



# SR-4 Wagon Trail Realignment Project Public Participation Plan

Updated August 7, 2009

## I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

### A. Background

In April 2001, Caltrans prepared a Project Study Report/Project Development Report (PSR) for the Wagon Trail that identified a need to make improvements to the roadway to improve safety and operations. This project was intended to relieve current and future congestion and reduce accidents. It would also improve system continuity. State Route 4 (SR-4) is a major access route from the San Joaquin Valley to the Sierra Nevada Mountains and is subject to high volumes of recreational vehicles. Recreational vehicle travel on this segment is forecasted to increase 50% by the year 2010. In addition, the growth (percentage wise) in Calaveras County is among the highest in the state. Within the project limits, the segment is a two-land roadway with nonstandard lane widths, no paved shoulders and is on a non-engineered alignment. Curves and limited sight distances reduce the operating speed on this segment of SR- 4. The accident rate within the project area is over twice the statewide average.

### B. Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

Caltrans, CCOG, and RBF Consulting initiated the public participation program to solicit input on the development of the Project Report and Environmental Document for the SR-4 Wagon Trail Realignment Project.

This Public Participation Plan seeks to:

- Conduct a process that is open and transparent;
- Engage a broad audience;
- Enhance public awareness of the project efforts and its importance; and,
- Conduct both formal and informal processes for community involvement.

### C. Federal and State Requirements

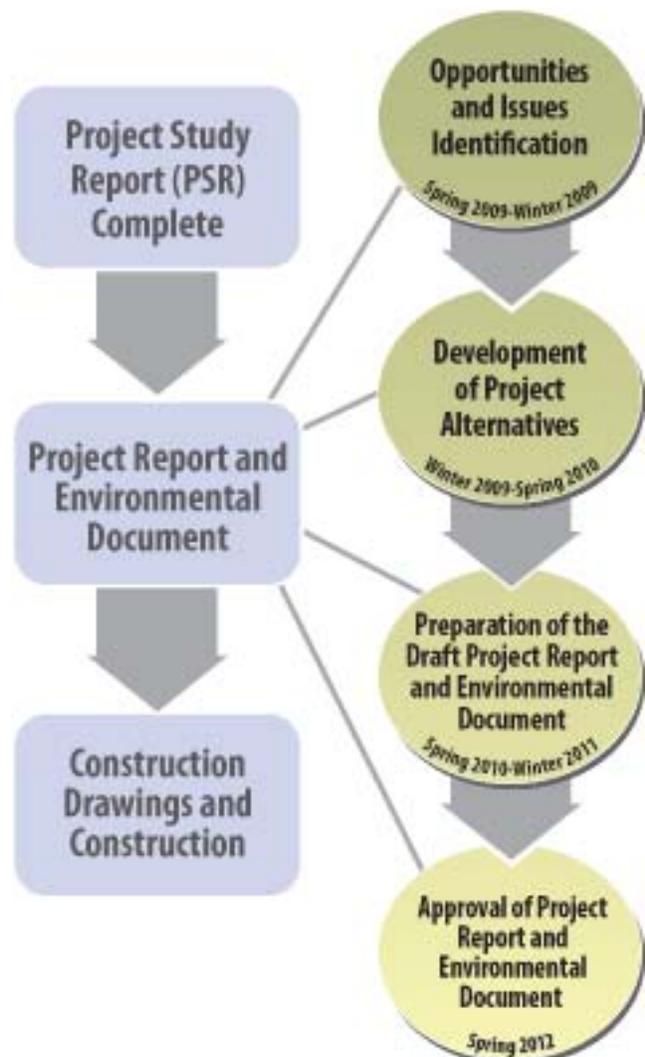
Federal and State laws require public participation for projects such as the SR-4 Wagon Trail Realignment Project. The following federal and state requirements will be met through this Public Participation Plan:

- *Federal Title VI*: The Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Title VI, requires states to conduct broad and diverse outreach, with an emphasis on underserved groups. Attendance at state public meetings must be documented and is subject to audits by federal and state Title VI representatives. A database of workshop participants will be recorded and available, as needed.
- *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)*: Section 15201 of the California Environmental Quality Act states that “public participation is an essential part of the CEQA process. Each public agency should include provisions in its CEQA procedures for wide public involvement, formal and informal, consistent with its existing activities and procedures, in order to receive and evaluate public reactions to environmental issues related to the agency’s activities”.
- *Caltrans Project Development Procedures Manual*: Chapter 11 – Public Hearing and Chapter 22 – Community Involvement of the Caltrans Project Development Procedures Manuals provide additional requirements for community meetings, noticing, and public hearings.

