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MICHAEL WOODMAN, Executive Director


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MEMORANDUM

TO: Nevada County Transportation Commission

FROM: Mike Woodman, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report for the March 2021 Meeting

DATE: March 17, 2021

READY NEVADA COUNTY – EXTREME CLIMATE EVENT MOBILITY & ADAPTATION PLAN

As part of the regional transportation planning process, the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC), in coordination with the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services, local jurisdictions, and Caltrans District 3, contracted with the consulting firm GHD to prepare the “READY” Nevada County - Extreme Climate Event Mobility & Adaptation Plan. The purpose of this planning effort is to prepare a transportation related extreme climate event vulnerability assessment and climate adaptation strategies.

The study will identify the climate-related weaknesses of the transportation system in Nevada County, including risks related to wildfire, and will provide actionable strategies for integration into transportation plans, transportation improvement programs, and emergency response plans for the region. The development and implementation of these strategies are intended to help mitigate and reduce the potential for loss of life and the duration and severity of climate related impacts. Other key objectives include enhanced communication channels and cross-education of best practices from local and regional first responders (e.g. local fire, police, and sheriff departments, CALFIRE, CHP, and others); and educating citizens and public officials.

The consultant is currently completing the review of background climate data and projections (precipitation, temperature, wildfire risk, dam failure, etc.) and identification of potential vulnerabilities. The consultant is currently preparing an inventory and evaluation of vulnerable populations, communities, transportation infrastructure, and other key resources. The consultant has also begun conducting climate event debriefing interviews with public officials, first responders, and other key stakeholders from nearby communities impacted by recent extreme climate events to identify vulnerabilities, lessons learned, and gather possible strategies to address future events.

NCTC staff, in coordination with GHD, will host an online public workshop in mid-April to introduce the project and scope, review existing conditions and observations, and gather input from stakeholders. Following the public workshop, the consultant will begin preparation of draft adaptation strategies based on the existing conditions report and initial public/stakeholder input.

WESTERN NEVADA COUNTY TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

As part of the regional transportation planning process, NCTC in coordination with Nevada County, contracted with GHD to update the Western Nevada County Transit Development Plan (WNCTDP). The purpose of the WNCTDP is to develop a five-year transit planning guide with recommendations to assist the Nevada County Transit Services Division in making sustainable operational adjustments and capital purchases for the fixed route transit system and paratransit services in western Nevada County.

The consultant has completed an analysis of existing demographics and economic conditions of the region as it relates to the need for public transit services, an evaluation of the existing transit services, has conducted online surveys, and has developed draft service alternatives that focus on enhancing existing services, as well as meeting identified transit needs that are sustainable. An online public workshop will be held in early April to review the study findings and draft alternatives. Following the public workshop, the consultant will incorporate input and prepare the Draft WNCTDP, which will be presented to the Transit Services Commission at their May 19, 2021 meeting for review and comment.

NEVADA COUNTY COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT - HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

As part of the regional transportation planning process, the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC), in coordination with Nevada County and the Town of Truckee, contracted with the consultant firm GHD to update the Nevada County Coordinated Public Transit - Human Service Transportation Plan (NCCPT-HSTP). This project will facilitate continued coordination between health and human services and transportation stakeholders, identify the existing transportation needs in Nevada County, and identify potential solutions.

The consultant has collected data regarding the public transportation options, human services transportation services, and private transportation options in western and eastern Nevada County. GHD has also documented the transit needs and gaps in service based on the review of demographic and economic data, unmet transit needs data, and input from stakeholder interviews, online surveys, and an online public workshop. The consultant is currently preparing draft strategies directed at meeting the identified transit needs.

An online public workshop will be held in early April to review the study findings and draft alternatives. Following the public workshop, the consultant will incorporate input and prepare the Draft NCCPT-HSTP, which will be presented to the Transit Services Commission at their May 19, 2021 meeting for review and comment.

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY - CLIMATE ACTION PLAN FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE (CAPTI)

On September 20th, 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order (EO) N-19-19 which calls for actions from multiple state agencies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. This includes a direct acknowledgement of the role the transportation sector must play in tackling climate change. The order states:

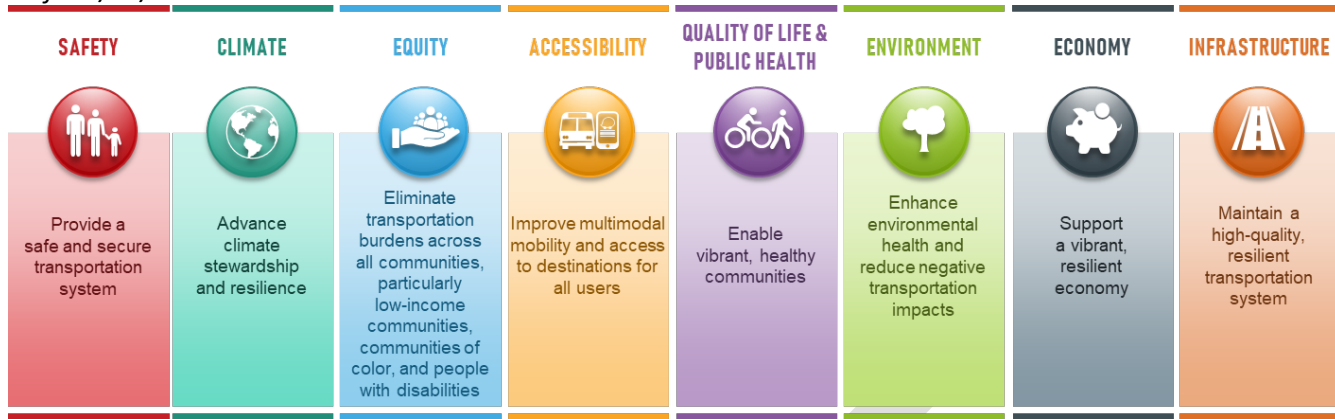
“California has ambitious and essential climate goals to transition to a healthier, more sustainable and more inclusive economy, including reducing GHGs 40% below 1990 levels by 2030... California has made substantial, measurable progress on our goals, but in recent years, direct tailpipe emissions from cars, ships, diesel trains, airplanes, and other transportation sources have remained a stubborn driver of greenhouse gas emissions, totaling 40.1 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions statewide.”

