

Nevada County Transportation Commission

The Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Nevada County. NCTC coordinates state and federal transportation programs for Nevada County, the City of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and the Town of Truckee.

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This Newsletter is Prepared by the Staff of the Nevada County Transportation Commission

Daniel B. Landon, Executive Director
Mike Woodman, Transportation Planner
Nancy D. Holman, Administrative Services Officer
Toni Perry, Administrative Assistant

The Nevada County Transportation Commission Newsletter is published quarterly. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please write or call the Nevada County Transportation Commission office.

101 Providence Mine Road, Suite 102
 Nevada City, CA 95959

(530) 265-3202

Fax: (530) 265-3260

Web Page: <http://www.nctc.ca.gov>

E-mail: nctc@nccn.net

Upcoming NCTC Meeting

The next meeting of the Nevada County Transportation Commission is scheduled on: **Wednesday, January 26, 2011 at 9:30 a.m., Grass Valley City Council Chambers, 125 East Main Street, Grass Valley, CA.**

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NEVADA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

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Pedestrian Improvement Plan Afoot In Nevada County

The Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) is spearheading an effort to create the first Pedestrian Improvement Plan for Nevada County. The plan's focus is to improve conditions for pedestrians and make walking a viable mode of transportation for all citizens and visitors in the county. The development process of the plan was aimed at objectively evaluating pedestrian needs, identifying and prioritizing improvement projects, listing ways to improve access to funding, and to supplement the adopted General Plans in the county. Recommendations in the plan encourage preservation of the rural and historic character of our region.

Caltrans awarded the NCTC a \$65,000 Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant this year, and development of the Pedestrian Improvement Plan started in April. NCTC staff have been working closely with Meghan Mitman and Charlie Alexander of Fehr & Peers, a transportation consulting firm based in northern California, and a Project Advisory Committee comprised of staff from



Safe Routes to School funding is one venue to promote walkability projects

Caltrans, Nevada County, the City of Grass Valley, Nevada City, the Town of Truckee, and Live Healthy Nevada County. A comprehensive public outreach process included workshops in Grass Valley and Truckee in August that were hosted by Fehr & Peers. NCTC staff facilitated booths at local public markets in Grass Valley, Nevada City, and Truckee to obtain feedback from the public, and comment cards were also available on the NCTC website. The Commission has been pleased with the numerous efforts to involve the community.

One of the biggest obstacles and potential safety issues posed to walking in Nevada County is the lack of continuous sidewalks outside of downtown Grass Valley, Nevada City, and Truckee. The plan identified and mapped recent vehicle-pedestrian collisions, which exacted the quantity and nature of these types of accidents. Pedestrian-vehicle collision "hot spots" were analyzed to propose development of future safety projects. This analysis revealed that the most common collision type in Nevada County involves pedestrians forced to travel in the streets due to a lack of safe routes (see photo below).

Preparation of the plan included a substantial effort to inventory and assess the existing pedestrian infrastructure. Using GPS-linked video, Fehr & Peers developed a GIS map inventory of sidewalks and curb ramps. This information will help the jurisdictions expand their sidewalk networks and assess whether to incorporate sidewalks as part of future transportation or development projects. Using the inventory of existing pedestrian infrastructure, Fehr & Peers worked with each jurisdiction to develop a recommended sidewalk network. This is the first time the jurisdictions have comprehensively assessed where to build sidewalks and how to link projects to increase walkability by planning projects in a network that provides safe routes to and from frequented destinations in the county.

