

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: February 13-14, 2008

Reference No.: 2.3a.(1)
Action item

From: CINDY McKIM
Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Timothy Craggs
Acting Chief
Division of Design

Subject: **ROUTE ADOPTION, 1-MEN-101 PM R44.9/49.0**
RESOLUTION HRA 08-01

RECOMMENDATION:

Submitted for transmittal to the California Transportation Commission (Commission) are Highway Route Adoption Resolution HRA 08-01 and a route location map for State Highway Route (SR) 101. The California Department of Transportation (Department) recommends that the Commission approve the resolution and the route location map in accordance with the recommendation of the Chief Engineer. The resolution grants approval of the Willits Bypass route adoption of SR 101 in the county of Mendocino from Post Mile (PM) R44.9 to 49.0.

ISSUE:

The Department and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to modify the adopted route for SR 101 in Mendocino County and in the vicinity of the city of Willits. A Project Report was approved December 15, 2006. A Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report was prepared for National Environmental Protection Act and California Environmental Quality Act approval. This document was approved on October 25, 2006.

Recommended by: _____
RICHARD D. LAND
Chief Engineer

BACKGROUND:

SR 101 is a major north-south route beginning in the city of Los Angeles, traversing northward to San Francisco. From a point opposite San Francisco in Marin County, SR 101 continues northward through inland coastal California. SR 101 passes through the city of Willits in Mendocino County before traversing northward through Eureka and Crescent City, to Oregon. In northern California, and in particular the Willits area, SR 101 serves an increasingly heavy commuter, recreational, and commercial traffic demand.

On July 19, 1945, the California Highway Commission adopted SR 101 as a freeway. SR 101 is on the Freeway and Expressway System, it is part of the National Highway System, and it is functionally classified as a principal arterial. The Federal Department of Defense, in cooperation with the Department, has also identified SR 101 as a Strategic Highway Corridor Network Route. In addition, SR 101 is on the Interregional Road System and is a designated Focus Route in the Department's Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan. SR 101 is also designated as part of the "SHELL" system (Sub-system of Highways for the movement of Extra Legal permit Loads) and as a State Scenic Highway. Maintenance of SR 101 between the San Francisco Bay Area and Oregon is critical to the economic well being of the northern region, as it carries high volumes of interregional traffic, including commercial and agricultural trucking, tourist, and business traffic.

There are five signalized intersections on the existing alignment within the project limits, the only signalized intersections on SR 101 between San Francisco and Eureka. The roadway is configured as a two-lane rural conventional highway that transitions to a four-lane urban conventional highway with posted speed limits varying from 55 mi/hr to 25 mi/hr. This configuration combined with urban signalized intersections and pedestrian/bicycle conflicts with turning movements contributes to relatively low traffic speeds even in free-flow conditions. Furthermore, non-standard shoulder widths, on-street parking, driveways, general traffic congestion, and lack of access control contribute to a total collision rate approximately 1.35 times the statewide average for similar urban facilities. The collision rate for the existing facility is approximately five times the statewide average when compared to a rural four-lane freeway.

SR 101 serves as the only through north-south roadway in Willits. Both interregional and local traffic must share the facility resulting in high levels of congestion. Traffic congestion north of Willits, following special events, has resulted in traffic queues as much as eight miles, according to the California Highway Patrol. Since interregional commercial vehicles must use SR 101, trucks carrying hazardous materials travel through Willits near high-density residential areas and schools.

The proposed route adoption and subsequent freeway construction for this segment of SR 101 will improve safety, reduce traffic congestion within the city, and improve the level of service for interregional traffic on SR 101 in the Willits area.

A project report recommending construction of a four-lane freeway facility on SR 101, to bypass the City of Willits, was approved in 1962. As a result of this Project Report, a bypass route was adopted by the California Highway Commission on January 11, 1963.

In 1969, improvements to SR 101 were made. A segment of freeway south of Willits was constructed and right of way was acquired. Due to funding shortfalls and a shift in transportation philosophies, further development of the bypass project stopped.

In 1987, the Commission directed the Department to re-evaluate the adopted route and to consider other alternatives to satisfy the “new” required environmental process. In 1988, a Project Study Report (PSR) investigating the feasibility of constructing a four-lane freeway bypass around Willits was approved. This approved PSR authorized environmental studies to be completed. During the course of the studies, the Department investigated a wide range of alternatives. In the 1992 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the Commission partially funded the Willits Bypass project, programming \$60.5 million for construction and \$9 million for right of way.

Engineering and environmental studies continued on the many alternatives under consideration through 1994, but due to funding shortages and resource redirection, by 1995, progress halted.

In 1998 studies resumed. The 1998 STIP included approximately \$117 million for right of way acquisition and construction. Seeing the project as a top transportation priority, the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) committed its entire \$17.3 million Regional Transportation Improvement share to show local support for the project. MCOG continues to commit its share of regional STIP funds to the project.

Finally, on October 25, 2006, the environmental document was approved and the proposed route alternative was selected. The preferred alternative minimizes impacts to environmental resources and avoids direct impacts to the area parks as well as the business/industrial park in the city.

Existing SR 101, immediately south of the project limits, is a four-lane freeway with a 60 foot wide unpaved median. Throughout the project vicinity, SR 101 has varying lane configurations. Entering the project from the south, SR 101 serves the sparsely developed area with two-lane conventional highway. As commercial development intensifies just north of the intersection with Baechtel Road, SR 101 increases to a four-lane conventional highway with a two-way left turn lane for about 0.9 miles. From this location to the intersection with SR 20, SR 101 has two lanes southbound and one northbound plus a two-way left turn lane. North of SR 20, through the older downtown portion of Willits, SR 101 reduces to one lane in each direction with a two-way left turn lane for approximately 1.1 miles. For the next 3.4 miles, SR 101 is a two-lane conventional highway until just north of Reynolds Highway. From this point on, SR 101 traverses rural lands as a two-lane conventional highway with truck climbing lanes. Approximately 6.2 miles north of the project limits, the two-lane conventional configuration changes to four-lane expressway for the next 10 miles.

The project proposes to construct a four-lane freeway bypass with full access control, two interchanges, and three grade separations east of Willits. The freeway will depart from existing SR 101 approximately 0.3 miles south of the Haehl Overhead and will end approximately 1.8 miles south of Reynolds Highway along the existing SR 101 alignment just south of the at-grade rail crossing of the Northwestern Pacific Railway. The bypass will provide access to Willits and Fort Bragg at interchanges toward the north and south ends of the project. Frontage roads and driveways to local roads will be constructed as needed to provide access to landlocked parcels.

A portion of the January 11, 1963 freeway route adoption will be rescinded as part of this proposed freeway route adoption as shown on the route location map. The proposed freeway route adoption will link the portions of the January 11, 1963 route adoption remaining in effect.

The Department's recommendation to redesignate a portion of existing SR 101 to SR 20 is under item 2.3a.(2). The redesignation from 0.3 miles south of Haehl Overhead to existing SR 101/ SR 20 junction, in town, will provide a link from SR 20 to SR 101 on its new alignment.

Relinquishment of the existing SR 101 from SR 20, in town, to near the north end of the bypass would occur after project construction. Relinquishment would transfer the State's right of way, title, and interest of a section of SR 101 to the City of Willits and to Mendocino County.

The Department has worked with the community and various interested local parties in developing this project. Multiple public information meetings were held throughout the project development process. On July 24, 2002, a public hearing was held in Willits. All comments received were addressed in the final environmental document.

The Route Concept Report (RCR) identifies a four-lane freeway bypass as an improvement needed to achieve the route concept levels of service. The Department's District 1 System Management Plan includes a four-lane freeway bypass of Willits in its proposed 20-year Transportation System Improvement Plan for Mendocino County. The Regional Transportation Plan adopted by the MCOG lists the Willits Bypass as the top priority project. The preferred alternative is consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan and with the Mendocino County General Plan.

The current capital cost estimate is approximately \$281 million. Construction of this project will be done in phases. The first phase includes the construction of the interchanges and two-lanes of highway with a cost estimate of \$194 million. This phase is programmed in the 2006 STIP for approximately \$226 million. The right of way is funded in FY 2008-09, while construction is funded in the FY 2009-10.

The Department approved the Project Report on December 15, 2006. The Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Protection Act and California Environmental Quality Act and was approved by the Commission on July 26, 2007.

Freeway and relinquishment agreements will be developed and executed with the City of Willits and Mendocino County following Commission approval of this route adoption.

