
**FINDINGS FOR THE NEVADA COUNTY
2016 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**
REQUIRED UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT
(Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq)

I. INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC), as the CEQA lead agency, to: 1) make written findings when it approves a project for which an environmental impact report (EIR) was certified, and 2) identify overriding considerations for significant and unavoidable impacts identified in the EIR.

These findings explain how NCTC, as the lead agency, approached the significant and potentially significant impacts identified in the environmental impact report (EIR) prepared for the 2016 Nevada County RTP Update (hereinafter "2016 RTP" or "proposed project"). The statement of overriding considerations identifies economic, social, technical, and other benefits of the proposed project that override any significant environmental impacts that would result from the proposed project.

As required under CEQA, the Final EIR describes the proposed project, adverse environmental impacts of the proposed project, and mitigation measures and alternatives that would substantially reduce or avoid those impacts. The information and conclusions contained in the EIR reflect NCTC's independent judgment regarding the potential adverse environmental impacts of the proposed project.

The Final EIR (which includes the Draft EIR, comments, responses to comments, and revisions to the Draft EIR) for the proposed project examined several alternatives to the proposed project that were not chosen as part of the approved project (the No Project, Financially Unconstrained, and Transit Enhanced Alternatives).

The Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations set forth below ("Findings") are presented for adoption by the NCTC, as NCTC's findings under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") (Public Resources Code, §21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., Title 14, § 15000 et seq.) relating to the proposed project. The Findings provide the written analysis and conclusions of the NCTAC regarding the proposed project's environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, and the overriding considerations, which in the NCTC's view, justify approval of the proposed project, despite its environmental effects.

II. GENERAL FINDINGS AND OVERVIEW

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Nevada County, which includes the Cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City, the Town of Truckee, and the County of Nevada. The NCTC, serving as the RTPA, is made up of seven Commissioners and four staff. The Commission is made up of the following representatives: Four members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and three are appointed by the incorporated municipalities in the County. The Board of Supervisors appoints two members of the Board of Supervisors and two county at-large representatives. The municipalities appoint the other three city/town representatives, one each from Grass Valley, Nevada City and the Town of Truckee. Together, these Commissioners represent the transportation interests of the region as a whole.

State law requires that the RTP be updated and submitted to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) every five years. The RTP needs to be updated in order to demonstrate the progress made toward implementing the 2010 RTP, to reflect any changing conditions, and to determine if changes are warranted to the NCTC's policies, programs, and projects for the next 20 years.

The purpose of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is to establish transportation policy and to document the short-term (2015-2025) and long-term (2025-2035) regional transportation needs covering the RTP horizon and to set forth an effective, cost-feasible Action Plan to meet these needs.

A key focus of the 2016 RTP is to transform the document to a performance-based planning approach that will bring a more systematic method of using information on transportation system performance. This approach will assist NCTC in developing investment priorities and will guide outcomes for the transportation plan and related planning documents. The update is also intended to create a better alignment of performance monitoring and transportation planning between state agencies, NCTC, and its regional partners.

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

The NCTC circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the proposed project on February 23, 2017 to trustee and responsible agencies, the State Clearinghouse (SCH# 1999072038), and the public. The NOP and comments are presented in Appendix A of the DEIR.

Concurrent with the NOC, the NCTC provided a public notice of availability for the Draft SEIR, and invite comment from the general public, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. The NOA was filed with the State Clearinghouse (SCH # 1999072038) and the County Clerk, and was published in a regional newspaper pursuant to the public noticing requirements of CEQA. The Draft EIR was available for public review from August 7 through September 20, 2017. The Draft EIR contains a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of project alternatives, identification of significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-

inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. The Draft EIR identifies issues determined to have no impact or a less than significant impact, and provides detailed analysis of potentially significant and significant impacts. Comments received in response to the NOP were considered in preparing the analysis in the Draft EIR.

