

Nevada County Transportation Commission meeting – May 18, 2022

Draft Ready Nevada County Extreme Climate Event Mobility and Adaptation Plan Presentation by Kendra Ramsey from GHD, Inc.

Mike Woodman:

NCTC's consultant, GHD Inc., has completed the Draft Ready Nevada County Extreme Climate Event Mobility Adaptation Plan. The completion of the draft report was guided by a project advisory committee consisting of representatives from NCTC, our local jurisdictions, Nevada County Office of Emergency Services, and some of our first responders in the county. It also included several opportunities for public outreach and public input that have been incorporated into the draft. Kendra Ramsey with GHD is with us today to present a brief overview.

Kendra Ramsey:

Great. Thanks, Mike. I will share my screen for the brief presentation. It has been my great pleasure working with NCTC staff and a fantastic group of other local agencies, first responders, and community members in developing this draft plan. We'll go over a quick background on the project and goals, a little bit on our outreach process, what can be found in the plan, and what the findings overview is.

The project purpose really is to build on all of the great efforts that have happened already, on responding to climate events like wildfire, looking at evacuation needs and hazard mitigation, and really think specifically about the transportation network and how all of the different agencies in the county can prepare and adapt to meet needs moving forward and make sure the transportation network is able to respond to these events in the future. Things like flooding, wildfire, the effects of increased temperature, landslides, and other impacts that happen when a lot of these different factors merge together at once.

The goals are really to understand what the vulnerabilities are, both currently and predicted in the future, with the modeling of what climate impacts will happen in the future, develop strategies to adapt to these changing conditions to both prepare for, better withstand, and then recover from climate events. A key component is community feedback, both members of the public, as well as the different first responders and agencies that'll have roles to play in these efforts, and then make sure that any recommendations preserve the qualities of Nevada County moving forward.

A little bit on outreach. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, obviously, we had our outreach entirely virtually. We had three public workshops on the plan, early in the development process to gather existing conditions information once we had some initial strategies and concepts developed, and then, more recently, to present the draft plan and receive comments.

We also had a project advisory committee, which Mike mentioned, that had representatives from a wide range of agencies within the county who provided very valuable feedback on the efforts that they had done in the past, that were currently underway, and planned in the future, as well as feedback directly on the strategies that were developed and some of the modeling and predictions for the future and how that related to what they were currently seeing. We did some key stakeholder outreach more directly to some of the first responders in the form of a survey and got some feedback from a lot of folks on efforts currently underway and ideas for the future.

We also had a public website that had a mapping exercise, which you see on the screen, to provide location-specific comments. We had a similar survey, identifying some challenges, and we posted the draft plan for public comment on the website with a comment form so that if folks wanted to provide comments that way they were able. And this word cloud had some of the survey responses, some of

the highlights from that. The plan components, there are several sections of the plan, existing conditions goes through the climate risks and vulnerabilities, fire hazard zones, the existing adaptation framework, policy and planning documents that exist and really looking at what a lot of the statewide databases say about the future of the county.

There are a number of maps both within the chapter and in the appendix that highlight the different areas in the county that are changing in risk over time and becoming increasingly high risk for different factors. Impact assessment is, what do these risks mean? What are the potential impacts of the increase in wildfire danger and the increase of severity of snow pack and rainfall and the cascading impacts of when these different factors both happen in a year, and what the geographic extent of those might be. The next section is really the meat of the plan, the adaptation strategies, policies, and concepts. All of the recommended things that the different actors in the county can do in the future to build on what has already been done and better prepare the transportation network for what's coming in the future.

The Implementation section discusses funding opportunities, and then there are detailed risk assessment maps in the appendix for more information. The findings, the solutions and concepts were developed in three buckets and some strategies fit into multiple buckets. Planning really looks at what additional planning studies or efforts might need to be done. Many of these have already been identified and some of the local agencies have already applied for additional funding for these studies, what design standards might need to be updated and other preparedness measures that have been identified by local agencies. Operational strategies look at how the transportation network can be maintained and operated in a way that better prepares for potential climate impacts. Hardening strategies are those recommendations for the actual physical infrastructure of the transportation network, whether it's new road construction, or when there are opportunities to upgrade or rebuild some of those facilities, this identifies some of the best practices for materials and development strategies that better withstand the potential impacts. The chapter that includes these solutions also identifies the likely lead and supporting agencies or organizations.

And so there's best ideas for who might be involved both based on prior work and where that strategy falls within the network of actors in the county. The adaptation categories, like with the strategies, some of the solutions fall into multiple categories, so evacuation planning and emergency preparedness, wildfire, extreme precipitation and flooding, and then crosscutting strategies, which are really those strategies that help address the cascading impacts. When we have a wildfire that destabilizes some of the hillsides, and then later there are landslides when extreme rain events might happen, for example. Solutions can fall into multiple categories and there is an entire set of these solutions and multiple categories. The concepts for the infrastructure changes are both new facilities, rebuilt facilities, and upgrades and maintenance, which are lower cost, lower effort.

