

Committee Members  
LESLIE CASTELLANO  
City of Eureka  
TAMI TRENT  
City of Fortuna  
JACK TUTTLE  
City of Trinidad

HTA Board Staff  
KATIE COLLENDER  
General Manager  
CAROLANN AGGELER  
Finance Manager



Humboldt Transit Authority  
Finance and Operations Committee  
North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District  
Conference Room - 707 L St, Eureka, CA 95501  
**AGENDA**

Monday, June 8, 2026

9:00 AM

Finance & Operations Committee  
Meeting

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**A. Call Meeting to Order**

**B. Roll Call & Introductions**

**C. Community Members Communication**

Members of the community are invited to comment on items or issues not on the agenda.

**D. New Business**

1. Draft Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget

Staff: Carolann Aggeler

***Action Recommend: Review, Discuss, and if no Changes, Approve Draft Budget***

**E. Adjournment**

*Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) is committed to a policy of non-discrimination pursuant to the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Persons who require special accommodations, accessible seating, or documentation in alternative formats under the American with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact HTA at least two days prior to the meeting.*

*Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) se compromete a una norma de no discriminación de acuerdo a los requisitos del Artículo VI del Acto Derechos Civiles de 1964. Las personas que requieren alojamiento especial de acuerdo con el American with Disabilities Act, o personas que requieren servicios de traducción (libre de cargo) deben comunicarse con HTA al menos dos días antes de la reunión.*



133 V Street  
Eureka, CA 95501

*A Public Entity Serving Humboldt County Since 1976*

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TO: Finance and Operations Committee Members

FROM: Carolann Aggeler, Finance Manager

DATE: June 8, 2026

SUBJECT: Draft Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget, Draft Financial Forecast, and Draft Budget Narrative

Staff has completed the annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Through the budgeting process HTA examines its transactions closely, identifies service changes, gathers funding estimates, and considers economic forecasts to produce a balanced draft budget that anticipates how the agency will meet financial obligations in the upcoming year while striving towards its operational goals.

HTA is improving transit efficiency through a planned RTS overhaul aligned with the 2023–2028 Humboldt County Transit Development Plan. Changes include removing low use stops that contribute to significant delays and increasing bus frequency at other stops, supplemented with microtransit. Flex, HTA's microtransit service, is now running until 10:00 PM Monday through Saturday to increase options for riders across coverage areas. This approach may serve as a model for other outlying areas with lower ridership that still require service.