The NCTC received one (1) comment letter during the Draft EIR public review period. No additional oral or written comments were received. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15088, this Final EIR responds to the written comments received. The Final EIR also contains minor edits to the Draft EIR, which are included in Section 3.0, Errata. This document and the Draft EIR, as amended herein, constitute the Final EIR.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS AND CUSTODIAN OF RECORD

For purposes of CEQA and the findings set forth herein, the record of proceedings for NCTC's findings and determinations consists of the following documents and testimony, at a minimum:

- The NOP, comments received on the NOP, and all other public notices issued by the NCTC in relation to the 2016 Nevada County Regional Transportation Plan EIR (e.g., Notice of Availability).
- The 2016 Nevada County Regional Transportation Plan Draft Supplemental EIR and Final EIR, including comment letters, and technical materials cited in the document.
- All non-draft and/or non-confidential reports and memoranda prepared by the NCTC and consultants in relation to the EIR.
- Staff reports associated with NCTC meetings on the Project.
- Those categories of materials identified in Public Resources Code Section 21167.6.

The Executive Director of the NCTC is the custodian of the administrative record. The documents and materials that constitute the administrative record are available for review at the NCTC at 101 Providence Mine Road, Suite 102, Nevada City, CA 95959.

CONSIDERATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

In adopting these Findings, the Commission finds that the Final EIR was presented to this Commission, the decision-making body of the lead agency, which reviewed and considered the information in the Final EIR prior to approving the 2016 RTP. By these Findings, this Commission ratifies, adopts, and incorporates the analysis, explanation, findings, responses to comments, and conclusions of the Final EIR. The Commission finds that the Final EIR was completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. The Final EIR represents the independent judgment of NCTC.

SEVERABILITY

If any term, provision, or portion of these Findings or the application of these Findings to a particular situation is held by a court to be invalid, void, or unenforceable, the remaining provisions of these Findings, or their application to other actions related to the 2016 RTP, shall continue in full force and effect unless amended or modified by NCTC.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

A. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

1. CAUSE AN INCREASE IN TRAFFIC WHICH IS SUBSTANTIAL IN RELATION TO THE EXISTING TRAFFIC LOAD AND CAPACITY OF THE STREET SYSTEM (EIR IMPACT 3.4-1)

- (a) Potential Impact. The potential for the Project to generate greenhouse gas emissions that would impact climate change is discussed at page 3.4-24 through 3.4-27 of the Draft EIR.
- (b) Mitigation Measures. No feasible mitigation measures were identified.
- (c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that:
 - (1) Mitigation and Remaining Impacts. The 2016 RTP has been developed to support planned and proposed growth in the region, but does not involve approvals of development projects. Forecasted growth in the County will result in increased vehicle miles traveled and daily trips regardless of the proposed project.

The proposed project includes funding and other strategies that are aimed at improving transportation conditions, including level of service on roadways. These are beneficial impacts to the transportation system in Nevada County; however, there will be funding shortfalls due to funding constraints. It will not be possible to fund all transportation improvements that are needed in the region. Ultimately it will be the responsibility for local land use agencies to collect development fees to fund projects that are needed, but not able to be funded through the 2016 RTP. The collection of development fees by local agencies to finance needed improvements would ensure that levels of service are maintained in their jurisdiction; however, this is not something that NCTC can control or guarantee. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would have a significant and unavoidable impact.

- (2) Overriding Considerations. The environmental, economic, social and other benefits of the proposed project override any remaining significant adverse impact of the proposed project associated with future traffic conditions, as more fully stated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations in Section VII, below.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS WHICH ARE MITIGATED TO A LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT LEVEL

A. AIR QUALITY

1. SHORT-TERM - CONFLICT WITH, OR OBSTRUCT, THE APPLICABLE AIR QUALITY PLAN, CAUSE A VIOLATION OF AIR QUALITY STANDARDS, CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY TO AN EXISTING AIR QUALITY VIOLATION, OR RESULT IN A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE NET INCREASE OF A CRITERIA POLLUTANT IN A NON-ATTAINMENT AREA (EIR IMPACT 3.1-2)

