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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 May 17, 2023

DATE: May 17, 2023

APRIL 12-13, 2023 CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION TOWN HALL MEETING

Annually the California Transportation Commission (CTC) holds one to two rural Town Hall meetings to provide the Commissioners and staff an opportunity to learn about different regions of the state and to hear about their unique needs and challenges. The most recent CTC Town Hall meeting was held on April 12-13, 2023 in Anderson, California and coordinated by the North State Super Region (NSSR). The NSSR represents the sixteen northern California Regional Transportation Planning Agencies/Metropolitan Planning Organizations, including NCTC. The group was formed in 2010 to provide a unified voice when addressing state and federal transportation funding and policy decisions.

NCTC's Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director attended the CTC Town Hall meeting, and as part of the agenda provided an overview and presentation of preliminary findings and next steps related to the Rural Induced Demand Study that NCTC is currently managing. The purpose of the study is to analyze the applicability of the concept of induced demand, which speculates that if a highway is widened it will create new vehicle trips and therefore reduce the intended congestion relief benefits. Rural agencies are concerned with the applicability of the urban based research in rural corridors absent significant congestion and are seeking data and analysis to help ensure the issue is correctly addressed in state guidelines, and that the associated funding program criteria do not unnecessarily limit the competitiveness of rural projects for state funding programs.

The presentation at the CTC Town Hall meeting was well received and staff from both the CTC and Caltrans Headquarters have been added to the Project Advisory Committee. NCTC has committed to attend a future regularly scheduled CTC meeting with updates as the study progresses.

UCLA COMMUNITY PYRO-RESILIENCE, EQUITABILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY (CYPRES) ENGINEERING RESEARCH CENTER COLLABORATION/STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Engineering Research team submitted a proposal for funding to the National Science Foundation on May 8, 2023 to establish an Engineering Research Center focused on conducting research on all aspects of wildfire resilience including evacuation planning/modeling. NCTC staff have been collaborating with the UCLA team, and in the event that funding is awarded to establish the research center, Nevada County has been identified as the first test bed region.

On March 22-23rd, 2023, NCTC's Executive Director attended the UCLA Engineering Research Center CyPRES Collaboration/Stakeholder workshop in Los Angeles and participated as a panel member to discuss infrastructure needs in relation to wildfire research. NCTC staff highlighted data needs related to documentation for competitive state and federal funding programs and opportunities for developing enhancements to evacuation modeling analysis tools to help guide and prioritize the investment of limited resources.

The main premise of CyPRES Engineering Research Center will be its transformative nature, which is reflected in its objectives:

- (1) To converge a set of key disciplines (from social science to engineering) into producing a necessarily holistic wildfire resilience framework that incorporates social equity and sustainability;
- (2) To co-produce research outcomes and technology with stakeholders, industry and academic partners, as well as local, state, and federal agencies through an inclusive and open culture environment;
- (3) To create a hub for knowledge, federated data tools, benchmarks, technology prototypes, integrated solutions, educational materials, and workforce training; and finally,
- (4) To devise and leverage technology solutions that will offer a sea change in capabilities in wildfire resilience assessment and future design of resilient communities.

It is anticipated that the National Science Foundation will announce the successful applicants by October of 2023. Please view the PowerPoint presentation of the CyPRES Engineering Research Center on our website, <https://www.nctc.ca.gov//documents/Newsletters/CyPRES-Workshop-Main.pptx.pdf>

CALTRANS DRAFT STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM MANAGEMENT PLAN CONCERNS

On February 15, 2023, Caltrans released the Draft State Highway System Management Plan (SHSMP) for review and comment. The SHSMP integrates maintenance, rehabilitation, and operation into a single management plan that includes both a statewide needs assessment and an investment plan that will guide the management of the State Highway System. The needs assessment presents the total needs of the existing State Highway System from a performance management analysis that estimates the costs necessary to close all condition and performance gaps on the State Highway System. The needs assessment is not constrained by current funding levels for the management of the State Highway

System. The investment plan defines how available funding with budget constraints is recommended to be allocated and prioritizes where available resources should be focused.

California is set to make a historical investment of \$1.744 billion of Climate Adaptation and Resilience program funding through the Draft 2023 State Highway System Management Plan (SHSMP) to address the impacts of climate change.

However, as proposed in the current draft version of the 2023 SHSMP, this landmark amount of climate funding will only target risks associated with Sea Level Rise. NCTC staff and other inland Regional Transportation Planning Agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations submitted comments relaying concerns that there is no funding identified to address the annually re-occurring climate related impacts such as wildfire, flooding, and landslides.

The importance of this funding opportunity to address the recent and annually occurring climate threats and impacts from wildfire, flooding, landslides, and other extreme weather cannot be understated. An investment of this magnitude should provide significant benefits and strategically reduce climate impacts across the diverse regions of the state. With the climate and resiliency investment as proposed in the Draft SHSMP, California is missing a strategic opportunity to address significant inland, climate vulnerabilities and adaptation needs.

NCTC staff submitted comments on the Draft SHSMP that are included in Item 13 Correspondence of the May 17, 2023 NCTC meeting packet. NCTC's Deputy Executive Director, Aaron Hoyt also attended the March 23-24, 2023, California Transportation Commission meeting in Los Angeles and provided comments relaying NCTC staff's concerns. NCTC staff will also be attending the May 17, 2023 CTC meeting virtually and provide additional comments on this issue. NCTC staff have also communicated concerns related to this issue to Nevada County's legislative representatives.