



Superior Court of California
County of Siskiyou

Yreka Courthouse

SB 1407 Project Need Report - August 24, 2012



ABOVE: Siskiyou Daily News reporter Pat Arnold took this startling photo of Edward Lansdale fring at a witness in a sex abuse case inside the Siskiyou County Courthouse.



Distance to Yreka

Montague	- 7 mi	McCloud	- 49 mi
Gazelle	- 21 mi	Macdoel	- 68 mi
Hilt	- 22 mi	Tennant	- 69 mi
Klamath River	- 25 mi	Cecilville	- 71 mi
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Mount Shasta	- 38 mi	Tulelake	- 105 mi
Callahan	- 41 mi	Somes Bar	- 108 mi
Dunsmuir	- 46 mi		



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INTRODUCTION

Siskiyou Superior Court has a desperate need for a new courthouse in Yreka, the county seat. Out of necessity, the court continues to operate in extremely overcrowded, poorly secured conditions with inadequate access for the public, staff, and inmates. There was a shooting in the courthouse in 2000 resulting in one death and one serious injury. Burglars broke into the Courthouse in 2012 and stole a major portion of Siskiyou County's heritage gold collection, apparently gaining access through a window. Raw sewage inundated the court's basement space, including a courtroom and a multi-purpose room, in 2003 requiring emergency hazmat cleanup and three months of refurbishment before the court could resume its use. The basement continues to flood periodically. Bats occasionally fly in the hallways and water leaks from upstairs ceilings during heavy rainfalls. Inmates are commingled with the public and staff as they are escorted necessarily through public hallways and flights of stairs. Vacant jury rooms serve as the only holding cells. Staff and judges cannot move through the courthouse without potential contact with the public and jail inmates. The court functions in one-fifth of the space recommended by Trial Court Facilities Standards. The courthouse is out of compliance on virtually all of the trial court standards, including ADA.

Historically, there were numerous small town justice courts spread throughout the county. These were eventually consolidated in 1990 into three justice court districts, generally serving the northeastern, northwestern, and southeastern portions of Siskiyou County. The justice courts were operating in far flung areas of the county in substandard facilities. One justice court consisted of a room next to a fire station where the judge and attorneys would wait outside in vehicles while a jury deliberated. In 1996, pursuant to state legislation, the Siskiyou County Municipal Court District superseded the Western, Southeastern, and Dorris/Tulelake Judicial Districts to embrace the entire County of Siskiyou.

In June 1998 when California voters approved Proposition 220, a Constitutional Amendment permitting the judges in each county to unify their municipal and superior courts into a unified superior court, Siskiyou County aggressively pursued unification. The court quickly transitioned into a case management system that all departments, staff, and judges could utilize while consolidating processes, procedures, and financial matters. Steps were taken to equalize workloads and cross-train judges and staff so all assignments could be adequately and flexibly covered.

Siskiyou County Superior Court has never had a facility that could accommodate the unified superior court. In particular, the main courthouse in Yreka provides limited access to justice with its deficient jury space and crowded conditions as described later in the report.



1857 courthouse

1954 courthouse



Walkway between two courthouses

Side view of two courthouses



CURRENT COURT OPERATIONS

Siskiyou County, which is geographically the fifth largest county in California spread over 6,347 square miles, is located in the far northern region of California. It is bounded by the State of Oregon on the north, Modoc County on the east, Trinity County and Shasta County on the south, and Del Norte County and Humboldt County on the west.

Four court facilities serve the county of Siskiyou. Facilities include a historic but outmoded courthouse with three courtrooms in Yreka, and single courtroom facilities in the remote locations of Weed, Dorris, and Happy Camp. All case types are heard at the Yreka facility while typically only traffic and small claims cases are heard at the remote locations along with misdemeanor arraignments in Weed and Dorris.

The Yreka Courthouse is the main courthouse in Siskiyou County. It is a multi-functional facility, dealing with all types of civil and criminal cases. The facility also houses court support functions, including court administrative offices, as well as the offices of the District Attorney, County Assessor – Recorder, and County Tax Collector, and the Board of Supervisors’ public hearings chamber. It is located in the downtown area of Yreka on 4th Street and is surrounded by small businesses, churches and residences. The courthouse is essentially multiple structures, ranging from wood frame to pour-in-place concrete, which are connected to one another by various means. The original structure dates from 1857 and is located to the rear of the primary entrance to the courthouse. The remaining structures were added through the years by means of various and unknown structural systems. In 1954, a rectangular structure was constructed directly in front of the historic 1857 courthouse, and the two buildings were joined by an internal bridge. The court structures cover the majority of the site, leaving very little space for landscaping and natural vegetation. Due to the fact that the site is fully developed, there is no on-site vehicular circulation. Service entry, as well as inmate entry, is directly from the street. There is no secure parking for Judicial Officers. This court facility has severe functional and access deficiencies that cannot be cost effectively remedied.