- (a) Potential Impact. The potential for the proposed project to result in short-term air quality impacts is discussed at page 3.1-16 of the Draft EIR.
- (b) Mitigation Measures. The following mitigation measures are hereby adopted and will be implemented as provided by the Mitigation Monitoring Program:
 - Mitigation Measure 3.1-1: The implementing agency for any construction activities, including dismantling/demolition of structures, processing/moving materials (sand, gravel, rock, dirt, etc.), or operation of machines/equipment, shall prepare a dust control plan in accordance with NSAQMD Rule 226. The dust control plan shall use reasonable precautions to prevent dust emissions, which may include: cessation of operations at times, cleanup, sweeping, sprinkling, compacting, enclosure, chemical or asphalt sealing, and use of wind screens or snow fences, and other recommended actions by the AQMD.
 - Mitigation Measure 3.1-2: The implementing agency shall consult and coordinate with the NSAQMD prior to the construction of each RTP project, to ensure that all applicable and appropriate criteria pollutant control measures are taken. Projects that are especially large or in special circumstances (such as near schools or other sensitive receptors), additional measures (e.g. limits on active disturbance area or grading areas) may be required, as directed by the NSAQMD.
- (c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that the impacts to air quality will be mitigated to a less than significant level as mitigation measures 3.1-1 and 3.1-2 would require the implementing agency to ensure criteria pollutant control measures are taken through coordination with NSAQMD, and preparation of a dust control plan in accordance with NSAQMD Rule 226. The dust control plan will use reasonable precautions to prevent dust emissions, which may include: cessation of operations at times, cleanup, sweeping, sprinkling, compacting, enclosure, chemical or asphalt sealing, and use of wind screens or snow fences. Any remaining impacts related to air quality after implementation of mitigation measures 3.1-1 and 3.1-2 would not be significant.

2. OCCASIONAL LOCALIZED CARBON MONOXIDE CONCENTRATIONS FROM TRAFFIC CONDITIONS AT SOME INDIVIDUAL LOCATIONS (EIR IMPACT 3.1-3)

- (a) Potential Impact. The potential for the proposed project to result in occasional localized carbon monoxide concentrations from traffic conditions at some individual locations is discussed at page 3.1-17 of the Draft EIR.
- (b) Mitigation Measures. The following mitigation measure is hereby adopted and will be implemented as provided by the Mitigation Monitoring Program:
- Mitigation Measure 3.1-3: The implementing agency shall screen individual RTP projects at the time of design for localized CO hotspot concentrations and, if necessary, incorporate project-specific measures into the project design to reduce or alleviate CO hotspot concentrations.
- (c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that the impacts to air quality will be mitigated to a less than significant level as mitigation measure 3.1-3 would require the implementing agency to screen individual RTP projects at the time of design for localized CO hotspot concentrations and, if necessary, incorporate project-specific measures into the project design to reduce or alleviate CO hotspot concentrations. Any remaining impacts related to air quality after implementation of mitigation measure 3.1-3 would not be significant.

3. POTENTIAL TO RELEASE ASBESTOS FROM EARTH MOVEMENT OR STRUCTURAL ASBESTOS FROM DEMOLITION/RENOVATION OF EXISTING STRUCTURES (EIR IMPACT 3.1-5)

- (a) Potential Impact. The potential for the proposed project to release naturally occurring asbestos from earth movement or structural asbestos from demolition/ renovation of existing structures is discussed at pages 3.1-17 and 3.1-18 of the Draft EIR.
- (b) Mitigation Measures. The following mitigation measure is hereby adopted and will be implemented as provided by the Mitigation Monitoring Program:
- Mitigation Measure 3.1-4: Prior to construction of RTP projects, the implementing agency should assess the site for the presence of asbestos including asbestos from structures such as road base, bridges, and other structures. In the event that asbestos is present, the implementing agency should comply with applicable state and local regulations regarding asbestos, including ARB's asbestos airborne toxic control measure (ATCM) (Title 17, CCR § 93105 and 93106), to ensure that exposure to construction workers and the public is reduced to an acceptable level. This may include the preparation of an Asbestos Hazard Dust Mitigation Plan to be implemented during construction activities.
- (c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that the impacts to air quality will be mitigated to a less than significant level as mitigation measure 3.1-4 would require the implementing agency to assess a project

for the presence of asbestos, and if determined present, implement ARB's asbestos airborne toxic control measure (ATCM) (Title 17, CCR § 93105 and 93106), to ensure that exposure to construction workers and the public is reduced to an acceptable level. Any remaining impacts related to air quality after implementation of mitigation measure 3.1-4 would not be significant.

