

## 4. TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

The United States Constitution recognizes Native American tribes as separate and independent political communities within U.S. territorial boundaries. In California, Native American lands are usually referred to as Reservations or Rancherias. There are 109 federally recognized Native American tribes in California. There are eight Native American Reservations and Rancherias in Humboldt County, which are: Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, Big Lagoon Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Karuk Tribe, Trinidad Rancheria, Wiyot Tribe, and the Yurok Tribe (see Figure 4.1).

Tribal governments in Humboldt have many of the same transportation priorities and needs as the cities and the County. Among the tribal governments, Reservations and Rancherias also have different priorities and issues for developing and maintaining transportation systems, because the tribes have widely varying land bases for which they are responsible. Each tribe is required to evaluate transportation resources on its reservation, and choose how to improve them for the betterment of their community.

"Native American tribal governments engage in transportation safety planning for all users in their communities. As sovereign nations, they have the authority to make and approve transportation plans to further their unique community goals."  
— *California Transportation Plan 2040*

### TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

"As sovereign nations, Native American tribal governments have the authority to make and approve transportation plans to further their unique community goals. These plans support the planning, construction, maintenance, and operations of roadways and guide the development of transit services on their tribal lands and for the residents of the community. In addition, tribal transportation plans are essential for successful proposals for competitive state and some federal transportation grant programs." (*California Transportation Plan 2040*)

### NORTH COAST TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

The North Coast Tribal Transportation Commission (NCTTC) is an intertribal association formed for the purpose of fostering collaborative dialog on transportation issues of mutual concern. The NCTTC is open to all federally recognized tribes in Northern California and currently is comprised of representatives from the Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, Big Lagoon Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Karuk Tribe, Trinidad Rancheria, the Wiyot Tribe, the Yurok Tribe, and the Elk Valley Rancheria, Resighini Rancheria and Tolowa Dee-ni Nation in Del Norte County.

The NCTTC's mission statement, which HCAOG actively supports, is:

*To promote safe and efficient modes of transportation, and to improve transportation, identify transportation needs, and advocate for transportation issues of tribal communities; to collaborate on issues between all of the Native American Tribes; and, to solve problems concerning transportation issues among the tribes.*

The purpose of the NCTTC is as follows:

- To actively participate and seek federal, state, and local funding, technical assistance and training.
- To promote safe and efficient modes of transportation;
- To act as representative for tribes, as delegated;
- To assist in federal, state and local transportation planning;
- To seek opportunities to preserve contemporary and traditional modes and routes of transportation;
- To raise awareness of tribal transportation issues;
- To seek funding that does not impact or reduce funding to individual tribes; and
- To represent Humboldt County tribes' transportation issues and priority projects at federal, inter-tribal, tribal, state, and county levels.

The NCTTC members work together and partner on transportation issues, share information about transportation programs, funding sources and project delivery, and network on the best approaches to dealing with transportation bureaucracies. The NCTTC has successfully brought together diverse groups that have historically not worked together.

## HCAOG'S ROLE IN TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

"Transportation is meant to bring people together, bridge divides, cross immovable boundaries and connect people from all walks of life. Caltrans cannot accomplish this mission without addressing the specter of exclusionary, prejudiced place names located throughout the California State Highway system."

—Toks Omishakin,  
Caltrans Director

The "Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines" (CTC 2017) require consultation with and consideration of Indian Tribal Governments' interests in developing regional transportation plans and programs. This includes state and local transportation program funding for transportation projects that access tribal lands. Other State policies relating to transportation planning with tribal governments include the California State Transportation Agency's (CalSTA's) Tribal Consultation Policy, "which obligates respect for tribal sovereignty and pursuit of good-faith relations with tribes." The Department of Transportation (Caltrans) policy "Working with Native American Communities" requires Caltrans to consult with tribal Governments before deciding on or implementing projects/programs that may impact their communities. Caltrans' intent is to "recognize and respect important California Native American rights, sites, traditions and practices" (Director's Policy 19, "Working with Native American Communities" 2001). HCAOG's intent is to uphold the same objectives to recognize, respect, and collaborate with Native American tribal governments and communities.

Six Humboldt County tribes currently have a representative on the HCAOG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The six tribes are Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Karuk Tribe, Trinidad Rancheria, and the Yurok Tribe. The TAC provides resources to tribes that are actively involved in acquiring resources for tribal transportation needs. Other tribes will be included in future transportation planning efforts if/when they decide to become active members of the TAC.

