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MICHAEL WOODMAN, Executive Director
AARON HOYT, Deputy Executive Director


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MEMORANDUM

TO: Nevada County Transportation Commission

FROM: Michael Woodman, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report for the March 1, 2023 Meeting

DATE: March 1, 2023

CALTRANS DISTRICT 3 STATE ROUTE 49 EVACUATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PROPOSAL - STATE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROGRAM

Caltrans District 3 has submitted a climate adaptation funding proposal focused on improving evacuation efficiency in the State Route 49 corridor between Ponderosa Way, just north of Alta Sierra Drive, and Wolf Road/Combie Road for consideration in the State Transportation Infrastructure Climate Adaptation Program. This project implements adaptation and resiliency strategies from the READY Nevada County Extreme Climate Event Mobility and Adaptation Plan (2022) by improving the proposed segment to current design standards through the construction of shoulders and a two-way left turn lane that could be utilized to improve efficiency of evacuation egress and ingress of emergency responders.

These improvements can be utilized during evacuation events to help address the significant traffic volumes anticipated. In the mostly likely case of a southbound evacuation, the northbound travel lane will be allocated for emergency responder ingress while the two-way left-turn lane, southbound lane and shoulder could be used to assist with evacuation of the public.

This new funding program is part of the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) federal funding authorization bill. This funding program presents a unique funding opportunity to make an investment in the State Route 49 corridor that could help increase the ability to more efficiently evacuate residents and improve safety.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES WILDFIRE RESEARCH CENTER EVACUATION MODELING RESEARCH PROJECT WESTERN NEVADA COUNTY

Nevada County Transportation Commission staff have been working in coordination with the UCLA Wildfire Research Center and the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services in pursuit of grant funding opportunities to conduct a wildfire evacuation research project focused on western Nevada County. The research project aims at developing a comprehensive, multi-purpose, community-centered Wildfire Evacuation Modeling and Simulation platform. The platform will integrate aspects of wildfire dynamics, traffic, and human behavior models through a probabilistic approach for assessing the likelihood of safe evacuation of communities endangered by wildfires. The result will be a robust and user-friendly platform that will allow for:

- Assessing the impact of transportation infrastructure on the probability of a community's safe egress and comparing different scenarios, informing resource allocation.
- Evaluating the vulnerability of community residents to wildfires considering their socio-demographic profile and access to exit roads, assisting managers and planners before and during evacuation efforts.
- Identifying the most vulnerable communities in California, informing actions across sectors and regions.

The project is intended to accomplish the following objectives:

- Integrate a robust traffic model that will allow comparing the impact of different scenarios on community evacuation, e.g., increased roads capacity, modified roads network, blockage of roads at a particular time.
- Integrate aspects of community resilience for developing metrics for assessing and improving the resilience of communities in danger of wildfires.
- Expand the human behavior model, extending the adopted socio-demographic factors and their impact on residents' evacuation awareness, decision-making, and movement times.
- Integrate different sources of wildfire spreading data, considering not only historical fires but also projections that include climate change.
- Develop a user-friendly interface for the decision-making of different stakeholders, including planners, evacuation managers, firefighters, and researchers.

Integrating robust fire, traffic, and human behavior models, along with community resilience and infrastructure aspects, will provide a risk-informed, model- and data-driven approach for wildfire evacuation management. Once developed, it is intended to be utilized to increase the safety of California communities vulnerable to wildfires, optimally informing resource allocation, and helping save lives.

CALTRANS FISCAL YEAR 2023/24 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM

NCTC staff in coordination with the Nevada County Transit Services Division will be submitting a grant application for Fiscal Year 2023/24 Sustainable Communities Grant funding to conduct a Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) of the western Nevada County fixed route and paratransit public transit services (Nevada County Connects/Nevada County Now). The analysis will include an evaluation of the existing transit/paratransit services and is intended to help guide the transit systems' emergence from depressed pandemic ridership. The study will also analyze alternative operating models with a key focus of improving transit system efficiency, effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability. The COA will consider an entire spectrum of service options ranging from minor modifications to a full "reversioning" of the system. Grant awards will be announced in the summer of 2023, and if NCTC is successful the planning study will be amended into the Fiscal Year 2023/24 Overall Work Program.