To further the State's climate goals, EO N-19-19 directs the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to leverage discretionary state transportation funds to reduce GHG emissions in the transportation sector and adapt to climate change. The Executive Order directs CalSTA to align transportation spending with the State's Climate Change Scoping Plan where feasible; direct investments to strategically support smart growth to increase infill housing production; reduce congestion through strategies that encourage a reduction in driving and invest further in walking, biking, and transit; and ensure that overall transportation costs for low-income Californians do not increase as a result of these policies. Further, EO N-79-20 directed the state to invest in creating new clean transportation options in urban, suburban, and rural settings for all Californians, as well as for goods movement.

In response, CalSTA has begun development of the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), and NCTC staff have been following and coordinating with the Rural Counties Task Force and North State Super Region groups who are actively engaged with the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA). One main issue of concern regarding the Draft Investment Strategies (attached), is related to Strategy 4 and capacity increasing projects.

Regarding Strategy 4, NCTC staff recognizes that the focus in the CAPTI is to promote projects that do not increase passenger vehicle travel and vehicle miles traveled and rather to consider alternative strategies to reduce congestion especially in urban areas; however, there needs to be recognition that in some suburban and rural areas of the state, strategic capacity increasing projects are appropriate and the need for the project is not always driven by congestion. Also, many of these rural projects do not significantly increase Vehicle Miles of Travel, but are needed to improve safety, operations, connectivity, and to facilitate evacuation in high wildfire risk areas. NCTC staff have expressed these concerns and are waiting to see the language contained in the Draft CAPTI report, which is anticipated to be released in early March for review and comment.

attachment



Fundamental to this vision is a continued commitment to a “fix-it-first” approach to our transportation system—ensuring the continued maintenance and repair of transportation infrastructure necessary to serve communities and support the state’s goals.

Investment Strategies to Reduce Emissions & Prepare for Climate Change

EO N-19-19 directs CalSTA to leverage state funding programs where the State plays a role in scoping, recommending, or selecting specific projects to further the implementation of this transportation vision. These specific funding programs are as follows:

- Active Transportation Program (ATP)
- Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP)
- Local Partnerships Program (LPP)
- Solutions for Congested Corridors (SCCP)
- State Highway Operations & Protection Program (SHOPP)
- Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP)
- Transit & Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)

Although California’s statewide transportation funding programs have different statutory aims and invest in different types of infrastructure, collectively they can help us work towards our transportation vision. Understanding that there isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to meeting our vision across the state’s diverse communities, a range of investment strategies are needed to reach the outcomes outlined in the draft CTP 2050. These investment strategies will work to reduce our dependence on driving, increase multi-modal options for all communities, and equitably meet our climate goals. In turn, these programs should collectively focus on prioritizing projects that align with the following investment strategies, as applicable within their existing program intent.

State investments should deploy the following strategies, as applicable:

1. **Reduce public health harms and maximize benefits to disproportionately impacted** disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and communities of color, in urbanized and rural regions and involve these communities early in decision-making. Investments should also avoid placing new or exacerbating existing substantial burdens on communities, even if unintentional.
2. **Make safety improvements to reduce fatalities and severe injuries of all users towards zero** on our roadways and transit systems by focusing on context-appropriate speeds, prioritizing vulnerable user safety to support mode shift, and ultimately implementing a safe systems approach.
3. **Assess physical climate risk** as standard practice for transportation infrastructure projects to enable informed decision making, especially in communities that are most vulnerable to climate risks.
4. **Promote projects that do not increase passenger vehicle travel**, particularly in urbanized settings where other mobility options can be provided. Projects should aim to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and not induce significant VMT growth. When addressing congestion, consider alternatives to highway capacity expansion, such as providing multimodal options in the corridor, employing demand management strategies (i.e. pricing), and using technology to optimize operations.
5. **Build towards an integrated, statewide rail and transit network**, centered around the existing California State Rail Plan that leverages the California Integrated Travel Program to provide seamless, affordable, multimodal interregional travel options to all.
6. **Promote compact infill development while protecting residents and businesses from displacement** by supporting transportation projects that support housing for low income residents near job centers, provide walkable communities, and address affordability to reduce the housing-transportation cost burden and reduce auto trips.
7. **Progress developing a zero-emission freight transportation system** that avoids and mitigates environmental justice impacts, reduces criteria and toxic air pollutants, improves freight's economic competitiveness and efficiency, and integrates multi-modal design and planning into infrastructure development on freight corridors.
8. **Incorporate safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure** on portions of the State Highway System that intersect active transportation networks, provide accessibility for transit users, or serve as small town or rural main streets, particularly in low income and disadvantaged communities across the state.
9. **Include investments in light, medium, and heavy-duty zero-emission-vehicle (ZEV) infrastructure** or supportive infrastructure as part of larger transportation projects. Support the innovation in and development of the ZEV market and help ensure ZEVs are accessible to all, particularly to those in more rural or remote communities.
10. **Protect natural and working lands** from conversion to more intensified uses by supporting local and regional conservation planning that focuses development where it already exists to help retain carbon sequestration benefits.