B. GREENHOUSE GASES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

1. GENERATE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, THAT MAY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT (EIR IMPACT 3.2-1)

(a) Potential Impact. The potential for the proposed project to generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly that may have a significant impact on the environment is discussed at pages 3.2-13 through 3.2-17 of the Draft EIR.

(b) Mitigation Measures. The following mitigation measures are hereby adopted and will be implemented as provided by the Mitigation Monitoring Program:

- Mitigation Measure 3.2-1: The NCTC should explore the feasibility of a transportation pricing policy for the transit system and selected portions of the road network to encourage people to drive less and increase use of transit, walking and bicycling modes. Such a policy may include: free or reduced transit fares during high pollution days; fare-free zones on the transit system; transit vouchers; days on which transit is free; congestion pricing options for portions of the road system, such as tolls on freeways and highways; and parking fees to park in certain high-traffic areas served by public transit.
- Mitigation Measure 3.2-2: The NCTC should consider a complete streets policy with a strong focus on identifying opportunities to create more active transportation within the region (i.e. bike and pedestrian facilities), in accordance with the following Statewide programs:
 - The Complete Streets Act of 2008 (AB 1358); and
 - Active Transportation Program (SB 99 and AB 101).
- Mitigation Measure 3.2-3: Consistent with Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines, the agencies implementing RTP projects should:
 - Promote measures to reduce wasteful, inefficient and unnecessary consumption of energy during construction, operation, maintenance and/or removal. As the individual RTP projects are designed there should be an explanation as to why certain measures were incorporated in the RTP project and why other measures were dismissed.
 - Site, orient, and design projects to minimize energy consumption, increase water conservation and reduce solid-waste.

- Promote efforts to reduce peak energy demand in the design and operation of RTP projects.
- Promote the use of alternate fuels (particularly renewable ones) or energy systems for RTP projects.
- Promote efforts to recycle materials used in the construction (including demolition phase) of RTP projects.
- Mitigation Measure 3.2-4: The NCTC should coordinate with local and regional agencies to assist in efforts to develop local and regional CAPs (Climate Action Plans) that address climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. Local and regional CAPs should include the following components:
 - Baseline inventory of GHG emissions from community and municipal sources.
 - A target reduction goal consistent with AB 32.
 - Policies and measures to reduce GHG emissions.
 - Quantification of the effectiveness of the proposed policies and measures.
 - A monitoring program to track the effectiveness and implementation of the CAP(s).

NCTC's role in the development of local and regional CAPs should include:

- Assistance in seeking and securing funding for the development of local and regional CAPs.
- Collaboration with local and regional agencies throughout their respective planning processes.
- Mitigation Measure 3.2-5: NCTC should assist local agencies with the development of an Alternative Fuel Vehicle and Infrastructure Policy. The policy should include provisions that address best practices, and standards related to saving energy and reducing GHG emissions through AFV use, including:
 - A procurement policy for using AFV by franchisees of these cities, such as trash haulers, green waste haulers, street sweepers, and curbside recyclable haulers. Such AFVs should have GHG emissions at least 10 percent lower than comparable gasoline- or diesel- powered vehicles.
 - A fleet purchase policy to increase the number of AFVs (i.e., vehicles not powered strictly by gasoline or diesel fuel) for municipally owned fleets.
 - A public education policy to encourage the use of alternative fuel vehicles and development of supporting infrastructure.

(c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that the impacts related to the generation of Greenhouse Gas Emissions will be mitigated to a less than significant level as mitigation measures 3.2.1 through 3.2-5 would require the implementing agency to coordinate with other local agencies to explore strategies to reduce VMT and energy use throughout the county. Although a

substantial decrease in Nevada County-generated mobile GHG emissions is expected, implementation of the mitigation measures described below will assist in the reduction of per capita VMT levels generated by Nevada County, which will assist in meeting the stated goals of AB 32, SB375, and the guidance provided by the applicable State Executive Orders. Any remaining impacts related to the generation of GHG emissions after implementation of mitigation measures 3.2.1 through 3.2-5 would not be significant.