Due to the physical and functional deficiencies of the Yreka Courthouse, the superior court has been forced to decentralize its operations, thereby requiring an annex facility located one block from the main courthouse. This facility is referred to as the Eddy Street Annex and houses the court’s Information Technology and Court Reporters staff. The fact that these facilities are not consolidated simply exacerbates their functional problems. This is one of the many conditions that impacts access to justice for all county residents and negatively impacts overall court operations, in terms of strain on resources, workload, and staffing.

The Weed satellite court facility is located in leased space in the City of Weed’s city hall. Court is held one day per week in the city council hearing room. The structure was originally built in the early 1900s and has since been expanded with numerous additions. Renovated portions of the facility are in generally sound condition while non-renovated

portions are visibly deteriorated with obvious water leakage problems. Restrooms, public counters and hardware require upgrades to meet current ADA standards. HVAC and electrical systems are not adequate.

The Dorris satellite court facility is located in a residential area of Dorris adjacent to the foothill of the mountain range. Court is held here one day per month. This one courtroom facility was recently remodeled and serves the eastern area of Siskiyou County and Western area of Modoc County as a joint use facility.

The Happy Camp satellite court facility is located within a county-owned facility shared by the sheriff’s and fire departments. The facility is approximately 70 miles (2 hour drive) west of Yreka. Utility of the facility for the Court is limited by the difficulty of winter travel to this site location. This satellite court serves the western part of Siskiyou County. Court is held here one day every other month. The facility only handles traffic, small claims, and fish and game violation cases.

Existing Facilities Transfer Chart

Transfer Status

Under the Trial Court Facilities Act, negotiations for transfer of responsibility of all trial court facilities from the counties to the state began July 1, 2004. Assembly Bill (AB) 1491 (Ch. 9 Statutes of 2008) (Jones) was enacted and extended the deadline for completing transfers to December 31, 2009. Transfer status for each existing facility affected by the proposed project is provided in the following table.

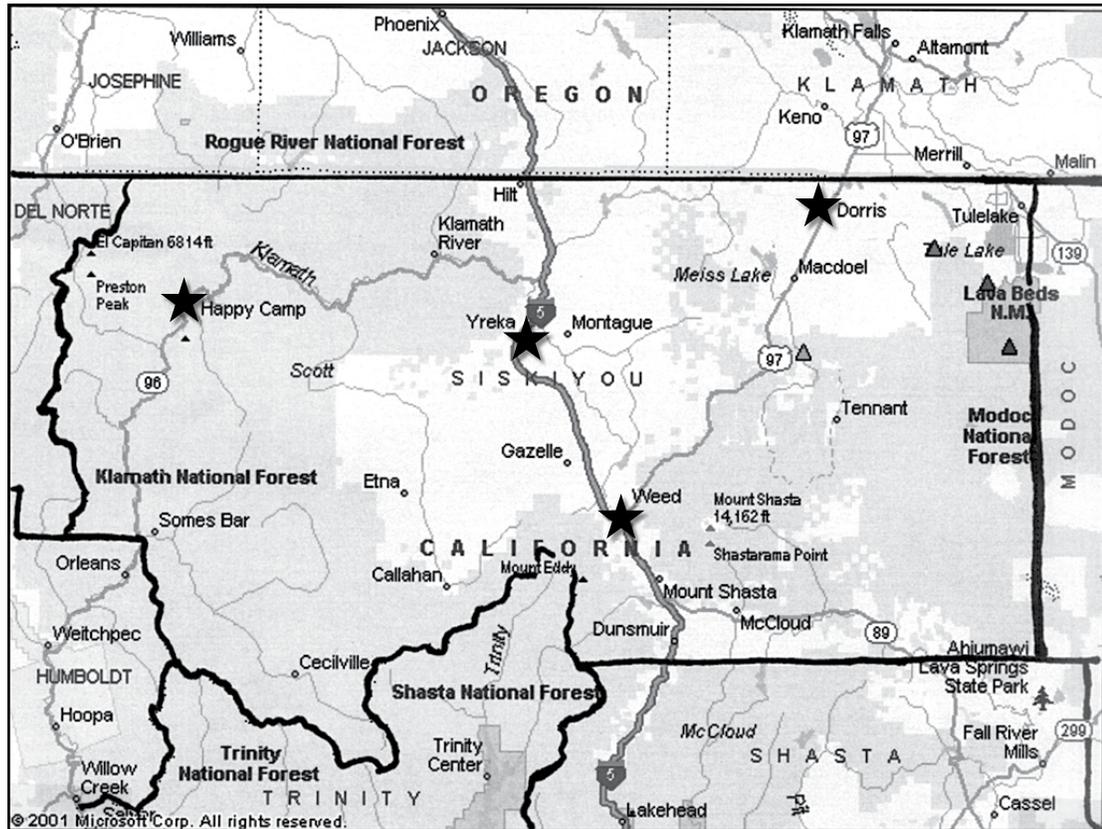
The main Yreka Courthouse did not transfer and is County owned.

