

**TRINITY COUNTY  
EAST CONNECTOR ROADWAY  
PROJECT  
WEAVERVILLE, CALIFORNIA**

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***Final Environmental Impact Report***

February 14, 2003

*Prepared for:*  
**Trinity County  
Planning Department  
File No. PW-01-01**

*Prepared by:*  
**Trinity County  
Department of Transportation**

**State Clearing House No. 2001032073**

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EAST CONNECTOR ROADWAY  
PROJECT  
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***Final Environmental Impact Report***

February 14, 2003

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State Clearing House No. 2001032073

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This Final EIR consists of the Draft EIR (incorporated by reference), a list of persons and agencies who commented on the DEIR, written and verbal comments and responses to comments, revisions to the Draft EIR, and a Mitigation Monitoring Program for the proposed new East Connector Roadway project in Weaverville.

### **Project Description:**

The East Connector project is proposed to meet the following objectives:

- Provide an efficient arterial connection for through traffic traveling between the east and north sections of Weaverville
- Reduce the dependency on SR 299 for local travel within the Weaverville historic district
- Reduce delays at intersections with SR 299, particularly at SR 3, Washington Street and Glen Road
- Reduce traffic on Washington Street between Weaverville Elementary School and Lowden Park
- Improve vehicle and pedestrian safety, and reduce the accident rate, on SR 299 in the vicinity of Glen Road, Nugget Lane and the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center
- Increase the availability and continuity of bicycle lanes and pedestrian trails, and provide a safe, off-highway route to Lowden Park and Weaverville Elementary School
- Provide an alternate route for emergency vehicle access and emergency evacuation plans

To meet these objectives, the project consists of the following components:

- A two-lane undivided, limited-access arterial with 3.6-m lanes (12 ft) and 1.8- to 2.4-m (6- to 8-ft) shoulders, including a Class II bicycle lane on each shoulder.
- An intersection with SR 3 controlled with stop signs on the East Connector and Five Cent Gulch Street and left-turn lanes on SR 3.
- A new vehicle bridge over East Weaver Creek
- A traffic signal at the intersection with SR 299/Glen Road
- Realignment of Glen Road to tie into the intersection of the East Connector with SR 299
- Possible closure of Nugget Lane at the intersection with Glen Road (three alternatives for the SR 299/Glen Road intersection and access to Nugget Lane are under consideration)
- Re-striping of the existing two-way left-turn lane on SR 299 to incorporate exclusive left-turn lanes from eastbound SR 299 to the East Connector and from westbound SR 299 to Glen Road

- Elimination of the existing SR 299 access on the south side of the CHP building and new access to the back of the building directly off the new East Connector
- New access to the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center at SR 299 and Glen Road from the East Connector and a transit stop at this location
- Up to two new access points to the Trinity River Lumber Mill off the East Connector to supplement the existing two access points off SR 299, to reduce congestion on SR 299 due to truck traffic entering at mid-block.
- Two new culvert crossings of Lance Gulch
- One or two intersections with Brown's Ranch Road (two alternatives are under consideration)
- Extension of Pioneer Lane to tie into the East Connector
- Left-turn lanes (pockets) on the East Connector at all county road and state highway intersections
- A separate Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail adjacent to Levee Road on the east side, with a bridge crossing East Weaver Creek near Lowden Park (two alternative locations for the bicycle/pedestrian bridge are proposed).
- Provisions (environmental clearance) for a possible future Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail along the east side of the East Connector from Pioneer Lane to Brown's Ranch Road, to be built by the Weaverville Basin Trails Committee.

### **Summary of Alternatives:**

The EIR considers two alignment alternatives, two alternative locations for the pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing of East Weaver Creek, and three alternative layouts for the new signalized intersection of the East Connector with SR 299 and Glen Road. The "No Project" alternative is also considered. Trinity County has not selected a preferred alternative, but developed these alternatives to provide the decision-makers with optional ways to resolve certain design issues. In particular, the two alignment alternatives vary in their relation to the Golden Age Center. One alignment would use the existing Brown's Ranch Road alignment in front of the Center, requiring pedestrians from the Senior Apartments and Two Creeks Mobile Home Park to have to cross the East Connector, while the other would pass on a new alignment behind the Center. The two pedestrian/bicycle path options differ with respect to where they end in relation to Lowden Park. The three alternative designs for the intersection with Glen Road and SR 299 propose various ways to address the impacts the traffic signal will have on access to businesses on Nugget Lane. The alternatives are described in detail in Chapter 2 of the Draft EIR.

### **Summary of Project Need:**

Congestion on the state highways in the downtown Weaverville area has been a recognized problem by Caltrans and Trinity County since 1984. A variety of planning efforts to improve transportation capacity in the Weaverville Basin have occurred since that time, including the *Trinity County Long Range Traffic*

*Study* (Nelson/Nygaard, 1989), and the *Preliminary Planning Study on SR 299 in Trinity County* (Caltrans, 1989).

In 1990, the *Weaverville Community Plan* identified a series of traffic and roadway improvements intended to improve, or at least maintain, the basin's circulation system with the least disruption of Weaverville's neighborhoods. These included a "Brown's Ranch/Airport Connector" and a "Martin Road/Brown's Ranch Connector," which together make up the presently proposed East Connector.

In 1998 the Trinity County Board of Supervisors, sitting as the Transportation Commission, appointed a Citizen's Advisory Committee and hired Transportation Consultants Leigh, Scott & Cleary, Inc. (LSC) to work with the Committee to study existing and projected traffic patterns in Weaverville and to come up with a plan to guide the improvement of transportation facilities in the basin, to relieve traffic congestion on SR 299; to improve safety for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists; and to best serve the traffic demands while maintaining the high quality of life enjoyed by Weaverville residents and visitors. There were six Advisory Committee meetings, three public workshops, a public hearing, and a meeting before the TCTC and Board of Supervisors to adopt the study and prioritized project list.

As part of the study, the Committee considered several variations of what is now the East Connector, including an "Eastside Connector-Martin/Glen to SR 3", an "East Roadway", an "East Roadway Extension to Ransom Road", an "East Roadway plus Levee Road," an "East Roadway plus Levee Road with Lowden Bridge", and a "Levee Road". The combination of analysis by LSC and community input from the Committee and public workshops resulted in a plan to accomplish the objectives. The *Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study* (LSC, Inc., 1998) identified the East Connector Roadway Project as the top-priority project to improve traffic conditions in the Weaverville Basin. The project was identified as "the most effective immediate means of addressing traffic congestion while also expanding Weaverville's roadway network to address possible future growth" (in the Basin). The resulting Phasing Plan identified "construction of the East Roadway from the SR 299/Glen Road intersection to SR 3, construction of the traffic signal at the SR 299/Glen Road intersection, improvement of Levee Road as a parkway and construction of a bicycle path over East Weaver Creek on the Lowden Lane alignment" as the first priority, for "implementation as soon as possible." The TCTC adopted the recommendations in the *Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study* in a public hearing on November 4, 1998, and directed staff to use them during the update of the *Regional Transportation Plan*.

The East Connector Roadway Project is included in the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan*, which was adopted in October 2001 (Trinity County, 2001), and the *Circulation Element of the Trinity County General Plan*, adopted in March 2002 (Trinity County, 2002).

Funding for the project was programmed in the 1998 Regional Transportation Improvement Program by the TCTC in November 1999. The California Transportation Commission approved the proposed program and included it in the 1998 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in May 2000.

**Project Impacts:**

The EIR identifies the physical environmental impacts of the project. Environmental impacts include potential erosion and sedimentation during construction, removal of some riparian habitat, potential water quality impacts to East Weaver Creek and Lance Gulch, encroachment into the 100-year floodplain of East Weaver Creek, increased noise levels (less than significant), changes in visual resources, potential loss of seasonal wetlands, potential introduction of invasive weeds, temporary disturbance of nesting birds, potential adverse impacts to the threatened coho salmon and its critical habitat, and accidental disruption of previously undiscovered cultural resources. All of the environmental affects of the project are mitigated to a level of non-significance with the mitigation measures proposed in the document.

In addition to the environmental impacts, there are socioeconomic concerns associated with this project. Although not required to be analyzed under CEQA, these impacts are discussed in the EIR, and should be considered in the decision-making process. These include impacts to the Trinity River Lumber Mill from the new road severing a portion of their property, impacts to businesses on Nugget Lane due to changes at the Nugget Lane/Glen Road intersection which would result in either complete closure of access to Nugget Lane from Glen Road, or prohibiting traffic from exiting Nugget Lane onto Glen Road, possible removal of the building that houses On Your Feet Shoe Store, increased traffic and vehicle speeds in the vicinity of the Golden Age Senior Center, and loss of the existing CHP access to SR 299 on the south side of the CHP building. TCDOT has met with the affected property owners and business owners regarding these issues. Several mitigation measures and alternative designs were developed and presented in the EIR to minimize these impacts. (This issue is addressed further in the responses to comments contained in the FEIR)

The fiscal effects of the project are also a matter of local concern, and are also discussed in the document. The project, including the Environmental, Design, Right-of-Way Acquisition and Construction Phases are all programmed in the 1998 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The funding will come from Federal and State Transportation funds. No local match is required. The completed road would be a County Road, maintained by County Road Funds. Road Funds are derived primarily from fuel taxes, and are allocated to the County depending, in part, on the number of miles of roads in the County system. State and Local Transportation Improvement Funds and Road Maintenance funds cannot be used for purposes other than transportation projects, per state law. Because transportation projects have their own exclusive funding, State and Local General Funds are not used for transportation projects. Construction and maintenance of the project will, therefore, not take funding away from other County or State projects funded by the General Funds or other funding sources.