Attachments:

Resolution HRA 08-01

Location Map

Route Adoption Map

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Highway Route Adoption Resolution
1-Men-101 PM R44.9/49.0

Resolution HRA 08-01

WHEREAS, the California Department of Transportation (Department), with input on the project from the County of Mendocino and City of Willits, has completed studies and approved of the public hearing process relative to the adopted State Highway Route 101, in Mendocino County; and

WHEREAS, the Department has completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report and Section 4(f) Evaluation; and

WHEREAS, the Alternative JIT was selected as the preferred alternative because it would have the least overall impact to the environment and best meet the purpose and need of the project.

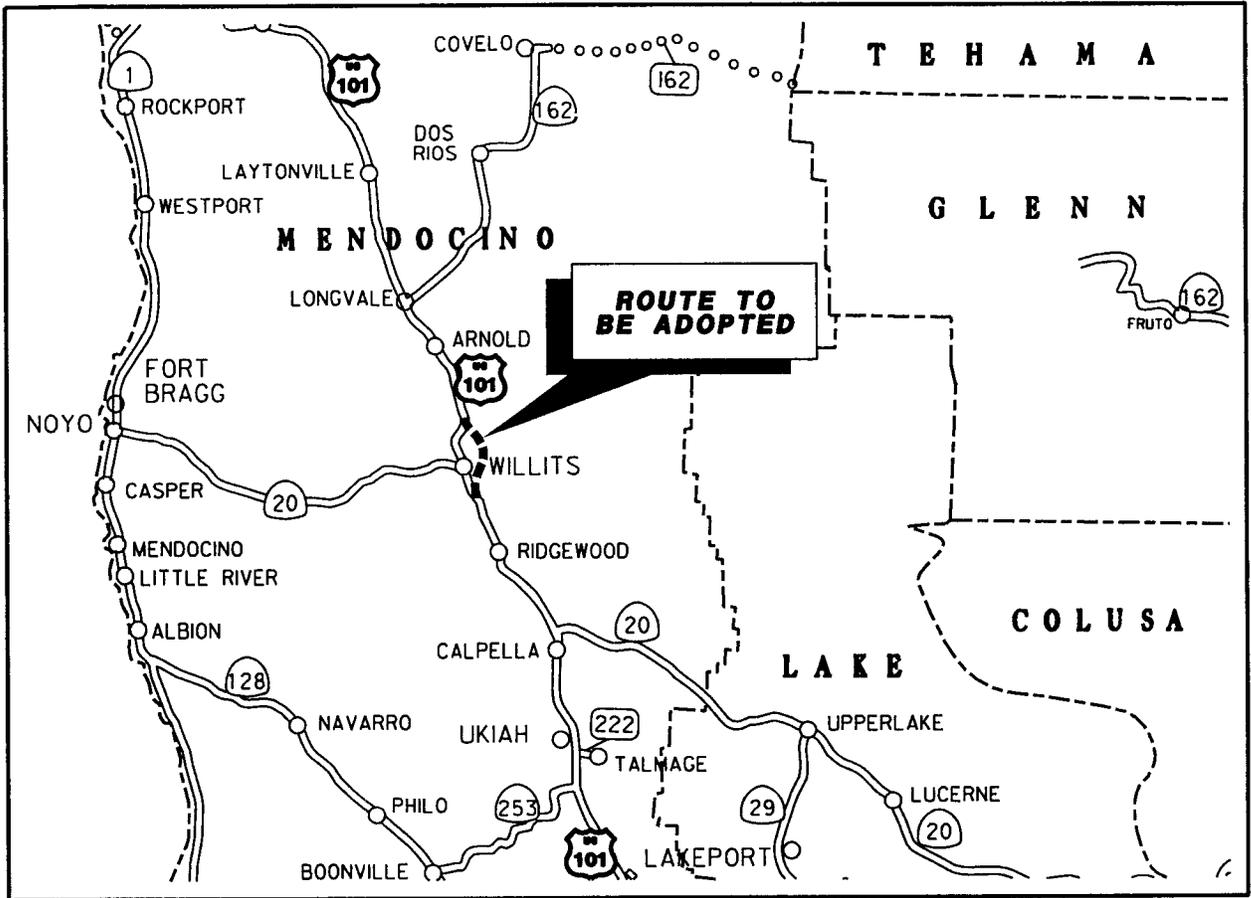
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the California Transportation Commission (Commission) that pursuant to the authority vested in it by law, this Commission does hereby select, adopt, and determine the location of that segment of State Highway Route 101, from 0.1 miles south of East Hill Road to 1.8 miles south of Reynolds Highway, in Mendocino County, and officially designate it as 1-Men-101, a freeway, as said location is shown on the map submitted by Timothy Craggs, Acting Chief Design Engineer; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said segment of State Highway Route 101 supersedes, and the Commission does rescind, a portion of the location previously adopted for Route 101 on January 11, 1963, from 0.1 miles south of East Hill Road to 1.2 miles north of Reynolds Highway; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Commission that the existing traversable highway shown on said map as the existing State highway shall remain as the State highway until such time as the new portion is constructed and available for traffic and until the existing State highway from SR 101/SR 20 junction to 1.8 miles south of Reynolds Highway has been relinquished as provided by law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Commission has found and determined and hereby declares that such location of said State highway is for the best interest of the State.