Existing Facilities Transfer Status

Facility	Location	Owned or Leased	Type of Transfer	Transfer Status
Yreka Courthouse	311 4th Street, Yreka, CA 96097	County Owned	TOR	12/19/08
Weed Satellite	550 Main Street, Weed, CA 96094	Leased	TOR	04/01/07
Dorris Satellite	324 North Pine Street, Dorris, CA 96023	State Owned	TOR/TOT	12/01/08
Happy Camp	4th Street Happy Camp, CA 96039	County Owned	MOU Limited Use	09/15/08

Siskiyou County Court Facilities' Location

★ Denotes Court Facilities



As the above map of Siskiyou County illustrates, citizens must travel great distances to avail themselves of court services and to fulfill jury duty

Distance to Yreka

Montague	- 7 mi	McCloud	- 49 mi
Gazelle	- 21 mi	Macdoel	- 68 mi
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Klamath River	- 25 mi	Cecilville	- 71 mi
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1. Security

In 2000, a defendant in a criminal case shot and wounded the victim and her fiancé and then shot and killed himself on the central interior stairway of the Yreka Courthouse. After this incident, security was improved in the courthouse as an x-ray machine, magnetometer, and more security officers were added. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, in February 2012, burglars gained access to the courthouse through a first floor window and stole the County's heritage gold collection. The following concerns cannot be improved due to deficiencies in the existing courthouse, and safety and security remain major issues:

- *Jail inmates are brought to the courthouse in sheriff's vehicles which must park on the street. The inmates are then escorted in shackles over an open-air walkway up to the side entrance of building. The officers and inmates are vulnerable to assault from every direction with numerous hiding places for potential perpetrators to lie in wait. Once inside, the inmates must be escorted through the public corridors and stairways to reach the assigned courtroom. There is not a viable place to construct a secure sallyport on the courthouse property as the courthouse consumes most of the court site area.*
- *The building does not have separate and secure judicial, staff and public circulation. The public can easily access judges and staff as they circulate through the building.*
- *The facility does not have separate and secure corridors for inmate movement. There are substantial security risks posed by the lack of dedicated, secured corridors and elevators. Inmates are marched through the same hallways that the public, staff, and judges must use in order to move through the building to reach any department or courtroom. Anyone capable of secreting a weapon into the building would have the opportunity to hand the weapon to an inmate.*
- *There is no secure parking for the judicial officers. Judges park in an open parking lot behind the courthouse that is in plain view and easily accessible by the public.*
- *There are no designated holding areas for inmates or juvenile detainees. Vacant jury rooms and the multipurpose room in the basement are primarily used for this purpose. At times, inmates must be seated in the jury box for significant periods of time because there is no place available in the courthouse to hold them.*

- *In order to shield juvenile offenders from public view, a curtain was installed at the end of the hallway near the makeshift holding area in the jury room. When the curtain is closed, it prevents egress from the building in the event of an emergency evacuation as it obscures an emergency exit.*
- *The courtrooms were designed with the witness stand adjacent to the bench and no effective barrier between them. The bailiffs must be posted near the door and the attorneys' tables and therefore would need some time to respond to any threat a witness might pose for a judicial officer. Departments 1 and 2 in the courthouse are especially problematic, and they each are used for a high volume of felony cases.*
- *There are multiple doors and windows through which the public can enter undetected by security even though the building has security cameras. Throughout the work day there is constant concern about an intruder entering through a side door. In 2012, two burglars entered the courthouse at night and heisted a major portion of the County's gold collection. The court remains concerned that persons desiring to harm judges or staff could enter the building undetected and commit violent acts.*
- *There are no rooms to separate victims and witnesses from the public or inmates.*
- *There is no security in the Eddy Building where our IT staff and Court Reporters are located.*

Various studies dating back to the 2002 Courthouse Master Plan have all concluded that the security issues cannot be resolved by remodeling the existing courthouse due to cost and design problems. The 2012 burglary and theft of a major portion of Siskiyou County's gold collection located in the lobby of the Courthouse indicates the deficiency in securing the building.

Yreka Courthouse

Inmates traverse through public corridors and stairs with judge shown on the left



Inmates are offloaded curbside from vans



*2000 shooting inside
of courthouse*



ABOVE: Siskiyou Daily News reporter Pat Arnold took this startling photo of Edward Lansdale firing at a witness in a sex abuse case inside the Siskiyou County Courthouse.

2012 gold theft inside courthouse



2. Overcrowding

Three (two combined courthouses & Eddy Building) existing facilities containing three courtrooms are directly affected by this project as shown in the table below. These facilities are currently unsafe, substandard in size, and overcrowded.

Existing Facilities

Facility	Location	Number of Existing Courtrooms Affected by This Project	Building Gross Square Footage	Departmental Square Footage Occupied by the Court	Court Space as a Percentage of Total Building Square Footage
Siskiyou Courthouse	311 Fourth Street Yreka, CA 96097	3	13,123	9,449	33.63%
Eddy Building Annex	322 W. Center Street Yreka, CA 96097	0	3,093	2,227	100.0%
Total Existing Courtrooms and DGSF		3	16,216	11,676	

The Superior Court of Siskiyou County is located in the county seat, Yreka. The facility has three courtrooms and one shared use courtroom with the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors. The second facility, Eddy Street Annex is located one block from the Yreka Superior Courthouse.