HCAOG supports Caltrans' policy that requires the Department to "recognize and respect important California Native American rights, sites, traditions and practices" (Director's Policy 19). HCAOG also commits to following this edict, within its authority, to the best of its ability.

In the past, the HCAOG Board has discussed the potential to include a tribal representative on the HCAOG Board of Directors. In 2013, the Board approved Resolution 13-07: Approving Joint Power Agency

Membership Criteria. This Resolution set forth membership criteria that specified federally recognized Indian tribes or a joint powers agency comprised of multiple tribes were eligible to apply to HCAOG to become a member based on the criteria contained in the resolution.

In 2004, Senate Bill 1189 was enacted to provide specific authority for Caltrans to directly enter into contracts with tribal governments. The legislation includes certain restrictions, such that the contract must provide for a limited waiver of sovereign immunity by the tribe for the purpose of enforcing obligations arising from the contracted activity. Since SB 1189 passed, the provision regarding the limited waiver of sovereign immunity has proven to be a barrier to Caltrans entering into direct contracts with federally recognized tribes, because tribes have been reluctant to agree to the waiver. A previous policy called for HCAOG to support legislation that would remove the limited waiver of sovereign immunity from Streets and Highways Code (SHC-94), and also expand the eligible projects to allow Caltrans to enter into direct contracts with tribes for projects in the Active Transportation Program.<sup>1</sup> AB 630 (Ramos) passed in 2023 and removed the limited waiver of sovereign immunity from requirements for Caltrans to enter contracts with federally recognized Indian tribes.

## GOAL, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES

**TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION GOAL:** Tribal communities have safe and efficient mobility options, benefit from equitable access to transportation resources, and have strong interjurisdictional partnerships for advocating and solving transportation issues of tribal communities.

| MAIN OBJECTIVES:                         | EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION SUB-OBJECTIVES (♦) AND POLICIES   |
|--|--|
| Equitable & Sustainable Use of Resources | <p><b>POLICY TRIBAL-1 Support NCTTC mission:</b> HCAOG supports the mission of the North Coast Tribal Transportation Commission (NCTTC) and actively engages with the NCTTC. This includes support for the formation of a tribal joint powers authority for the purpose of applying for a seat on the HCAOG Board.</p> <p><b>POLICY TRIBAL-2 Support removing sovereign waiver:</b> HCAOG supports legislation that would remove the limited waiver of sovereign immunity from Streets and Highways Code (SHC-94), and also expand the eligible projects to allow Caltrans to enter into direct contracts with tribes for projects in the Active Transportation Program.<sup>2</sup></p> <p><b>POLICY TRIBAL-23 Redress discriminatory names:</b> HCAOG supports Caltrans' initiative to review all named assets located on the state transportation system and propose assets to be renamed. HCAOG will participate in dialogue around re-naming places and transportation infrastructure in an effort to redress discriminatory names.</p> |

<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>In 2004, Senate Bill 1189 was enacted to provide specific authority for Caltrans to directly enter into contracts with tribal governments. The legislation includes certain restrictions, such that the contract must provide for a limited waiver of sovereign immunity by the tribe for the purpose of enforcing obligations arising from the contracted activity. Since SB 1189 passed, the provision regarding the limited waiver of sovereign immunity has proven to be a barrier to Caltrans entering into direct contracts with federally recognized tribes, because tribes have been reluctant to agree to the waiver.

## TRIBAL GOVERNMENT SUMMARIES

### BEAR RIVER BAND OF ROHNERVILLE RANCHERIA

The Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria located in Loleta California, is a federally recognized tribe with a total of 238 acres located in Eureka, Loleta, and Fortuna California. Of the 238 acres, 173 acres are held in trust with the federal government and are located in Loleta California. The remaining 65 acres of fee land are located in Eureka, Loleta, and Fortuna California. The Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria runs adjacent to Highway 101.

Included on the Tribe's trust land are the Bear River Casino Resort, Bear River Pump N Play Fuel Casino Minimart, Bear River Tobacco Traders and Coffee, Bear River Recreation Center, Tish-Non Library, Tish-Non Tribal office and community center, 41 Tish-Non residential homes, 11 residential homes on Bear River Drive, the Tribe's wastewater sewage plant, the Tribe's water treatment plant, and renewable energy windmills and solar panels. The trust land includes 2.6 miles of road. Included on the Tribe's fee land are two residential apartment complexes in Fortuna California, a commercial property in Eureka California, and several residential properties in Loleta California.

The Rancheria's *Tribal Transportation Safety Plan* was developed throughout 2016 and submitted for approval to the Federal Highway Administration in early 2017.

### BLUE LAKE RANCHERIA

The Blue Lake Rancheria, California, is a federally recognized tribe with 98.5 acres in land area, located directly west of the City of Blue Lake. It is adjacent to SR 299, approximately five miles east of the City of Arcata in Humboldt County. Unincorporated lands of the County of Humboldt are adjacent to the Rancheria's northerly and southerly boundaries and the Mad River forms the westerly Rancheria boundary.

The Rancheria previously operateds a deviated-fixed route transit service system and a Dial-a-Ride system, named the Blue Lake Rancheria Transit System (BLRTS). However, due primarily to long-term funding sustainability, the service was discontinued in 2023. The BLRTS serves Rancheria resident riders as well as riders in Blue Lake, Glendale, Arcata, McKinleyville, Fieldbrook, and Eureka. (See this RTP's Public Transportation Element for more details.)

#### Transportation Projects – Proposed

Blue Lake Rancheria's strategies for future projects include:

1. Adding sidewalks and bicycle lanes to promote walkability on the Rancheria for pedestrian safety and healthy living;
2. Adding dedicated industrial truck routes to separate commercial and retail traffic;
3. Improving intersections to increase safety;
4. Potentially integrating sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and/or roads with the existing one-mile Annie & Mary Rail Trail;
5. Increasing river access along the Mad River for recreational opportunities;
6. Installing tribal street signs for ease of travel on the Rancheria;

7. Installing more street lights to improve safety;
8. Installing bicycle parking facilities on the Rancheria
9. Coordinating with the City of Blue Lake to improve routes to school and pedestrian facilities between the Rancheria and City of Blue Lake; and
- ~~10. Expanding the frequency and/or service area(s) for all Blue Lake Rancheria Transit Service routes.~~

## HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE

The Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation is the largest reservation in California. The Reservation is nearly square and totals approximately 144 square miles. This area encompasses roughly 50 percent of the Hupa aboriginal territory. The Reservation is located in the northeastern corner of the county, approximately 50 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. State Route 96 bisects the Hoopa Valley Reservation and the Trinity River flows through the center.

State Route 96 is the primary access road for the Hoopa Valley, SR 299 and Interstate 5. State Route 96 is in need of traffic calming and safety enhancements at various locations. The following segments of SR 96 experience peak- and nonpeak- hour congestion: the intersections of SR 96 and School Road, SR 96 and Pine Creek Road/Loop Road, SR 96 and Tish Tang Road, and SR 96 and Tsewenaldin Road.

Hoopa Valley Reservation's regionally significant roads include: Tish Tang Road, which provides the only access to K'ima:w Medical Center; Pine Creek Road, which provides access to significant residential areas and is the sole connection to Bald Hill Road (to U.S. 101) and Dowd Road (route around Martins Ferry Bridge); Bair Road, which provides secondary access to SR 299; and Tsewenaldin Road, which provides access to the grocery store, U.S. post office, radio station, and Lucky Bear Casino.

The Hoopa Valley Reservation operates the Hoopa Airport, a Limited General Aviation Airport. (See this RTP's Chapter 6 *Aviation System Element* for more details)

### Transportation Projects – Proposed

The following list is of proposed transportation projects:

1. Downtown traffic calming & safety enhancement project (Highway 96, PM 12.38-12.8)
2. Safe Routes to Schools, pedestrian walkways and bikeways, ATP Cycle 2 Funding
3. Trinity River Bridge pedestrian facilities (California State Route 96)
4. Bald Hill emergency access improvements (BIA Route 11)
5. Hoopa Airport improvements
6. Legion Way Road improvements
7. Marshall Lane improvements
8. Transportation and Road Maintenance Facility

## KARUK TRIBE

The Karuk Tribe is the second largest Tribe in California with 3,740 members, of which approximately 900 reside in the County of Humboldt. Karuk Tribal properties are comprised of approximately 900 acres of

reservation and Trust Land, and an additional 761 acres in fee status. The Tribe's land is scattered mostly along the Middle Klamath River Sub-basin and in the communities of Orleans, Somes Bar, Happy Camp and Yreka, California.

The Karuk Tribe currently negotiates an Annual Tribal Transportation Programmatic Agreement (TTPPA) with the FHWA under the authority of the Karuk Tribe Constitution and By-Laws and the authority granted by Title 23, USC Chapter 2; and, as amended by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), Pub. L. 114-94 and the Delegations of Authority set forth in 49 CFR Sect. 1.85.). The TTPPA, and subsequent Referenced Funding Agreements, allocate formula-based funding to the Karuk Tribe. Such funding allows the Tribe to perform the planning, research, design, engineering, construction and maintenance for highways, roads, bridges, parkways or transit facility programs or projects on select routes deemed official on the current Tribal Transportation Program Road Inventory.

