Addendum to the 1998-2000 Program Environmental Impact Report for the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan for Humboldt County -

State Clearinghouse Number 99032077

A Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR or PEIR) was prepared for the 1998-00 Humboldt County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and certified by the Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) on October 28th, 1999. The California Environmental Quality Act guidelines provides that addendums to EIRs may be prepared, where there are no substantial environmental changes from those analyzed in previously certified EIR.

The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG), the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency, is also the lead agency for the RTP. The 2008 RTP serves the same purpose as the previous (1998-00, 2000-02, 2002-04 and 2004-06) RTPs for Humboldt County, in that it is a regional transportation plan for a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system.

The 2008 RTP continues to be a long-range planning and programming document, prepared by HCAOG as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), in coordination with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 1, local transit authorities and transportation agencies, Native American tribes, residents, business interests and other stakeholders.

The 2008 RTP update provides current regional transportation goals, policies, objectives, and strategies for Humboldt County. As an RTPA, HCAOG is required to periodically adopt and submit an updated RTP to the California Transportation Commission (CTC), and Caltrans. This 2008 RTP update is intended to comply with the CTC's most current, adopted RTP Guidelines, which state that the outlook for an RTP should be 20 years. The 2008 RTP horizon year is 2028.

HCAOG developed the 2008 RTP for Humboldt County pursuant to Government Code § 65080 et seq. of Chapter 2.5, federal legislation; U.S. Code, Title 23, § 134 and §135 et seq., and the 2007 CTC RTP guidelines. As policy, HCAOG has chosen to update its RTP biannually, to better address the most current activities that could impact the development of the regional transportation system.

Humboldt County encompasses 3,500 square miles of forested mountains, river valleys, coastal terraces, agricultural lands and coastline. Humboldt County's seven incorporated cities: Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, Blue Lake, Rio Dell, Ferndale, and Trinidad range in size from Trinidad's 400 residents to Eureka's 26,000 residents. No community within the County meets the urbanized metropolitan criteria as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. The nearest designated metropolitan area is located more than 150 miles away.

In 2007, the county population was over 131,000. The majority of these residents (52%) were concentrated in the area surrounding Humboldt Bay, which is also the center of government and commercial services. Most of the county remains sparsely populated, and many residents live in places that are remote or difficult to access.

The regional transportation system includes, but is not be limited to; highway, street, and road; transit; bicycle and pedestrian; goods movement (rail, truck, and marine); and aviation facilities. The RTP also has provisions for recreational travel, transportation system management, pipeline and energy transport, land use and transportation connections, and air quality. The RTP includes a needs assessment, and policy, action and financial elements. It considers both the short-term and long-term needs, and provides policy guidance, regional action programs and priorities, and financing strategies.

Finding that the 2008 RTP was prepared primarily to comply with State RTP Guidelines, with minor environmental changes, HCAOG has prepared this Addendum to the previously certified Program EIR based on the following findings:

> A Program EIR was prepared and certified for the 1998-00 RTP. The EIR includes descriptions of all the required elements. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines provide several options for environmental documentation once an EIR has been prepared for a project or program. Where only minor changes occur to the project or program, and addendum to the previously certified EIR may be prepared. The 2008 RTP Update represents only minor changes and additions from the 1998-00 RTP and therefore meets the guidelines for the preparation of an addendum.
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> The primary focus of the 2008 RTP Update is to comply with the CTC's RTP guidelines. Updated project lists, similar to those in the 1998-00 RTP, have been provided by each member entity of HCAOG. Proposed projects and funding cover the same transportation modes as in the previous RTP. No new major projects are proposed in the 2008 RTP new project lists.
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> A subsequent EIR is required if substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or if substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR. The 2008 RTP Update contains no substantial changes which will require major revisions of the 1998-00 RTP and no substantial changes with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken. Therefore, a subsequent EIR is not required for the 2008 RTP Update.

The following impact and mitigation summary, which was included in the certified Program EIR is also made a part of the EIR Addendum

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION SUMMARY

A Program EIR prepared for the 1998-2000 RTP for Humboldt County, identified potentially significant environmental effects for several issues, and mitigation measures and a monitoring

program to reduce or offset those effects. HCAOG adopted findings and mitigation measures, and certified the RTP on October 28th 1999. These findings have been reviewed as part of the 2008 RTP update process and are found, with minor changes, to reflect the environmental conditions and potential effects of regional transportation system planning for Humboldt County.