**PUBLIC WORKSHOP  
COMMENTS**

**May 6, 2003**

John Rapf	Hyampom resident and business owner
Vernon Rylee	Affected property owner
Marilyn Renaker	Hyampom resident
Steven Greenleaf	Hyampom resident

**PUBLIC HEARING  
COMMENTS**

**May 8, 2003**

John Rapf	Hyampom resident and business owner
Marni Rapf	Hyampom resident and business owner

## **AGENCY CONSULTATIONS**

### **U.S. Forest Service, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, South Fork Management Unit:**

- Jim Fitzgerald, Hydrologist
- Cheryl Carrothers, Wildlife Biologist
- Mark Arnold, Archaeologist

### **NOAA Fisheries**

- Diane Ashton

### **North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board**

- Andy Baker

### **California Department of Fish and Game**

- Bob Williams

## **WRITTEN COMMENTS**

### **-CITIZEN COMMENTS-**

L-1	Marilyn Renaker
L-2	Cindy Winter
L-3	Janet and Vernon Rylee
L-4	Marni Rapf
L-5	John Rapf
L-6	Marilyn Renaker
L-7	The Rosenstein Family: David, Tori, Gabriel, Theo, Isabel
L-8	Neil Harvey
L-9	Uschi and Eberhard Schneider
L-10	John Rapf
<b>L-11</b>	<b>Pat and Lindy McCaslin, Butter Creek Streamkeepers</b>

## **SECTION 2 WRITTEN COMMENTS**

Note:

Copies of written comments cannot be provided in the online version of the East Connector Final EIR. All comments are summarized in Section 4, **RESPONSE TO WRITTEN COMMENTS**.

Hard copy of the Final EIR, including written comments, can be viewed at at the Trinity County Planning Department at 190 Glen Road in Weaverville, at the Trinity County Department of Transportation, at 303 Trinity Lakes Boulevard, Weaverville, and at the Trinity County Library at 211 Main Street in Weaverville. Copies of the Final EIR may be purchased at Imaginations, in the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center in Weaverville for the cost of reproduction.

MINUTES  
Weaverville

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NOTE: THESE ARE PARTIAL MINUTES, EDITED TO INCLUDE AGENDA ITEM 14 ONLY.  
THESE MINUTES WERE ADOPTED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON January 23, 2003.

**14. WORKSHOP ON DEIR FOR EAST CONNECTOR**

**PW-01-01**

Draft Environmental Impact Report for the East Connector Roadway in Weaverville, CA.  
Applicant: Trinity County Planning Department.

Chairman Jaegel explained tonight's meeting to the public. He mentioned that the public hearing will be held on January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 pm in the Library. He explained that the next meeting will be an open meeting to receive comments from the public. This meeting is to get information and to ask questions of County staff. Comments can be made at this time, as well. He stated that if anyone at the meeting wanted to ask a question or make a comment, they needed to step up to the podium, state their name and should also submit their comments in writing.

Jan Smith, Environmental Compliance Specialist, stated that this project is a two lane County road connecting Hwy 299 and Hwy 3. This road will be a limited access arterial, which means that the Department of Transportation will limit the amount of encroachment permits on the road. This will move traffic through and reduce congestion. The Department of Transportation (DOT) is limiting the number of driveways entering the road. Jan stated that the Mill, CHP, Shopping Center and Senior Center will all have driveways onto the east connector. If additional development takes place, it must have an internal road that connects to a single driveway onto the east connector.

Mrs. Smith stated that the project design speed is 35 MPH and will include a bridge over East Weaver Creek. There will also be a traffic light at Glen Road and Hwy 299. A bike lane will be placed on each shoulder and a class 1 bike line on the east side of Levee Road. She stated that this project has been in the works since 1989, when the long range traffic study was prepared by Nelson/Nygaard. In 1990 several of the ideas from the Nelson/Nygaard study were included in the Weaverville Community Plan. A road called the Browns Ranch Airport Connector and a road called Martin Road Browns Ranch Connector actually make up the East Connector. In 1998 the Board of Supervisors decided to commission a study to do more analysis on these ideas that were proposed, they also put together a community advisory team to look at the projects designed to reduce traffic in the down town area of Weaverville. That study identified the East Connector as the most effective immediate means to reduce traffic and promote growth and stated that it should be implemented as soon as possible. Since that study, staff was directed to proceed with the project. In November of 1999, the project study report began and DOT started to get the funding for the project. The first allocation was for the environmental review. She

stated that the next allocation should come in March of 2003. They hope to start negotiations to obtain the right of way in 2004.

She stated that there is significant traffic congestion down town on Hwy 299. She also stated that if you looked at the average daily traffic numbers that Caltrans puts out every year, between hwy 3 and Glen Road the estimated traffic is 11,300 cars. West of Hwy 3 is only 2,900 cars. East of Glen Road is 6,900 cars. There is twice as much traffic in the downtown area as there is east of town and almost four times as much traffic than in areas west of town.

Mrs. Smith stated that the majority of the traffic is the citizens of Weaverville. This route will provide an alternative route to hwy 3. She stated that the current wait to pull out onto Hwy 299 from Hwy 3 is about 30 seconds. To turn onto hwy 299 from Washington Street, you also have a wait of about 30 seconds. It doesn't sound like a long time, but when you are sitting there to make that left turn the tendency is to jump out when it is not safe. The projections of growth show that it is only going to get worse.

Jan stated that according to the traffic projections it will take almost 3 minutes to make a left turn off of Hwy 3 onto 299, almost 3.5 minutes to get onto 299 from Washington St. She stated that the connector would reduce the number of cars that are on that stretch of 299, freeing up the intersections and allowing people to make those turns safely. In addition there is a traffic light planned at Glen Road which will create gaps in the west bound traffic of Hwy 299. This will also allow pedestrians to cross the road safely. Currently there is no safe area to cross the street for pedestrians trying to get from Glen Road over to Tops Market. The road is very wide with lots of cross traffic. In addition to the stoplight, DOT is proposing to eliminate the two-way center left turn lane in that area, and create isolated turn pockets to get rid of the head on collision risk. Currently you have cars going east bound wanting to make a left hand turn and cars going west bound wanting to make a left hand turn and they almost run right into each other. This is a risk that needs to be eliminated. She stated that this project will provide an alternative route for emergency vehicles and will provide alternative routes to get to hwy 3 or hwy 299 just in case the bridge ever went out over Weaver Creek.

Jan mentioned that there are three alternatives to the design of the intersection at Glen Road, hwy 299 and Nugget Lane. The stoplight will cause a build up of vehicles waiting for the light to turn, on Glen Road, thus blocking the entrance to Nugget Lane. So the first alternative suggests blocking off the entrance to Nugget Lane with a curb. Another entrance would be placed across the street from the Burger King driveway. Parking would be placed on 299 for individuals to access Weaver Valley Market. Jan stated that on two of the alternatives they propose abandoning Nugget Lane. She mentioned that the Commission had heard a request this evening on abandoning the north portion of Nugget lane.

Mrs. Smith stated that the second alternative was to eliminate On Your Feet and a portion of the Dollar Store. This would provide more space and a straighter intersection. After blocking off Nugget Lane they would place a small road that connects to Golf Course Road which would provide through circulation.

The third alternative would allow individuals to enter Nugget Lane from Glen Road, but they would not be able to exit onto Glen Road.

Jan stated that there are also two alternatives surrounding the Senior Center. One alternative goes in back of the Senior Center and the other goes in front of the Senior Center. The alternative in front of the Senior Center has two intersections and uses the portion of Brown's Ranch Road that is in front of the Senior Center. There are some pedestrians that go from the Senior Apartments and the Two Creeks Trailer Park to the Senior Center. She stated that if they went with that alternative they would put in an all way stop sign and a pedestrian crossing on the east connector in front of the Senior Center. The other alternative goes behind the Senior Center, which would eliminate that problem. It also takes less property from the Mill.

She stated that DOT is intending this road to be used by the locals and not the tourists. They will not be placing any signs that direct people to the lake or the alps. Tourist from Eureka will continue to go the way that they have always gone and tourists coming from Redding may or may not take this route, depending on how well they know the area. She stated that one of the economical benefits is that it will free up the downtown area for easier parking. She mentioned that sometimes it is hard for individuals to parallel park because there is someone right behind them, this could stop tourists from stopping to shop. She also stated that pedestrians will have a safer experience crossing the streets as well as having more opportunities to cross the street.

