

**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA
BOARD WORKSHOP**

FRIDAY

9:03 A.M.

March 14, 2025

PRESENT:

Board & Commissioners

Alexis Hill, Washoe County Commissioner, Chair

Devon Reese, Reno Councilman, Vice Chair

Ed Lawson, Mayor of Sparks

Mariluz Garcia, Washoe County Commissioner

Hillary Schieve, Mayor of Reno

Bill Thomas, RTC Executive Director

Adam Spear, Legal Counsel

Tracy Larkin Thomason, Director of NDOT

RTC Staff

Dale Keller, Deputy Executive Director/Director of Engineering

Christian Schonlau, Director of Finance/CFO

Laura Freed, Director of Administrative Services

James Gee, Director of Public Transportation/Operations

Vanessa Lacer, Director of Planning

Sai Sun, Transit Planner, Presenter

Alex Cruz, Senior Technical Transit Operations Planner, Presenter

The annual Board Workshop meeting was held at the Reno Sparks Convention Center, Rooms A1/A6, 4590 S. Virginia Street, Reno, and was called to order by Chair Hill.

**NO ACTION WAS TAKEN AT THIS WORKSHOP
EXCEPT TO APPROVE THE AGENDA, CONSENT ITEMS AND TO ADJOURN**

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Roll Call

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Hill opened the meeting to public input and called on anyone wishing to speak on topics relevant to the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) that are not included in the current agenda. There being no one wishing to speak, Chair Hill moved to Approval of Agenda.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On motion of Vice Chair Reese, seconded by Commissioner Schieve, which motion unanimously carried, Chair Hill ordered that the agenda for this meeting be approved.

4. CONSENT ITEMS

4.1 Executive

4.1.1 Authorize the Executive Director to submit Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) and Community Project Funding (CPF) funding requests that are focused on neighborhoods where local streets need rehabilitation. *(For Possible Action)*

4.2 Public Transportation

4.2.1 Approve an Interlocal Contract Agreement with State of Nevada, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Health Care Financing and Policy (DHCFP/Medicaid) for reimbursement to the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) for completing paratransit eligibility evaluations for eligible Medicaid recipients as outlined in the ADA regulations of the Federal Transit Administration for an estimated not to exceed amount of \$132,836.15. *(For Possible Action)*

On motion of Vice Chair Reese, seconded by Commissioner Garcia, which motion unanimously carried, Chair Hill ordered that the consent items for this meeting be approved.

5. WORKSHOP *(No Action Will be Taken at this Workshop)*

The purpose of the workshop is to discuss and possibly give general direction regarding policy and strategic objectives of the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County for the current Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026, which may include, but not be limited to presentations, review, discussion and possible direction to the Executive Director and staff regarding the following topics.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation Operations and Bus Stop Improvement Plan

Discussion focused on the achievements and future plans of the RTC, particularly in improving customer service and ridership. Key points included the successful marketing campaigns targeting specific demographics, such as Spanish-speaking populations and college students, which resulted in increased ridership and reduced complaints. The importance of addressing the disconnect between contractors and employees was highlighted, with efforts made to improve communication and trust.

The presentation also covered the bus stop improvement program, emphasizing the need for ADA compliance, sight impaired improvements and the prioritization of bus stops based on ridership and community needs.

Discussion revolved around the improvements made to bus stops in the region. Over the past five years, 97 bus stops were upgraded, focusing on accessibility and user amenities such as wider concrete pads, improved crosswalks, and better lighting. In 2025, 18 additional bus stops will receive enhancements, including shelters and benches, based on ridership and community needs. The importance of ADA compliance was emphasized, with 60% of stops meeting standards, while addressing the remaining that lack designated boarding areas. Budget considerations were discussed, particularly regarding the cost of retrofitting less-used stops versus enhancing amenities at more popular locations. The conversation highlights the challenges of property rights and community engagement in the planning process, as well as the need for careful prioritization of projects based on ridership and accessibility.

Free Fares for Students

The board discussed the potential for free bus rides for students, recognizing the importance of providing access to transportation for those facing barriers, particularly in light of chronic absenteeism in schools. The collaboration between RTC and the Washoe County School District was seen as a positive step towards addressing these issues and enhancing community engagement.

