, as defined by the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC).
4. **Cost Effectiveness:** The proposed UTN will not affect the ability of the overall system of the implementing agency or agencies to meet the applicable transit systems performance objectives or the state farebox ratio requirement after an exemption period, if the service is eligible for the exemption.
5. **Funding:** The proposed service would not cause the claimant to incur expenses in excess of the maximum allocation of all TDA (LTF and STA) funds.

These criteria are in priority order, and each comment will be reviewed using the criteria in the order of priority.

If a transit agency submits unmet transit need(s) and identifies those as reasonable to meet, then those unmet needs do not need to be reviewed by SJCOG staff pursuant to Section D. UTN Comment Review Process. The UTNs will still be presented to the SSTAC for comments and/or discussion.

D. UTN COMMENT REVIEW PROCESS

To determine whether an unmet transit need is reasonable to meet, SJCOG staff will perform the following criteria evaluation, and present their recommendations to the SSTAC. The SSTAC will review the comments, provide feedback to staff recommendations, and then vote on a recommendation to send to the SJCOG Board.

1. **Equity:** To meet the Equity Criteria, the origin or destination of the proposed service must lie within areas prioritized through the use of census data, and the following statewide and regional resources:
 - SB 535, CA Office of Health Hazard Assessment Disadvantaged Communities’ Map
 - AB 1550, California Air Resources Board Low-Income Communities’ Map.
 - Environmental Justice Communities as defined by SJCOG’s 2022 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategies (RTP/SCS)

(Figure 5.3)

- SB 743, High Quality Transit Areas as identified in SJCOG’s 2022 RTP/SCS (Appendix W)

2. **Operational Feasibility:** To meet the Operation Feasibility Criteria all local, state, and federal laws and regulations have been considered.
3. **Ridership Potential:** To meet the Ridership Potential Criteria, the following demographic categories will be mapped. The maps will display census tracts with highest density for each demographic metric in the county. The maps will display the most up-to-date census data.
 - a. Older individuals (65yrs and up)
 - b. People with Disabilities
 - c. Poverty
 - d. Youth (17yrs and below)
 - e. High Transit Dependent Ethnic Groups
 - f. Households with No Vehicles
 - g. Foreign Born

These maps will be used by SJCOG staff to evaluate the UTNs during this portion of the assessment process.

A UTN origin or destination must be within a high-density census tract for 5 of the 7 maps to meet the Ridership Potential Criteria.

This process will be utilized until the SSTAC identifies a new approach or program.

4. **Cost Effectiveness:** To determine the Cost-Effectiveness Criteria, SJCOG will coordinate with the transit operators when reviewing the comments and refer to the most current SJCOG Board adopted Transit System Performance Objectives, or the state farebox recovery ratio, for consideration.
5. **Funding:** To determine the Funding Criteria, this will depend on the jurisdiction of the unmet transit need comment. If the jurisdiction uses LTF for streets and roads, then some or all of that LTF could be allocated to transit to meet the unmet transit need. If 100% of an agency’s LTF is already allocated to transit, and the unmet transit need pertaining to that jurisdiction meets all other “Reasonable to Meet” criteria, then SJCOG staff would still propose the unmet transit need is “Reasonable to Meet,” even though there is no funding available to support it.

RTD uses 100% of LTF for transit. The Funding criterion does not impact the determination of reasonable to meet unmet transit needs for RTD.

An unmet transit need that meets the definition of unmet transit needs and meets all five (5) criteria (at least four (4) for agencies that already allocate 100% to transit), shall be considered reasonable to meet.

E. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

All unmet transit needs will be placed on a two-year list found on the SJCOG website. This list would be a reference for stakeholders and decision-makers seeking additional funding. This list would also be revisited every assessment cycle prior to reviewing any new comments. Comments would be displayed on the list for two years.

If a UTN is recommended by the SSTAC and found to be 'reasonable to meet' by the SJCOG Board, the affected claimant(s), with respect to their own capacity constraints, will present a new proposed service to the SSTAC prior to implementation of the new service.

A claimant with any available TDA funds, including LTF funds being used for non-transit purposes, will use those funds to pay for the new service.

A claimant that already uses 100% of their TDA funds on an existing service will analyze the cost of the proposed service. The agency will inform the SSTAC of its research prior to the end of the calendar year. If the agency was not able to identify any non-TDA funds, then that information will be reported as an information item to the SSTAC.

When a proposed service crosses multiple jurisdictions, SJCOG will work as a convener and facilitator with the affected claimants to determine the funding split on a case-by-case basis.

F. EVALUATION PERIOD

The SSTAC will put in place performance metrics identified in PUC 99246(d) and defined in PUC 99247 to evaluate a service implemented through the UTN process for a period of time.

The evaluation period will last no more than 3 years from the implementation of the service

The SSTAC may request performance updates from the service provider of the UTN service at least annually.

The SSTAC will be informed about any changes to the UTN service as an information item from the operator prior to the changes being made.

Upon completion of the 3-year evaluation period, if the new service meets the performance measures, the SSTAC will cease to monitor the service and inform the SJCOG Board of the successful service.

G. UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

To meet PUC 99401.5 (b), SJCOG staff will draft an annual UTN Assessment Report to capture and publish the analysis that was conducted. The report will identify the transit needs of the local jurisdictions, and will include the size and location of identifiable groups likely to be transit-dependent or transit disadvantaged, including, but not limited to, older individuals, people with disabilities, including individuals eligible for paratransit, and other special transportation services pursuant to Section 12143 of Title 42 of the United States Code, the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 12101 et seq.), and persons of limited means, including, but not limited to, recipients under the CalWORKs program. The report will also depict an analysis of the adequacy of existing public transportation services and specialized transportation services, including privately and publicly provided services, prepared pursuant to Section 12143(c)(7) of Title 42 of the United States Code, in meeting the transit demand of the identifiable groups, and an analysis of the potential alternative public transportation and specialized transportation services and service improvements that would meet all or part of the transit demand.

Lastly, upon a request by an interested party identifying a potential need to the transportation planning agency, the report will provide an analysis of the need to acquire or lease vans and related equipment for a farmworker vanpool program pursuant to subdivision (f) of Section 99400.

H. UNMET TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE

UTN Assessment Timeline	Tentative Date
Review UTN Guidelines	August
UTN Public Outreach Plan	September
SJCOG holds public outreach and hearings to collect feedback	October – December
SJCOG staff and SSTAC analyze UTN public comments	January – March
SJCOG Board reviews and adopt findings	April – May
SJCOG forward UTN findings to Caltrans / work with transit operators on any UTNs found ‘Reasonable To Meet’	June