Jan stated that the funding for the project is all Federal and State Transportation Funds. There will be no County funds used for this project. The funds cannot be used for anything else except for transportation projects. By transportation projects they mean only road maintenance or road projects. The money cannot be used for transit or off road trails. The maintenance would come from County Road funds, which are also prohibited by the State to be used for anything else rather than road maintenance. The County's general funds will not be used at all for this project or the maintenance of the project.

Jan stated that this is a public workshop, which gives the public an opportunity to ask questions and make comments on the project. She also recommended that the public get familiar with the project and the environmental document. She stated that the environmental document was available at the Trinity County Planning Department, the Dept of Transportation, the Weaverville Library, the County Website and also available for purchase at Imaginations. She stated that Imaginations is selling copies for \$50.00. They will also copy portions of the document, if that is all you require. She stated that in two weeks there will be another public hearing for the public to make comments. However staff will not be responding to the comments at that time, they will respond in writing. She stated that all written comments are due at 5:00 pm on January 31, 2003 at the Dept. of Transportation. She explained that after all of the comments have been reviewed and responded to, they will prepare the final EIR. The final EIR will contain every comment and response and all revisions that might be made to the draft EIR, a Mitigation Monitoring Plan and draft findings for the board to make. She stated that the plan is to have this document ready for the Commission and available to the public at the regular Planning Commission meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>. She explained that no comments would be heard on the document at that meeting. It would be handed to the Commission for review at that time. She stated that the final public hearing would be on February 20<sup>th</sup> one week later. At that meeting the Planning Commission would make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors as to whether or not they feel that the document meets the requirements of CEQA and recommending either approval or denial of the project.

Jan stated that there was also an alternative on the Pedestrian Bicycle crossing. There is one that comes out at the community garden at the end of Park Avenue which would be directly adjacent to Lowden Park. The other one passes through CSD's maintenance yard and comes out at the intersection of Lowden Lane, Park Ave and Weaver St.

Commissioner Jaegel asked if there was any parking proposed along the East Connector. Jan stated there would be no parking along the East Connector. That is the whole idea around limited access.

Commissioner Bushman asked if there were any projections stating how long it would take the East Connector to become obsolete due to growth. Jan stated that the traffic projections are out to the year 2020. She stated that with the design it does not appear that the East Connector would be up to capacity at that time. She also mentioned that the project would keep hwy 299 functioning at acceptable levels of service for a longer time.

Chairman Jaegel opened the public hearing.

Ed Bates, resident of Weaverville, asked if the intersection of Martin Road and Hwy 299 would be realigned at the time of the East Connector construction. He stated that the intersection is very dangerous and has had many close calls with head on collisions.

Jan stated that it was not part of the original plan to realign that intersection at this time.

Mr. Bates asked if it was mentioned in the Draft EIR. Jan stated that no it was not addressed in the Draft EIR.

Jeff Morris, local business owner in Weaverville, asked if the traffic study this project was based on was done in 1989.

Jan stated that the study the project was based on was done in 1998. The study prior to that was done in 1989, but this project is not based on that.

Mr. Morris asked if the proposed construction dates were 2005 or 2006.

Jan stated that the construction would start around 2005.

Mr. Morris asked how those dates matched up with the construction dates of the proposed airport. Jan stated that it was possible that they could both be constructed at the same time, but it was not real likely.

Mr. Morris asked if staff knew how many accidents had happened at the intersection of Hwy 299 and Hwy 3 over the last 10 to 15 years. Jan stated that the EIR states that there were 10 accidents with two injuries and no fatalities from the period of January 1999 to December 2001.

Mr. Morris asked if it also stated the accident ratio from Glen Road and Hwy 299. Jan stated that it mentioned four crashes, one injury and no fatalities.

Mr. Morris stated that the problems seem to be more up town than down town. He also asked if there had been any talk about putting in a stop light at Washington Street as opposed to putting in a new road and stop light at Glen Road. Jan stated that the idea had been considered. She stated that Washington Street was close to the historical district and there were guidelines in the General Plan that prohibited stop lights. She mentioned that the issue was also addressed in the Airport EIR, and that it did not solve all of the problems it was like a band-aid effect, and was not a real popular idea in the community.

Mr. Morris asked what part of the General Plan this project fell under. Jan stated that there is a Transportation Element as well as a Circulation Element. Mr. Morris asked if it would also fall under the Land Use Element. Jan stated that this would be a question for the Planning Director. Planning Director John Jelicich stated that there was definitely a relationship between the land use and circulation elements as to how it is developed. The principle factor here would be the policies of the circulation element pertaining to traffic improvements.

Mr. Morris asked when the Land Use Element was last updated. John stated that the Land Use Element was last updated in 1989 and the Community Plan was updated in 1990.

Mr. Ron Yingling, property owner, stated that he has a piece of property that is involved in the East Connector project. He asked which one of the bike lane proposals the County favored. Jan stated that they have not formally designated one yet and they would not designate one until all of the comments have come in and the Commission, public and Board of Supervisors give their input. However, the environmentally preferable one would be the area up stream across from Mr. Yingling's property.

Mr. Yingling asked if the County was going to upgrade Levee Road. Jan stated that Levee Road was not a County road and therefore would not be maintained.

Jerry Knight, Douglas City resident, asked if the right of way take envisions enough right of way for a future stand alone bike lane. Jan stated that with the negotiations with the Mill there was a portion that would be used for a trail. She stated that there would be a side walk by the shopping center and then pedestrians would have to get on the shoulder of the road for a short distance and then get on the trail.

Jerry stated that he had been an engineer for Caltrans for quite some time and thought it best for the County to obtain all of the right of ways now for the future completed bike line or sidewalks. He stated that over the years he has seen how difficult it is to obtain land after a project is completed as opposed to getting the land right up front and then getting the funding to complete a project at a later date. He stated that having the extra right of way now gets pedestrians off of the street, provides safer working conditions for your road maintenance crews, and allows for erroneous cars to have a place to swerve if needed. He stated that now is the time to obtain all the right of way that is needed.

Colleen O'Sullivan, Weaverville resident, asked if staff could comment on the environmental impacts. Mrs. Smith stated that the project would have typical construction impacts such as soil erosion, effects to Weaver Creek, and possible impacts to endangered species such as Coho Salmon, Foothill Yellow Legged Frog and Pond Turtles. She went on to say that there were several mitigation measures for the construction sediment. After construction there are

mitigations to address road runoff. Jan stated that there would be a slight increase in noise at the Senior Center as well as an increase of 5 decibels or less above the connector on Browns Ranch Road. The max noise increase is 7 decibels, and this is not considered significant. She stated that the maximum noise level which could be heard from this project is less than 60 decibels. Jan stated that they also addressed the impacts of viewing the project and there will be some properties at the end of Martin Road that will look down over the road. There are also mitigation measures regarding the 100 year floodplain as well as invasive weeds and drainage.

Mrs. O'Sullivan asked if DOT was going to conduct hydrology studies before adopting the EIR. She also asked if there was a preferred alternative. Jan stated that there is not a preferred alternative and that they cannot do a specific hydrology study until the alternative is selected.

Colleen stated that the alternative preferable to her would be the one that does not involve removing businesses from Nugget Lane and Glen Road. She also asked if the 11,000 traffic count was a growing trend. Jan stated that she believed it was.

Colleen stated that there were numerous traffic studies with conflicting information. She quoted some different Caltrans traffic counts on hwy 299, so she wondered how accurate the projections could be in the EIR.

Mr. Knight, Douglas City resident, stated that in the traffic study of 1998, the committee had ideas for a two-way road on Center Street and a right turn pocket on Washington Street. He asked if the department had looked at these alternatives. Jan stated that staff had looked at Washington Street and to implement that alternative would only shave approximately one second off of the time it would take individuals to pull out onto Hwy 299. She went on to mention that the two-lane road for Center Street was very controversial.

Director John Jelcich stated that the 1998 study projected little benefit at Hwy 299 and Hwy 3, if the two-lane road was placed on Center Street. He stated that the issue could be reviewed again with the new Board of Supervisors, but the Department of Transportation was directed not to bring it before the Board again. He stated that if the questions was, "Are we going through the list and looking at the alternatives", the answer is yes and the East Connector was the top priority of the committee.

Jeff Morris asked if the traffic numbers given were taken during peak traffic hours. Jan stated they were averaged daily traffic counts. Mr. Morris asked if the intersection information was different than the thru traffic information. Jan stated that yes it was. At an intersection you must count each vehicle and for thru traffic they place a traffic counter across the road. She stated that intersection counts are for peak hour, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., but for no specific season. Through traffic counts are averaged over a whole year.

Mr. Ed Bates stated that he was concerned about the traffic flow studies. He stated that waiting 30 seconds to make a turn is not that substantial. Safety should be the main concern. He stated that he uses Weaver Street instead of Washington Street because the site distance is greater. He also stated that safety to schoolchildren should be a main concern. He stated that the East Connector or something like it is needed for the safety of children walking to and from the elementary school and to and from the park.