***Action Recommended: Review, Discuss, and Direct Staff as Needed.***

**DRAFT 2026-27 OPERATING BUDGET AND FORECAST**

	FY 24-25 Actual	FY 25-26 Budget	FY 26-27 Budget	FY 27-28 Forecast	FY 28-29 Forecast	FY 30-31 Forecast	FY 31-32 Forecast
<b>Resources</b>							
<b>Service Revenue</b>							
Fares & Passes	\$ 1,110,397	\$ 1,179,500	\$ 1,353,833	\$ 1,421,525	\$ 1,492,601	\$ 1,567,231	\$ 1,645,593
Contract Transportation	\$ 2,048,445	\$ 1,431,906	\$ 752,749	\$ 775,331	\$ 798,591	\$ 822,549	\$ 847,225
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,158,842</b>	<b>\$ 2,611,406</b>	<b>\$ 2,106,582</b>	<b>\$ 2,196,856</b>	<b>\$ 2,291,192</b>	<b>\$ 2,389,780</b>	<b>\$ 2,492,818</b>
<b>Supplementary Resources</b>							
Advertising	\$ 134,514	\$ 190,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 154,500	\$ 159,135	\$ 163,909	\$ 168,826
Interest/Miscellaneous	\$ 456,104	\$ 45,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,440	\$ 22,889	\$ 23,347
Federal Formula 5311	\$ 2,063,001	\$ 1,782,857	\$ 1,854,171	\$ 1,891,254	\$ 1,929,079	\$ 1,967,661	\$ 2,007,014
JPA Member Assessment	\$ 3,311,308	\$ 3,639,095	\$ 5,252,587	\$ 5,410,165	\$ 5,572,470	\$ 5,739,644	\$ 5,911,833
State Transit Assistance	\$ 1,508,433	\$ 1,581,673	\$ 1,422,791	\$ 1,451,247	\$ 1,480,272	\$ 1,509,877	\$ 1,540,075
State of Good Repair	\$ 240,140	\$ 274,308	\$ 232,308	\$ 236,954	\$ 241,693	\$ 246,527	\$ 251,458
Low Carbon Transit Ops Prgm	\$ 385,676	\$ 402,198	\$ 136,786	\$ 69,761	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Transit Intercity Rail Capital Prgm	\$ 1,310,319	\$ 325,000	\$ 365,138	\$ 383,395	\$ 402,565	\$ 422,693	\$ 443,828
SB125 Formula Transit Intercity	\$ -	\$ 1,194,413	\$ 2,428,137	\$ 2,141,391	\$ 2,908,027	\$ 3,696,761	\$ 4,529,724
Measure O	\$ -	\$ 3,600,000	\$ 3,600,000	\$ 3,600,000	\$ 3,600,000	\$ 3,600,000	\$ 3,600,000
Regional Early Action Planning 2.0	\$ 208,793	\$ 1,190,250	\$ 99,742	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Affordable Housing & Sustainable Communities (AHCS)			\$ 689,149	\$ 403,267	\$ 420,820	\$ 404,451	\$ 406,404
<b>Supplementary Total</b>	<b>\$ 9,618,288</b>	<b>\$ 14,224,794</b>	<b>\$ 16,280,809</b>	<b>\$ 15,763,934</b>	<b>\$ 16,736,501</b>	<b>\$ 17,774,412</b>	<b>\$ 18,882,509</b>
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>\$ 12,777,130</b>	<b>\$ 16,836,200</b>	<b>\$ 18,387,391</b>	<b>\$ 17,960,790</b>	<b>\$ 19,027,693</b>	<b>\$ 20,164,192</b>	<b>\$ 21,375,327</b>
<b>Requirements</b>							
<b>Service Requirements</b>							
Payroll	\$ 4,222,060	\$ 5,967,000	\$ 6,662,360	\$ 6,995,478	\$ 7,345,252	\$ 7,712,515	\$ 8,098,141
Employee Costs	\$ 1,154,698	\$ 1,526,000	\$ 2,013,000	\$ 2,113,650	\$ 2,219,333	\$ 2,330,300	\$ 2,446,815
Retirement	\$ 908,283	\$ 974,000	\$ 1,393,000	\$ 1,462,650	\$ 1,535,783	\$ 1,612,572	\$ 1,693,201
Contract Transportation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Insurance	\$ 825,155	\$ 1,188,000	\$ 1,638,000	\$ 1,769,040	\$ 1,910,563	\$ 2,063,408	\$ 2,228,481
General Operating	\$ 1,167,055	\$ 633,000	\$ 686,000	\$ 713,440	\$ 741,978	\$ 771,657	\$ 802,523
Facilities	\$ 846,969	\$ 315,000	\$ 347,000	\$ 364,350	\$ 382,568	\$ 401,696	\$ 421,781
Technology	\$ 351,458	\$ 440,000	\$ 261,000	\$ 274,050	\$ 287,753	\$ 302,141	\$ 317,248
Vehicles	\$ 1,695,299	\$ 2,050,000	\$ 2,234,981	\$ 2,458,479	\$ 2,704,327	\$ 2,974,760	\$ 3,272,236
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>\$ 11,170,977</b>	<b>\$ 13,093,000</b>	<b>\$ 15,235,341</b>	<b>\$ 16,151,137</b>	<b>\$ 17,127,557</b>	<b>\$ 18,169,049</b>	<b>\$ 19,280,426</b>
<b>Asset Management</b>							
Equipment Purchases	\$ 346,191	\$ 270,000	\$ 262,650	\$ 275,783	\$ 289,572	\$ 304,051	\$ 319,254
Facility Maintenance	\$ 492,759	\$ 583,200	\$ 473,400	\$ 497,070	\$ 521,924	\$ 548,020	\$ 575,421
Vehicle Replacement	\$ 1,573,839	\$ 2,890,000	\$ 2,416,000	\$ 1,036,800	\$ 1,088,640	\$ 1,143,072	\$ 1,200,226
<b>Asset Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,412,789</b>	<b>\$ 3,743,200</b>	<b>\$ 3,152,050</b>	<b>\$ 1,809,653</b>	<b>\$ 1,900,136</b>	<b>\$ 1,995,143</b>	<b>\$ 2,094,901</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>\$ 13,583,766</b>	<b>\$ 16,836,200</b>	<b>\$ 18,387,391</b>	<b>\$ 17,960,790</b>	<b>\$ 19,027,693</b>	<b>\$ 20,164,192</b>	<b>\$ 21,375,327</b>
<b>Resources Less Requirements</b>	<b>\$ (806,636)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