Adam Searcy, COO Washoe County School District, addressed chronic absenteeism. He highlighted the importance of analyzing data to identify students with poor attendance and the need for multifaceted solutions, including public engagement and in-home visits. Searcy emphasized the role of transportation in ensuring students can attend school, mentioning recent efforts to reduce walk zones and provide free transportation. He discusses a potential partnership with RTC to improve access to public transportation for students, which could enhance their educational experience and community engagement. Excitement was expressed about the project, noting its potential to build ridership and serve community needs, particularly for students during the summer. It was proposed to use the TRANSIT App to provide free passes for students, ensuring access to transportation year-round.

TOPS Program

Discussion revolved around the development of the TOPS plan, which aims to comprehensively evaluate and enhance the transit services offered by RTC. The plan will assess various services, including fixed routes, micro transit, paratransit, and senior services, while also considering peer reviews to understand RTC's standing compared to other transit services. The process will involve a thorough review of existing services, gathering feedback from customers, and identifying areas for improvement, particularly in technology and financial forecasting. The timeline for the plan's development is set to span from April 2025 to March 2026, with an emphasis on collaboration with stakeholders throughout the process.

As the TOPS plan progresses, there will be a focus on reevaluating routes that may have been eliminated in the past, especially in growing districts. Stakeholders are encouraged to provide input to ensure that the reviews address current needs rather than relying on outdated assumptions. The importance of gathering feedback from various community members was highlighted, as it will inform the decision-making process and help shape the future of transit services. The discussion also touched on the need for a holistic view of transit services, particularly in relation to senior services and technology advancements in fare payment systems.

Additionally, the conversation emphasized the need for ongoing communication with the Board throughout the year-long planning process. There will be multiple touchpoints to ensure that the consultant receives direct input from the community regarding route needs and service improvements. The North Valleys area was specifically mentioned as a priority for review, given its diverse audience with conflicting transit needs. Overall, the discussion underscored the collaborative effort required to create an effective and responsive transit plan.

Takeaways for staff from the Planning for the Future of Public Transportation discussions was to identify a reasonable budget and timeline to complete the remaining 5% of bus stop improvements, continue collaborating with the School District to roll out the free fares for students program on RIDE, and move forward with the TOPS planning process using a holistic approach.

AUTHORIZED USES OF FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES

Financial Sustainability

The complexities of managing the financial status of RTC was discussed, emphasizing the unique funding available to each of their organizations. RTC's funding is limited and dependent on sales tax, fuel tax, and federal sources, with no independent authority to increase fees or taxes. The financial forecast was based on available revenues and funding sources, with a focus on fiscal conservatism to avoid overextending resources. The uncertainty in financial planning was acknowledged, particularly regarding federal programs and their funding reliability.

During the discussion, several successful projects funded through discretionary awards were highlighted, including the Arlington Avenue Bridges and the Lemon Drive Resiliency Project. RTC has been proactive in seeking competitive grants, such as the Sixth Street for All Grant, which aims to improve safety for a variety of road users. The funding for these projects often comes from a combination of federal and local sources, showcasing RTC's ability to leverage multiple funding streams to complete essential infrastructure improvements.

RTC relies on various formulary funds for its operations, including CMAC and STBG funds, which support multimodal projects and pedestrian networks. The Finance Director explained the different funding buckets available for transit and highway programs, emphasizing the importance of maximizing matching ratios for federal funding. Despite the challenges and uncertainties surrounding future funding allocations, RTC remains committed to securing necessary resources for its transit services and planning initiatives.

Concerns regarding federal funding for surface transportation projects, particularly in light of potential budget cuts, was discussed. We have not heard any direct confirmation of these cuts but acknowledge the importance of these funds for significant projects like the Spark Boulevard project, which relies on approximately \$57 million in accumulated STBG funds. The conversation highlighted the need to advocate for these funding sources, especially during events like the AMPO conference, where discussions about federal revenue were prominent.

Takeaways for staff from the Authorized Uses of Federal, State, and Local Funding Sources discussions was to continue advocating for consistent formula funding and to proactively pursue an EV parity funding mechanism in the 2027 Legislative Session by building community support in the interim.

OVERVIEW OF RTC ADMINISTERED ROADWAY PROGRAMS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES FOR PROJECT SELECTION

Pavement Preservation Program

There was discussion regarding the Pavement Preservation Program, which has evolved from its original designation as the Regional Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program. The program was initiated in response to the 2005 Washoe County Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations on maintaining regional assets. Over the past 20 years, the program has adapted to changing circumstances, including funding challenges and the need for a systematic approach to prioritize road maintenance based on roadway classification and usage. The speakers emphasize the importance of

maintaining roads efficiently, highlighting that preventative measures like slurry sealing are significantly more cost-effective than extensive repairs.