**15. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Members of the public may address the Planning Commission concerning matters within their jurisdiction, which are not listed on the agenda. No action may be taken on these matters.

**16. ADJOURN**

Chairman Jaegel adjourned the meeting at 9:25 pm.

**TRINITY COUNTY  
SPECIAL PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING  
January 23, 2003 at 6:00 p.m.  
Trinity County Library, Weaverville**

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**UNOFFICIAL MINUTES (MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL ADOPTED BY THE  
PLANNING COMMISSION ON February 13, 2003.)**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Jaegel called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Members present: Commissioner Groves, Commissioner Bushman, Commissioner Jaegel, Commissioner McKnight, Commissioner Hahn, Senior Planner Jeanne Bonomini, Planning Director John Jelicich, Associate Planner Tina Cameron, Director of Transportation Carl Bonomini, Environmental Compliance Specialist Jan Smith and Administrative Coordinator II Tina Teuscher.

**2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Commissioner Groves moved to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Hahn seconded. Motion carried.

**3. MINUTES (January 9, 2003)**

Commissioner Bushman moved to approve the January 9<sup>th</sup> minutes. Commissioner Groves seconded. Motion carried.

**4. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**5. WITHDRAWN OR CONTINUED ITEMS**

**6. DRAFT EIR FOR EAST CONNECTOR PW-01-01**

Public hearing to receive comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the East Connector Roadway project in Weaverville, CA. Applicant: Trinity County Planning Department.

Chairman Jaegel stated that there was a meeting held on January 9<sup>th</sup> that contained a workshop for the Draft EIR of the East Connector. He stated that staff answered questions pertaining to the Draft EIR at that time and that this evening would be for comments only. He stated that all comments heard tonight would be recorded and that they would be responded to in writing. He then turned the meeting over to Jan Smith with the Department of Transportation.

Mrs. Smith stated that this was a public hearing regarding the East Connector project in Weaverville. She stated that the project pertained of a new county road that would begin at

State Route 299 with an intersection at Glen Road, going along the backside of the Mill coming out on State Hwy 3, across from Five Cent Gulch Street. The road will be an arterial with two lanes and the design speed will be 35 mph. She explained that the intersections would be at Browns Ranch Road and an extension of Pioneer Lane that will connect the East Connector to the Pioneer Heights area.

She went on to say that there would be a new vehicle bridge over East Weaver Creek, a traffic light at the intersection of Glen Road and Hwy 299 and bike lanes on both shoulders. There will also be a bike lane along the east side of the levee road, and a bike/pedestrian bridge across East Weaver Creek to Lowden Park. There are two alternative alignments by the Senior Center, one in front and the other behind. There are three alternatives to the Nugget Lane and Glen Road intersection. She stated that because of the signal light they could not allow people to come out from Nugget Lane onto Glen Road. They would either close off Nugget Lane at Glen Road or allow vehicles to enter Nugget Lane but not exit. One of the alternatives removes the "On Your Feet" and "Dollar Store" building. The alternative that removes the building on Nugget Lane would include a connection from Nugget Lane to Golf Course Drive. All alternatives would have a new access to Nugget Lane from hwy 299 midblock, across from the Burger King driveway. She stated that there are two optional bike paths across East Weaver Creek; one crosses directly across from the Yingling Construction yard and comes out at the end of Park Avenue. The other is further down stream and comes out at the Weaverville Community Service District yard at the three way intersection of Park Ave, Lowden Lane and Weaver St.

She stated that the county has not designated preferred alternatives. They prefer to leave the options open and select based on public input. They developed these options to deal with impacts on local businesses. She stated that she gave a more extensive presentation two weeks ago and that she was assuming that since people here tonight were here to comment, they would be familiar with the project and the document. She also stated that the meeting that was held two weeks ago has been aired on channel 22 for the last two weeks.

She stated that they are not going to respond to any comments made this evening. She stated that this is the public's turn to talk. Questions of a factual nature could be answered by staff, but comments would not be responded to at the meeting. All comments will be responded to in writing. She also stated that the last day to submit comments would be Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> at 5:00pm. The final EIR will be available on Feb 13<sup>th</sup>. She stated that it would be handed to the Planning Commission at that time, but no action would be taken. It will also become available to the public at that time. She explained that the next special public meeting would be held one week later on February 20<sup>th</sup>. At that time the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors concerning adoption of the EIR and selecting an alternative. They will also take action on the findings and mitigation monitoring plan. She stated that the Board would hopefully take their action on March 4<sup>th</sup>.

John Jelichich stated that there was a sign up sheet at the podium and asked if each speaker could write down his or her name for the record.

Chairman Jaegel asked if the Commission had any questions.

Commissioner Hahn asked what the mileage distance was from the signal light to the connection at Hwy 3. Jan Smith stated that she believed it was about two miles.

Chairman Jaegel opened the public hearing.

**Joseph Bower, Ower of the building on Nugget Lane that contains the Dollar Store and On Your Feet.** He stated that he has reviewed the EIR and finds it insufficient in three areas. The first is establishing the need for the project. He stated that the project first surfaced a long time ago, back in the late 80's. It was mentioned in the first Weaverville Community Plan as being something that might be needed in twenty years. He stated that there has not been 20 years of steady traffic growth. He also stated that the EIR was deficient in the economical analysis because it really doesn't tell you anything about the economic impacts to businesses in the community. He stated that the new road would soon be discovered as a short cut to people headed north. Whether it is to their homes or the campgrounds or the lakes. He stated that it would be no different than Washington Street. Washington Street is not signed with directions to the Lake area, however people do use that road as a short cut to get to Hwy 3. He stated that the new road will funnel a great deal of traffic away from downtown. He stated that this needed to be analyzed in the economic analysis that goes with the EIR. He stated that he would like to see the county looking at alternatives that have less of an impact on the community. Closing Nugget Lane entirely leaves the property defunct. The tenants now enjoy great access, visibility and parking. He stated that if the business were at the end of a dead end street, you would have to provide a turn around and the turn around would wipe out most of the parking. He stated that it would be difficult for people to enter the parking area, thus stopping them from shopping at these stores. He stated that alternative B, which removes the building, would eliminate the businesses from the community. He stated that there were no other retail locations for the business owners to move into that they could afford.

Mr. Bower stated that Alternative C, which was in response to the scoping comments which asked that Nugget Lane remain open, allows ingress but no egress. He stated that this alternative would require a turn around as well which would still take out parking. He requested that the Commission adopt a "no action alternative". He stated that if this project went forward, he suggested leaving Nugget Lane open and put a limit line on Glen Road, stopping traffic on before entering the intersection going into Nugget Lane. He stated that they have those kinds of intersections in Redding, Anderson and Red Bluff. He also would like to suggest that the alignment in Nugget Lane stay as it is with a jog in the intersection.

Mr. Bower stated that the other alternative that leaves Nugget Lane open eliminates three parking spaces along Glen Road and 25% of the parking lot that is currently occupied by Trinity Transit. He stated that this alternative would leave the Transit parking area in a dysfunctional way also. He stated that the new alternative would be to leave Nugget Lane alignment as it is, with a jog in the intersection. He stated that lots of intersections have jogs in them, and they work just fine.

He stated that the other alternative that he would suggest, would be instead of taking off from the California Highway Patrol, move it down to the first driveway that goes into Longs. He stated that this would funnel all of the traffic going into Tops and Longs with a signal. Across from that you could place the new entrance for Nugget Lane. It would be safer. It would leave

Nugget Lane functioning and not hurt the merchants. He stated that he hoped that the Commission would direct the staff to consider these two alternatives, unless the Commission sees the need for a “No Action Alternative”.

**Trudy Furst**, Pioneer Lane resident. She stated that she would rather see the road run along the creek. She also stated that it would be interesting to know what the charges would be for the easements for the creek side or for the street. She stated that it would keep all of the merchants in that area, available to Hwy 299. She believes that it would cost less in the long run.

**Jeff Morris, Weaverville resident and business owner, stated** that he would like to focus on the economic and social impacts of the road. He stated that he does not see the real need for the project. The traffic projections are not panning out currently and the population is actually shrinking. He stated that regardless of whether the project was signed or not, people are going to learn about the shortcut, just like they learned to use Washington Street, especially with GPS and newer cars. “How do we get to the Lake?” is the question.

He stated that there were some simple solutions that were proposed in the traffic circulation plan that have been leap-frogged over without even testing some of them. An example would be right hand turn pockets, peak times of year when you have congestion at Hwy 299 and Hwy 3, put in a traffic cop with white gloves, he would cost less, the impact would also be less. He stated that as far as congestion of traffic down town, in the EIR there was a thought about too much traffic downtown will have an economic impact due to parking and traffic congestion, etc. He stated that he is lost with that logic because more cars mean more people during the peak times of the year. Parking and congestion are solvable. He mentioned that the Board of Supervisors mantra over the last few years has been economic development. He stated that he did not see how diverting traffic from Main Street would promote economic development. He felt that we were taking a reverse approach, when there are were other solutions to solving our traffic problems during the peak times of the year.