The functional square footage of space currently occupied by the court at these two facilities is 11,676. The square footage required for the project is 49,438 Departmental Gross Square Feet (DGSF) or 69,213 Building Gross Square Feet (BGSF). This represents a shortfall of 37,762 DGSF to meet the current and near-term needs of the court based on the space program developed by the AOC.

The existing facilities contain numerous deficiencies relative to access and efficiency, security, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility which create impediments to the administration of justice. Specific issues with the existing facilities are summarized as follows:

- *The court facilities serving Siskiyou County are decentralized, have severe security problems, are overcrowded, and have many physical condition problems. As the Yreka Courthouse cannot be renovated and expanded on site, the operations of this facility and those in the Eddy Building Annex need to be consolidated into a single, secure, and physically appropriate building.*
- *Approximately 90 percent of court staff are located in Yreka, and all of the judicial officers are headquartered in Yreka. All of the felony, unlimited civil, probate, family law and juvenile proceedings and trials (other than some infractions) are heard exclusively in Yreka. The jail is located in Yreka, and the District Attorney, Public Defender, and most of the private attorneys practice in Yreka exclusively. Probation, Human Services, and*

the Sheriff's Office are also located in Yreka. In sum, the Yreka courthouse is integral and vital to the dispensation of justice in Siskiyou County. There are no viable alternative courthouses in our county.

- With approximately 13,123 gross square feet of space in the Yreka Courthouse, we currently operate in only 20% of the space that Trial Court Standards recommend (the Trial Court Standards specify that we need approximately 69,213 gross square feet). We are forced to convert broom closets into work areas, crowd staff into constricted areas, share converted courtrooms with the county, lease space, and do without basic secure space and other necessary space because it is either non-existent or unaffordable. It is important to note that many courts that scored higher than Siskiyou as immediate need courts did so based primarily on the criterion of needing new judges. Since we are not scheduled to receive any new judges in the foreseeable future, we did not score any points in this category. Ironically, many of the courts scoring high in this category have a significantly greater percentage of recommended space, even after the additional judges are factored in, than does Siskiyou. We are not aware of any other court that will be operating in a percentage of recommended space as low as ours, either before or after the need for new judges has been considered.*
- There is no jury assembly room in the courthouse. Prospective jurors often must crowd in the hallway and wait their turn to be called into the courtroom for jury selection. There is no method of remedying this unpleasant situation within the existing overcrowded, inadequate courthouse.*
- Our clerks are crammed into tight spaces within a labyrinth of file shelves, copy machines, file carts, cubicles, coffee cart, and freestanding coat racks. They are virtually on top of one another at times. Our Financial Officer works in a converted janitor's closet.*
- As mentioned under security, many areas must serve dual and often non-optimal purposes. Our jury rooms serve also as conference rooms and holding cells. Our basement hearing room serves as a jury assembly room, training room, self-help work area, and storage area for criminal department filing cabinets. We often have to inquire about absent staff so we can find a seating area for an assigned judge.*
- We cannot hold more than two juries on the same day because we have only two jury boxes and two jury rooms. Of course, on the days that we hold two juries, we have problems determining where to hold inmates and juvenile detainees since the jury rooms also serve as holding/detention rooms. An existing jury room is deficient lacking adequate ventilation, windows, and restrooms. Jurors must use public restrooms, and thus risk encountering parties or witnesses involved with the trial.*
- Attorneys have no place other than crowded hallways and the back of the courtrooms to interview clients, often within earshot of other defendants or witnesses.*