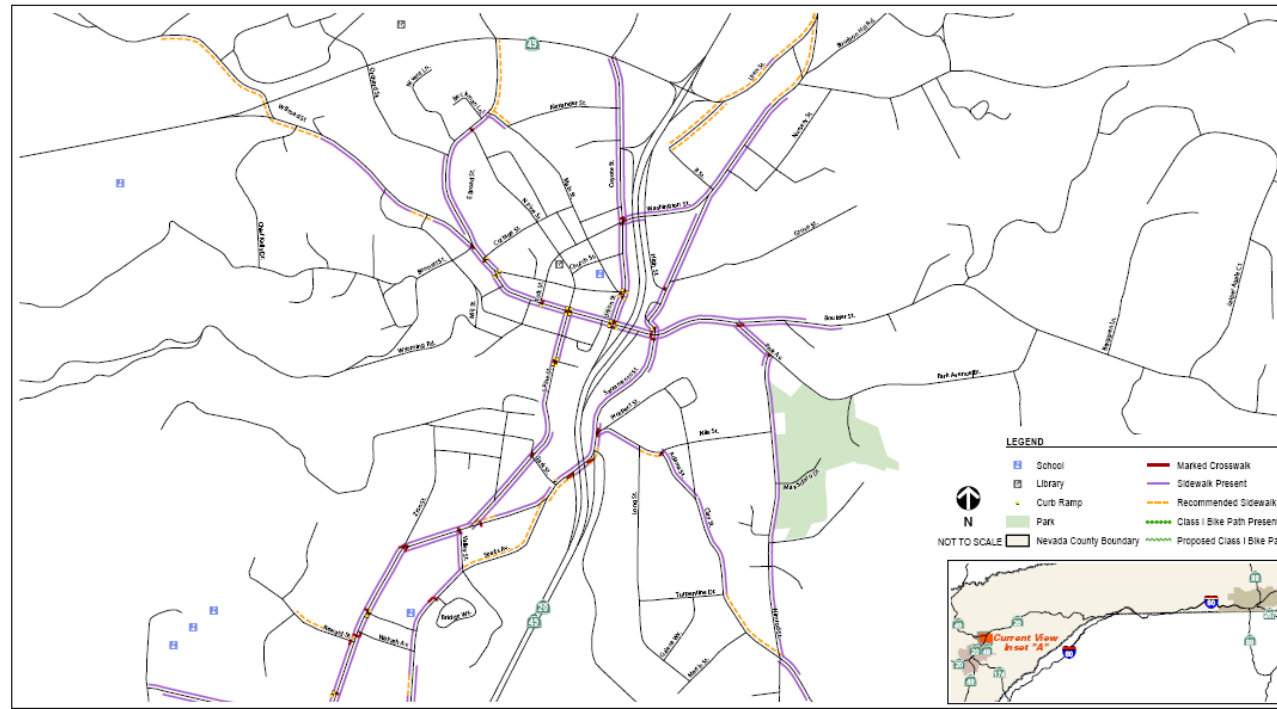
In addition to expanding the sidewalk network, the plan proposes projects that aim to improve safety and accessibility. Fehr & Peers conducted

(continued on page 2)



Sidewalks are needed on key segments of Donner Pass Road

Pedestrian Improvement Plan (continued)



Recommended Sidewalk Network – Nevada City

“walking audits” in key areas of the jurisdictions with NCTC staff, jurisdiction staff, and interested citizens. The purpose of the walking audits was to candidly assess how well the existing pedestrian infrastructure safely accommodates all users, including the ease of use and accessibility of facilities by the disabled. The plan documents where curbs ramps with “truncated domes” (pictured below right) are needed to alert pedestrians with vision impairments of their approach to streets and hazardous drop-offs.



Walking audit in Truckee allows a closer look at issues



Curb ramp with “truncated domes” in Grass Valley

Projects identified in the plan were prioritized based on how well they improve safety, provide access to key destinations, and offer accessibility for the disabled. Projects were stratified into three priority tiers: high, medium, and low. This prioritization methodology allows flexibility to jurisdictions when selecting projects. The process considers all Tier 1 projects as equal; therefore, one project does not have to be justified over another to be selected for construction. The plan identifies potential funding sources for projects and includes “Grant-Ready Fact Sheets” to help prepare funding applications.

The task for the jurisdictions, once the plan is approved, will be to implement improvements. The Pedestrian Improvement Plan provides a basis for education and encouragement to help the community utilize the improved facilities. Parents, teachers, and walking advocates in Grass Valley and Nevada City recently organized walk-to-school events (see photo on page 1) that promoted their week-long walk-to-school campaign. State and federal Safe Routes to School grants help pay for infrastructure improvements such as new sidewalks, crosswalk enhancements, and educational campaigns on the health and environmental benefits of walking to school.