Mr. Morris stated that one of the other issues on the economic development side is where the road takes off and where it comes in. It skips all of the gas stations in town. He stated that unless someone puts a gas station at one end or the other of the road, individuals who need gas are going to end up going downtown anyway. He also stated that if someone did put a gas station on the road, they would be taking away from the people that already have gas stations in this town.

He stated that the data that was collected for the study is interesting. At the last meeting he inquired about the accident data at hwys 299 and 3. He was told that there were 10 accidents and this data was taken from 1998 and 2001. The traffic studies are based on a 10-year period. He stated that if we are talking about traffic and accidents they need to have the same year base for the study. He said you can't base a decision to alleviate congestion on data from two different time periods.

Mr. Morris stated that his preference would be the “No Project Alternative”. He also mentioned that if there were cheaper, more efficient solutions to the problem, they are what we should be looking at. He stated that congestion down town means “more traffic equals more

business”. He mentioned that there was a fire in Oregon that closed Route 199 for 3 weeks, and we saw more people through town from 199, going to hwy 5 or the coast, and more traffic through town. “More is more.” He stated that the goal is for Weaverville to flourish. He stated that if our mission is to develop private enterprise, this project does not work into that.

Mr. Morris stated that there is a possibility that this project and the airport project may be going on at the same time, we need to look at both of those together as cumulative impacts to our economy in the short term and the long term.

**Colleen O’Sullivan, resident of Weaverville**, stated that she would like to commend the staff and consultants for preparing a very readable document. She stated that as Jeff had mentioned she does not feel that the social and economic impacts have been adequately analyzed in this document. She stated that it is a no brainer to assume that if you have a major intersection improvement with a signal, folks coming into town are going to figure out pretty quick that the road goes someplace pretty important. She stated that the fact that the Department of Transportation is not signing the road, will not prevent people from finding it and using it. She believes that this is going to result in a significant social and economical impact. She stated that under CEQA that issue needs to be analyzed. She quoted the CEQA document: If the physical change causes adverse economic or social effects on people those adverse effects may be used as a factor in determining whether the physical change is significant. She stated that she believes that this impact is significant.

Mrs. O’Sullivan stated that the document doesn’t give a preferred alternative, but does give an environmentally superior alternative. She stated that the “No Project Alternative” would be the environmentally superior alternative. It has no affects on the environment. She recommended the “No Project Alternative” be seriously considered.

She also noticed on the drawings for the road that there was a connector from Pioneer Lane through the East Connector on all alternatives. She stated that she thought that this was a good idea. Martin Road and Pioneer Lane are dead end streets. If that area is going to grow, and there is some potential for growth in Pioneer Heights above Martin Road, then it will be imperative to have through circulation in that part of town, in case of emergency. However, she does not think you can say that there is no growth inducement as a result of this project when you are including a extension of a road that is going to provide better and safer access to a whole part of town that is presently not available. The Growth Inducement section of the EIR is inadequate and should be revised. There may be other constraints in Pioneer Heights now that prevent it from being developed, but one of them surely is transportation and with that solved we will have a lot more pressure to develop that area.

Colleen stated that her concern was with the range of alternatives that have been provided. They define the project by those ranges. She stated that they are basically small variations of how Nugget Lane is going to be affected and where they are going to cross the creek up on Hwy 3. They did not consider any other alternatives that are not that route. She stated that under CEQA they could have and they should have. She quoted again from CEQA, Section 15126.6: Under alternative locations the key question and first step in analysis is whether any of the significant effects of the project would be avoided or substantially lessened by putting the project in another location. Only locations that would avoid or substantially lesson any of the

significant effects of the project need to be considered for inclusion in the EIR.

She stated that staff had not considered any other locations. She stated that the levee road was another location that could be considered. She mentioned that even though in the traffic circulation study in 98 the east side connector came up as the top project, the consultant also stated that levee road would provide the same relief if it was developed. It would have substantially less impacts to the community than building a brand new road. She stated that under the range of alternatives, why not just put in a traffic light. She mentioned that in the document the consultant also mentions that installation of a traffic light would also improve the level of service and creating pulsing. It would be safer for pedestrians and bicycles, and achieves all of the same goals. She stated that there could be a signal light at Levee Road without improving Levee Road, or at Glen Road without a big intersection and the impacts to businesses. She stated that she did not understand why these reasonable alternatives were not mentioned in the document. She went on to say that not including solutions to the problem that have been provided that have been identified in all these traffic analyses, studies and plans was a fundamental flaw in the document.

**Jeff Clark, resident of Lewiston**, stated he was not familiar with the project; however, he did have some concerns. He stated that with the current economic climate with the state cutting loose a lot of their funding for the county, we are basically going to be left with our own devices. He mentioned that our economic base in the county is stabilized by small business people. He has seen a lot of businesses open and close in his 20 years in Trinity County. This project is hurting a viable business and a new business that provides a valuable service. In his view anything that negatively affects our tax base, the people that stabilize this county, will hurt the county as a whole and needs to be seriously considered.

**Shelly Harmon, Owner of Dollar Mart**, stated that she would lose 3.5 employees if she closed. She stated that she could not move into another area because it is too costly. She would have to pay twice the rent, plus upgrade the building. She mentioned that her business is a service to the community. She stated that she is not making millions, "it's a Dollar Store", but she does supply a good service for those who shop there. She agrees with everyone else and believes that the project should be stopped.

**Ed Bates, Weaverville resident**, stated that everyone this evening has made valid points. He stated that his concern is that other alternatives have not been considered. One alternative was written off, but not through the EIR process. He stated that this should be done as an extension of Martin Road. This would be a road that the local residents would use, not tourist. It would divert some people but not all of them. Locals would still go downtown. Anything you do will harm the downtown businesses to some degree. He stated that he would like to see the project put on hold, that is, go with the "No Project Alternative". He stated that the Weaverville Community Plan should be updated first, prior to this project being approved.

Mr. Bates stated that if something were done at the airport, whether it is redoing the existing airport or putting it on top of the ridge, now that the dump is closed, there is a possible alternative in the future to have one connector road that takes off from Ransom Road in the general area of the current U-Haul. He stated that the road could go from Ransom road up the drainage behind Tops and across the landfill, behind the high school and back to hwy 299. He

stated that he is not saying he would support this project but he believes that the County needs to take a closer look at were, and if, we want development to occur.

**Mary Whitmore, Browns Ranch Road resident** of Weaverville, stated that she had a couple of different perspectives why she would strongly suggest that the Commission support the “No Project Alternative”. She believes that this project is based on projections of what traffic flow would be into the future. She thinks that those projections, up to this point have not born out the huge influx of traffic that was being expected. She believes that the entire project is based on an assumption that has not born itself out. We are currently in economically difficult times and could go into more difficult times. She stated that taking on a project like this at this time, does not make economic sense. She mentioned that we are currently looking at changes with the hospital which will likely have a huge impact on our community and it’s economic viability and growth. We are looking at nationwide economic potential for money to go into other directions. She stated that it was premature for the county to take on a project of this nature at this time.

Ms. Whitmore asked that we assume that the Commission approved the project. She stated that the option of a traffic signal in a strategic place would help with the flow of traffic. She does not think that the problem with the traffic is volume, she believes that it is flow. There are problems getting onto the highway, no one would disagree with that. She stated that a traffic light, while unpopular, may be more popular than the East Side Connector. Ms. Whitmore stated that there is something about this community that attracts her. She believes that other people in the community share in her attraction. It is a sense of community. She stated that being a close community is an attractive thing to have in this era. She mentioned that most of us are forced to flow into the downtown area at some point and time during the day, which is where and when we see our neighbors. Her understanding of the project is to take local people and get them away from down town. She stated that this was the wrong direction to go.

Ms. Whitmore stated that she and most of her neighbors purchased their land because of the small, quiet nature of the area. She has a nice view of Weaver Bally and it is quiet. The project would impact her more than anyone else on Brown’s Ranch Road, because she is the closest. Visual and noise impacts would be huge. She stated that the East Side Connector would alter the character of the neighborhood. Mary mentioned that there is one alternative that places the new road in front of the Senior Center. She stated that if the alternative, which places the new road behind the Senior Center where to be chosen, it would personally affect her. There is a seasonal creek that drops down off of the bluff where staff is suggesting placing the second alternative. This creek was not mentioned in the E.I.R. at all. It puts a huge amount of water onto Alternative 2. This is a bad alternative, and she prefers Alternative 1.

**Chuck Johnson, resident of Weaverville**, stated that he was the Director of Trinity County Planning 23 years ago. He just retired 5 years ago as the Director of Planning for Colusa County. He stated that his comments would be limited to the County’s General Plan. He stated that there are seven elements that make up the General Plan; the most significant is the Land Use Element. He stated that the Trinity County Land Use Element was 12 years old. The other elements have not been updated in almost 30 years. He mentioned that before the County takes on a project like this they need to update their General Plan.