Note: Special projects and associated funding not eligible for operating use on Grant Funded Projects sheet

# DRAFT 2026-27 OPERATING BUDGET BY SERVICE

	Redwood Transit System	Eureka Transit Service	Arcata & Mad River Transit System	Southern Humboldt Intercity	North State Express 299	North State Express 101	Paratransit	Flex Microtransit	Total
Planned Miles	51%	8%	8%	11%	7%	6%	6%	3%	100%
Planned Hours	42%	15%	12%	5%	4%	3%	13%	6%	100%
<b>Resources</b>									
<b>Service Revenue</b>									
Fares & Passes	\$ 689,644	\$ 269,622	\$ 203,484	\$ 46,483	\$ 73,822	\$ 5,530	\$ 45,673	\$ 19,575	\$ 1,353,833
Contract Transportation	\$ 168,338	\$ 19,008	\$ 528,843	\$ 3,348	\$ 32,932	\$ 80	\$ 200	\$ -	\$ 752,749
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>\$ 857,982</b>	<b>\$ 288,630</b>	<b>\$ 732,327</b>	<b>\$ 49,831</b>	<b>\$ 106,754</b>	<b>\$ 5,610</b>	<b>\$ 45,873</b>	<b>\$ 19,575</b>	<b>\$ 2,106,582</b>
<b>Supplementary Resources</b>									
Advertising	\$ 62,322	\$ 22,855	\$ 17,972	\$ 6,853	\$ 6,497	\$ 4,274	\$ 20,073	\$ 9,154	\$ 150,000
Interest/Miscellaneous	\$ 20,774	\$ 7,618	\$ 5,991	\$ 2,284	\$ 2,166	\$ 1,425	\$ 6,691	\$ 3,051	\$ 50,000
Federal Formula 5311	\$ 744,063	\$ 124,010	\$ 108,509	\$ 402,228	\$ 255,964	\$ 219,397	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,854,171
JPA Member Assessment	\$ 2,162,955	\$ 224,538	\$ 656,728	\$ 626,803	\$ 303,944	\$ -	\$ 1,277,619	\$ -	\$ 5,252,587
State Transit Assistance	\$ 775,008	\$ 156,723	\$ 109,237	\$ 158,636	\$ 97,771	\$ 84,596	\$ 39,284	\$ 1,536	\$ 1,422,791
State of Good Repair	\$ 125,533	\$ 27,423	\$ 17,836	\$ 16,872	\$ 15,964	\$ 13,813	\$ 14,867	\$ -	\$ 232,308
Low Carbon Transit Ops Prgm	\$ 74,076	\$ 24,838	\$ 13,445	\$ 10,750	\$ 7,662	\$ 6,015	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 136,786
Transit Intercity Rail Capital Prgm	\$ 222,856	\$ 55,634	\$ 43,747	\$ 16,683	\$ 15,815	\$ 10,403	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 365,138
SB125 Formula Transit Intercity	\$ 1,327,648	\$ 944,609	\$ 73,407	\$ -	\$ 44,698	\$ 37,775	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,428,137
Measure O	\$ 2,165,319	\$ 234,000	\$ -	\$ 197,242	\$ 189,353	\$ 445,536	\$ 368,550	\$ -	\$ 3,600,000
Regional Early Action Planning 2.0	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 99,742	\$ 99,742
Affordable Housing & Sustainable Communities (AHC)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 689,149	\$ 689,149