Those are the main categories. And that's really the overview of the plan. There's a lot of detail in there and I'm sure that many folks will be most interested in what is identified for their individual organization or agency. And it is also broken down by geographic area. Happy to take any questions or comments at this time and really appreciate the opportunity to work with the Transportation Commission and receive all of your comments throughout the process as well as today. Thank you.

Ed Scofield:

Thank you, Kendra. Commissioners, comments, questions?

Jan Zabriskie:

This is Jan Zabriskie. I have a question on solidifying evacuation protocols. Kendra, could you just expand on what is meant by that and what the greatest concerns are?

Kendra Ramsey:

Without pulling up the full document, I think some of the main themes that were identified for evacuation protocols were, there were some comments that we received about both how good the communication network already is in comparison to other regions, but also the improvements that different responders had already identified and were already maybe looking into, so that's one area. Also looking at the routing and the impacts of the different climate events on the roadway network. We had a few areas, for example, that were identified of roadway congestion when there are evacuation events or if folks are diverted from I 80, for example, and then are going on 49, what the impacts are there? So that's another area that was discussed. Those are the two main ones that pop to the top of my head without pulling up the full document, but a lot of different solutions around those categories.

Jan Zabriskie:

Now that the report's done, are there areas where you think it could have been strengthened on that topic? The adequacy of the report, looking back on it, are there areas where you think the report could have been improved?

Kendra Ramsey:

I think we benefited greatly from both the community, the general public that was able to comment, and also the local agency actors that provided great comments. So I think we did our best to include the widest range of potential topics and solutions for those topics. I'm sure, like any planning document, there's probably more that could be added with some different perspectives, but we had a good swath of different folks commenting that provided feedback. So hopefully, it's as comprehensive as is useful for everyone.

Jan Zabriskie:

Thank you.

Jay Strauss:

What happens with the plan now that it's apparently done? I mean, did it just go on the shelf someplace or does it go to all of the agencies for action potentially?

Mike Woodman:

Now that the plan is done, we'll bring it back in July for final adoption. Although, if any of the commissioners haven't had a chance to take a look at the complete plan it is available on the NCTC website, and we would welcome any additional comments through the end of the month. But once the final plan is adopted at the July meeting, it will be distributed to the jurisdictions and partners. And there's already some recommendations from the plan such as developing an emergency evacuation plan, the Nevada County OES has already submitted for grant funding to do that study and NCTC would participate in that effort as well. We want it to be a plan that's utilized, it helps to identify areas where there are weaknesses and also some strategies where those weaknesses are identified to harden the infrastructure or things that the jurisdictions could undertake to help minimize future risks.

Jay Strauss:

So does NCTC staff monitor implementation of the recommendations over time? Is that part of an official role?

Mike Woodman:

In a sense through coordination with the local jurisdictions, we will be monitoring implementation with this being the first climate adaptation plan focused on transportation. It'll be a springboard for some numerous efforts that come out of that. But that is something we're happy to track, we will be working with the jurisdictions to see what recommendations they're carrying forward and the progress.

Ed Scofield:

I believe this becomes a tool for the jurisdictions and the agencies, and I know the county sounds like they're utilizing much of what's come out of this already in their evacuation plans.

Mike Woodman:

Actually, it'll also make both NCTC and the jurisdictions more competitive for certain new grant funding sources that are coming out of the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act, so there's a benefit to having that as well. There's not a lot of regions, especially rural regions that have these climate adaptation plans that focus on the transportation system. The only other one that I can really think of was Shasta County Regional Transportation Planning Agency, who several years ago, started on this effort after they'd been impacted by several large fires and other climate related events. And, we said, hey, that's a great idea for Nevada County to do something similar.

Jay Strauss:

Just one quick question. Is there a place where you can still look at the workshops because they were online for a bit? If somebody wanted to go back and re-look at the workshops. I downloaded the whole report, but I just was curious if you could still see them somewhere?

Mike Woodman:

Are those on the project page?

Kendra Ramsey:

I believe they are. I will double check that right now, and it looks like there's going to be an email to the commissioners to have the PowerPoint after the fact. But I will make sure those are still up there, they certainly were previously.

Mike Woodman:

And we can push out the link because the plan is on our NCTC website, but there's also a separate project specific website that you can get linked to with some of the other information. So we can push that link. Oh, there it is in the chat.

Kendra Ramsey:

And they are on there, I just checked.

Ed Scofield:

Okay. This item is for comments only and will be brought back in our July meeting for final approval. This is an opportunity to take a closer look at it if you wish. All right, any other comments? Then let's move on to the next item.