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MEMORANDUM

TO: Nevada County Transportation Commission

FROM: Mike Woodman, Executive Director 

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

DATE: September 15, 2021

NCTC 2021 ANNUAL SALARY COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT

In March 2016, NCTC adopted a Compensation Policy which included the provision that annually, NCTC will adjust its salary ranges, as budget allows, by the average cost of living increase provided by the local labor market to the journey level planner.

This month staff received the final cost of living adjustments (COLA) for the local labor market:

- County of Nevada: 2.0%
- City of Grass Valley: 5.0%
- Town of Truckee: 1.5%
- City of Nevada City: 5.0%

The average of the labor market increases for 2021 is 3.8%. The COLA increase will go into effect retroactive to July 1, 2021 for all NCTC employees. The NCTC Compensation Policy also provides that NCTC will compare its compensation to other Regional Transportation Planning Agencies approximately every five years, which is scheduled to occur in 2026.

STATE BUDGET ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM AUGMENTATION UPDATE

The 2021-22 California State Budget signed in July included \$500 million in funds to augment the Active Transportation Program (ATP). The California Transportation Commission proposed to use the revenue to fund more of the projects previously submitted through the 2021 Active Transportation Program. However, the Budget also required subsequent legislation be enacted before October 10th for those funds to be released. At this time, it appears the subsequent legislation required to release the \$500 million Active Transportation Program augmentation will not be acted upon before the Legislature adjourns. Because the Legislature will not convene again before the October deadline, the \$3.3 billion appropriated for the Governor's transportation package, including the appropriations for the Active Transportation Program, will revert to the General Fund to be available for potential allocation during the 2022 budget process.

The Assembly's Floor Report on the 2021 Budget states:

“Discussions concerning [...] proposed additional General Fund allocations to improve regional transit, adapt transportation systems to climate change, boost active transportation efforts, and fund other transportation improvements will continue through the fall and winter.”

NCTC will continue to monitor the proposed ATP augmentation.

CALTRANS RELEASES DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FOR THE STATE ROUTE 49 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AND SOLICITS PUBLIC INPUT

Caltrans hosted the first of two online public workshops to discuss the State Route (SR) 49 Corridor Improvement Project on September 7, 2021 to provide an overview of the project and information on how to review the draft environmental document that is available for public comment. A second online workshop is scheduled for September 22, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. (see attached press release for details). The draft environmental document for the SR 49 Corridor Improvement Project can be viewed at <https://www.nctc.ca.gov/Projects/SR-49-Corridor-Improvement-Project/index.html>. The public comment period closes October 8, 2021.

Improvements to the SR 49 corridor that improve safety, operations, mobility, and evacuation capacity are a top regional priority of NCTC. The SR 49 Corridor Improvement Project is the next planned phase of improvements within the corridor that is being developed by NCTC in coordination with Caltrans District 3. The SR 49 Corridor Improvement Project begins at the limits of the previous La Barr Meadows Signalization Project (PM 11.1) and ends just south of the McKnight Way Interchange (PM 13.3), connecting to the four lane Golden Center Freeway. The project (STIP 4E170) will make improvements to this segment focused on improving safety, evacuation capacity, operations, goods movement, and mobility improvements. This project is designed to be funded in three phases as state and federal transportation funding allow.

The ultimate project includes redirecting numerous entrances to the highway from a newly constructed frontage road system to access the highway at two new at-grade intersections that will either be roundabouts or signalized. The project will also construct northbound and southbound truck climbing lanes and will eliminate the merge points that currently exist to the north and south of the project limits, connecting to the existing four-lane northbound/southbound sections. The project includes southbound right turn lanes at Wellswood Way, Bethel Church Way, Smith Road, and Crestview Drive. This project also proposes to further address safety concerns through the installation of a continuous median barrier, eight-foot shoulders with rumble strips, animal crossing tunnel with fencing, enhanced wet night visibility striping, and pavement edge treatments.

Phase 1: Construction of the northbound truck climbing lane, a 16 foot wide continuous two way left turn lane, 10 foot shoulders, and elimination of the northbound merge point improving the highway to four lanes and improving northbound evacuation capacity. This phase includes southbound right turn lanes at Wellswood Way, Bethel Church Way, Smith Road, and Crestview Drive. Other safety features include enhanced wet night visibility striping, rumble strips, and pavement edge treatments. A wildlife undercrossing with fencing will be installed as part of this phase to help reduce deer strikes.

Phase 2: Construction of the southbound truck climbing lane, 10 foot shoulders with rumble strips, and elimination of the lane drop/merge point south of the McKnight Way Interchange improving the southbound highway segment to four lanes and increasing evacuation capacity. This phase will also include enhanced wet night visibility striping, rumble strips, and pavement edge treatments.

Phase 3: Construction of frontage roads, elimination of ingress/egress points, construction of two access-controlled intersections, initially proposed in the vicinity of Wellswood Lane and Smith Road, and installation of a center median barrier.

CALTRANS PREPARATION OF THE 2021 INTERREGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Caltrans Headquarters is currently preparing the funding recommendations for the 2021 Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP). The purpose of the ITIP is to improve interregional mobility for people and goods across the State of California on highway and passenger rail corridors of strategic importance. These strategic corridors provide the transportation network that connects the state's major regions to one another and connects the rural regions to the large urban areas. The corridors also provide connectivity to neighboring states and the international border with Mexico. The ITIP is a program of projects funded through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that obtains funding primarily through the per-gallon State tax on gasoline.

In accordance with California Government Code Section 14526: (a) Not later than October 15 of each odd-numbered year, based on the guidelines established pursuant to Section 14530.1, and after consulting with the transportation planning agencies, county transportation commissions, and transportation authorities, Caltrans shall submit to the commission the draft five-year interregional transportation improvement program consisting of all the following: (1) Projects to improve State highways, pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 164 of the Streets and Highways Codes. (2) Projects to improve intercity passenger rail system. (3) Projects to improve interregional movement of peoples, vehicles, and goods. (b) Projects included in the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program shall be consistent with the State Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan prepared pursuant to Section 14524.4.

State Route 49 is identified as a strategic interregional corridor and NCTC staff has been advocating for ITIP funding for the SR 49 Corridor Improvement Project. As part of that effort, in coordination with the County of Nevada, NCTC staff, along with Board of Supervisor members Ed Scofield and Sue Hoek, NCTC Chair Andrew Burton, and representatives from the County of Nevada, CALFIRE, Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, and the California Highway Patrol, recently met with Assemblywoman Megan Dahle on September 2, 2021 to discuss the importance of the SR 49 Corridor Improvement Project and seek assistance in advocating with Caltrans and the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA). The information presented was well received and Assemblywoman Dahle welcomed the opportunity to assist the SR 49 coalition in advocating for including funding for the project in the 2021 Interregional Transportation Improvement Program recommendations. In coordination with the County of Nevada, NCTC staff are working with the Assemblywoman to prepare a joint letter of support with Senator Brian Dahle to request support for funding consideration and trying to secure a meeting with Caltrans and CalSTA with the coalition to advocate for our project. NCTC staff will provide an update on these efforts at the November 17, 2021 NCTC meeting.