<b>Supplementary Total</b>	<b>\$ 7,680,554</b>	<b>\$ 1,822,248</b>	<b>\$ 1,046,872</b>	<b>\$ 1,438,351</b>	<b>\$ 939,834</b>	<b>\$ 823,234</b>	<b>\$ 1,727,084</b>	<b>\$ 802,632</b>	<b>\$ 16,280,809</b>
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>\$ 8,538,536</b>	<b>\$ 2,110,878</b>	<b>\$ 1,779,199</b>	<b>\$ 1,488,182</b>	<b>\$ 1,046,588</b>	<b>\$ 828,844</b>	<b>\$ 1,772,957</b>	<b>\$ 822,207</b>	<b>\$ 18,387,391</b>
<b>Requirements</b>									
<b>Service Requirements</b>									
Payroll	\$ 2,901,893	\$ 914,331	\$ 735,144	\$ 400,855	\$ 325,797	\$ 235,209	\$ 789,208	\$ 359,923	\$ 6,662,360
Employee Costs	\$ 876,793	\$ 276,261	\$ 222,120	\$ 121,116	\$ 98,438	\$ 71,067	\$ 238,455	\$ 108,750	\$ 2,013,000
Retirement	\$ 606,741	\$ 191,173	\$ 153,708	\$ 83,813	\$ 68,119	\$ 49,179	\$ 165,012	\$ 75,255	\$ 1,393,000
Contract Transportation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Insurance	\$ 830,067	\$ 136,948	\$ 125,760	\$ 182,631	\$ 112,559	\$ 97,392	\$ 104,825	\$ 47,818	\$ 1,638,000
General Operation	\$ 285,023	\$ 104,522	\$ 82,190	\$ 31,343	\$ 29,712	\$ 19,545	\$ 91,800	\$ 41,865	\$ 686,000
Facility Operation	\$ 175,844	\$ 29,012	\$ 26,641	\$ 38,689	\$ 23,845	\$ 20,632	\$ 22,207	\$ 10,130	\$ 347,000
Technology	\$ 132,263	\$ 21,821	\$ 20,039	\$ 29,101	\$ 17,935	\$ 15,519	\$ 16,703	\$ 7,619	\$ 261,000
Vehicle Operation	\$ 1,132,591	\$ 186,860	\$ 171,594	\$ 249,192	\$ 153,582	\$ 132,887	\$ 143,029	\$ 65,246	\$ 2,234,981
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>\$ 6,941,215</b>	<b>\$ 1,860,928</b>	<b>\$ 1,537,196</b>	<b>\$ 1,136,740</b>	<b>\$ 829,987</b>	<b>\$ 641,430</b>	<b>\$ 1,571,239</b>	<b>\$ 716,606</b>	<b>\$ 15,235,341</b>
<b>Asset Management</b>									
Equipment Purchases	\$ 133,099	\$ 21,959	\$ 20,165	\$ 29,285	\$ 18,049	\$ 15,617	\$ 16,808	\$ 7,668	\$ 262,650
Facility Maintenance	\$ 239,898	\$ 39,580	\$ 36,346	\$ 52,782	\$ 32,531	\$ 28,147	\$ 30,296	\$ 13,820	\$ 473,400
Vehicle Replacement	\$ 1,224,324	\$ 188,411	\$ 185,492	\$ 269,375	\$ 166,021	\$ 143,650	\$ 154,614	\$ 84,113	\$ 2,416,000
<b>Asset Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,597,321</b>	<b>\$ 249,950</b>	<b>\$ 242,003</b>	<b>\$ 351,442</b>	<b>\$ 216,601</b>	<b>\$ 187,414</b>	<b>\$ 201,718</b>	<b>\$ 105,601</b>	<b>\$ 3,152,050</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>\$ 8,538,536</b>	<b>\$ 2,110,878</b>	<b>\$ 1,779,199</b>	<b>\$ 1,488,182</b>	<b>\$ 1,046,588</b>	<b>\$ 828,844</b>	<b>\$ 1,772,957</b>	<b>\$ 822,207</b>	<b>\$ 18,387,391</b>
<b>Resources Less Requirements</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