*Commingling of inmates,
public, staff and judges*



*Crowded hallway with
summoned jurors*

Crowded waiting area

*Judge walking in only access hallway
while inmates are being transported*



3. Physical Condition

Existing Yreka Courthouse

- *Siskiyou County has retained ownership of the Yreka Courthouse. The County recently acquired the court's right to occupy its current space in the courthouse in exchange for some property on the site of the proposed New Yreka Courthouse. As a result, the court remains in the existing courthouse with the understanding that it will vacate by 2016. After this point, terms of the purchase agreement allow the court to remain in the courthouse, but the duration is not stated, thus making the Court's continuing tenancy uncertain.*
- *The building is severely non-compliant with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. In order for a non-ambulatory person to enter the courthouse, the person must find a way to the back of the courthouse, enter through the back door and navigate the various levels of the courthouse. If a person needs to go to the Criminal Department, he or she would have to take the elevator to the second floor; then seek assistance to travel through the locked door of the District Attorney's Office and then move around some files and boxes through another locked door to reach the Criminal Department's public counter. This circuitous journey is necessary because the 1954 addition was not built to the same levels as the 1857 courthouse. Thus, it is not possible for a person in a wheel chair to reach the Criminal Department without great effort and assistance. In a fire or other emergency, evacuation of a disabled person would be dangerously problematic.*
- *The building has a Level 5 seismic rating, which means that it cannot be transferred to the State without costly structural repairs, which in the case of the 1857 courthouse is not possible.*
- *The 1857 Courthouse, while eclipsed by the boxy looking 1954 Courthouse directly in front of it, would evoke substantial resistance in the community if attempts were made to demolish it.*
- *The lower level of the structure periodically floods causing damage to furniture, office equipment, and files. We have placed furniture and file cabinets on blocks to prevent water damage. One judge was flooded out of his chambers three times.*
- *In 2003, the basement of the courthouse, which houses a courtroom, jury room, judge's chambers, and storage/multi-purpose room, was inundated with raw sewage. The entire basement was evacuated and a hazardous materials company spent three months removing the waste and remodeling the area before the court was able to resume using the space.*
- *The building has outdated and inefficient electrical and mechanical systems. It is often cold in the winter and hot in the summer. Mysterious and very unpleasant odors infiltrate staff work areas at unpredictable intervals.*
- *Our multi-purpose room is too small to serve as a proper jury assembly room, but we have no other option. The Fire Marshall has voiced concerns about this*

- *arrangement, particularly when we hold significant trials requiring us to summons a large jury panel. There is poor ventilation in one of the jury rooms, and because heating and cooling is uneven and inadequate throughout the building juror comfort is virtually impossible. Long trials tend to frazzle even the most dedicated jurors under these undesirable conditions. The judges routinely have to inquire in jury trials about claustrophobia.*
- *The existing courthouse has asbestos and we have had to send asbestos warnings to staff per AOC advice and counsel.*
- *Bats are regularly spotted in the building. Recently, a bat was discovered attached to the pant leg of a bailiff as he rose from his desk to assist a jury exiting the courtroom.*

Eddy Street Annex

- *This building has been under lease with a private owner for several years.*
- *There is not adequate space for court staff to function effectively.*
- *The court space is split between two floors. The lack of a building elevator is a major drawback to its continued use from the perspective of the court employees.*
- *The suite is not protected by the court security staff.*
- *The public can enter into the space without restriction.*



Front entrance to courthouse is not in compliance with ADA

Eddy Street Annex is non-compliant with ADA & has no security



Court users in wheelchair must traverse locked District Attorney's Office to reach department 4



Crowded hallway for persons in wheelchair on way to department 4



Storage area that persons in wheelchairs must navigate on way to department 4



Persons in wheelchairs must have assistance with doors on way to department 4



4. Improved Access to Court Services by Constructing New Courthouse

As demonstrated above, the existing courthouse's security problems, overcrowding, and poor physical conditions cannot be remedied according to the 2002 Master Plan, AOC Needs Assessment, Seismic Studies, and ADA reviews. Through the construction of a New Yreka Courthouse, access will be improved or expanded as follows:

Security of Safe Access

- *Separation of Judges and Staff from public and inmates.*
- *Separation of inmates from all court users.*
- *Holding cells for inmate security and safety.*
- *Efficient movement of inmates from sally port, holding cells, inmate elevators, and courtroom holding cells.*
- *Secured, separate parking for safety and security of judges.*
- *Secure entrances and exits.*

Overcrowding

- *Adequate space for judges, staff, inmates, and public.*
- *Public counters centrally located on the first floor.*
- *Waiting areas.*
- *Interview rooms.*
- *Witness separation areas.*
- *Adequate Jury Assembly Rooms.*
- *Efficient Court Calendars*
- *Five courtrooms with jury boxes and jury rooms.*

Physical Conditions

- *Seismic Compliance.*
- *Compliance with ADA standards.*
- *Compliance with Fire Marshall Reviews.*
- *No more floods, asbestos, bats, leaky ceilings, foul odors or raw sewage.*
- *Consolidation of court staff.*
- *Adequate heating, cooling and other mechanical systems.*

5. Summary of Economic Opportunities

In accordance with Chapter 311, Statutes of 2008, Government Code section 70371.5(e), in recommending a project for funding, the Judicial Council shall consider economic opportunities for the project. “Economic opportunity” includes, but is not limited to, free or reduced costs of land for new construction, viable financing partnerships with, or fund contributions by, other government entities or private parties that result in lower project delivery costs, cost savings resulting from adaptive reuse of existing facilities, operational efficiencies from consolidation of court calendars and operations, operational savings from sharing of facilities by more than one court, and building operational cost savings from consolidation of facilities.

Economic opportunities for this project are as follows:

1. *Free or Reduced Costs of Land*

The project has benefited from a land cost reduction or land donation. The City of Yreka and Siskiyou County have donated \$25,000 each to purchase property in the downtown proposed site.

2. *Donation of City and County Staff time*

The County Counsel and City Attorney have contributed over 200 hours of time to the project.