#### D. Overview of the Process

The development of the Project Report and Environmental Document for the Wagon Trail Realignment project is broken down into four phases. The following is a description of each phase.

- *Phase 1 – Opportunities and Issues Identification (spring 2009 to Winter 2009\*)*: The project team will review existing information including topography, drainage, utility locations, access points, and other data as well as hike the study area to obtain additional information.
- *Phase 2 – Development of Project Alternatives (winter 2009 to spring 2010\*)*: Includes the development of potential corridors that will accommodate the best alignment. A community workshop will be held to share the potential corridors with the





community and allow participants to comment on each of the alternatives.

- *Phase 3 – Preparation of the Draft Project Report and Environmental Documents (spring 2010 to winter 2011\*)*: The project team will perform a detailed analysis of the corridors and develop technical studies to analyze and refine the probable corridors. The result of this phase is the preparation of the draft environmental documents and draft project report. A community workshop will be held to allow community member to review and discuss the project alignments and environmental analysis.
- *Phase 4 – Approval of the Project Report and Environmental Document (spring 2012\*)*: The final phase of the process will include the selection of the preferred alignment and the formal approval of the project report and environmental document by Caltrans. A public hearing will be held to review and discuss the preferred alternative.

\* This is an approximate schedule. The project team will provide schedule updates to the public when more information is available during the process.

## II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following section summarizes the public participation portion of the Wagon Trail Realignment Project:

- Property Owners Meetings
- Focus Meeting
- Outreach Materials and Media Coordination
- Community Workshops
- Draft Project Report and Environmental Document Public Review and Comment
- Public Hearing

### A. Property Owners Meetings

Meetings with the property owners early and often is key to a successful public participation plan. The first meeting with property owners took place on February 9, 2009. During this meeting participants had the opportunity to learn more about the project, to discuss impacts to surrounding property owners, and to ask questions of the project team.

### B. Focus Meeting

Focus meetings provide a more intimate setting with key stakeholders. The following focus meeting was conducted for the SR-4 Wagon Trail Realignment Project:

- *Focus Meeting 1: March 26, 2009 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm*: This focus meeting introduced the project and process to the community and answered questions from community members.



Comments from each focus group meeting will be summarized and posted on the project website for review. Refer to Appendix C, Summary Reports for details.

### C. Outreach Materials and Media Coordination

The following outreach materials will be created to inform the community of ways to get involved in the SR-4 Wagon Trail Realignment Project:

- *Flyers*: Flyers will be created to advertise key community meetings including focus meetings and community workshops. Flyers will be distributed via the project website, direct mailing, and available at the CCOG office.
- *Newspaper Advertisements*: Newspaper advertisement will be posted in the Calaveras Enterprise and Copperopolis Herald to announce upcoming focus meetings and workshops.
- *Workshop Comment Forms*: Comment forms will be available at all focus meetings, workshops, and at the CCOG office for community members to provide written comments.
- *Website*: A 24-hour website will be available to community members to review draft documents, learn about the project and process, and find out more information about upcoming events. An online comment form allows community members to comment on the project via the internet.
- *Public Participation Database*: Contact information from workshop attendees, comment cards, and online comments will be compiled into a project database. This database will be utilized to inform interested community members about upcoming events and draft documents.

For more information on timing and noticing, refer to Appendix A, Community Outreach Matrix. For a complete list of stakeholders, refer to Appendix B, Stakeholder List.

### D. Community Workshops

Four community workshops will be held throughout the process to identify existing opportunities and values, review project alternatives, and ongoing project communications. Workshops will include:

- *Community Workshop #1 – Potential Corridors, Issues, and Opportunities*: During this workshop, participants will have the opportunity to review and discuss the preliminary project alternatives or corridors through a number of fun, interactive exercises.
- *Community Workshop #2 – Development of the Refined Project Alternatives*: During this workshop, the refined alignments will be shared with the community. Participants will have the opportunity to comment on each of the alignments.



- *Community Workshop #3 – Presentation of the Draft Project Report and Draft Environmental Documents:* This workshop will allow participants to review and discuss the project alignments and environmental analysis with the Project Team.

Comments from each workshop will be summarized and posted on the project website for review. Refer to Appendix C, Summary Reports for details.

### **E. Draft Project Report and Environmental Document Public Review and Comment**

The draft Project Report and Environmental Document will be released for public review and comment prior to the public hearing. Specific dates to be determined.

### **F. Public Hearing**

Caltrans will hold a public hearing to hear from the community prior to approving the Final Project Report and Final Environmental Document. This public hearing will provide an opportunity for community members to voice their concerns or approval for each of the proposed alternatives. A final alternative will be selected based on public comment.