Commissioner Mark Groves corrected Mr. Johnson, stating that the General Plan was updated 27 years ago.

**Al Wilkins, resident of Weaverville**, stated that if there was ever a project that would impact the community, this was it. He stated that this project would begin by impacting the Golden Age Center, then a quiet residential district, a deer herd, disturbing wildlife habitat and the Mill, which is the community's only industry, then knock out a couple of thriving businesses at Nugget Lane. He believes that this is no project.

**Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville**, stated that her concerns regard CEQA. She stated that if the Commission approved the EIR, it was going to cost the county a lot of money to defend it. CEQA requires that you offer a reasonable range of alternatives. She mentioned that you are not to show a dress in red, black and gray and have those three choices be your alternatives, when maybe pants are appropriate. She stated that you are required to offer changes in location, scale and direction, not just a different curve or angle in the alignment, maybe you don't even need a road. She stated that there is virtually no discussion of growth inducing effects. She mentioned that as Colleen stated there is potential growth inducing effects with this project. This information must be disclosed. She stated that staff should be made to do their job correctly. She stated that another flaw that she saw in the document was that in the selection of the environmentally superior alternative the basis for the selection was that this alternative meets the projects goals. It is not that the selection is environmentally superior. She believes that the EIR is facially deficient for a number of reasons. The first thing that occurred to her is that the initial study is not in the E.I.R. She stated that the EIR does point the reader to the data that supports the analysis and the conclusions. She stated that there is a list of technical appendices but it is listed by title, you can't tell what is in these documents. When she went in to look for the basis of the traffic projections, she could not find any information because she did not know where to look. She stated that this information is to be in the document or in a publicly accessible place. This needs to be redone.

Liz stated that people before have mentioned that there is a need analysis; staff should be directed to take a closer look. She mentioned the traffic and growth studies are not panning out, and stated that the project should be stopped and done right. She stated that this EIR was resting on studies that have been done with connection to the airport construction. She stated that the airport EIR was stopped and is being completely reanalyzed. She stated that the water shed impacts and water quality impacts that were presented in the airport EIR are carried forward in this EIR. She stated that this EIR should not rest on the airport EIR, it is non-existent.

Liz mentioned another reason the EIR is defective is it fails to mention any impacts on the deer that will be affected. There is a deer migration corridor that will be affected by the construction of a major roadway. Deer are already being slaughtered on hwy 3. She stated that this effect needs to be analyzed. There is nothing in the EIR about this. She mentioned that the creek that Ms. Whitmore had mentioned is a wetland all year. It is a stream for part of the year. There needs to be a thorough analysis of the wetlands species. You probably need a Corps permit to deal with anything in that area. As Chuck had mentioned that General Plan needs to be updated and this kind of development should not be resting on an antique document. The project is inconsistent with the Community and General Plans. It leap-frogs over the

prescribed, step-by-step approach to these circulation problems that are contained in those documents. You need to be consistent with your planning documents when you do projects like this.

Liz stated that in general, her main criticism is that this project seems to be a part of a strategy that comes from the upper authority of the county, to have a Strategic Plan for Weaverville consisting of several parts – a series of dominos - that has never been adopted. This Strategic Plan consists of several distinct projects not analysed together, not adopted in public or environmental review. This was admitted to by Chris Erikson in a published ad in the Trinity Journal. What is this plan? Let's have a community plan process to deal with this up front, from the community first. I want to know the connection between the Bypass, the East Connector, the Airport, Hospital closure/relocation, etc. How do these all affect the community and why are they being dropped on us one by one? They should all be taken together.

She requested that the Planning Commission recommend against certifying the EIR. It is defective, and you should know you are heading for litigation. She also recommended the Commission not select any alternative except the "No Project Alternative". She recommended that the Commission direct staff to do further study of the omitted environmental effects, and recommend to the Board of Supervisors that further work on this project be discontinued until the Community Plan and Land Use Element of the General Plan are updated properly.

**Judy Ames-Ruiz, Five Cent Gulch Mobile Home Park**, mentioned that she represents most of the people from the mobile home park. They go downtown and wouldn't use the East Connector. She stated that they all feel that this project is not necessary. The only possible good thing coming from the new road and intersection would be the slowing down of traffic on hwy 3. She tried to get Caltrans to drop the speed limit on hwy 3 from 55 to 45, but she only got it lowered to 50. She stated that they do get people on Five Cent Gulch that get lost. She asked that if the road does get built, that a sign be placed on the Five Cent Gulch Street stating that it is a dead-end road.

**Cindy Angel, Attorney in Weaverville**, stated that she is so emotional about this needless project that she is having a problem articulating her objections. She stated that she would offer free legal services to anyone who wanted to go against the project.

**Joseph Bower** stated that there does not seem to be a lot of support for this project. It appears to be staff-driven only, and on the wrong track. He then stated that with all the deficiencies in the EIR there was no way that staff could take this project before the Planning Commission next month, and the Supervisors in March. It will take a lot of money, and more time and uncertainty for the business owners to complete the EIR. He believes that if the community is this against the project, why spend more money on it if it is not going anywhere. He requested that the Planning Commission consult with staff this evening on how to bring this project to an end without spending any more money and time.

Chairman Jaegel closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Groves asked where alternative 3 was located. Jan stated that it was discontinued. She mentioned that Alternative 3 went further to the east and went through the

Wilkins' and Whitmore's property. It had too many disadvantages to it so it was dropped. Commissioner Groves asked if it was on the map. Jan stated that it was on the alternative map because it was an alternative.

Chairman Jaegel asked if there were any more comments. No more comments were heard.

**7. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Members of the public may address the Planning Commission concerning matters within their jurisdiction, which are not listed on the agenda. No action may be taken on these matters.

**8. ADJOURN**

Chairman Jaegel adjourned the meeting at 7:07 pm.

## RESPONSE TO WRITTEN COMMENTS

### Comments from Public Agencies:

#### A-1: WEAVERVILLE FIRE DISTRICT

**Comment Summary:** The Weaverville Fire District supports the East Connector Project, because it would assist the Weaverville Fire Department in a quicker and safer emergency response due to less traffic on Main Street. It is sometimes difficult and hazardous for emergency vehicles to pull onto Main Street (SR 299) from Bremer Street due to excessive traffic, even with emergency lights and siren.

**Response:** Comment noted. Two of the project objectives are to “reduce delays at intersections with SR 299” and to “provide an alternate route for emergency vehicle access.”

#### A-2: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (CALTRANS):

**Comment Summary:** Caltrans suggests modification or elimination of Community Mitigation 5 ) Page 3.18-31), since traffic operations and safety dictate where parking can be safely allowed along the State highway. If no safety or visibility concerns exist, parking would be allowed along the State highway. Caltrans will work with the County regarding parking during the design phase.

**Response:** The mitigation measure will be eliminated, but the County will still work with Caltrans to provide parking on SR 299 in the vicinity of Nugget Lane, if parking at this location turns out to be feasible based on consideration of circulation, safety, visibility and intersection operations. The Mitigation Measure was incorrectly referenced in Chapter 3.18 *Traffic and Transportation*. The Mitigation Measure first occurs in Chapter 3.16, *Community Impacts*, as Community Mitigation 2, one of three Mitigation Measures for Community Impact 1: “Commercial enterprises along Nugget Lane may lose business due to changes in access from Glen Road to Nugget Lane (Alternatives A, B, C). Two other mitigations for this socioeconomic impact remain, and Alternative C further minimizes this effect.

As stated at the beginning of Section 3.16, *Community Impacts*, on Page 3.16-1, “Some of the effects analyzed in this section, such as fiscal effects and taxable sales cannot be reasonably tied to a physical change in the environment. Therefore their analysis is not required by CEQA, and these types of impacts are not considered significant under CEQA. However, the social and economic effects of the project are of concern to the community. They are discussed here in the interest of disclosure, for use by County decision makers, so that the social and economic consequences of their decisions will be fully understood.” The “significance statement” on Page 3.16-9 is made in the interest of public disclosure, and as a lead-in to the proposed mitigation, but this significance finding and associated mitigation are not required under CEQA. Therefore elimination of this Mitigation Measure is permissible under CEQA.

## **Comments from Citizens and Members of the Public:**

### **L-1: ORGANIZATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF TRINITY COUNTY**

#### **1. Comment Summary: “General Comments”**

This introductory section summarizes the comments to be made in greater detail later in the letter. The introductory section does make some general comments that do not appear elsewhere in the comment letter:

- a. The project title “Eastside Connector Road” obscures the community-transforming quality of this project.
- b. The DEIR does not recognize or discuss why such an enormous amount of tax money is proposed for a limited-use roadway in Weaverville in the face of obvious need for more worthwhile road expenditures throughout the entire county.
- c. The definitions of “thresholds of significance” are inadequate.
- d. The DEIR fails to establish the project need, and overstates existing traffic and circulation conditions, resulting in skewed future traffic problems.