Note: Special projects and associated funding not eligible for operating use on Grant Funded Projects sheet

# Draft Budget Narrative

## Introduction

Staff have completed the annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Through the budgeting process, HTA closely reviews its transactions, identifies service changes, develops funding estimates, and considers economic forecasts to produce a balanced budget draft that anticipates how the agency will meet its financial obligations in the coming year while advancing its operational goals. The included five-year financial forecast and expanded narrative strengthen HTA's ability to plan for future needs.

HTA is improving transit efficiency through a planned RTS overhaul aligned with the 2023–2028 Humboldt County Transit Development Plan. Changes include removing low use stops that contribute to significant delays and increasing bus frequency at other stops, supplemented with microtransit. Flex, HTA's microtransit service, is now running until 10:00 PM Monday through Saturday to increase options for riders across coverage areas. This approach may serve as a model for other outlying areas with lower ridership that still require service.

## Current Services:

Redwood Transit System (RTS)  
Eureka Transit Service (ETS)  
Arcata & Mad River Transit System (A&MRTS)  
Southern Humboldt Intercity (SHI)  
North State Express 299 (NSE 299)  
North State Express 101 (NSE 101)  
Paratransit or Dial-a-Ride (DAR)  
Flex Microtransit (Flex)

## Key Items:

### Funding Updates

#### *Funding Trends*

Local Transportation Funds (LTF) are a component of Transportation Development Act (TDA) funding that is derived from a ¼ cent of the general sales tax collected statewide. The Humboldt County Auditor Controller's estimate of LTF funds for Fiscal Year 2025-26 is \$5,416,531 which is a decrease of \$481,869 from the 2025-26 estimate. The estimate is calculated using a 1% increase to revenues while also factoring in the difference between the estimate and actual revenues from FY 2024-25, which is why the current year projections are lower (despite 1% projected revenue growth).

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) administers the state's Cap-and-Trade program, now renamed Cap-and-Invest. Under the program, major emitters purchase allowances for their greenhouse gas emissions, and auction proceeds are deposited into the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), which supports essential programs for HTA, such as LCTOP. On May 29, 2026, CARB voted to adopt amendments to the Cap-and-Invest

# Draft Budget Narrative

program. It is projected that quarterly auction revenue for state climate programs will drop from roughly \$4 billion a year to about \$2 billion under the new overhaul. This would decrease funding for AHSC, TIRCP, and LCTOP. Additionally, LCTOP funding was lowered in priority in its pool, and for that reason LCTOP could be unfunded in future years.

## *Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 5*

HTA has made significant progress under the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) Cycle 5, advancing its commitment to zero-emission transit and regional connectivity. With this \$38.7 million grant awarded in 2022, HTA is deploying 11 New Flyer fuel cell electric buses (FCEBs), constructing a hydrogen fueling station, retrofitting service bays to safely work on hydrogen buses, and building an intermodal transit center in downtown Eureka. The station will also offer public fueling options, supporting the broader adoption of hydrogen vehicles on California's North Coast. These initiatives align with HTA's Zero Emission Bus Rollout Plan, targeting a 100% zero emissions fleet by 2040, and reflect a concerted effort to reduce emissions, improve transit accessibility, and foster sustainable transportation solutions in the region. At the time this budget was prepared, HTA received the pilot bus and five production buses. Construction is set to begin on the transit center in August 2026 and the hydrogen station in October 2026.

## *Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 7*

Staff applied for the TIRCP Cycle 7 competitive grant in July of 2024 and were awarded their full request of \$18.7 million. This grant will support a range of transformative transit projects across the North State region. It will enable the launch of a new 15-minute headway express service to address an identified Unmet Transit Need and boost ridership. The grant also supports new standardized bus stop designs to improve the passenger experience, safety, and enhance Ride Humboldt brand recognition. At the Eureka Intermodal Transit Center, additional indoor and outdoor infrastructure improvements include interactive lighting, art, and additional sitework. Public art installations at bus stops and the Transit Center will further foster community pride and engagement with transit. The grant will also fund Phase 1 of the North Coast Zero Emission Training Center, which will support regional workforce development, enhance systemwide safety through better operator and mechanic training, and reduce training-related travel and other costs. Lastly, the continued expansion of HTA's hydrogen fleet will increase the number of zero-emission miles operated and hopefully reduce fuel prices by leveraging a greater volume of hydrogen fuel.

## *Senate Bill (SB) 125*

Senate Bill (SB) 125 will distribute \$4 billion from the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program to regional transportation planning agencies over the next few fiscal years. This money is highly flexible and can be used for operations or capital improvements. It is serving as an essential resource for balancing HTA's budget in the upcoming years, advocates of the transit industry are hoping the State establishes ongoing funding to fill this need. The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) is administering these funds for Humboldt County. SB 125 also establishes a Transit Transformation Task Force led by the California State Transportation Agency to develop policy recommendations on how to grow transit ridership, improve the transit experience, and address the long-term operational needs agencies face.