Circulation. The traffic volume forecasts for state routes are projected to increase by approximately 1.4 percent per year over existing volumes. This increase extends to truck traffic as well. Transit capital improvements may increase transit ridership, potentially reducing auto traffic and vehicle miles of travel. Planned bicycle/pedestrian facility improvements would also reduce auto use. Goods movement is expected to increase due to anticipated economic growth. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- Planned improvements on regional roadways and rehabilitation and overlay projects on local roads and streets are programmed in the RTP, to maintain acceptable service levels, eliminate gaps, relieve congestion and improve safety.
- The RTP policy encouraging re-establishment of rail service, and support for port and truck facility improvement will facilitate goods movement in and out of the region.
- Development and promotion of education programs for bicycle safety and for motorist awareness of bicyclists and pedestrians will improve mobility and safety for these modes of travel.

Geology. Steep slopes and unstable geologic material found in much of the county are susceptible to movement and erosion, especially where roadway construction includes cut- or fill-slopes. Faults and liquefaction zones in the County are factors to be considered in planning transportation improvements. Facilities located too close to a fault or in a liquefaction zone are susceptible to damage from a major seismic event in the region. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- A reconstruction and maintenance program for existing railroad, road and highway alignments, and application of best management practices for erosion control techniques and on-site soil retention both during and after construction, will improve the potential to decrease rates of slope failures, erosion and sedimentation.
- Avoidance of known fault or liquefaction areas or appropriate seismic engineering will reduce potentially significant geologic impacts.

Water Resources. Land-based transportation corridor projects have the potential to affect surface and ground water resources in the area. These impacts include an increase in impervious surface which can lead to reductions in natural water percolation and increases in stormwater runoff; changes in water quality from sediment or contaminants; and potential alterations to the course or flow of flood waters. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- Road/railway design and reconstruction that incorporates long-term maintenance, reduces storm water runoff and erosivity of that runoff, reduces slope instability; separates the

transportation system from the stream system; and road reconstruction that includes upgrading culverts to convey a 100-year storm event and ensure no stormflow diversion potential; and provision of training on effective, state-of-the-art erosion control, will reduce hydrological impacts.

- Incorporation of stormwater filtration systems on construction or reconstruction projects, and implementation of spill control measures as part of standard road construction practices, will reduce pollution delivery to stream systems and minimize surface water disturbance.
- Program/facility enhancement to support conversion to alternative fuels (especially for transit fleets) with improved storage, will reduce the potential for underground storage tank leakage;
- Roadway design that prevents changes in drainage patterns or encroachment upon stream systems will reduce flooding hazards

Air Resources. Potential air quality impacts include increased levels of ozone smog (Smog is formed when Reactive Organic Gasses (ROG) and Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x), react in the presence of sunlight to form a third compound, ozone) and Particulate Matter (PM 10). Ozone smog levels in the air basin currently meet air quality standards and are not projected to exceed those standards in the foreseeable future. PM_{10} levels do exceed air quality standards. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- Implementation of NCUAQMD's transportation control measure recommendations, and transportation system management measures that reduce congestion, will reduce PM_{10} emissions.
- Implementation of RTP policies for the use of low emission vehicles, and considering energy conservation in transportation decisions, will reduce transportation-related emissions that contribute to air pollution.

Air Resources: Greenhouse Gas Emissions. This analysis is added to the Program EIR Addendum to respond to recent California legislation. Atmospheric gases that trap heat are called greenhouse gases (GHG). Common GHG include water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, chlorofluorocarbons, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, ozone, and aerosols. These gases are emitted by natural processes and human activities. GHG accumulation in the atmosphere regulates the earth's temperature. Without the natural heat trapping effect of GHG, the earth's surface would be about 34 degrees Centigrade (°C) cooler. However, it is believed that human activities, such as electricity production and vehicle use, have elevated gas concentrations of these in the atmosphere beyond naturally occurring levels.

CEQA requires that Lead Agencies, in this case HCAOG, inform decision-makers and the public regarding the following: potential significant environmental effects of proposed projects; feasible ways that environmental damage can be avoided or reduced through the use of feasible mitigation measures and/or project alternatives; and disclose the reasons why the Lead Agency approved a project if significant environmental effects are involved (CEQA Guidelines §15002). CEQA also requires Lead Agencies to evaluate potential environmental effects based to the fullest extent possible on scientific and factual data (CEQA Guidelines §15064[b]). Significance

conclusions must be based on substantial evidence, which includes facts, reasonable assumptions predicated upon facts, and expert opinion supported by facts (CEQA Guidelines §15064f[5]).

Presently, there are no CEQA thresholds of significance established for GHG. However, California Assembly Bill (AB) 32 passed in September 2006, called for the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to adopt regulations requiring statewide greenhouse gas emissions reporting, and set a year 2020 statewide greenhouse gas emissions limit equivalent to 1990 levels. Ultimately, it can be assumed that local air districts and agencies will be responsible for enacting regulations, in response to CARB mandates.

GHG associated with the implementation of the HCAOG RTP are primarily associated with energy consumption for heating, air conditioning, and lighting and fuel consumption associated with new residential and non-residential development, construction equipment, and motor vehicles traveling to, from, and moving around the county. One of the RTP objectives serves to limit motor vehicle trips in the county. The plan objective is to establish a multi-modal transportation system (i.e., roadways, bike paths, sidewalks) that will provide strong connectivity among neighborhoods and districts, is free of congestion, provides convenient transit opportunities, and greater safety for pedestrians and motorists.

The RTP also contains goals and policies aimed at energy reduction and the use of alternative forms of energy, which are as follows:

Public Transit Service:

Goal: Provide high quality, safe, reliable and cost-effective public transit services to county residents, especially to accommodate student, workforce, elderly and disabled needs.

Policy PT-2: Improve local and interregional transit service

Objective: Increase community outreach efforts to demonstrate the importance of A&MRTS, ETS and RTS to the vitality of the community.

Objective: Coordinate transportation services with other transportation providers within the region.

PolicyPT-4: Promote coordination of transit service route planning with land use policy, community planning and development efforts.

Objective: Encourage the cities and the county to support transit-friendly development.

Objective: Work with the cities and the county to enhance pedestrian access to bus stops.

Objective: Encourage new development to provide unimpeded transit access and amenities for transit riders.

Policy PT-5: Promote intermodal transit opportunities.

Objective: Make intermodal transfers as efficient as possible, through coordinated transit planning and scheduling by public and private transportation services entities.

Objective: Conduct a feasibility study for the development of park-and-ride lots near population centers to encourage bus ridership and carpooling

Bicycles and Pedestrian Facilities:

Goal: Create a transportation system that provides inter-community and intra-community non-motorized pedestrian, bicycle travel throughout the region.

BP-1 Policy: Develop a cohesive system of regional bikeways that provides access to, and between, major activity centers, public transportation, recreation, and other destinations, and eliminate barriers to pedestrian and bicycle travel.

Objective: Construct and maintain contiguous sidewalks and designated bicycle routes within one mile of all public schools, and between transit stops and nearby public facilities (libraries, parks, and community centers).

BP-2 Policy: Encourage an interconnected transportation network.

Objective: Develop bicycle and pedestrian trail facilities in the region, through coordination among Humboldt County (Humboldt County General Plan), Caltrans, cities, non-profits, and other entities with planning responsibilities.

BP-5 Policy: Encourage bicycle-friendly designs for all streets and roadways, through new technologies, "best practices" standards, guidelines, and innovative treatments on new roadways and multiuse paths.

Objective: Secure funding augmentations for roadway improvement projects to include bicycle and/or pedestrian facility improvements, such as bridges, roadway shoulder widening, and dedicated facilities for bicycle travel.

BP-9 Policy: HCAOG recognizes the high level of public support for provision of a dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facility between Arcata and Eureka.

Objective: Promote the study of alternatives for a dedicated facility between Arcata and Eureka.

Objective: Continue to support the multi-jurisdictional group of stakeholders, currently working to identify constraints and opportunities to develop a multi-use trail facility in NCRA corridor between Eureka and Arcata, under a National Park Service Technical Assistance grant.

As stated above, state law has delegated the task of implementing a strategy to combat GHG emissions to CARB, and the response to that duty may include establishing uniform thresholds of significance for GHG emissions caused by local projects. Currently, there does not appear to be consensus in the scientific community as to when and under what circumstances a project's incremental contribution to the global problem of climate change would be considered "cumulatively considerable."

Nevertheless, and in light of the emissions reductions goals of AB 32, it can be argued that implementation of this project may result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to the global problem. As discussed below, various mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project to sufficiently reduce any impact the project may have on global warming.

The county is prepared to implement a number of air quality improvement programs and emission reduction programs through the RTP that are designed to minimize operational emissions for the county and the air basin, all of which reduce GHG emissions.

Asbestos Improvements identified in the RTP would require construction activities, including grading, which has the potential to release naturally occurring asbestos into the air. This is a potentially significant impact to construction workers and citizens in the region. However, each improvement project will require a geotechnical study to be performed. The study will identify the soil types and the presence of soils and rock types, including those that could contain naturally occurring asbestos. If asbestos is deemed present, an Asbestos Hazard Dust Mitigation Plan would be prepared to ensure that adequate dust control and asbestos hazard mitigation measures are implemented during project construction.

