

## **Nevada County Transportation Commission meeting – November 8, 2023**

### Draft Allocation Plan for Senate Bill 125 Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program / Zero Emission Transit Capital Program

Presentation by NCTC Deputy Executive Director Aaron Hoyt

Aaron Hoyt:

What we're presenting to you today is a draft list of projects for inclusion in the initial allocation plan for Senate Bill (SB) 125 funding. This initial allocation plan is due to the California State Transportation Agency, otherwise also known as CalSTA, by December 31st. Given our timing of meetings and the quick deadline that was impressed upon us by Senate Bill 125, we'll be working on this with the Town of Truckee and Nevada County for submittal in December. We are presenting an overview of the program, the funding and the projects that are being considered.

Senate Bill 125 was amended into the Budget Act of California in 2023. It created a new one-time funding source for transit funding. This really stemmed from the impacts that we are still seeing in the transit industry during the Covid pandemic, when people stopped traveling to work and stopped using transit as frequently, reducing ridership. Reduced ridership decreases the amount of passenger fares that those transit operators receive, so it continues to create some issues. We have not seen transit services in Nevada County having significantly prolonged impacts as some of our counterparts in the bigger metropolitan areas, so we haven't seen as severe needs for cuts as some of these other agencies have. But this is where this funding stemmed from.

Statewide, approximately \$5.1 billion has been made available from a variety of different fund sources controlled by the state. \$12.3 million of that \$5.1 billion is coming back to Nevada County, and the funds are distributed to Nevada County Transportation Commission and other regional transportation planning agencies based on formulas that have been set and are used for other existing programs. Within SB 125, there are two programs that will distribute funds that the Town of Truckee and Nevada County can apply for. One is through the existing Transit Inner City Rail Capital Program, otherwise known as TIRCP. The other is the Zero Emission Transit Capital Program. This is a new program that enables transit agencies and regions to transition their vehicle fleet over to zero emission buses.

To access the funding, we will need to submit an initial allocation plan by December 31st. Then as part of this initial allocation plan, it must include a financial plan, a background of transit services, any hardships that have been seen, and identify the projects. Our initial allocation plan that we're going to submit to CalSTA will focus just on one year's worth of funding. We'll be coming back to you at later points in time with additional funds that will be requested.

What you see here on the slide is our initial program of projects. We began talking with Nevada County and Town of Truckee back in August about the guidelines and what kind of comments we should submit to help fine tune these guidelines we're required to follow by using this funding. At that point in time, we had actually identified over \$85 million in needs for primarily transit capital. This is really related to the conversion to zero emission vehicles and buses on the transit fleet just alone. So, with that \$85 million, we realized we can't fund it all. Working with the local agencies, they identified their priority projects that come from their transit development plans that are existing, their innovative clean transit plans that identify how and what vehicle fleets they would actually transition over to zero emission vehicles with the infrastructure needed and other capital infrastructure projects they have to support their existing transit services.

We've whittled down a long list of projects that are identified both by the Town of Truckee and Nevada County. Also, you'll see on the second slide here, it actually identifies Transit Program Administration for NCTC allowed within the guidelines is that 1% of the funding may come back to the Regional Transportation Planning Agency to administer the program. These funds are going to be used towards our annual audits that we have to expand upon to show the money coming in, and how it's used to coordinate with them on annual reporting. Also, we're required by 2026 to submit a long-term financial

transit plan that identifies what are the transit funding needs we're going to need in the foreseeable future, any shortfalls that we may see, et cetera. So, we'll likely look at potentially hiring someone to assist us with that long-term financial analysis.

We worked to really identify what our initial needs are, recognizing that CalSTA will allow us to amend our plan at any point in time, and recognizing that we've only had really a few months to coalesce around a set of projects that are known to each of the agencies. So, we wanted to focus just on those projects that we can see funding in Fiscal Year 2023/24, maybe bleeding over to 2024/25. We don't have to request all \$12.3 million upfront. It does provide us some flexibility should policy discussions change. I know that in the Town of Truckee, you can see on the program of projects, it's listed there for expanding the connect on-demand service. So, this is a current discussion going on within the Town of Truckee of how might they fund ongoing citywide on-demand service or micro transit service.

In talking with staff, there might be an opportunity for some of this funding from SB 125 to help fund that into the future. So that's included, but we did not want to preclude any discussions the council may have in the future on it. So that's on here just illustrative to share what we're considering and what the agencies are considering. Not to say that all these projects will be funded because there's some flexibility in this, but what I do want to point you to is on Table Three. Table Three is the projects that we're looking at requesting funding for in this fiscal year. This would include the Public Service Center for the transit facility expansion in the Town of Truckee. It would include the fixed route and para transit CAD. Remind me Robin of the acronym?

Robin Van Valkenburg:

CAD ADL, Computer Aided Dispatching and Automatic Vehicle Location System.

Aaron Hoyt:

We heard about that in our earlier meeting. It's a software that will replace existing software on the Nevada County Transit fleet that will help them to schedule and locate vehicles in real time. It also will provide funding towards the purchase of on route vehicle chargers at the Tinloy Transit Center. This is a component to another grant fund that they already have, so this will complete that funding package and any cost increases that have happened over time. They will also set them up for looking at design requirements for the micro grid electric vehicle resiliency development project of the Transit Operation Center. That will start to look at how might they install and construct, and what do they need in terms of hardware for solar panels, for emergency backup battery source as well as emergency generation of power. For NCTC, there's a small amount in there for program administration.