C. LAND USE AND POPULATION

1. PHYSICAL DIVISION OF AN ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY (EIR IMPACT 3.3-1)

(a) Potential Impact. The potential for the proposed project to result in the physical division of an established community is discussed at pages 3.3-6 through 3.3-7 of the Draft EIR.

(b) Mitigation Measures. The following mitigation measure is hereby adopted and will be implemented as provided by the Mitigation Monitoring Program:

- Mitigation Measure 3.3.1: Prior to approval of RTP projects, the implementing agency shall consult with local planning staff to ensure that the project will not physically divide a community. The consultation should include a more detailed project-level analysis of land uses adjacent to proposed improvements to identify specific impacts. The analysis should consider new road widths and specific project locations in relation to existing roads. If it is determined that a project could physically divide a community, the implementing agency shall redesign the project to avoid the impact, if feasible. The measures could include realignment of the improvements to avoid the affected community. Where avoidance is not feasible, the implementing agency shall incorporate minimization measures to reduce the impact. The measures could include: alignment modifications, right-of-way reductions, provisions for bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicle facilities, and enhanced landscaping and architecture.

(c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that the impacts which could result in the physical division of an established community will be mitigated to a less than significant level as mitigation measure 3.3.1 would require the implementing agency to consult with local planning staff to ensure that the project will not physically divide a community. The consultation would include a detailed project-level analysis of land uses adjacent to proposed improvements to identify specific impacts. The analysis would consider new road widths and specific project locations in relation to existing roads. If it is determined that a project could physically divide a community, the implementing agency shall redesign the project to avoid the impact, if feasible. Any remaining impacts related to the physical division of an established community after implementation of mitigation measure 3.3.1 would not be significant.

D. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

1. RESULT IN INADEQUATE EMERGENCY ACCESS (EIR IMPACT 3.4-5)

- (a) Potential Impact. The potential for the proposed project to result in inadequate emergency access is discussed at page 3.4-28 of the Draft EIR.
- (b) Mitigation Measures. The following mitigation measure is hereby adopted and will be implemented as provided by the Mitigation Monitoring Program:
- Mitigation Measure 3.4.1: The implementing agencies shall develop a traffic control plan for construction projects to reduce the effects of construction on the roadway system throughout the construction period. As part of the traffic control plan for individual projects, project proponents shall coordinate with emergency service providers to ensure that emergency routes are identified and remain available during construction activities.
- (c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that the impacts to emergency access will be mitigated to a less than significant level as mitigation measure 3.4.1 would require the implementing agency to develop a traffic control plan for construction projects to reduce the effects of construction on the roadway system throughout the construction period. As part of the traffic control plan for individual projects, project proponents will coordinate with emergency service providers to ensure that emergency routes are identified and remain available during construction activities. Any remaining impacts related to emergency after implementation of mitigation measure 3.4.1 would not be significant.

E. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

1. CAUSE A SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE CHANGE IN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCE, PURSUANT TO ASSEMBLY BILL 52 (EIR IMPACT 3.5-1) or CUMULATIVE IMPACT ON TRIBAL RESOURCES (IMPACT 4.6)

- (a) Potential Impact. The potential for the proposed project to Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal cultural resource, pursuant to Assembly Bill 52 is discussed at pages 3.5-6 through 3.5-7, and 4.0-8 of the Draft EIR.
- (b) Mitigation Measures. The following mitigation measure is hereby adopted and will be implemented as provided by the Mitigation Monitoring Program:
- Mitigation Measure 3.5.1: Prior to approval of individual RTP projects, the implementing agency shall consult with local tribes who have requested consultation per AB 52 to ensure that the project will not substantially impact tribal resources. Tribal consultation shall specifically include, but not be limited to, consultation with the United Auburn Indian Community (UAIC). The tribal consultation should include a more detailed project-level analysis of proposed

improvements to identify specific impacts. Additionally, projects literature and data including cultural reports, records searches, and maps prepared for the project should be provided to local tribes as requested to help facilitate the identification and potential mitigation for resources present.