3. *Adaptive Reuse of Existing Facilities*

The project does include adaptive reuse of existing facilities as the existing courthouse will be adapted for use as county offices.

4. *Consolidation of Court Calendars and Operations*

The project consolidates three existing facilities into one new courthouse; the 1857 Yreka Courthouse, the 1954 Yreka Courthouse and the Eddy Street Annex.

6. Stage of Project Completion

Site Acquisition was completed and approved by the Publics Works Board in June 2012. Five private homes were acquired; the County exchanged these buildings, land and a parking area with the State for the Court’s space in the joint Court-County Building, and the City sold a parking lot to the State. The footprint for the New Courthouse and parking area is 2.24 acres.

The project is now entering the pre-planning phase, and has local court construction funds (\$3.3 million) to pay for a substantial portion of this work.

7. Courtroom Usage

7.1 Courtroom Locations and Assignments. For its five judicial officers, Siskiyou Superior Court has only three courtrooms, one makeshift courtroom with no jury box, and a multipurpose room with no jury box. There are only two jury deliberation rooms, and one of these rooms is located in a dark basement and is very small with no windows, no attached restroom, and poor ventilation. The other jury room also serves as the primary holding area for inmates, and is thus not always available. The outlying courthouses are remote and have no jury boxes or jury rooms. Due to the remoteness of these courthouses, only small claims, traffic, and misdemeanor arraignments are conducted. As mentioned previously, it is not possible to expand the existing courthouse in Yreka since the deficiencies in terms of circulation, seismic issues, asbestos, and historical preservation make it cost prohibitive.

Calendar assignments in the Yreka courthouse are somewhat akin to a fire drill due to lack of holding cells, jury boxes and jury rooms. We are unable to hold more than two jury trials at a time, causing civil trials to be continued frequently. We are unable to make permanent assignments of judges to courtrooms, but must rotate as calendar matters change during the day. We have a full-time calendar coordinator who constantly makes changes to calendars as splits, settlements, continuances, and extended hearings occur. If we had five dedicated courtrooms, with at least three, or preferably four, jury boxes and jury rooms, our use of staff and judges would be considerably more efficient.

Court Usage Information

Judicial Resources		FY 2009-10 Filings			FY 2009-10 Dispositions			FY 2008-09 Jury Trials			2011 Population		
5.0	5.6	25,256	4,510	18	24,630	4,398	12	22	3.9	20	45,084	8,051	30

7.2 Estimated Population Served

County	Judicial position equivalents 2009-10	County Population Total	Per judicial position equivalent	Rank
Siskiyou	5.6	45,084	8,051	30

7.3 Number of Filings

County	Judicial position equivalents 2009-10	Filings Total	Per judicial position equivalent	Rank
Siskiyou	5.6	25,256	4,510	18

7.4 Number of Dispositions

County	Judicial position equivalents 2009-10	Dispositions Total	Per judicial position equivalent	Rank
Siskiyou	5.6	24,630	4,398	12

7.5 Number of Jury Trials

County	Judicial position equivalents 2009-10	Jury Trials Total	Per judicial position equivalent	Rank
Siskiyou	5.6	22	3.9	20

7.6 Weighted Filings Data

The AOC will provide this information.

8. Type of Courthouse

The New Yreka Courthouse Project will be the Main Courthouse in Siskiyou County, and the only Courthouse that offers jury trials and hearings for all case types.

9. Disposition of Existing Court Space

The AOC, Court, and County were able to collaborate on a negotiated agreement that provided a county parking area, Public Defenders Building, Detective Office, and Stage Bus Office to the Courts in exchange for the Court’s space in the shared County Courthouse. The County will relocate part of the Sheriff’s Office, all of the County Counsel’s office, and will expand the District Attorney’s Office into the existing court space.

10. Consolidation of Facilities

As noted above, the 1857 Courthouse, 1954 Courthouse and leased space in the Eddy Building, all of which have inadequate space with numerous security, crowding, and physical problems, will be combined into a new courthouse to remedy these problems. The Yreka Courthouse handles well over 90% of the court’s work, houses all of the judicial officers, and is the only courthouse that handles all matters, including juries.

11. Extent to Which Project Solves Court’s Facilities Problems

Please see Item 4 for a list of general issues resolved by construction of the New Yreka Courthouse. It is likely that construction of the new courthouse would resolve all major court facility issues for Siskiyou Superior Court for 50-100 years.

12. Expected Operational Impact

In general, preliminary reviews suggest that all of the impacts on our court will be positive with the exception of a few funding issues.

Custodial Services—Since the new courthouse will be substantially larger than the existing courthouse space, custodial services will be more expensive. However, this will be partially offset by having a newer, easier to clean building and the ability to have competitive bids for cleaning service. We will also consider custodial labor costs in selecting flooring and furnishings for the new courthouse.

Security—Since AB 109, the Sheriff’s Office has been in charge of the security budget. It is anticipated that security costs will increase for the new building due primarily to supervising holding areas and operating a control center for the courthouse. We have held preliminary discussions with the Sheriff, and believe that we can mitigate some of these costs by careful scheduling of courtrooms and inmate transportation.