These are the projects that we're looking to wrap up into an allocation plan to submit to CalSTA by December 31st, 2023. We wanted to provide you the opportunity to comment on these. I know we heard some conversation in the earlier meeting with the Transit Services Commission about maybe opportunities to change projects or what happens if this doesn't pan out. So just want to provide this opportunity to create an ongoing dialogue as we come back in the future. But we did want to mention that we'll be working with each agency to make sure we submit our allocation plan by the deadline. So, with that, I'd be glad to take any questions.

Commissioner:

When we talk about zero emissions vehicles, what kind of technologies are we talking about and what's the projected life of those technologies? How do we know we're not going to be replacing it all in five years, 10 years?

Aaron Hoyt:

I might take some help with that. I will give it a shot and I'll clean up my crystal ball here. The first part is the two technologies: there's really one primary technology, and there's another technology that's emerging. First is zero emissions electric buses. Those have actually been tested and running now for probably at least a decade in various forms. The county does have two buses that have been purchased and we're just awaiting the rest of the infrastructure to make sure that they can run on a continuous basis and pilot them out to see how they work in the terrain we have here in Nevada County. The other technology that's out there is hydrogen. There's some testing that's beginning with those. There's a whole slew of challenges much like there is with electric vehicles in terms of infrastructure, refueling. So that's something that has been probably tested less and is still emerging in this field. For electric buses, currently right now the buses that the county uses, 32-foot cutaway bus, is on a diesel chassis platform, diesel engine. The new electric buses they've purchased are 35-foot battery electric buses and those have a 14-year expected life versus about a 7-year expected life of the diesel cutaway buses. So essentially doubled, but we're also maybe tripling, quadrupling the cost of these vehicles. So, we can go from \$200,000, \$500,000 cutaway bus, depending on the size and equipment, up to about a million dollars for electric vehicle.

Commissioner:

Just a follow-up question, and maybe it's for our expert here. Is this just spitting in the ocean, the money that we're spending on this particular kind of thing? Do we have data that shows the improvements in our lives from any of this? If you just read the newspapers these days, you're worried about all this stuff in terms of the environment and air quality and all the other stuff. We spend culturally an enormous amount of money on projects that feel good and make people feel good. Oh, we're doing something. Is there data that shows what we're actually accomplishing by these expenditures? I'm not challenging it, I don't know.

Commissioner:

From what I've seen, I'm by no means an expert at that level, but we do see nationwide at least in North America, I don't know about Europe, that urban hotspots, Southern California, the Bay Area as hybrid vehicles and EV vehicles are increasing the sales, that air quality is improving. But I couldn't give you data that shows by how much, by half a percent or by 3%. But definitely we are seeing improvements overall. There are signs that yes, things are improving, but that's a very vague description because it could also be related to other changes as far as control factors that we are applying to factories. But absolutely there's data showing the air quality is improving.

Commissioner:

I would just strongly say I agree with the thought that as that technology is more available, I would prefer that we push towards hydrogen fuel cell. By far and away and just out through a little speech by the new Toyota CEO recently, where he basically even said that Toyota, which is pretty much setting the bar worldwide for that type of vehicle, they believe EV vehicles are eventually not the answer. Hydrogen is. So, as it becomes available, I would love to see these monies, even if it's long after I'm gone for my grandchildren maybe, that things go that direction.

Public Comment:

I would ask, how does electric bus handle itself and the snow? Up where my father's from as the train goes by, it plows the snow automatically and the vehicle is heavy enough that it does not lose traction in the snow. So, like I say, the book I have by John Signor, who is a SP engineer, is the whole history

of the Donner Crossing. And in 1945, the Kaiser engineers did a study to electrify that route and a new route that was lower than the one higher up that required more snow removal. And that's the one that I have been showing Supervisor Bullock now. And that is a complete modern straight route, involves some tunnels and some bio ducts and so on. But you're going to have to resurface in the snow no matter what kind of conditions you have with your electric bus, with a rubber tire on the pavement. Remember the steel wheel on a piece of rail is one fifth the friction of a rubber tire on a piece of pavement.

And of course, Caltrans, mother nature beat them with Donner Summit weather so they could not finish their emergency paving project. And from what I've talked to Caltrans engineers, the Donner Summit 80 corridor is the most expensive to maintain in the state. And I've talked to the truckers and they go through a set of chains every winter grinding up the pavement. And I've been up behind the trucks many times going up to Tahoe and looking at the rail right away and it's empty. That does not make any sense. If you want to move people. And at one time, Amtrak was moving perishable freight too until UP kicked up a storm and it went back on the trucks. So what they're doing in Europe, and I've been watching the YouTube, the Chinese are building a rail line through Kathmandu in Nepal and they've got a big boring machine. They're boring an eight-mile tunnel into the Himalayas. And the Indians, on the other end, are building a high-level bridge to Kashmir. They get rail service into Kashmir and Jamul. I mean we should be watching those and learning from them. Thank you.

Ed Scofield:

Alright, is there any other public comment? Then I'll close the public comment portion of it and I don't see that we're asking for a motion on this, is that correct?

Mike Woodman:

That's correct. Just to provide comments.