As required by the TTPPA, the Karuk Tribe Department of Transportation develops an annual Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP), in which the tribe identifies their priority transportation projects. The Tribe has identified the following projects for inclusion in this and upcoming Karuk Tribe TTIPs for the Humboldt County community of Orleans, California.

## Transportation Projects – Proposed

The following two projects are located in Orleans. For funding sources and estimated costs, refer to the Complete Streets & Connected Communities Element, Table *Streets-4*.

### 1. Orleans Community Safety Corridor Project

The Orleans Community Safety Corridor Project includes streetscape improvements to address pedestrian/bicycle safety. State Route 96 runs through the community of Orleans and functions as both a state highway and a community main street. In FY 2009/10 an Environmental Justice Grant was awarded to the Karuk Tribe to develop the *Middle Klamath River Community Transportation Plan (MKRCTP)*. The Tribe worked with Caltrans to conduct a series of outreach efforts concerning the transportation needs of local communities along SR 96 in both Humboldt and Siskiyou counties. Outreach efforts included meetings with Caltrans Districts 1 and 2, U.S. Forest Service, and Humboldt and Siskiyou Counties, and community meetings and other discussions with local residents. One focus of this project was the community of Orleans. Further details are available in the MKRCTP (November 2011). The report points to a strong community desire for improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities through Orleans. The Karuk Tribe began the project phase of planning and conceptual design during the summer of 2017; this phase is called the Panamnik: Orleans Community Center Connectivity Project, which has separate funding (State funds transferred to FHWA for Tribes, per 23 U.S.C. 209(a)(9)).

The project proposes to construct non-motorized improvements within the community of Orleans including sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalk enhancements, and improved signage. A sidewalk on the westbound side of SR 96 from Eyesee Road (PM 37.63) to Ishi-Pishi Road (PM 38.43) and on the eastbound side of SR 96 from Red Cap Road (PM R38.75) to the Orleans Medical Clinic (PM R38.98) would separate pedestrians from motorized traffic and increase pedestrian safety. Installation of bicycle lanes from Eyesee Road (PM 37.63) to Ishi-Pishi Road (PM 38.43) and from Red Cap Road (PM R38.75) to the Orleans Medical Clinic (PM R38.98) would improve bicyclist safety through the community and help to alert drivers to the presence of non-motorized users. In order to construct sidewalks and bicycle lanes the purchase of 0.34 miles of right of way (PM 38.08 to 38.42) will be necessary.



The existing crosswalk located at the Orleans Elementary School (PM 38.16) would benefit from visibility improvements such as sharks teeth. Additionally, a new high visibility crosswalk would be installed across from the post office (PM 38.38). Both high visibility crosswalks would increase driver awareness of pedestrians, increasing pedestrian safety. Furthermore, vegetation clearance and adjustment of guide sign locations should be performed in conjunction with the addition of non-motorized improvements.

Currently an existing guide sign obscures eastbound traffic's view of pedestrians utilizing the school crosswalk, and existing school crossing signs are obscured by vegetation and placement behind a telephone pole. Finally, to address community concerns a depression in the road between PM 38.25 and 38.35 would be signed to alert drivers of limited sight distance. No specific funding source has been determined as of yet for this project.

## 2. Tishawniik Hill Bikeway and Trail

The project extends from the intersection of California SR 96 and Camp Creek Road and along SR 96 to the intersection of Asip Road in Orleans. Current conditions in the project area, such as excess traffic speeds, minimal shoulders, narrow bridge and a through-cut road segment, impair safe pedestrian and bicycle access.

The goal of this project is to provide a safe, active transportation route on both sides of SR 96. The project entails utilizing the existing roadway alignment, widening the shoulders of SR 96, and constructing a five-foot-wide Class II paved bikeway/pedestrian-way (10,560 linear feet); and a Class I bikeway/pedestrian-way (2,112 linear feet). This project will be constructed within the existing public right-of-way and adjacent to Federal, State, Tribal, and private property.

## TRINIDAD RANCHERIA

Trinidad Rancheria's Transportation and Land Use Department is committed to improving the overall safety and infrastructure of its transportation system, and is involved in initiatives to maintain and improve a sustainable and multimodal transportation network system, as well as preserving and protecting tribal sovereignty. The Trinidad Rancheria envisions a Safe, Sustainable, Integrated, and Efficient Tribal transportation system for All Users that will increase equity for the disadvantaged Tribal community by identifying broad, community-informed goals/strategies to meet community health, employment, economic, cultural, educational, and environmental needs. The Tribe's connections within the community and to the larger regional transportation system play a critical role in defining equitable mobility and access.