13. Qualitative Statement of Need to Replace a Facility

Since 1998, the AOC has been engaged in a process of planning for capital improvements to California’s court facilities. The planning initiatives began with a statewide overview, moved to county-level master planning, progressed to county level master planning, and proceeded to project specific planning in 2002.

The New Yreka Courthouse was initially ranked 14 out of 211 SB1732 projects in 2004 as one of the courthouses in the state with the worst conditions of overcrowding, poor security and inadequate physical conditions. When the criterion of space for Access, primarily to meet the demand for new judges, was added to the ranking criteria, the New Yreka Courthouse ranking was reduced even though the existing Yreka Courthouse remained one of the most overcrowded courthouses in the State, operating in one-fifth of the space needed. We believe that the total courtroom and courthouse inventory for a county should be considered in making determinations on access and crowding. Similarly other access issues for ADA compliance, public access without being in proximity to inmates or alleged perpetrators, and protection of witnesses should have been more fully considered for our courthouse in assigning points for access.

In October 2008, the Council also adopted an updated trial court capital-outlay plan (the plan) based on the application of the methodology. The plan identifies five project priority groups to which 153 projects are assigned based on their project score (determined by existing security, physical conditions, overcrowding, and access to court services). This project—ranked in the Critical Need priority group in the Trial Court Capital-Outlay Plan adopted by the Judicial Council in October 2008—is one of the highest priority trial court capital-outlay projects for the judicial branch, and was selected as one of 41 projects to be funded by SB 1407 revenues by the Judicial Council in October 2008 even without the additional considerations requested above.

14. Courtroom and Courthouse Closures

During the past six years, we have continued to move more of our court business to Yreka. Limited Civil cases were moved from Weed to Yreka about six years ago. Approximately one year ago, we moved Misdemeanor Pre-trials from Weed to Yreka. Similarly, about three years ago, we reduced our monthly calendar in Happy Camp to one day every two months. All of these actions continue to strain our already overcrowded conditions in Yreka, but needed to be taken as a result of budget reductions.

We discontinued leasing courtroom space in Tulelake approximately one year ago. This court was jointly operated by Modoc County Superior Court and Siskiyou County Superior Court one day per month on alternating months. The Tulelake Court Calendar has now been combined with the Dorris Calendar that is in session one day per month, and continues in Dorris as a joint Modoc and Siskiyou shared calendar. The Dorris Court is owned by the State, and was remodeled two years ago to resolve ADA and other compliance issues.

15. Outside the Box

During the site selection process, our Project Advisory Group selected the downtown site because it offered economic contributions from the City and County; was in proximity to the jail, Sheriff, private and public attorneys, and other agencies; and was close to shopping, restaurants, bus services, the freeway, and utilities. For the State, it represented a particularly creative plan as the existing court space was exchanged for County property, thus lessening project costs while unburdening the State from the difficult task of disposing of the Court's space in the existing courthouse in 2012, with its many deficits.

In 2012, Siskiyou Superior Court volunteered to reduce the size of its project by over 17,000 gross square feet, and has also agreed to look at lower cost construction options for its new courthouse project as SB 1407 funds were reduced.

In addition, Siskiyou Superior Court was approved by the Judicial Council Group to use its \$4.5 million local Court Construction Funds to purchase five homes on the project site, and use the remaining funds for pre-planning purposes in the amount of \$3.3 million. Consequently, if approved to proceed with its project, Siskiyou will be able to fund a major portion of pre-planning with local funds rather than SB 1407 funds. This plan also reduced total project costs by over \$6 million as the need for a multiple level parking structure was no longer necessary with the expanded size of the site.

16. Expended Resources by AOC, Court, & Local Communities

In 2010, the Project Advisory Group (PAG) was formed in Siskiyou County. The PAG was comprised of AOC, Court, City of Yreka, and Siskiyou County representatives. The PAG was very active in discussing site selection options, alternatives, and local contributions. In the early stages the committee met frequently, and has remained active through the site selection process.

The Yreka City Manager and Siskiyou County Administrative Officer have been active and have volunteered the use of their staff's time to assist in the project where needed. The City and County Planners have assisted in preparation of environmental and site impact matters, saving the state substantial time. The City Attorney and County Counsel were instrumental in working with AOC attorneys to complete the property acquisition agreements for the private and public property for the site. Court staff and judges and AOC staff have also contributed hundreds of hours to the project.

As noted previously, the PAG was able to overcome many obstacles to select an optimum plan for a court site while devising a plan to leverage \$4.5 million in local contributions and funds to reduce project costs.

