



March 15th, 2021
Attn: Brenda Veenendaal
Fresno COG
2035 Tulare Street, Ste. 201
Fresno, CA 93721

Submitted via Email

RE: Fresno County Unmet Transit Needs Assessment 2021

To the Fresno Council of Governments (COG):

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments for the 2021 Unmet Transit Needs Assessment (UTN). Leadership Counsel works alongside the most impacted communities advocating for sound policy to eradicate injustice and secure equal access to opportunity regardless of wealth, race, income, and place. We work beside community leaders throughout the San Joaquin Valley on various issues including essential transportation services and equitable investments in transportation.

The UTN Assessment is a key opportunity to help communities close the gap towards access and inequities in the County of Fresno. Many residents lack access to a vehicle which makes public transportation their only source of moving around the city. Since public transit policies and access have a long history of discrimination and segregation, we must actively work against the implicit racist and prejudicial patterns embedded in the current structure. Achieving a just and equitable transit system cannot be done without the very same groups who are discriminated against being active partners, driving the solutions for their communities.

As such, we have provided the following project list resulting from discussions with BIPOC residents throughout the county for the 2021 Unmet Transportation Needs to improve their communities and quality of life:

→ Expanding and Institutionalizing Electric Rideshare Programs for Rural and Isolated Communities:

- ◆ Fresno County Rural Transportation Agency (FCRTA) has put forth community-driven rideshare programs to address the specific transportation needs of the region's rural and isolated communities. There are few smaller cities and communities, like Cantua Creek, that already have an electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, and FCRTA is working diligently to ensure a reliable grid for all-electric fleets. We urge FCOG to fund innovative, resilient, and sustainable projects, like those created by FCRTA, to continue to adequately address rural



transportation infrastructure issues. A rideshare program in communities such as Lanare and Cantua is a project which could address these issues. Biola and Westpark have successfully implemented this project through the Unmet Transit Needs funding and should be expanded to more rural communities.

→ **Better Transit Access In the City of Fresno West of Highway 99:**

- ◆ Extending the Bus Rapid Transit along California Avenue into West Fresno. In the short-term, Route #28 needs to pass by with more frequency along California Ave.
- ◆ Reliable and efficient transit stops/access on Route #35 towards Addams Elementary. Currently, the bus passes by every 30 to 40 minutes making it difficult for children and parents to get to school on time. This should be reduced to a 15-minute frequency. This should also include safe routes to the bus stop on both sides of Floradora and Hughes Avenues.
- ◆ Reliable and efficient transit stops and access near the Three Palms Mobile Home Park. This could be done by expanding Route #20. We also ask there be a commitment from FAX to implement the mobility option that results out of the Clean Mobility Options Grant for the 2022-2023 budget.
- ◆ Efficient transit connections from Addams Elementary to Gaston Middle School by extending service on Church Avenue and Hughes Avenue.

→ **Better Connectivity From Southeast and Southwest Fresno to Northeast Fresno**

- ◆ Extending the Bus Rapid Transit along McKinley Avenue.
- ◆ Adding stops/access along Church Avenue.

→ **Prioritization of Active Transportation Projects in DUCs/DACs**

- ◆ Ensure that sidewalks, bike lanes, curb, and gutter projects are funded in areas that do not have the existing pedestrian infrastructure. In addition, FCOG should work in conjunction with Fresno County to ensure that communities who reported flooding in the SB 244 analysis are prioritized.

Furthermore, once the unmet needs that are “reasonable to meet” are prioritized and funded, then Fresno COG can move forward to funding non-transit needs such as streets and roads. The following is a list of projects for those priorities:

- Repave East Central Avenue between Cherry Avenue and Chestnut Avenue.
- Protected bike lanes and complete sidewalks along Cedar Avenue from Jensen Avenue near Calwa Elementary towards Tulare Avenue at Roosevelt High.



- Complete sidewalks and bike lanes leading to Addams Elementary. This includes sidewalks along Marks Avenue from Olive to Clinton Avenues, especially on the east side of Marks.
- Complete streets project on East Central Avenue between Cherry Avenue and Chestnut Avenue so they are safer for pedestrians and bicycle riders.
- Protected bike lanes or separated trails on rural corridors for safe travel for cyclists, specifically in Lanare, Three Rock, Riverdale, and Cantua Creek.
- The intersection of North Avenue and Elm Avenue need completed sidewalks on all four corners to connect all directions of travel for pedestrians and bicyclists, including southbound Elm Avenue where the sidewalks abruptly end.
- Leveling and paving Britten Avenue along Cherry Avenue.
- Safe routes to school leading to Cantua Creek Elementary.

Conclusion:

The Transportation Development Act in Article 3 Section 99238.5 of the California Public Utilities Code requires that the transportation planning agency “solicit the input of transit dependent and transit disadvantaged persons”. Cal. Pub. Util. Code § 99238.5. Thus, clearly identifying the needs of the elderly, disabled, and residents of limited means for the UTN Assessments is mandated by law and must be complied with. Furthermore, as Article 8 Section 99401.5 of the California Public Utilities Code states “the fact that an identified transit need cannot be fully met based on available resources shall not be the sole reason for finding that a transit need is not reasonable to meet.” Hence, the projects listed above should not be classified unreasonable to meet merely due to lack of resources.

We thank you once again for the opportunity to submit public comments. We hope our recommendations are considered and look forward to a better connected County of Fresno. If any questions arise, do not hesitate to contact me at kmartinez@leadershipcounsel.org.

Sincerely,

Karla Martinez

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability