



# NEWS RELEASE

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**District:** 1 - Eureka  
**Contact:** Phil Frisbie, Jr.  
**Phone:** (707) 441-4678

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Please note: Attached guest editorial is being sent as a news release. A photo of Caltrans District 1 Director Charles C. Fielder can be obtained by contacting Julie East at [Julie\\_East@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Julie_East@dot.ca.gov) .**

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## Caltrans District 1: Year in Review, and a Look Ahead

By Charles C. Fielder

Greetings, summer has arrived and we welcome the change in weather and activities. The State of California's 2007/08 fiscal year recently concluded on June 30th and I am pleased to report that Caltrans District 1 (Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake and Mendocino Counties) had another productive year improving transportation on the North Coast. You may have also noticed that our maintenance workers were very busy keeping the highways open during last winter's storms. Our crews work long hours to keep our highways open so that others can continue their normal routines. Now that summer has arrived, we are busy with more road work to make needed repairs and improvements.

In addition to our regular maintenance activities, Caltrans has been busy planning and developing much-needed capital improvement projects for the North Coast. Last year, District 1 delivered over \$160 million in projects through the excellent efforts of our workforce. Delivery means Caltrans, with the help of our local partners, developed plans and contract specifications for construction bidding purposes. These projects are then funded through approval by the California Transportation Commission (CTC). I want to share some of the highlights of a few of the projects that we delivered, as well as update you on some of the projects that are either in construction or are planned for the future.

In Del Norte County, Caltrans, in partnership with the Del Norte Local Transportation Commission, gained approval from the CTC in May to program funds for projects that will open the 197/199 corridor to STAA (Surface Transportation Assistance Act) trucks, now the nationwide industry standard. Caltrans delivered three projects on the Route 197/199 corridor: construction of turnouts in multiple locations, resurfacing and re-striping traffic lanes through Gasquet, and repaving the roadway near Hardscrabble Creek. I also anticipate the completion of two other projects on Route 199 by early next year – the replacement of the Hardscrabble Creek Bridge and a safety project near Idlewild. On Route 101, work is still on-going in the Smith River area with a safety improvement project and later next year, we will break ground on a project that will help to stabilize Route 101 in the area known as the Last Chance Grade.

In partnership with the Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG), Caltrans recently completed the plans, permits, and property acquisition phases of the Route 36/101 Interchange Project. Also known as the Alton Interchange, this project will eliminate at-grade crossings along Route 101 from the Van Duzen River Bridge to just north of Drake Hill Road. This project was made possible by funding from voter-approved Proposition 1B. Construction will begin next spring. Also in Humboldt County, after many years of providing service, the two Mad River Bridges on Route 101 just north of Arcata will be replaced beginning next spring. The new bridges will feature wider shoulders to increase safety for motorists and bicyclists and a separate multipurpose path on the northbound bridge for non-motorized use. The Mad River, like all of our North Coast waterways, is a valuable resource. The careful construction of this sizable project will take at least 4 years to complete. Traffic impacts will be minimized, as the new bridge construction will be west of the existing bridges, which traffic will continue to use during construction.

Other projects that Caltrans delivered in Humboldt County include an intersection improvement at the junction of Routes 101 and 211 at Singley Road near Fernbridge (which will be completed prior to the beginning of the Humboldt County Fair), a curve improvement project near Big Lagoon that allows STAA trucks to access Humboldt County on Route 101 as far south as Garberville, and several emergency storm damage repair projects throughout the county.

The area of our district that has seen the greatest amount of recent population growth is Lake County. With this growth, there has been an increase in the number of vehicles using the state highways, especially Route 29 over Mount St. Helena into Napa County and beyond. Last fiscal year, we delivered four safety projects on this route in addition to a major paving project. The public will see most of this work being constructed this summer. Caltrans continues to partner with the Lake County Area Planning Council on widening Route 29 between Diener Drive and Route 175 south of Kelseyville. In addition, we will be busy at work on Route 20 performing paving activities as well as constructing a nearly 3-mile long safety project to add shoulders just west of Nice. Once the work is completed on Route 20, I think that the public will appreciate the smooth riding performance of the new pavement.

In Mendocino County, we continue to make good progress with the Confusion Hill Realignment Project on Route 101. The northern "slant-leg" bridge is nearly complete and the southern "segmental" bridge is over half finished. We are on schedule to open the new alignment in fall 2009. Further south we recently began work on a combined safety and community enhancement project through Laytonville. This project will calm vehicle traffic through Laytonville and provide sidewalks with enhanced crosswalks. Over on the coast, the Ten Mile River Bridge Seismic Safety Project on Route 1 is more than half complete. We will be starting a project next spring to stabilize a section of Route 1 just north of Elk.

The first phase of the Willits Bypass project continues to make great strides. Through the efforts of the Mendocino Council of Governments and Caltrans, the first phase of the bypass is programmed to begin construction in the summer 2010. We are in the process of acquiring the right of way needed to construct the bypass and finalizing the design plans. We have also entered into a partnership with the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District to assist us with the environmental mitigation and final permits required for the project.

As you can see, we have lots of work in store for the North Coast. While this year's budget outlook is challenging for the state, we will continue to work hard with the resources we have to improve mobility across California. With all of this planned construction work in addition to our regular maintenance work, I would like to remind the public that it is essential to pay attention and drive safely, as our maintenance and construction work is in full swing, taking advantage of the good weather. Also, school is out and there are many people traveling to the North Coast to take in the beauty it has to offer. With the increase in traffic and distractions, we must all pay special attention to driving. Be on the defense and make the end of the day a happy one. Please slow for the cone zone!

Thank you