Biological Resources. Already planned and approved projects built at or near sensitive habitat areas could disturb existing plant life on specific sites; lead to the removal of native vegetation on undeveloped areas; and introduce non-native grass, bushes, trees and other landscape materials. RTP projects may disturb or damage endangered and sensitive plant species, and in turn, lead to the destruction of animal habitats. The loss of habitat initially may cause animals to relocate to adjacent areas with similar habitat. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- Implementation of guidelines for road and rail corridor construction and maintenance activities that protect salmonid habitat, recommended in a final report to the Five County Planning Group in the fall of 1998 (U.C. Cooperative Extension); and implementation of road and rail reconstruction projects that allow unimpeded fish passage at all flow levels for fish-bearing streams, encourages use of bridges over streams rather than culverts, use fish ladders or weirs when necessary, and provide for an adequate maintenance program; and avoidance of construction in fish bearing streams or in the habitat of any sensitive species during especially sensitive periods (e.g., during spawning runs of protected salmon populations), will reduce transportation related impacts to fish and fish habitat.
- Enforcement of harbor district ordinance requiring that vessels flush ballast at sea will reduce the potential for introduction of non-indigenous species.

- Delineation of protection zones around riparian and wetland areas for road/rail reconstruction and maintenance; and incorporation of riparian vegetation planting into construction or reconstruction projects in riparian zones, when appropriate; and incorporation and consideration of the movement of resident or migratory wildlife species into project design, will reduce impacts to biological resources.

California Wildlife Action Plan. In 2000, Congress enacted the State Wildlife Grants Program to support state programs that broadly benefit wildlife and habitats but particularly "species of greatest conservation need." As a requirement for receiving funding under this program, state wildlife agencies were to have submitted a Wildlife Action Plan (comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2005. The California Department of Fish and Game (Fish and Game), working in partnership with the Wildlife Health Center, University of California, Davis, directed the development of this report, California Wildlife: Conservation Challenges, the state's Wildlife Action Plan, and associated Web publications. Species identified in the Plan, for the north coast, are limited to marbled murrelet and coho salmon. Potential impacts to these listed species are considered in environmental documents prepared for transportation projects. The RTP identifies the region's transportation needs and issues, sets forth an action plan of projects and programs to address the needs consistent with the adopted policies, and documents the financial resources needed to implement the plan. The programs and projects to be included in the RTP will be analyzed through development of a Program EIR. A more detailed or project level environmental assessment of the various projects included in the Plan will be conducted before the projects are constructed or implemented.

Noise. The majority of noise impacts from mobile sources occur adjacent to higher volume roadways, train tracks and airports. Additional potential noise impacts include short-term noises related to demolition and construction activities and long-term impacts related to increases in travel volumes. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- Circulation projects included in the RTP shall comply with federal and state guidelines for roadway and vehicle noise, to reduce noise impacts.
- Implementation of the compatibility measures contained in the *Humboldt County Airport Land Use Plan* by Humboldt County and the cities of Eureka and Fortuna, including adoption of appropriate land use designations and zoning, and acquisition of navigation easements where possible, and acquisition, on a voluntary basis, of those existing residences lying within the forecasted 60 dB CNEL contour as designated on the Airport Layout Plan for Arcata-Eureka Airport, will reduce airport related noise impacts.

Aesthetics. The majority of the proposed roadways and roadway widening projects will not result in major changes in views or visual quality of the County. Similarly, most projects will have minimal lighting and aesthetic impacts. However, several of the long-term transportation projects, such as upgrading of US 101 and improvements to State Route 299, have the potential substantially alter viewsheds. Extensive cut and fill, and removal of native vegetation are

examples of potentially significant impacts. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- RTP projects shall be designed to avoid the degradation of the existing visual character or quality of natural, cultural, or biological aesthetic resources. Design elements of new facilities located within identified scenic vistas should be as compatible as possible with the immediate vicinity.
- RTP projects shall be designed to include landscape screening and lighting design that minimize visibility of new transportation facilities from communities, and prominent aesthetic resources.
- RTP projects will be reviewed to ensure that the proposed lighting design will cause minimal spillover and glare for adjacent uses. Street and parking area lighting will be unobtrusive, with the lowest intensity compatible with safety, and will be directed downward and shielded to minimize impacts on adjacent residential uses.

Cultural Resources. Road, highway, waterway or railway construction, reconstruction and maintenance activities where earthmoving or dredging occur have the potential to disturb or destroy recorded and unrecorded cultural resources. Paleontological and archaeological resources are particularly sensitive to heavy equipment excavation activities by which valuable stratigraphic information can easily be lost. Historic resources still in use (bridges, road corridors, structures) could potentially be altered or lost due to seismic retrofitting and transportation corridor widening. The following Program EIR conditions and findings have not substantially changed as a result of the 2008 RTP Update:

- Cultural resources (including but not limited to archaeological, paleontological and architectural sites, grave sites and cemeteries) shall be identified where feasible, assessed as to significance, and if found to be significant, protected from loss or destruction to reduce cultural resource impacts.
- The North Coastal Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information Center, located in Klamath California, Native American tribes in the region and historical organizations shall be consulted during project review for the identification and protection of cultural resources.
- Archaeological and paleontological resources shall not be knowingly destroyed or lost through a discretionary action unless the resource has been found to be of insignificant value by relevant experts of the cultural resources community.