

Executive Summary

The Modoc County 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) provides a coordinated, twenty-year vision of the regionally significant transportation improvements and policies needed to efficiently move goods and people in the region. As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), the Modoc County Transportation Commission (MCTC) is required by California law to adopt and submit an approved RTP to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) every five years. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) assists with plan preparation and reviews draft documents for compliance and consistency.

This dynamic working document was developed with extensive stakeholder input through a specific process. The agency announced its intent to develop an RTP and solicited input from all stakeholders. After data were gathered and organized, the Commission prepared a draft plan, including all required elements, and then solicited comments from stakeholders. To comply with the California Environmental Quality Act, relevant documentation was prepared and distributed with the draft RTP.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

The MCTC solicited public comment from a wide variety of groups, including the general public, its committees, agencies, organizations and governments. Copies of draft RTP documents were available at the county library, chamber of commerce, County of Modoc Road and City of Alturas Public Works Departments. Throughout the development process, potentially affected public agencies and governments were contacted repeatedly for input and coordination, among others the County of Modoc, City of Alturas, Caltrans, Alturas Rancheria, Cedarville Rancheria, Fort Bidwell Reservation, Pit River Tribe, agencies administering various public lands, social service agencies, truck traffic generators, railroads, and all surrounding counties.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION GOALS

In coordination with stakeholders, the MCTC adopted the following regional transportation goals:

- ▶ **Reliability** Develop a reliable transportation system, implementing only projects that can be maintained, operated and sustained through identified funding sources.
- ▶ **Safety and Security** Provide for optimum safety and security during movements of people and goods.
- ▶ **Mobility** Provide transportation services and facilities, equitably distributed among all ethnic, age and income groups, that best facilitate mobility and support accessibility.

- ▶ **Quality of Life** Develop transportation services and facilities for all transportation modes, to enhance enjoyment of increased mobility and to minimize adverse impacts on the natural, social, cultural, and historical environments.
- ▶ **Financial** Construct, operate, and maintain the regional transportation system to maximize return on investments, meet adequate standards, and serve as an integrated, coordinated whole.
- ▶ **Livable Communities** Maintain and improve the regional transportation system to support livable communities, access to locally-operated businesses, and economic vitality.
- ▶ **Advanced Technologies** Deploy advanced technologies within the regional transportation system to enhance traveler information, safety, mobility, accessibility, and economic vitality.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND ISSUES

The regional transportation network is impacted by harsh climatic conditions, isolation from major urban center, short periods for road construction and maintenance due to weather restrictions, and scarce financial resources. The limited amount of funds available is *the* most significant regional transportation issue, particularly funding to support roadway operations and maintenance, lifeline transit services, and safe bicycle and pedestrian travel access. The list below briefly summarizes the major issues:

- ◆ Shortfall in revenues to implement an adequate pavement rehabilitation program and to make needed improvements to local roads, State highways and regional bridges.
- ◆ Impact of substandard roads on local maintenance funds, when added to the maintained roadway inventory.
- ◆ Need for transportation services – to ensure mobility and reasonable access for all ethnic, age and income groups – in comparison with limited funding sources, extensive travel distances and higher regional operating and fuel costs.
- ◆ Need for traveler safety and security.
- ◆ Desire to improve local economic vitality, supporting livable communities and individual well-being.
- ◆ Need for bicycle and pedestrian facilities to provide safer environments and better connectivity for non-motorized travel.
- ◆ Importance of maintaining and improving regional airports for emergency response and general aviation.
- ◆ Need to preserve the rail system, maintain existing rail service and protect potential for long-term expansion, which are all economically important to the region.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The maintained public roads system in Modoc County includes 1,699.4 miles of two-lane roads, either paved or graveled. This figure does not include private roadways or roads that are not maintained by public entities. Distance mileage of maintained public roads system by jurisdiction includes the following:

– State of California	177.6 miles	– U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	5.89 miles
– County of Modoc	987.4 miles	– U.S. National Park Service	9.46 miles
– City of Alturas	33.12 miles	– U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs	16.6 miles
– U.S. Forest Service	466.34 miles		

The highest annual average daily traffic volumes in the County occur on US 395 (Main Street) near First Street in Alturas (6,900). Other relatively high AADT volumes in 2004 were observed on US 395 south of SR 299 junction in Alturas (6,800), on SR 299 west of US 395 Junction in Alturas (4,500) and on SR 139 near Newell (2,450). Variations in traffic depend on time of year and local driving conditions. Traffic volumes are higher during summer months with added recreational travelers. Over the last eleven years, traffic volumes on the state highways generally declined in the outlying portions of the County, and increased around Alturas and Cedarville. However, because of its sparse population, the region is generally free of traffic congestion.

In addition to roadway networks, other important elements of the regional transportation system include six airports (located in Adin, Alturas, California Pines, Cedarville, Fort Bidwell, and Tulelake), three rail lines (owned by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Modoc Northern), the Sage Stage public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Modoc County is also beginning to unfold a Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architecture.

ACTION ELEMENT

Transportation plans typically focus on alternatives that vary by travel mode, such as highway versus transit improvements. Such comparison-by-modes approach is not relevant in Modoc County due to: (1) limited changes in population and travel demand, (2) very limited funding available for public transit purposes, and (3) funding shortfalls for maintenance of existing roadways. Instead of comparing alternatives according to travel modes, discussion focuses on roadway maintenance versus roadway improvements.

- ♦ ***Status Quo Alternative*** – Under this “make do” alternative, the state and regional entities would continue to prioritize programs and to receive/use revenues consistent with past practices. STIP regional shares would be used to the maximum extent possible for regional road rehabilitation projects, for state matching funds with federal programs, and for inter-regional projects where justifiable. However, under this alternative, roadways would continue to deteriorate unless additional funding sources were identified to support proper maintenance of the regional system.