The Tribes parcels a segmented and spread throughout 108 acres of property. The main Trinidad Rancheria parcel covers 58.5 acres west of US Highway 101 (US 101), currently accessed via Scenic Drive from US 101 Exit 728 to Trinidad. Current land use is a combination of rural residential, civic/administrative, and recreational uses. Notable features include the Tribal Administrative Center, Emergency Operations Center, Victim and Social Services Center, Transportation and Land Use, Tribal Library, The Heights Casino, and Sunset Restaurant. While the vistas from the coastal bluffs are breathtaking, steep terrain and geological instability create safety concerns for aging infrastructure. The other tribal properties include: the Trinidad harbor and Pier cover 9.3 acres within Trinidad including the pier, Seascape Restaurant, and access recreational access.; Westhaven and Trillium parcels, 12.3 acres east of the main parcel and US 101; and McKinleyville parcel, 28.3 acres along Archer Road in McKinleyville.

Construction of the first section of Highway 101—363 miles between San Francisco and Crescent City, authorized in 1910—began soon after, reshaping the region's highway network. The current US 101

alignment near the Rancheria was constructed in 1962, with right-of-way granted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) without consent from the Tribe. Its construction severed Tribal lands, leaving two detached tracts with no direct access to the new highway permitted when abutting landowners refused to grant access easements. To offset this loss and accommodate expanded housing demands, increased member services, and economic development, in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s the Tribe acquired additional properties, which now comprise its land base. Over 60 years have passed since the BIA's unilateral division of tribal lands and abandonment of Scenic Drive to the care of the under-resourced County of Humboldt, creating a legacy of harm through division and isolation of the Tribal community. Scenic Drive provides sole access to the main parcel—the seat of government, tribal administration, emergency operations, victim services, and much of the Tribe's critical infrastructure.

The transportation network for the Trinidad Rancheria covers 61.5 centerline miles of highway and trails, stretching along 28 miles of California's coast. Streets, roads, and highways make up the largest component of the network; there are 60.7 miles of existing highway routes in the Tribe's current inventory. By mileage, the bulk of the inventory is comprised of state- or county-owned routes: 46% and 45% respectively. Overall, 1.8 miles are BIA-owned and 1.9 miles (including 1.6 miles of proposed centerline miles) are Tribal-owned routes.

Every transportation safety study the Tribe has conducted over the past decades emphasizes the critical need for improvements to Scenic Drive: over 70% of survey responses conducted as part of the 2017 Safety Assessment identified Scenic Drive as an "unsafe roadway" for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians. The report notes, "Scenic Drive has many safety issues, including landslide areas, poor pavement conditions, steep drop-offs, narrow road sections, worn striping, poor sight distances, lack of guardrail, and single lane sections...Tribal members living in Westhaven are regularly crossing Highway 101 on foot to get to the Rancheria's main parcel on Scenic Drive. Pedestrians are prohibited on Highway 101, but the route along Westhaven Drive, Trinidad Main Street, and Scenic Drive is a much longer alternative (2.3 miles compared to 0.2 miles on foot)."

Trinidad Rancheria Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) completed in 2025, aimed at the Tribe's multimodal transportation vision for the next 20 plus years. Within the LRTP it identified a set of goals to help inform decision-making during development of a funding strategy to implement the Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP). The LRTP also recognized what short- and long-range transportation improvement strategies that will address current and future transportation needs. In 2023-2024, a series of technical memos were published that lay out the groundwork for the LRTP. The white papers described the existing transportation network and planning, future conditions, needs and deficiencies, and more. In late 2022, the Tribe was awarded a Safe Streets for All (SS4A) planning grant through the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). Through this planning effort. The Tribe prepared a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP) based on Vision Zero principles. The CSAP was intended to develop a holistic, well-defined strategy that will reduce the risk of death and injury crashes on the Tribe's transportation system. This included a range of strategies: i.e., performance goals, specific safety focused improvement projects, adjustments to policies/standards, education campaigns to target high risk behaviors, etc. Implementation of the CSAP was to improve the transportation safety for the Tribe, its people, and visitors to the area.

## **Transportation Projects – Proposed**

Trinidad Rancheria began the journey of planning and building infrastructure in the early 2000's. In 2011 the Rancheria completed a "Community Based Comprehensive Plan" which looks at transportation connectivity, long-range planning for cultural preservation, housing, land, environment and economic development.



The Tribe's current vision is informed, in part, by its past planning efforts. The Tribe has completed a host of previous transportation planning documents over the past two decades, documenting its vision and priorities over time. Past studies and ongoing projects were reviewed to understand potential needs, omitting any previously addressed concepts. At the top of the list: the US 101 Trinidad Area Access Improvements Project, and Scenic Drive Emergency Roadway Repair, Ue-Kwe'-Won Beach (Trinidad Head Beach) – Landslide Area and Protection of Resources.

### **U.S. 101 Trinidad Area Access Improvements Project**

Currently, the only access (ingress/egress) to Trinidad Rancheria's main parcel, which includes: Tribal Government Operations; the Victim Services Social Services Center; Tribal Member Services; Transportation and Land Use; the Emergency Operations Center; Public Safety; Tribal Library; Natural Resources; RV Park; The Heights Casino; and Tribal Member Housing is by way of Scenic Drive, a two-lane, narrow three-mile-long road that parallels US 101 along the west side from the City of Trinidad to the north and communities to the south. Scenic Drive was constructed in the early 1920s on the face of a steep bluff adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, and has experienced extensive damage associated with slope instability and bluff erosion at several locations. Access to Trinidad Rancheria is compromised due to the regular road closures and inherent instability of Scenic Drive.

The US 101 Trinidad Area Access Improvement Project will provide the Trinidad Rancheria and surrounding community with safe and sustainable access to and from US 101, ensuring reliable multimodal transportation connections to Tribal lands and surrounding communities via Scenic Drive. The project aims to: address the loss of connectivity between Tribal lands east and west of U.S. 101 and to improve safety, accessibility, and mobility.

The Trinidad Rancheria initiated the Project Study Report–Project Development Support (PSR-PDS) phase in 2015. A multidisciplinary Project Delivery Team (PDT) was formed with Trinidad Rancheria staff, Caltrans, FHWA, BIA, HCAOG, Humboldt County, and the City of Trinidad. After developing the project's Purpose and Need statement, twelve potential alternatives were identified to address transportation deficiencies. This project represents the highest priority for the Trinidad Rancheria community. Its success is critical to advancing resilient infrastructure, land use improvements, safe and reliable multimodal transportation opportunities, and long-term economic development goals. The absence of safe pedestrian infrastructure across US 101 and along Scenic Drive poses a significant safety concern. Scenic Drive also traverses a geologically unstable area, creating risks to emergency access and overall reliability for the traveling public. As of 2025, the project is in the Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase. Preliminary design and environmental investigations are currently underway. Three project alternatives—Alternative 3D, Alternative 5C and No Build—are under evaluation.

### **Scenic Drive Emergency Roadway Repair**

Scenic Drive is a rural two-lane roadway that winds along the Pacific Ocean coastal bluffs, offering dramatic views of the coastline. It once served as part of the original Highway 101 before the highway was rerouted further inland to avoid the unstable coastal terrain. Today, Scenic Drive remains a vital route — it provides the only access to the Trinidad Rancheria Proper, where the Tribal Government offices, essential services, economic activity and approximately 24 Tribal homes are located.

Beyond serving the Rancheria, Scenic Drive also provides access to nearby properties, and local coastal recreation areas. It is used daily by Tribal members, area residents, and visitors alike. The route not only

supports local travel and economic activity but also connects people to the Tribe's lands, community, and coastal environment.

Over the years, portions of Scenic Drive have shown signs of distress due to the area's natural conditions. The exact cause and timing of the most recent roadway failure may be uncertain, but its effects are clear. Continued movement of the slide area poses serious risks to public safety, property, and the environment. If left unaddressed, ongoing slope failure could lead to significant damage to the roadway and surrounding ecosystem, with impacts to coastal habitat, wildlife, and water quality.

Previous stabilization work and engineering studies have documented that this portion of Scenic Drive is highly susceptible to erosion, landslides, and coastal bluff retreat. The steep terrain, high rainfall, and regional seismic activity all contribute to this vulnerability.

To ensure the long-term stability and safety of this essential roadway, the Tribe proposes permanent mitigation and slope stabilization measures. These improvements will include removing unstable soils, constructing keyways and benches, installing subsurface drainage, and building a soldier pile retaining wall approximately 168 feet in length. The wall will be set back between 36 feet on the northwest end and 19.5 feet on the southeast end from the roadway centerline. This design represents the most feasible and effective solution for protecting the road and surrounding area. It provides strong, deep foundation support while allowing for flexibility should minor slope movements continue over time. Importantly, the proposed repair will not require permanent right-of-way acquisition, and one lane of traffic is expected to remain open during construction.

Through these improvements, the Tribe seeks to preserve and protect a critical transportation link — one that supports Tribal access, community connection, and the safety and well-being of all who travel Scenic Drive.

#### **Ue-Kwe'-Won Beach (Trinidad Head Beach) – Landslide Area and Protection of Resources**

The Trinidad Harbor and surrounding coastal bluffs are among the most scenic and culturally significant landscapes on California's North Coast. The area includes Trinidad Head, Ue-Kwe'-Won Beach (also known as Trinidad Head Beach), and the adjoining sandstone cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean. These coastal features are central not only to the natural beauty of the region but also to the cultural and historical identity of the Trinidad Rancheria, the Yurok Tribe, and other neighboring Tribal communities. Protecting these places—where the land, sea, and spirit are deeply interconnected—is of paramount importance to the Tribe.

Addressing the instability above Ue-Kwe'-Won Beach is a critical priority within the Tribe's transportation and infrastructure planning efforts. Stabilization will help protect Tribal property, maintain safe access to the harbor area, and preserve the natural and cultural integrity of this significant coastal site for future generations.

The landslide area is located within the boundaries of the Trinidad Rancheria's Harbor Properties, along the north side of the narrow strip of land that separates Trinidad Head from the mainland. The slide occurred along the face of existing sandstone cliffs bordering Ue-Kwe'-Won Beach. This location sits directly west of the Seascape Restaurant, Trinidad Pier, a nearby residence used as a vacation rental, and other harbor-related facilities and activities. The base of the cliff lies adjacent to Trinidad Head Beach, which forms part of the broader Trinidad Bay shoreline.

The slide activity has been observed along approximately 475 feet of the existing cliff face, which rises nearly 85 feet in height. The area is uniquely exposed, bordered by the Pacific Ocean on both the north and south sides. The land slopes toward the ocean, with the southern portion forming the high point of the area. The

main slide extends about 250 feet along the base of the cliff, with a smaller secondary slide occurring to the west and an additional area of exposed soil to the east near the Seascape Restaurant. Preliminary estimates indicate that between 8,000 and 10,000 cubic yards of material detached from the cliff face during the slide event.

Inspections identified several critical resources at risk from continued slide activity. The nearby residence shows structural movement that could worsen with further slope failure, while a utility pole within thirty feet of the cliff edge is vulnerable to collapse and service disruption. The paved walking path lies only ten feet from the cliff and may be lost entirely with additional sliding. The harbor leachfield, just twenty feet from the slide area, could be compromised, affecting wastewater operations. Ongoing movement is also depositing debris onto Ue-Kwe'-Won Beach, limiting access for cultural use, recreation, and habitat.

Ue-Kwe'-Won Beach is not only a place of recreation but also a refuge for marine life, including harbor seals that regularly use the beach for resting, protection, and nurturing their young. Landslide events can occur suddenly, putting these species at immediate risk and reducing their available habitat.

In addition, erosion of slide material contributes to sediment pollution within Trinidad Harbor, affecting water quality and marine ecosystems. The Tribe recognizes that this area represents both an ecological and cultural resource—its preservation is essential to the continued health of the natural environment and the Tribal community's connection to its ancestral coastal lands.

Based on preliminary evaluations, there is a high likelihood of future slide activity at this site, especially as environmental pressures such as severe weather, earthquakes, and sea level rise continue to increase. Without corrective stabilization measures, the slide will continue to expand and could cause irreversible damage to the harbor area, infrastructure, and cultural resources.

These efforts align with the Tribe's broader Coastal Resilience and Infrastructure Safety Goals, which emphasize the protection of critical access routes, harbor facilities, and culturally significant landscapes. By integrating environmental stewardship with long-term infrastructure planning, the Trinidad Rancheria continues to uphold its responsibility to safeguard the land, water, and community for future generations.

## YUOK TRIBE

The territory of the Yurok people runs along the coast seven miles north of the Klamath River to Wilson Creek and 35 miles south of the river mouth to Little River. Inland, their territory follows the Klamath River from its mouth upriver for over 45 miles past the confluence of the Klamath and Trinity Rivers. The watershed of the Lower Klamath River and its tributaries dominated the Yurok Territory. The River is mountainous, heavily forested and meanders 52 miles along the federally designated Wild and Scenic Klamath River.