Consequently, significant delays or discontinuing the New Yreka Courthouse would be devastating because:

- *Siskiyou will continue to operate in a substandard, ADA deficient, overcrowded, inadequately secured courthouse with no separation of the public, staff, judges, and inmates in space that is 20% of the size recommended by California Trial Court Facilities Standards.*
- *The downtown site, which is the priority site of the Project Advisory Group, would likely not be available in perpetuity if the project is eliminated.*
- *It is not clear how long Siskiyou Superior Court would be able to remain in the space it inhabits as the County now owns this space as part of the property exchange with the State. The county has developed plans for using the existing courthouse space occupied by the court.*
- *There are no other facilities in Yreka, or in the entire county for that matter, that could be suitably remodeled into a courthouse.*
- *The State would be saddled with managing or disposing of the five private homes, three County buildings, and two parking lots it purchased for the new courthouse site.*
- *If the downtown site is not used for the courthouse project, the City of Yreka and Siskiyou County as well as the community will be less supportive of any future collaboration with the State involving construction of a court facility. We have had a very active Project Advisory Group for over two years that strongly prefers the downtown site.*
- *If the downtown site, the primary site selected by the PAG, is not utilized, then the contributions of the City and County will not be available. Similarly, the remaining \$3.3 million in local Court Construction Funds would need to be turned over to the State Controller's Office and would not be available for any future project.*

CONCLUSION

Siskiyou Superior Court and the representatives of the community have collaborated impressively for over ten years attempting to achieve a primary goal of court consolidation: the construction of a New Yreka Courthouse. For our county, this means having the first facility in the county that is equipped to handle all case types, safely holds inmates and juvenile detainees, and offers a secure, healthy environment for court users, inmates, staff, and judges. It is hard to conceive that our current facility, with such dire, irreparable security, crowding, physical, and access problems could or should remain in service much longer.

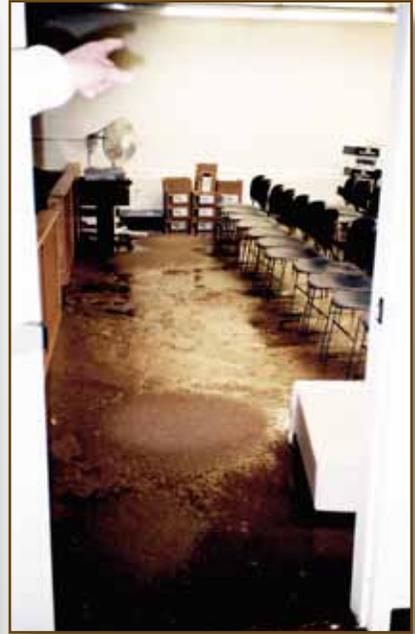
Major milestones have been completed for the project. Site acquisition in the optimum downtown location close to the jail, Sheriff's Office, public and private attorneys, other justice partners, public transportation, and other services has been approved and is widely supported in the community. As part of this transaction Siskiyou County and the City of Yreka have contributed substantial funds and in-kind staff services, while Siskiyou County will move into the court's space in the existing courthouse once the New Yreka Courthouse is constructed.

The New Yreka Courthouse project is now in the pre-planning phase, and Siskiyou County has encumbered \$3.3 million in local court construction funds to pay for a significant portion of this phase. These funds will not be available in the future if the New Yreka Project is eliminated.

We believe that the New Yreka Courthouse Project represents the pinnacle of court consolidation as embodied in SB 1732 and funded by SB 1407 by "ensur[ing] uniformity of access to all court facilities in California."

Thank you for your consideration of the New Yreka Courthouse Project.

Courthouse Sewage Flood



ADA Challenges



1954



1857



Superior Court of California
County of Siskiyou

311 4th Street • P.O. Box 1026 • Yreka, California 96097-1026



Addendum to SB 1407 New Yreka Courthouse Needs Report

The AOC recently provided updated information to Item 7.6, Judicial Weighted Caseload. Prior to receiving this information, we had already printed our report. As a result, we wish to offer the following additional information on Item 7.6:

1. Initially, the projected need calculated by the AOC was for six courtrooms for Siskiyou Superior Court. Siskiyou Superior Court subsequently, in consultation with the AOC, volunteered to reduce the number of courtrooms for the project to five courtrooms, and the total project gross square footage by 17,000 square feet.
2. While the recent weighted judicial caseload study shows a need for 3.9 judicial officers for Siskiyou Superior Court, this number reflects the best estimate by AOC staff at a point in time using agreed upon criteria that changes over time for California courts. The judicial weighted caseload study is very useful information, but it should not be considered the definitive authority on judicial needs. Many other factors such as an increase in trials, travel time to outlying courts, and other changes in case filings should be considered as well as other unique characteristics among the trial courts.
3. Even if 3.9 judicial officers is considered the final authority on judicial need for Siskiyou Superior Court, our court uses approximately six tenths of a judicial officer with assigned judges and judges pro tem. Thus, at a minimum, Siskiyou Superior court would need the equivalent of 4.5 judicial officers, or five courtrooms.
4. It should also be noted that Siskiyou Superior Court has five judicial officers, and with the use of assigned judges and judges pro tem, has the equivalent of 5.6 judicial officers according to the AOC. This is a statistic based on actual use of judicial officers as opposed to the findings on judicial weights.