# Draft Budget Narrative

## *Measure O*

The citizens of Humboldt County have memorialized their support for public transportation with a new sales tax. On November 6, 2024, Humboldt County voters passed a 1% sales tax known as “Measure O” to bring local funds to road repair and bus services. This new tax is estimated to bring over \$24 million to the county each year to improve road infrastructure and to maintain and enhance local public transit. Encouragingly revenue has been coming in over projections. On April 22, 2025, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution that named HTA as the appropriate agency to represent local transit and receive 15% of the total amount collected starting on July 1, 2025, until June 30, 2030. Each year, HTA will bring its Work Plan to the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council for review and input. HTA will then finalize the plan as they deem appropriate and bring it before the HTA Board of Directors for adoption. Staff will then submit quarterly reports to the County Administrative Office to receive payment. An annual report will be submitted to the Humboldt County Audit Committee by the end of December following each fiscal year.

Measure O priorities for the upcoming fiscal year include but are not limited to support for Southern Humboldt Intercity, North State Express 299, and North State Express 101, Eureka Transit System, Dial-a-Ride, and Redwood Transit System. Although HTA is committed to the transition to zero emissions, with no local redundancy for hydrogen fuel, it is essential to retain a diversified fleet. With 76.4% of the RTS fleet past its useful life, as defined by the FTA and Caltrans, HTA plans to purchase one diesel bus to strengthen its ability to provide reliable transportation to the county.

## *Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 Grant*

The HCAOG applied for the California Department of Housing and Community Development Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 grant on behalf of HTA and “We are Up” in late 2022. The original grant amount for HTA was \$2.19 million, but it was reduced to \$1.47 million with a delayed start date. Due to changes to the grant term and award, services will now only be available for the first half of this fiscal year ending on December 31, 2026. This initiative aims to provide on-demand transportation options that connect residents to essential services and fixed route transit, serving as a model for other rural communities with similar needs. The REAP 2.0 program supports sustainable, equitable, and climate-friendly infrastructure projects in underserved communities.

## *Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC)*

HTA has been a corecipient of two AHSC grants with the City of Eureka and has applied with them for a third. The first grant, the “Eureka Scattered Site Project,” is a three-site development located on city-owned parking lots within the City of Eureka. Collectively, these three communities will provide ninety apartment homes for low-income families throughout the city. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2025 and be completed in 2026. In partnership with the City of Eureka, the secured AHSC funding provides just over \$30 million for affordable housing, programmatic support, and substantial investments in public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and critical infrastructure throughout the city. Transit-related funding includes ten years of transit vehicle operations for microtransit, resident bus passes, the purchase of microtransit vehicles, and a Transit Signal Priority System. Construction is set to be completed in Q2 of fiscal year 2026-27, and HTA will start receiving operational revenue then.

# Draft Budget Narrative

The second awarded grant, the “Sunset Heights Phase I” project, will develop forty-three units of affordable housing for households earning 30 – 60% AMI in addition to improved pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure. The infill site is situated on the bluff overlooking Humboldt Bay and the Broadway/Highway 101 Commercial Corridor below. New and improved walkways will make it easier for residents to access transit service that will be doubled in frequency. A new bicycle boulevard will improve east-west connectivity within an existing multimodal network throughout the city that encourages mode shift, improves safe access to bicycle facilities and walkways, and connects bicyclists to transit services. The project will provide residents with bus passes and operational funding for HTA to operate ETS to better serve the area.

## Service Changes

### Redwood Transit System (RTS)

Staff are working to refine RTS service by eliminating infrequently used stops that require substantial time deviation. In addition, buses will now follow a more streamlined route with higher frequency. This aligns with the 2023–2028 Humboldt County Transit Development Plan, and requirements for bus routes that are classified as commuter lines. The stops will be serviced by microtransit service. These changes, together with the fare simplification implemented in October 2024, represent significant improvements to the rider experience. More frequent RTS service has been an objective of HTA for some time, with 15-minute headways identified as a commitment under the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) Cycle 7 grant. This service concept represents the first step toward scaling operations to achieve even greater frequency. The current RTS schedule requires eighteen employees to operate, whereas this concept requires twenty-five. It is not anticipated that this will start within the 2026-27 fiscal year.