Concerns were raised about the pressures to expand the scope of preservation projects to include additional features such as bike facilities and traffic signals. While these enhancements are valuable, they detract from the primary goal of maintaining asphalt quality. It was stressed that if preservation projects are transformed into larger construction projects, it could lead to a reduction in the number of roads that can be effectively maintained, ultimately resulting in a deterioration of road conditions and increased public dissatisfaction.

Collaboration with local government staff is necessary to clarify the role of the RTC in road maintenance and to establish priorities for funding. The Board acknowledged the challenges of balancing community needs with available resources, emphasizing that decisions must be made based on the broader impact on traffic and community benefit. The discussion concluded with a commitment to reevaluate the program's direction and ensure that pavement preservation remains focused on its original intent, while also considering the evolving needs of the community.

TOMS

Traffic Operations and Management (TOMS) highlights the management and maintenance of over 400 traffic signals in the region. This presentation emphasized the collaboration with the University of Nevada, Reno, to identify traffic issues and develop solutions while maintaining local control. The Traffic Operations and Management Group was established in 2009 to prioritize projects and optimize funding, initially starting with a limited budget of \$1 million per year. Over time, the program has evolved to address capacity needs based on new developments and has grown to a budget of approximately \$10 million, incorporating advanced technology and data analysis to improve traffic flow. There have been positive outcomes, such as improved signal timing leading to smoother traffic movement, and a desire for better regional coordination among jurisdictions to enhance the overall efficiency of the traffic system.

UPWP

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) outlines the agency's work plan for the next two years. This federal document is updated biennially and aligns with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The UPWP includes a detailed list of tasks, staff hours, and budget allocations, ensuring that the agency's goals and community needs are met. A new feature this year is the formalization of a call for projects through an application process, aimed at improving decision-making and aligning selected projects with agency and community goals.

Neighborhood Network Plans

This conversation highlighted the agency's commitment to a multimodal approach in transportation planning, which encompasses various modes such as walking, biking, and public transit. This approach is integrated into all aspects of the agency's work, from engineering to project design. The planning team is focusing on specific projects like bike and pedestrian plans, ensuring that infrastructure supports multimodal access. The Active Transportation Plan, adopted in September, emphasizes neighborhood network plans to encourage active transportation for short trips, aiming to reduce car dependency in local areas.

Additionally, the discussion touched on the implementation of quick build techniques for transportation improvements, allowing for rapid installation of semi-permanent and temporary solutions. This method enables the agency to test improvements quickly and gather data on their effectiveness before making permanent changes. By assessing the impact of these installations, the agency aims to ensure that the improvements genuinely facilitate active transportation and meet community needs.

Truckee River Path

The discussion focused on an update regarding the multimodal planning work for the Truckee River path. The team, directed by the Strategic Roadmap, conducted a site analysis over the summer, involving two interns who assessed the 11.1-mile corridor. They collected data on pavement condition, width, slope, and amenities, which will be compiled into a final report to be presented in June. The analysis also compared the corridor's conditions to federal standards for multi-use paths. Questions were welcomed, and there was interest in presenting the findings to the local City Councils and County Commissions.

The discussion revolved around the upcoming presentation in June regarding the classification of a corridor as either a transportation or recreational corridor. The distinction is significant as it affects funding sources and design standards. If designated as a transportation corridor, it would require uniformity and consistency across the system, unlike recreational paths which can vary by jurisdiction. The implementation would likely occur in incremental phases, with specific projects tied to private development, flood management, or road improvements. It is important to have a grand plan while acknowledging the challenges of securing funding for a complete project at once, suggesting that progress will be made as opportunities arise.

Takeaways for staff from the Overview of RTC Administered Roadway Programs and Decision-Making Processes for Project Selection discussions was for RTC to begin leading conversations around the Truckee River as a transportation corridor—serving as a project manager coordinating the many components, but not as the primary funder—and to continue advancing the Neighborhood Network Plans, particularly focusing on quick-build techniques and data-driven decision-making following their installation.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Hill opened the meeting to public input and called on anyone wishing to speak on topics relevant to the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) that are not included in the current agenda. There being no one wishing to speak, Chair Hill moved to Adjournment.

7. ADJOURNMENT (*For Possible Action*)

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.



ALEXIS HILL, Chair
Regional Transportation Commission

Presentation copies are available upon request. Contact mkraus@rtcwashoe.com.