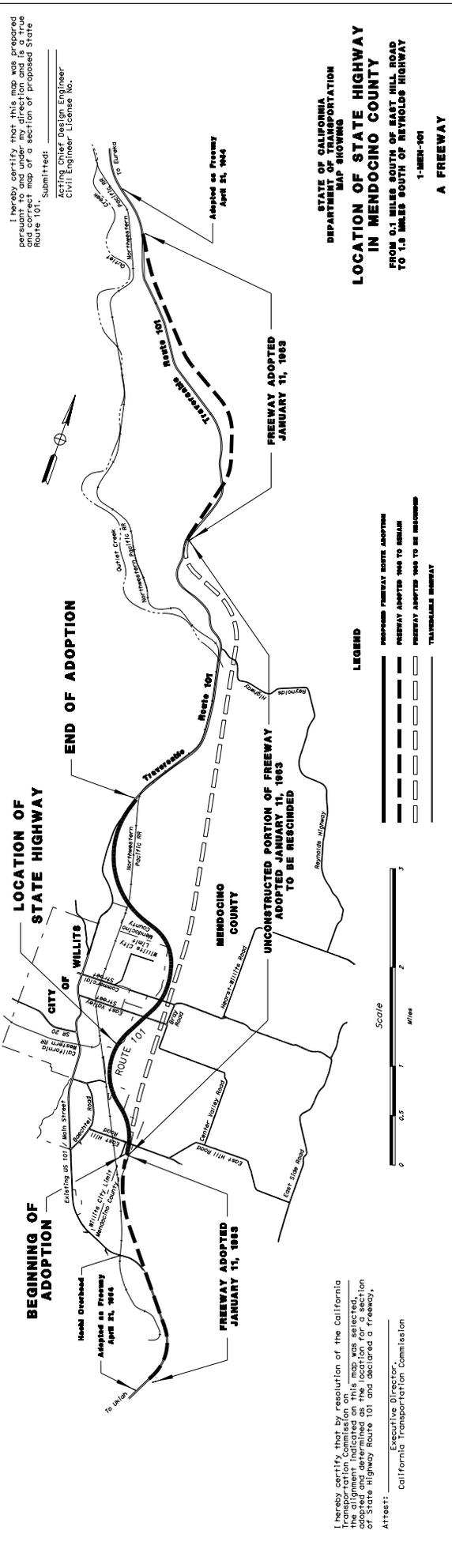
VICINITY MAP



**MENDOCINO
COUNTY**

LOCATION MAP

ROUTE ADOPTION WILLITS BYPASS 1-MEN-101



I hereby certify that this map was prepared pursuant to and under the direction of the correct map of a section of proposed State Route 101.
 Submitted:
 Acting Chief District Engineer
 Civil Engineer License No. _____

Adopted as Freeway
 April 21, 1964

FREEWAY ADOPTED
 JANUARY 11, 1963

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 MAP SHOWING
**LOCATION OF STATE HIGHWAY
 IN MENDOCINO COUNTY**
 FROM 0.1 MILES SOUTH OF EAST HILL ROAD
 TO 1.3 MILES SOUTH OF REYNOLDS HIGHWAY
 1-SHR-101
A FREEWAY

I hereby certify that by resolution of the California Transportation Commission on the alignment indicated on this map was selected for the proposed freeway route and declared a Freeway.
 Attest:
 Executive Director
 California Transportation Commission

LEGEND
 PROPOSED FREEWAY ROUTE ADOPTION
 FREEWAY ADOPTED 1963 TO BE RESCINDED
 FREEWAY ADOPTED 1963 TO BE MENDOCINO
 TRAVELABLE FREEWAY



IN MENDOCINO COUNTY, PM 164.3/16.0