The Draft Nevada County Pedestrian Improvement Plan is available for review on the NCTC website at www.nctc.ca.gov. Comments on the draft report are to be submitted to NCTC no later than 5:00 p.m. on or before December 29, 2010.

NCTC staff will present the draft plan to the city councils of Grass Valley and Nevada City, at their request, before the final report is brought to the March 16, 2011 NCTC meeting for approval.

North State Super Region

North State Super Region ... what is it? Sixteen counties in the northern part of California decided they share similar issues, such as transportation needs, population growth, and hard-hit economies. An alliance was formed with their Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) to coordinate information and resources, have more influence than as individual planning agencies, and have a stronger voice in Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

The North State Super Region represents the counties north of the Sacramento and Bay Area metropolitan regions (see map to right), which contains 26% of California’s land area and 37% of California’s state and federal roads. The total land area of the Super Region is 42,620 square miles. The total population of the Super Region is 1,044,002 persons, half of which reside in the Sacramento Valley sub-area. In the long-term, the Super Region counties will continue to be attractive for new growth. Much of the growth will be focused in the North Sacramento Valley, which is also a service hub to most of the surrounding counties.

Several issues the Super Region RTPAs face are under-investment by the state on transportation infrastructure, a hard-hit resource-based economy, and projected population growth which is encroaching on prime agricultural land and sensitive environmental habitat. The San Joaquin Valley presents an example of what can happen if counties do not adequately plan and prepare for a growing population. A region that was once considered the “nation’s salad bowl” is now struggling with the impacts of two decades of population growth that has led to significant traffic congestion, safety issues with at-grade railroad crossings, urbanization that has sprawled into once prime agricultural land, and a distinction with Los Angeles of having the worst air quality in the nation. The Super Region RTPAs are in a unique position to ensure that the North State does not follow a similar course. Unlike the San Joaquin Valley of twenty years ago, the North State has modern tools such as blueprint planning and regional collaboration. Moreover, state and federal agencies are currently much more supportive of this approach.

Goals of the coalition include influencing transportation policy, collaborating on grants, and pursuing a north region representative on the California Transportation Commission. The first meeting of the Super Region was held on October 20th in Butte County. One of the items discussed on the agenda was potential support of the *Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act*. This act provides payments to counties for roads, routes to public schools, and provides funds to invest in Title Two Forest Improvement Projects. According to the Partnership for Rural America Campaign website, Nevada County has received or will receive a total of \$2,275,957 in payments over the five-year period of 2008 to 2012 from the *Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act*.

The next meeting of the North State Super Region is scheduled for February 16, 2011. One of the agenda items at that meeting will be development of a North State Super Region legislative platform.



Nevada County 2010 RTP Update

The 2010 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update is currently in the review and comment period for the draft report. NCTC is required by state law to prepare, adopt, and submit an updated RTP to the California Transportation Commission and to Caltrans every five years. The purpose of the RTP is to document the short-term (2010-2020) and long-term (2020-2030) regional transportation policy direction, multi-modal regional transportation needs, and to set forth a financially constrained action plan to meet those needs. Projects seeking federal and state funding must be included in or be consistent with the plan. The Draft 2010 RTP includes projects that can reasonably anticipate funding within the plan’s fiscal constraints. The RTP update also identifies projects that can be implemented if additional funds become available.

Given the state budget problems over the past five years and reductions in transportation funding revenues, the additions or changes to the 2005 adopted Nevada County RTP are relatively minor. They include:

- Updated state highway and regional transportation project costs
- Changed project scopes and timeframes reflective of funding limitations
- Updated transportation funding revenue forecasts
- Updated air quality information and addressed recent Greenhouse Gas Legislation
- Updated information regarding goods movement, transit services, non-motorized transportation, aviation, rail, transportation systems management, and intelligent transportation systems.

The Draft Nevada County 2010 Regional Transportation Plan is available for review at the NCTC website at www.nctc.ca.gov. Comments on the draft report are to be submitted to the Nevada County Transportation Commission no later than 5:00 p.m. on or before December 29, 2010. Comments can also be addressed to Mike Woodman, Transportation Planner, NCTC, 101 Providence Mine Road, Suite 102, Nevada City, CA 95959. All comments are welcome.