

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Making Conservation
a California Way of Life.

January 15, 2021

Nevada County Coalition of Firewise Communities
640 Charlene Lane
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Dear Coalition of Firewise Communities:

This communication is in response to your letter dated December 04, 2020 with comments on the SR 49 Safety Assessment Report, urging Caltrans to update its definition of highway safety to include roadside vegetation mitigation and revise the Safety Assessment Report to include the need for 30-feet of defensible space alongside the SR 49 evacuation corridor in Nevada County.

Thank you for your comments; your feedback is greatly appreciated. The primary focus of the SR 49 Safety Assessment was to evaluate transportation safety enhancements that could be implemented on the state highway system with a focus on automobile, pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Primary factors considered in the assessment report included the collision history of the corridor and contributing collision factors that may be mitigated with additional safety features.

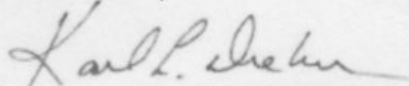
Your letter emphasized vegetation control and evacuation routes along the SR 49 corridor, particularly in the heavily forested Nevada County area. Given widespread wildfire events that have impacted communities statewide, Caltrans is also making wildfire mitigation on the state highway system a priority. This is a multi-faceted, multi-agency task that will require extensive collaboration, planning and support for these projects along the SR 49 corridor.

Roadside fire fuel reduction efforts will be considered for implementation to increase wildfire resiliency and help to ensure safe operations of the highway corridor. In addition, transportation projects in this area will receive due consideration towards defensible space and evacuation options during project development.

In addition, Caltrans recently awarded the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) a Regional Planning Assistance Grant to prepare a transportation related extreme climate event vulnerability assessment and climate adaptation strategies planning study. The study will identify the climate-related weaknesses of the transportation system in Nevada County, including risks related to wildfire, and will provide actionable strategies for integration into transportation plans, transportation improvement programs, and emergency response plans for the region.

Caltrans understands the issues and concerns expressed in your letter and will work to develop processes and projects to address them as quickly as possible. If you have any further questions, please contact Sam Vandell, Project Manager at (530) 741-4593.

Sincerely,



for

AMARJEET S. BENIPAL
District Director

cc: Sam Vandell

Unit Chief Brian Estes, CAL FIRE

Public Information Officer Mary Eldridge, CAL FIRE

Greenhorn Firewise Community

Scott's Flat Pines Road Neighborhood Firewise Community