#### **1. Response:**

- a. The project is known by the County as the “East Connector Road”. In the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCS; LSC 1998) it was called the “East Roadway”, (Alternative H). The name “East Connector” implies that the road will connect SR 299 and SR 3, and provide a through road, as an alternative to the existing system of mostly dead-end roads in the community. The name is also used to distinguish the project from the “East Bypass”, which was one of the optional Highway Bypass alignments that appeared on the 1992 ballot. The word “bypass” implies a State Highway. We use the word “connector” to imply a County arterial roadway. The answer to the question of whether the project is “community-transforming” is subjective. The EIR identifies all of the environmental impacts associated with the project. Individuals can form their own opinions regarding whether these impacts, taken together, are “community-transforming.”
- b. CEQA does not require a DEIR to recognize or discuss the issue of County allocation of tax money, or other socioeconomic impacts, as significant effects on the environment, unless they result in a physical change in the environment. (CEQA Guidelines 15131(a)). However, in response to the comment, Trinity County has numerous other worthwhile road projects in progress or recently completed, including, to name a few, six bridge replacement projects and rehabilitation of Hyampom, Ruth-Zenia, East Side, Rush Creek, Mad River, Zenia Bluffs and Van Duzen Roads.
- c. CEQA does not dictate to public agencies what “significance thresholds” to use. The County is allowed, but not required to, establish it’s own “thresholds of significance”. Most agencies that choose not to formally adopt significance thresholds look to the Initial Study Checklist (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G) to formulate significance thresholds. This use of the Checklist was intended by the

California Resources Agency, which revamped the Checklist as part of its comprehensive revision to the CEQA Guidelines in 1998. In a late 1998 essay entitled, "*The New and Improved CEQA Guidelines Revisions: Important Guidance for Controversial Issues*," then-Resources Agency General Counsel Maureen Gorsen explained that the revised Checklist was "organized by resource topic and referenc[ed] federal, state and local laws and regulations containing precise qualitative and quantitative standards that are commonly used thresholds in practice. In addition to providing more clear criteria to lead agencies in determining the significance of particular impacts, the new checklist integrates references to the numerous statutes dealing with specific environmental impacts (e.g. California Endangered Species Act) and standards developed by numerous regulatory bodies focused on particular environmental problems (e.g. San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, South Coast Air Quality Management District) in dealing with environmental impacts to certain important resources. In so doing, the Guidelines achieve the important statutory goal of integrating the requirements of CEQA with the environmental requirements of other laws." (Footnote omitted.)

Trinity County has chosen to use the Initial Study Checklist questions to determine the significance of impacts. The applicable checklist questions are cited in each impact section (Sections 3.1 through 3.20), under the heading "Significance Criteria". The County has also looked to the "mandatory findings" of significance set forth in CEQA Guidelines section 15065.

- d. Contrary to the OPTC comments, the County has done a very thorough job of planning for transportation improvement projects Weaverville. Two basin-wide studies have been prepared since 1989. These studies have been used in preparing planning documents. The 1989 Nelson/Nygaard Study was used in preparing the Weaverville Community Plan in 1990, and the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study was used to update the Regional Transportation Plan and Circulation Element of the General Plan. Both of these studies were prepared by professional traffic analysts, working with a Citizen's Advisory Committee and County planning and transportation staff. There have been numerous public meetings on each of these studies and planning documents, and at Transportation Commission meetings where specific projects were programmed. There was even a ballot measure concerning a State Highway bypass in 1992. Although the West Bypass was approved by the voters, a vocal minority, mostly composed of downtown business owners, persuaded the Board of Supervisors not to program that project. That was when the second basin-wide traffic study (WBTCS) was developed. Since the Citizen's Advisory Committee did not agree with the population projections used in the previous study (Nelson/Nygaard) and also used in the Weaverville Community Plan (2.75% per year population growth in Weaverville), and since that growth rate was not realized between 1989 and 1998, the Citizen's Advisory Committee and the traffic consultant for the WBTCS decided to use a much lower annual population growth rate of 15 new dwellings per year, which equates to approximately 1% per year (WBTCS Page 51). The

WBTCs assumed through traffic on SR 299 would increase by 1.25% per year, based on population growth in Shasta and Humboldt Counties (WBTCs Page 54). These are the assumptions used to forecast traffic conditions through year 2020 in the WBTCs, and in this EIR.

Traffic conditions, including levels of service at intersections along SR 299 and SR 3, were modeled through year 2020. The East Connector and other roadway improvements were examined in the WBTCs for their performance in improving traffic congestion, as well as their impacts to the community and the environment.

The remaining comments in this introductory section are general in nature, and will be responded to as they are raised in more detail later in the OPTC letter.

## **2. Comment Summary: “Specific Comments; Introduction”**

This is another general introductory section, which repeats many of the same points from section 1. Other points are made in terms that are too general to provide a meaningful response. These are addressed more specifically below.

## **3. Comment Summary: 1.0 Project Description**

There is no “real Project alternative”. The slight variations in alignment and two optional bridge crossings for the bicycle trail do not afford decision-makers with any real choice.

### **Response:**

This document is the Draft EIR for the East Connector Project, not an environmental document to analyze the comparative effects of all possible basin-wide traffic improvements, such as those proposed in the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study. The East Connector Project arose out of the recommendations of the WBTCs, which was a planning level analysis with considerable public and community input. The Trinity County Transportation Commission programmed the East Connector Roadway Project into the 1998 STIP, and directed staff to implement this particular project. The WBTCs included a “Recommended Plan” (WBTCs Page 168), which listed 14 elements. The intent was never to treat the list as a menu, from which only one project would be selected. The entire plan is intended to be implemented, provided funding can be secured, agreements can be made with other agencies (such as Caltrans and the U.S. Post Office in the cases where the County does not have sole authority to implement a project), and provided the environmental analysis for each project did not result in a decision by the Board of Supervisors to deny a project.

The County, in preparing this EIR, has given weight to the deliberations conducted by, and conclusions reached by, the Citizens Advisory Committee and traffic consultants Leigh, Scott and Cleary. It is reasonable for the County to carry forward only those alternatives that the Committee and its Consultants found to be most viable, and not to examine in detail each and every option considered by the Committee. According to CEQA case law, “the discussion of alternatives need not be exhaustive, and the requirement as to the discussion of alternatives is subject to a construction of reasonableness.” (*Residents Ad Hoc Stadium Committee v. Board of Trustees* (1979) 89 Cal.App.3d 274, 286.) The CEQA Guidelines add that “the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The range of feasible alternatives shall be selected and discussed

in a manner to foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making." (CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (f); see also *Rio Vista Farm Bureau Center v. County of Solano* (1992) 5 Cal.App.4th 351, 376 (“CEQA does not require analysis of every imaginable alternative or mitigation measure; its concern is with feasible means of reducing environmental effects”); *City of Rancho Palos Verdes v. City Council* (1976) 59 Cal.App.3d 869, 892 (CEQA “does not require that every conceivable alternative be stated in the [EIR] nor that the alternatives that are stated be described in every possible detail”; “[w]hat is required is that the EIR give reasonable consideration to alternatives in light of the nature of the project”).)

This EIR has been prepared specifically to determine and disclose the environmental effects of constructing the East Connector Roadway. The project is to implement a policy decision made previously by the Trinity County Transportation Commission and the Board of Supervisors. These bodies have already accepted the WBTCS and directed staff to use it to update the Regional Transportation Plan, in a public hearing held on November 4, 1998. They have programmed the East Connector Project into the County’s Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in a public hearing held on September 21, 1999. They have included the East Connector Roadway in the Weaverville Community Plan, Regional Transportation Plan and Circulation Element of the General Plan. The Board of Supervisors and the Trinity County Transportation Commission have thereby directed staff to proceed with this particular project, the first step of which is to complete the environmental process for this project (not to reinvent the WBTCS).

The California Supreme Court has emphasized that, where a particular land use or project is consistent with, or mandated by, an approved general plan, a project-specific EIR should not normally be a vehicle for revisiting the appropriateness of the land use or project type in question. (See *Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 553, 573 (“*Goleta II*”); see also CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6., subd. (f)(1) (“general plan consistency” is a factor to consider in determining feasibility of alternatives for possible inclusion in an EIR).) Here, the County Board of Supervisors has already identified the need for an East Connector, and this EIR is the vehicle for determining *how*, and not *whether*, to build such a facility.

This is not to say that the Board of Supervisors has already decided to proceed with this project. That decision will be based on the analysis of the environmental effects of the East Connector Roadway Project contained in this EIR, and the public testimony with regards to this project, which shall become part of the public record. The Board retains the option of selecting the “NO Project” alternative, based on this information. Still, County Staff, in preparing the EIR, had to assume that, given prior planning decisions already in place, the Board was primarily interested in seeing options regarding *how*, rather than *whether*, to build an East Connector.