The Yurok Tribe has prepared and adopted several transportation plans. The Yurok Tribal *Long Range Transportation Plan* (updated in 2016) identifies the Tribe's transportation goals and needs, and includes a list of projects for the TTIP. *Tribal Transportation Safety Plan (2016)* identifies opportunities and activities to improve transportation safety for the Yurok Tribe. *The Yurok Trails and Waterways Master Plan (2014)* identifies and classifies trails and waterways.

Historically, the Yurok people used the Klamath River along with a traditional system of trails as their primary transportation routes. Many of the roads today on the Yurok Reservation follow these same traditional trails. The Yurok Reservation was once the center of a bustling logging economy that depended upon improved

roads for the removal and sale of logs. As logging on the reservation diminished, State and county roads and bridges on the reservation have fallen into disrepair. While highways and roads off the reservation were widened and brought up to federal standards, highways and roads on the reservation have deteriorated and fallen far short of federal highway standards. Consequently, most road segments on the reservation are incomplete, underdeveloped or falling seriously behind acceptable federal standards for public roads. State Route 169 and U.S. 101 serve as the major transportation arteries of the Yurok Reservation, and are key access points for Tribal economic development and transportation-related commerce. A twenty-mile strip of SR 169 on the upper reservation is a one-lane highway without striping, guardrails or other safety measures.

The BIA stopped conducting routine road maintenance in 1988. For the last 25 years, the only road maintenance on tribal or BIA roads has been the result of disaster assistance after major storms. Funding for road maintenance provided by the BIA amounts to less than \$50,000 per year. It is estimated that the backlog of roadway maintenance could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. In fact, most roadways have fallen into such deplorable condition that road maintenance can no longer address the problem, and most routes now require major roadway rehabilitation. Additionally, Hunter Creek Bridge in Klamath is rated below an acceptable standard and requires replacement.

The Yurok Tribe has established the Yurok Tribal Transit Service (YTTS) which currently provides regular fixed route and demand responsive public transit services within the Klamath and Weitchpec communities. YTTS has implemented a seasonal River Ferry providing transportation between Wautech and Klamath. Tribal Transportation and FTA grants fund this service. (See this RTP's Public Transportation Element for more details.)

## Transportation Projects – Proposed

The following lists proposed transportation projects:

~~1. Yurok Tribe Future Projects:~~

- ~~2.1.~~ Klamath Tsunami Trail
- ~~3.2.~~ Klamath Blvd Crosswalk
- ~~4.3.~~ Klamath Beach Road Resurfacing Project
- ~~5.4.~~ Expansion of the River Ferry
- ~~6.5.~~ Tulley Creek Road Resurfacing
- ~~7.6.~~ Intersection Safety Improvements for Weitchpec School Road
- ~~8.7.~~ Intersection Safety Improvements for New Village Road
- ~~9.8.~~ Implement a Car Seat and Seat Belt Educational Program
- ~~10.9.~~ Road Safety Audit on Intersection SR 169 with McKinnon Hill Rd
- ~~11.10.~~ Bald Hills Road Improvements
- ~~12.11.~~ New Village Road Resurfacing Project
- ~~13.12.~~ Morekwon Road Resurfacing Project
- ~~14.13.~~ McKinnon Hill Road Resurfacing Project
- ~~15.14.~~ Jack Norton School Road Resurfacing Project

## WIYOT TRIBE

The land base of the Wiyot Tribe is an 88.5 acre parcel of trust land located south of Eureka near the community of Loleta. Table Bluff Reservation is a community of 34 homes, and the Tribe's administrative

buildings. In addition, the Tribe owns property on Cock Robin Island and on Indian Island in Humboldt Bay. While the Tribe's land base is small, the Tribe serves the needs of approximately 600 citizens. Hookton Road is the main arterial road connection to the Table Bluff Reservation from U.S. Highway 101. Flooding at Hookton Road often reroutes drivers to use smaller collector roads to reach destinations within the county. Public transit or paratransit is not available on the Reservation. The nearest connection to public transit is the RTS bus stop in Loleta.

## REFERENCES

### CITATIONS

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**Trinidad Rancheria 2012** Trinidad Rancheria Road Safety Audit

**Trinidad Rancheria 2006** Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Transportation Safety Plan 2006-2026

**Trinidad Rancheria 2014** Trinidad Rancheria 2014 Safety Plan

**Yurok Tribe 2014** The Yurok Trails and Waterways Master Plan

**Yurok Tribe 2016** Long Range Transportation Plan

**Yurok Tribe 2016** Tribal Transportation Safety Plan