If cultural resources are discovered during project-related construction activities, all ground disturbances within a minimum of 50 feet of the find shall be halted until a qualified professional archaeologist can evaluate the discovery. The archaeologist shall examine the resources, assess their significance, and recommend appropriate procedures to the lead agency to either further investigate or mitigate adverse impacts. If the find is determined by the lead agency in consultation with the Native American tribe traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the project site to be a tribal cultural resource and the discovered archaeological resource cannot be avoided, then applicable mitigation measures for the resource shall be discussed with the geographically affiliated tribe. Applicable mitigation measures that also consider the cultural values and meaning of the discovered tribal cultural resource, including confidentiality if requested by the tribe, shall be completed (e.g., preservation in place, data recovery program pursuant to PRC §21083.2[i]). During evaluation or mitigative treatment, ground disturbance and construction work could continue on other parts of the project site.

- (c) Findings. Based upon the EIR and the entire record before the NCTC, this Commission finds that the impacts to Tribal cultural resources, pursuant to Assembly Bill 52 will be mitigated to a less than significant level as mitigation measure 3.5.1 would require the implementing agency to consult with local tribes who have requested consultation per AB 52 to ensure that the project will not substantially impact tribal resources. Additionally, this mitigation measure require project level standards to be implemented in the event of a previously undiscovered or unknown Tribal resource is discovered during individual project implementation activities. Any remaining impacts related to Tribal cultural resources after implementation of mitigation measure 3.5.1 would not be significant.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THOSE IMPACTS WHICH ARE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT OR LESS THAN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE

Specific impacts within the following categories of environmental effects were found to be less than significant as set forth in more detail in the Draft EIR.

Air Quality: The following specific impacts were found to be less than significant:

- Impact 3.1-1: Long-Term - Conflict with, or Obstruct, the Applicable Air Quality Plan, Cause a Violation of Air Quality Standards, Contribute Substantially to an

Existing Air Quality Violation, or Result in a Cumulatively Considerable Net Increase of a Criteria Pollutant in a Non-Attainment Area (less than significant)

- Impact 3.1-4: Create Objectionable Odors Affecting a Substantial Number of People (less than significant)

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change: The following specific impacts were found to be less than significant:

- Impact 3.2.2: Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases (less than significant)
- Impact 3.2-3: Project implementation may result in the inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary use of energy resources (less than significant)

Land Use and Population: The following specific impacts were found to be less than significant:

- Impact 3.3-2: Conflicts with Applicable Land Use Plan, Policy, or Regulation Adopted to Avoid or Mitigate an Environmental Effect
- Impact 3.3-3: Induce Substantial Population Growth in an Area
- Impact 3.3-4: Displace Substantial Numbers of People or Existing Housing, Necessitating the Construction of Replacement Housing Elsewhere

Traffic and Circulation: The following specific impacts were found to be less than significant:

- Impact 3.4-2: Result in a change in the air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks
- Impact 3.4-3: Substantially increase hazards due to design features (e.g. sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses
- Impact 3.4-4: Interfere substantially with implementation of any adopted non-motorized transportation plan

The proposed project was found to have a less than cumulatively considerable contribution to specific impacts within the following categories of environmental effects as set forth in more detail in the Draft EIR.

Air Quality: The following specific impact was found to be less than cumulatively considerable:

- Impact 4.1: Cumulative Impact on the Region's Air Quality

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change: The following specific impact was found to be less than cumulatively considerable:

- Impact 4.2: Increased Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions May Contribute to Climate Change

Land Use and Population: The following specific impact was found to be less than cumulatively considerable:

- Impact 4.3: Cumulative Impact on Communities and Local Land Uses
- Impact 4.4: Cumulative Impacts on Population and Housing

Traffic and Circulation: The following specific impact was found to be less than cumulatively considerable:

- Impact 4.5: Cumulative Impact on the Transportation Network

The above impacts are less than significant or less than cumulatively considerable for one of the following reasons:

- The EIR determined that the impact is less than significant for the proposed project.
- The EIR determined that the proposed project would have a less than cumulatively considerable contribution to the cumulative impact.
- The EIR determined that the impact is beneficial (would be reduced) for the proposed project.

