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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 September 20, 2023 Meeting

DATE: September 20, 2023

### NCTC 2023 ANNUAL COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT

NCTC's revised Compensation Policy adopted by Resolution 22-30 on July 20, 2022 includes the provision that NCTC will adjust its salary ranges annually, as budget allows, by the average cost of living increase provided by the local labor market for the journey level planner classification.

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

- County of Nevada: 2.0%
- City of Grass Valley: 3.0%
- City of Nevada City: 4.0%

The average of the labor market increases for 2023 is 3.0%. The COLA increase is effective retroactive to July 1, 2023, for all NCTC employees. The NCTC Compensation Policy also provides that NCTC will conduct a comprehensive review of its compensation with comparison to other similar Regional Transportation Planning Agencies approximately every five years, which is scheduled to next occur in 2026.

### LOCAL TRANSPORTATION CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROGRAM (LTCAP) GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

Nevada County Transportation Commission staff, in coordination with Caltrans District 3, submitted the State Route 49 Grass Valley Wildfire Evacuation Route Project to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) for funding consideration in the 2023 Local Transportation Climate Adaptation Program (LTCAP). Funding for LTCAP stems from the \$148.5 million in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (November 15, 2021) that established the Promoting Resilient Operations for

Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Formula and Discretionary Grant Programs and \$148 million from Senate Bill 198 to support resiliency, evacuation route and at-threat coastal infrastructure improvements.

The proposed project is intended to help address the existing evacuation barriers identified at bottleneck locations on the State Route 49 corridor between Combie Road/Wolf Road and Ponderosa Pines Way through the construction of structurally engineered shoulders and a center two-way left turn lane that could be utilized to allow contraflow travel out of the Grass Valley area during emergency events. The shoulders will be 12 feet wide southbound and 8 feet wide northbound. The 16-foot center two-way left turn lane will also improve safety and operations during non-emergency events allowing safer operations for vehicles entering and exiting the highway. The planned improvements will help to facilitate southbound contraflow during evacuation events, mitigating risks to residents of the Cities of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and unincorporated communities adjacent to the SR 49 corridor by reducing evacuation times while enhancing emergency ingress. Additionally, the project will harden infrastructure and improve climate resiliency.

The grant application requested \$35,000,000 of LTCAP funding, which includes a state only match request of \$5,833,000 to expedite Community Resilience and Evacuation Route improvements on State Route 49. The LTCAP funding requested will allow NCTC in partnership with Caltrans District 3 to advance the project through a coordinated strategic funding plan. Of the \$35 million total funding requested, approximately \$10 million of LTCAP is requested to complete the project development work (Project Approval/Environmental Documentation, Plans, Specifications & Estimates, Right-of-Way Support, and Construction Support), \$3.5 million for Right-of-Way Capital, and \$21.6 million is being requested to fully fund the construction in partnership with State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP) funding committed by Caltrans District 3. NCTC is the nominating agency and Caltrans District 3 will be the implementing agency. The CTC funding recommendations are anticipated to be announced in November 2023.

### **AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION CALIFORNIA CHAPTER 2023 PLANNING CONFERENCE "PLANNING AT A CROSSROADS"**

The American Planning Association California Chapter held the 2023 Planning Conference in Fresno, California on September 16-19, 2023. This three-day conference for planning professionals statewide hosts numerous sessions covering various topics of significance and challenges facing land use and transportation planners. NCTC's Executive Director moderated a panel session on research being conducted on the application of the theory of Induced Demand on transportation improvement projects in rural areas of California to address the lack of data.

The theory of induced demand or induced Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) is based on research conducted on congested urban highways and interstates and is focused on the effects of highway improvement projects that added capacity through construction of additional lanes. Research to date suggests that by reducing travel times from point "a" to point "b" on congested highways by constructing additional travel lanes can lead to additional trips that would not have otherwise occurred. The release of pent-up demand leads to increased VMT that was not originally accounted for and diminishes the true benefits of the project.

The panel session explored the literature review of the existing urban based research, analysis of case studies that looked at the changes in VMT at various time intervals after construction (i.e., 5, 10, & 20 years) of transportation improvement projects in rural areas of the state, and challenges experienced by Regional Transportation Planning Agencies related to application of new state policy guidance related to Vehicle Miles Traveled in rural areas.

### **CALTRANS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW 2023 STATEWIDE WORKSHOP**

On August 22-24, 2023, Caltrans hosted their annual planning conference for all Caltrans District level staff involved in the Local Development Review process that focuses on the review of local land use projects for potential impacts to the state highway system. NCTC's Executive Director was invited to participate on a panel to discuss how local agencies have developed methodologies and thresholds to implement the new state requirements related to the change to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). VMT replaced roadway level of services as the new metric of determining the significance of transportation impacts and opportunities for coordination.