



Department of Transportation (MCDOT)

Director's Report – April 10, 2012

- **CTC Approves Willits Bypass:** On March 28, 2012, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) allocated \$135 million in financial allocation for Mendocino County for the 101 Willits Bypass, by resolution STIP1b-a-1112-005.

This huge victory is due to Mendocino County partnering with the State on State Highway projects funded with local STIP dollars in rural counties. Willits has been the number one priority, rural candidate in the north state since 2007. Mendocino County put all of their local STIP shares on this project for many STIP cycles. Furthermore, efforts are proceeding to possibly obtain additional, future Corridor Mobility Improvement Account (CMIA) funds to advance Phase II (converting the Willits Bypass back to a full four-lane project). Phil Dow, Executive Director of the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG), has worked tirelessly on this project some 30 years and deserves many thanks for his efforts. In my opinion, if it is possible, CMIA funding should be used to complete a full design four lane project. This would be best, considering future traffic interruptions, environmental impacts and cost.

As a practical matter MCDOT is in discussions with the Caltrans Construction Managers on addressing impacts to the County Maintenance Road System from Project Contractor and Sub-Contractor trucks and equipment. Caltrans has indicated the primary access to the work zone will be directly from the highway at each end of the project; MCDOT is seeking more specific agreements in writing. If the project construction access over County Roads becomes unreasonable, MCDOT might present the Board with consideration of amendments to Mendocino County Code Section 15.16.030 related to Sec. 15.16.030 "Highways Closed to Commercial Vehicles." Pursuant to Section 35712 of the California Vehicle Code, the use of county highways by any commercial vehicle exceeding a specified gross weight on certain county designated roads can be prohibited or restricted by permit. This issue might not be a problem, but we are having the conversation with Caltrans now in the hope that they will limit impacts to county roads voluntarily. If we cannot reach agreement the County may take action by ordinance.

- **Road Division Activities:** MCDOT Road Division personnel are performing normal spring activities such as mowing for vegetation control and grading gravel roads countywide. Furthermore, MCDOT's vegetation removal efforts have been increased all winter and spring due to the use of the Chamberlain Creek Conservation Camp (or the Eel River Conservation Camp) inmate crews. Use of the California Department of Forestry (CDF) supervised inmate crews provides very economical assistance.
- **County Surveyors Activities – Assisted General Services Agency (GSA) with the sale of the Hopland Road Yard:** Staff from the County Surveyor's Office assisted in preparation of the property legal description for the sale of the Hopland Road Yard. Also, GSA is attempting to assist MCDOT in receiving salvage value for the decommissioned Robison Creek Bridge which has been stored there since 2004.

- **2012 Discretionary Community-Based Transportation Planning (CBTP) Grant Program — County of Mendocino Planning Project - Orchard Avenue Extension**

Feasibility Study: MCDOT staff personnel completed work on project applications for a proposal under the FY-2012/2013 solicitation to be administered by Caltrans. Staff delivered the required documentation packages to Caltrans District 1 prior to the established deadline of 5:00 p.m. on April 2, 2012. Mendocino County will be competing statewide for CBTP funds. Mendocino County is applying for \$162,000 for the Orchard Avenue Extension (see attached map). This project is to provide an alternate north-south transportation corridor, in addition to the corridors afforded by U. S. Route 101 and North State Street, for the greater Ukiah area.

The Orchard Avenue Extension will be especially beneficial during those occasions when a major incident partially closes or restricts traffic on Highway 101. Without the proposed extension, acute and widespread gridlock is likely, as demonstrated by such situations in the recent past. The road extension will also provide better distribution of day-to-day traffic, including more efficient routing of emergency response vehicles.

Another purpose of the Orchard Avenue Extension project is to enhance the availability of non-motorized travel opportunities, through provision of bike and pedestrian facilities as integral features of the extended road segment. The bike and pedestrian facilities will offer safe and convenient access to Mendocino College, Lake Mendocino, major shopping centers and a large area of housing. Under current conditions, partial road closures along North State Street sometimes result in non-motorized users having no feasible alternate routes between Ukiah and the Forks area.

Also addressed by this project, is the U.S. Route 101 within the Ukiah Valley "oversized load height restriction" which can be as little as 14' 8". This limitation requires Caltrans Transportation Permit Trips to send oversized loads to either Interstate 5 or direct such loads to City of Ukiah and Mendocino County surface streets and roads. In this case, the north-south alternative in Ukiah is County Maintained Road CR 104 (North State Street), which is constructed to 15' 1" northbound. The statewide policy to all new structures is that it must accommodate 16' high oversized loads.

The list of stakeholders for the Orchard Avenue Extension project is extensive, including the Mendocino County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), the Mendocino County Department of Planning & Building Services, Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG), City of Ukiah, Caltrans, local emergency response (law enforcement, firefighting, emergency medical support) agencies, businesses and companies in north Ukiah and The Forks areas, Mendocino College, Pinoleville Indian Reservation and — most importantly — the traveling public.

The primary benefits afforded by the project are generally the same for all stakeholders: an additional, primary north-south road in the Ukiah Valley, providing an alternate access route in emergencies and disasters (natural or man-made), improve traffic circulation within the project vicinity and an important infrastructure enhancement for non-motorized transportation (pedestrian and bicycle) within the valley.

Furthermore, since the proposed road extension will be primarily in undeveloped parcels, existing businesses, companies and residents will experience relatively minor impacts as the Orchard Avenue Extension project is built.

Many partner agencies including the City of Ukiah and Public Safety Agencies provided letters of support for our application.