### *Ride Humboldt Flex Microtransit*

Ride Humboldt Flex is an on-demand shared-ride service that operates between bus stops, including both existing stops and newly designated virtual stops. In fiscal year 2024–25, the program transitioned from a soft launch that relied on time available between paratransit trips to dedicated vehicles and assigned shifts. As of May 26, 2026, microtransit hours have been extended in Eureka to 10:00 pm to serve passengers after the conclusion of fixed-route ETS and A&MRTS service hours. AHSC funding from the Eureka Scattered Site project will support the acquisition of additional microtransit vehicles and the expansion of service in the Eureka area. The REAP 2.0 grant has been supporting the expansion of transit options by funding the pilot program and ongoing microtransit service already.

## Other Items

### *Employee Benefits*

Employee benefit costs continue to represent a significant area of budget growth for FY 2026–27. AUAL expenditures are projected to increase from \$307,542.96 in FY 2025–26 to \$349,567.00 in FY 2026–27, reflecting an overall increase of 13.7%. Health insurance costs remain the primary driver of this increase. Employer-covered health insurance plans experienced a 6% increase in the prior year, consistent with national trends in employer-

# Draft Budget Narrative

sponsored healthcare coverage. Industry surveys continue to report annual premium growth in the 5%–7% range due to rising healthcare utilization, prescription drug costs, and overall medical inflation.

## *Staffing and Recruitment*

Ongoing challenges with driver recruitment across the transit industry have required HTA to implement additional measures to attract qualified applicants and retain valued employees. In January, HTA adopted a 34-hour work week to support improved work-life balance. Each quarter, refinements are made to driver bid schedules to reduce the number of split shifts and provide as many drivers as possible with multiple consecutive days off. The planned updates to RTS and the expansion of microtransit service will also require a significant increase in driver allocations.

## *Insurance*

HTA is a member of the California Transit Indemnity Pool (CalTIP), a Joint Powers Authority insurance pool. By joining with other agencies to establish a pooled program layer and to purchase reinsurance, members are slightly insulated from the volatile insurance industry. CalTIP provides general liability, and vehicle physical damage. For the next fiscal year, there were changes to the lowest starting amount of what reinsurance partners were willing to offer in the general liability program. This meant that CalTIP was required to fund its self-funded layer at \$2.75 million rather than \$2.25 million per incident. The cost share between pool members is based on loss history and revenue miles. This year's change equates to an \$865,628 contribution to the general liability program. This is 57.33% higher than the prior year.

## *Grant Funded Projects*

Special projects were not included in this operationally focused budget, which is centered on the annual costs related to sustaining transit services and assets. Including large projects in the operating budget would create inconsistencies from year to year, as these one-time or infrequent expenses can significantly skew annual comparisons and planning. While funding for major infrastructure investments falls outside the scope of that budget, HTA remains committed to long-term improvements and upgrades and actively pursues competitive grant funding to achieve these outcomes. A list of large projects both planned and underway is provided below. These funding sources are earmarked for each capital project and cannot be transferred into the operating budget in the event of a shortfall. These projects reflect total project cost, some have project partners contributing.

# Draft Budget Narrative

Project	Cost	Funding
Hydrogen Fueling Station	\$18,179,522.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 5</li> <li>- Federal Highway Infrastructure Program</li> <li>- Carbon Reduction Funds</li> <li>- STA</li> <li>- LCTOP</li> </ul>
10 Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses	\$15,151,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 5</li> <li>- Federal Highway Infrastructure Program</li> </ul>
Maintenance Bay Hydrogen Retrofit	\$1,401,155.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 5</li> <li>- STA</li> <li>- LCTOP</li> </ul>
Eureka Intermodal Transit Center	\$35,669,081.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 5</li> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 7</li> <li>- Private Funding</li> </ul>
5 Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses	\$7,959,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 7</li> <li>- Federal Highway Infrastructure Program</li> </ul>
Real-Time Signage Pilot	\$209,000.00 (Estimated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unfunded, likely STA</li> </ul>
Bus Stop Redesign and Branding Pilot	\$2,440,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 7</li> <li>- Federal Highway Infrastructure Program</li> </ul>
North Coast Zero Emission Training Center	\$846,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program Cycle 7</li> </ul>
Facility Redesign and Replacement	\$65,000,000.00 (Estimated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unfunded</li> </ul>
TOTAL PROJECTS	\$146,854,758.00	