- ♦ ***Capital Improvement Emphasis Alternative*** – This “build new” alternative would focus on new capital improvement projects throughout the region. In addition to capital-restricted programs, a portion of any discretionary funding would be accessible to bolster capital projects. While this alternative would allow additional system improvements, it would further decrease available funding for critical maintenance. Accordingly, more local funding would be needed compared to the Status Quo Alternative and/or the level of financially feasible maintenance activities would be reduced. Relatively good traffic conditions (lack of significant congestion) throughout Modoc County indicate only limited and localized capital improvement needs.

- ♦ ***Maintenance Emphasis Alternative*** – This “fix up” alternative would focus funding on maintenance of the existing system – roadway, transit, non-motorized and aviation facilities and programs. New capital projects would be initiated only if justified by their merit and/or financing did not significantly deflect funding for maintenance and rehabilitation projects. Specialized capital projects would be implemented according to need and/or availability of new funding sources.

Considering the substantial backlog of roadway maintenance projects, the Maintenance Emphasis Alternative is the only prudent course of action for Modoc County.

Chapter 4 of this document, the Action Element, includes a series of tables listing both financially constrained and financially unconstrained roadway, bridge, transit, aviation, bicycle/pedestrian and ITS improvement projects. In coordination with local jurisdictions, MCTC has developed project level performance measures and quantified current system baseline performance for each measure. Prior to implementation/after-completion of each RTP transportation improvement project, the impact of that project on current system baseline performance will be evaluated. This strategy will maximize limited funding opportunities for transportation improvement projects.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The following federal, State and local funding sources and programs are available to fund transportation improvements in the Modoc County region:

Federal Sources

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Surface Transportation Program – Transportation Enhancement – Highway Bridge Program – Highway Safety Improvement Program – Federal Lands Highway Program – Section 130/Highway Safety Improvement Program – Emergency Relief Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – FTA Section 5310 Capital for Elderly and Disabled Transportation – FTA Section 5311 Public Transportation for Rural Areas – FTA Section 5311f Intercity Bus for Rural Areas – Federal Airport Improvement Program – Jobs Access Reverse Commute – New Freedom Program |
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State Sources

- State Transportation Improvement Program
- Traffic Congestion Relief Program
- State Highway Operations and Protection Program
- Minor Programs
- California Aid to Airports Program
- Environment Enhancement and Mitigation
- AB1475 - Safe Routes to School (SR2S)
- Bicycle Transportation Account
- Pedestrian Safety Program
- Transportation Development Act Funds

Local Sources

- State Gas Taxes
- Motor Vehicle In-Lieu Fees

Over the twenty-year plan period, \$41 million in STIP regional projects are funded. There is a shortfall of \$12.8 million in funding for local County roadway projects over the long-term. The City of Alturas has developed a financial constrained local street improvement program over the entire RTP planning period; however, there are significantly more local street improvement needs than funding available, as there are \$35.9 million in unconstrained local road improvement projects.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR RTP IMPLEMENTATION

The following strategies are required to successfully implement this RTP:

- ♦ Transportation investments will be evaluated based on performance and need assessments.
- ♦ “Bottom up” planning and coordination, so that the policy vision and projects meet local needs, and consider the regional system as an integrated whole.
- ♦ Greater involvement between stakeholders in the early stages of the planning process and subsequent phases of project implementation will ensure solutions to problems experienced by local and interregional customers of the system.
- ♦ Emphasize maintenance and preservation of the system, and provide for mobility and access, job opportunities, safety in vehicle and non-motorized travel, reliability of the transportation system, efficient movement of freight, protection of the environment, satisfaction of customers, and equitable distribution of benefits.
- ♦ Attempt to ensure that the mobility, economic and “quality of life” needs of the region’s scattered population are met. Emphasis is given to providing the elderly, disadvantaged, and mobility-impaired portions of the population with better transportation choices.
- ♦ Support livable and economically vital communities by improving access to locally operated businesses. Also, encourage programs that promote greater transit usage, bicycle, and pedestrian activities.

- ◆ Confirm that partnerships and coordination are the foundations of cooperative problem solving with emphasis on developing and sustaining mutual respect and cooperation among stakeholders to solve transportation problem.

AIR QUALITY COMPLIANCE

Modoc County is part of the Northeast Plateau Air Basin. The Modoc County Air Pollution Control District maintains one monitoring site in Alturas, where levels for one air pollutant are followed. The County is considered “in attainment” for every State and Federal air quality standard, except the State PM₁₀ standard. The primary sources of PM₁₀ pollution include wood stoves, open and prescribed burning, and wind-blown dust from unpaved roads and agriculture. Typically, the highest levels of PM₁₀ occur during fall and winter, because of increased open burning and wood stove use. Overall, Modoc County has good air quality because of its low density population, limited industry, and extensive undeveloped public lands. Unlike many urban areas in California, where congestion, traffic volume and environmental conditions cause unhealthful ozone pollution, transportation has no significant impact on air quality in Modoc County. This Plan does not significantly encourage additional vehicle travel or lead to generation of air pollutant emissions. Thus, this RTP can be considered to comply with air quality plans.

OVERALL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

In compliance with California Environmental Quality Act guidelines, an Initial Study/Proposed Negative Declaration was prepared and circulated with this RTP. This document provides environmental analyses and a general overview of the potential impacts of proposed RTP projects.

This Plan is a programmatic document containing general policies, guidelines and lists of projects. Preparation and adoption of the RTP represents long-term transportation planning for the Modoc County region, and by definition does not examine individual projects that may have individual impacts. Specific environmental impacts of proposed projects will be addressed on an individual basis at the time of project review and selection. Therefore, there is no potential for significant environmental impact resulting from this Plan.