VI. PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

A. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

An EIR is required to identify a “range of potential alternatives to the project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic purposes of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one of more of the significant effects.” Chapter 2.0 of the Draft EIR identifies the Project’s goals and objectives.

The alternatives to the proposed project selected for analysis in the EIR were developed to minimize significant environmental impacts while fulfilling the basic goals and objectives of the project. The following objectives have been identified for the proposed project. The objectives and presented below are consistent with the objectives, policies, and programs contained in the General Plans of Nevada County, Grass Valley, Nevada City, and the Town of Truckee. The Project objectives include:

- Provide for the safe and efficient movement of all people, goods, and services, on the roadway network.

- Reduce adverse impacts on the natural, social, cultural, and historical environment and the quality of life.
- Develop an economically sustainable transportation system.
- Create and maintain a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation system to serve the needs of the County.

B. ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS IN EIR

Three alternatives to the proposed project were developed based on the technical analysis performed to identify the environmental effects of the proposed project. Due to the nature of the proposed project, there are elements common to each of the alternatives, with each alternative having the same approach and investment associated with goods movement, aviation, energy, land use strategies, and outreach and coordination objectives. The alternatives analyzed in this EIR include the following three regional alternatives in addition to the proposed 2016 RTP project.

1. NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE:

The No Project Alternative is discussed on pages 5.0-2, through 5.0-11, of the Draft EIR. As required by CEQA, this alternative assumes that the adopted 2010 RTP would remain in place and would guide improvements to the transportation network.

Findings: The No Project Alternative is rejected as an alternative because it would not achieve the Project's objectives.

Explanation: This alternative would be out of compliance with federal and state requirements, including the California Transportation Commission Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines, it would not realize the transportation system benefits of the 2016 RTP (i.e. improvements to highways, local streets and roads, transit, bicycle, aviation, rail and goods movement), and it would not achieve the project objectives. Were transportation funding and improvements to continue to be guided by the 2010 RTP, the No Project Alternative would not achieve the objective associated with additional safety improvements. The Draft EIR does not identify any environmental benefits of this alternative over the proposed 2016 RTP.

2. FINANCIALLY UNCONSTRAINED ALTERNATIVE:

The Financially Unconstrained Alternative is discussed on pages 5.0-3 through 5.0-11 of the Draft EIR.

Findings: The Financially Unconstrained Alternative is rejected as an alternative because it is not considered fiscally feasible.

Explanation: As discussed on pages 5.0-2 through 5.0-5 of the Draft EIR, the Financially Unconstrained Alternative includes all of the individual projects identified under the Financially Constrained Alternative plus numerous additional projects that are needed

but not yet funded over the planning horizon. Under this alternative, total spending would need to increase by approximately \$219,602,273 million in western Nevada County and approximately \$52,500,000 in eastern Nevada County. Total county-wide spending would need to increase by \$272,102,273. This alternative includes all projects without regard to whether or not they can be funded. A complete list of the projects and their long-term project costs are provided in Table 5.2-1 and 5.2-2 of the Draft EIR. Environmental benefits of this alternative over the proposed 2016 RTP include the reduction of impacts from transportation and land use planning. The Financially Unconstrained Alternative would result in a transportation system that further reduces congestion to meet objectives stated in local general plans, and would result in the greatest potential to reduce impacts associated with regional roadway operational and safety conditions in comparison to the other alternatives.

3. TRANSIT ENHANCED ALTERNATIVE:

The Transit Enhanced Alternative is discussed on pages 5.0-6 through 5.0-11 of the Draft EIR.

Findings: The Transit Enhanced Alternative is rejected as an alternative because it is not considered fiscally feasible.

Explanation: As discussed on pages 5.0-6 of the Draft EIR, the Transit Enhanced Alternative focuses investment into transit modes, while also funding the locally-funded transportation improvements included in the Financially Constrained Alternative. This alternative would require shifting funds from the Financially Unconstrained Alternative to fund transit capital, operational, and maintenance. Funding under the Financially Unconstrained Alternative is not programmed at this time and it is not known if any funds identified under the Financially Unconstrained Alternative will become available. Therefore, this alternative is not considered fiscally feasible. Additionally, the increase in transit service under this alternative would not be expected result in a proportionate increase in ridership, particularly in the smaller communities and more rural areas. Environmental benefits of this alternative over the proposed 2016 RTP include the reduction of impacts from air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, land use planning, tribal resources and transportation.

4. ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE:

CEQA requires that an environmentally superior alternative be identified among the alternatives that are analyzed in the EIR. If the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, an EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2)). The environmentally superior alternative is that alternative with the least adverse environmental impacts when compared to the proposed project.

Table 5.4-1 of the Draft EIR provides a comparison of the alternatives using a qualitative matrix that quantifies the impacts of each alternative relative to the other alternatives. As shown in Table

5.4-1 of the Draft EIR, the Transit Enhanced Alternatives has the lowest overall impact (score of 5). The Financially Unconstrained Alternative ranks second with a score of 10, while the Financially Constrained Alternative ranks third with a score of 11, and the No Project Alternative ranks last with a score of 14.

The Financially Unconstrained Alternative has greater transportation benefits related to congestion relief, vehicle delay and safety, while the Transit Enhanced Alternative has the greater emission (Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas) benefits. The Transit Enhanced Alternative is deemed the environmentally superior alternative because it provides the greatest reduction of potential impacts in comparison to the other alternatives. The feasibility of the environmentally superior alternative(s) is/are based on the funding availability over the planning horizon. At this time funding is programmed for a portion of these alternatives (constrained project list), while funding is not programmed for the unconstrained project list, or enhancement of transit. For these economic reasons, the environmentally superior alternative(s) are not feasible. The NCTC will need to consider the costs and benefits of additional regional roadway projects from the unconstrained list of projects vs. the enhancement of transit service for the region as additional funds become available in the future.

VII. STATEMENTS OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE 2016 NEVADA COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN FINDINGS

As described in Section III of these Findings, the following significant and unavoidable impacts could occur with implementation of the Project:

- Impact 3.4-1: Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system

The adverse effects identified above are substantive issues of concern to NCTC. However, the challenges NCTC and the implementing agencies face in relation to transportation facilities and services, such as the need for roadway safety and addressing the increased roadway congestion and demand for use of existing transportation facilities that will occur based on projected increases in population, are far greater and could lead to a larger regional transportation effect. Implementation of the 2016 RTP projects will help to alleviate many of the problems associated with the larger transportation challenges, including increased roadway safety, relief of traffic congestion, and increased infrastructure to support alternative modes of transportation, all of which will ultimately improve the overall quality of life in Nevada County.

- A. Traffic Safety. The 2016 RTP would provide improvements that would result in increased roadway safety for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.
- B. Decrease Roadway Congestion. The 2016 RTP will implement roadway improvements that will decrease roadway congestion and overall vehicle hours travelled.
- C. Improve Transit and Alternative Modes of Transportation. The 2016 RTP will provide funding for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes, which are intended to encourage

increased use of alternative modes of transportation. The increased use of these alternative modes of transportation will result in a decrease in emission of air pollutants and greenhouse gases and will assist the County in reducing its potential impact on climate change.

- D. Accommodating Regional Housing Needs Allocation. The State of California requires each county and city to accommodate its fair share of allocated state housing needs, including housing for extremely low, very low, low, moderate, and above moderate income groups. The 2016 RTP has been developed to be consistent with the adopted General Plans, including the housing and land use plans, of Nevada County Grass Valley, Nevada City, and Truckee. The 2016 RTP will assist in reducing traffic congestion and air quality impacts associated with accommodating planned growth, which includes housing growth that must be accommodated under Government Code Section 65580 et seq.

Based on the entire record and the EIR, the need for the improvement of the transportation system, the economic and social benefits of the proposed project in Nevada County outweigh and override any significant unavoidable environmental effects that would result from future implementation of the proposed project. The NCTC has determined that any environmental detriment caused by the 2016 RTP has been minimized to the extent feasible through the mitigation measures identified herein, and, where mitigation is not feasible, has been outweighed and counterbalanced by the significant social, environmental, and land use benefits to be generated to the region.