Since the purpose of this EIR is to disclose the environmental effects of the East Connector Roadway, in particular, and not to re-examine the basin-wide traffic circulation studies for a third time, the EIR is not required to treat the other projects recommended for implementation in the WBTCS as alternatives. (See also response to Comment 1 in Letter L-2.)

**4a. Comment Summary: Project Background** There is no way for a member of the public to locate the studies cited in the Project Background. Specifically the 1989 Nelson/Nygaard study and the 1998 TCTC citizens advisory committee's study and priority list.

**Response:** Appendix C lists the technical reports that were prepared specifically for the East Connector Project. Most of the information in these reports is incorporated directly into the Draft EIR. The list does not include documents that were not prepared specifically for this project, such as planning documents and the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study. However, at the bottom of the list, Appendix C states: "Other documents referred to in this EIR, but not prepared specifically for this project, including planning documents such as the Trinity County General Plan elements, Regional Transportation Plan, Weaverville Community Plan and Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study, are also available at the Trinity County Planning Department and the Trinity County Department of Transportation in Weaverville." Anyone desiring to review any of these documents could have easily done so by visiting one of these County offices in Weaverville, at the street addresses listed in Appendix C. County staff at neither office recalls anyone asking to look at these documents during the public review period for this DEIR. The documents are also listed in DEIR Chapter 6, References.

The data and conclusions of the 1989 Nelson/Nygaard study were not used in the analysis for the East Connector. Therefore, the Nelson/Nygaard study was not mentioned in Appendix C. It is mentioned in the Project Background Section of the DEIR, as part of the long history of planning activities that has gone on since 1984 to identify and resolve traffic congestion problems in Weaverville. Since the document is cited in the Project Background section, it is included in the References section in Chapter 6. The "TCTC citizens advisory committee's study and priority list" is the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study. As stated above, that document, and locations where it could be viewed, was included in Appendix C.

**4b. Comment Summary: Project Background** The DEIR falsely implies that the citizens committee recommended construction of an east connector road, when in fact the committee recognized it as a last resort to solve long range growth problems, to be implemented only after first trying much less disruptive controls such as traffic lights, use of the Levee Road, etc.

**Response:** It is unfortunate the commenter was unable to locate a copy of the WBTCs, which is the document that reports the findings and recommendations of the citizens advisory committee and their consultant. It is unclear what the comment refers to as the "citizens committee recommendations", since neither the Trinity County Planning Department or Transportation Department has any records of the citizen's committee ever making the statements cited in the comment. The citizen's committee's conclusions are documented in the WBTCs, which, in the "Recommended Plan" section on Page 168, calls the East Connector "the most effective immediate means of addressing traffic congestion, while also expanding Weaverville's roadway network to address future growth" and recommends that "this plan element should be implemented as soon as planning, funding and construction scheduling allows." Regarding traffic signals, the WBTCs states under the second

recommendation “*Construct a Traffic Signal at the SR 299/Glen Road Intersection*” that “The recommendation to install Trinity County’s first traffic signal is not made lightly. It is understood that, to a degree, a traffic signal impacts the small-town quality of the community. However, in comparison with the ongoing increases in traffic congestion absent a signal, this traffic signal is considered to be an unfortunate necessity.” The next paragraph (Page 171) states, “Additional traffic signals beyond that identified for SR 299/Glen Road are not recommended over the next twenty years under currently foreseeable conditions.” Reading these recommendations, it appears that the citizen’s advisory committee is recommending the opposite of what the comment implies. In other words, the committee did recommend the East Connector be constructed, and in fact urged that construction occur “as soon as possible.” What the committee characterized as a “last resort” was the construction of traffic signals *other than at Glen Road*.

**4c. Comment Summary: Project Background** The planning process was “backwards”, as it moved from the specific to the general, and is “project-driven” rather than plan driven.

**Response:** The Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study was a planning-level study of basin-wide transportation conditions, and basin-wide solutions. The study analyzed 19 projects (WBTC Page 71) and eliminated 8 others for having “fatal flaws” (WBTC Page 69). The 19 remaining projects were analyzed by a defined set of evaluation criteria including benefits to traffic operation, community impacts, natural environmental impacts, and cost-effectiveness (WBTC Page 105). The 19 projects were ranked according to these criteria. The results were presented to the Advisory Committee at meetings on August 4 and September 3, 1998, and a public workshop on August 5, 1998. Based upon extensive discussions at these meetings, the “Recommended Plan” was developed. (WBTC Page 167). The Recommended Plan included 14 of the 19 projects. These were:

1. Construct the “East Roadway” from SR 299/Glen Road to SR 3
2. Construct a Traffic Signal at the SR 299/Glen Road intersection
3. Begin Planning and Right-of-Way acquisition for the West Connector
4. Implement Traffic Calming measures on Mill Street
5. Modify SR 299 through the town to improve pedestrian crossing conditions and reduce vehicle speeding
6. Improve Levee Road as a Parkway
7. Construct a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over East Weaver Creek
8. Convert Center St. between Court Street and SR 3 to two-way
9. Preserve a potential future corridor east of the straight stretch
10. Develop right turn lanes on side streets intersection SR 299
11. Improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities
12. Improve driver sight distance at the SR 299/3 intersection
13. Improve downtown parking conditions through a combination of additional parking, education and enforcement
14. Encourage the U.S. Postal Service to implement commercial mail delivery and cluster box delivery.

Following this list was a Phasing Plan, recommending the timing for these improvements. Numbers 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14 were recommended for implementation “as soon as possible”. Numbers 5, 11 and 9 were recommended for implementation in 1 to 5 years, and construction of the West Side Connector (and the associated Number 4) was recommended in 10 to 20 years.

The project that is the subject of this EIR incorporates recommended projects number 1, 2, 7 and part of 6. Project number 3 is also underway. Project number 10 is partially implemented, with right turn lanes installed on Oregon Street and Forest Avenue. Project number 13 is also partially implemented with the installation of a developed parking area at Lee Fong Park. Caltrans is working on a sidewalk and bicycle lane project along SR 299 that would partially implement number 11.

This set of recommended projects was treated as an overall plan, not a recommendation for a single, specific project. This overall plan was developed with ample opportunity for public input from both the Citizens Advisory Committee and through public workshops and hearings. This overall plan was then used to prepare future transportation-related planning documents. Planning moved from the general, a basin-wide transportation study and plan, into the appropriate adopted planning documents (the Regional Transportation Plan and Circulation Element of the General Plan), to the specific project that is the subject of this EIR.

**5a. Comment Summary:** “Project Objectives” The specific project objectives do not carry forward, recognize and incorporate the wider socioeconomic objectives of the underlying plans and studies, such as preserving the community’s attractive small town character, contributing to the area’s economic vitality, etc. The project would maroon the historic downtown area and cut through the heart of the lumber mill, and eliminate or make inaccessible the collection of stores on Nugget Lane.

**Response:** The more general objectives cited here are from planning documents and the WBTCs. The specific objectives indicate how the East Connector will help achieve some of the planning documents’ general objectives, such as the following: “to provide a streets and highways system which effectively, efficiently and safely serves the variety of transportation needs of the community.” (*Weaverville Community Plan*); “improve capacity and level of service of SR 299 without impacting the historic nature of the downtown area.” (*Weaverville Community Plan*); “improve[s] safety for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists” (WBTCs), and “preserve[s] the existing attractive small-town character of the community.” (WBTCs). The DEIR also lists the evaluation criteria of the WBTCs. The WBTCs already evaluated this project according to the evaluation criteria, and it scored highly. The analysis and conclusions in the DEIR disagree with several of the commenter’s conclusions:

**Comment:** That the specific project objectives fail “completely” in meeting these more general objectives of the applicable plans to avoid impacts to local businesses and preserve the local community character. The Project Objectives are focused on the narrow problems of reducing traffic delays and improving circulation efficiencies.

**Response:** This is a transportation improvement project. Several of these applicable plan objectives relate specifically to increasing efficiency and safety and reducing congestion. A road construction project cannot be reasonably expected to cure all of the social and economic problems of Weaverville, such as “accommodate and attract new businesses and visitors” or “support and promote economic development” as these two policies from the Circulation Element of the General Plan are quoted (incompletely and out of context) in the comment letter. The actual policies say “As feasible under financial constraints, expand the transportation system to accommodate and attract new businesses and visitors” and “support and promote economic development through the efficient movement of freight and tourist travel to, and through Trinity County.”

**Comment:** That the project will adversely affect the historic nature of the downtown area or the attractive small-town character of the community.

**Response:** Review of these policies and WBTCES evaluation criteria, and how they were applied in these planning documents indicates that these policies should be understood to mean that physical changes in the downtown historic district, such as traffic lights or additional lanes on SR 299, are undesirable, and that alternative methods to improve congestion downtown should be sought. This project is a means to avoid these physical changes that would impact the historic nature and small town character of the downtown historic district.

**Comment:** That the project will adversely impact the economic livelihood of businesses in the historic district.

**Response:** The East Connector will have absolutely no effect on the number of vehicles traveling on SR 299 west of the intersection with SR 3, which is considered the “heart” of the historic downtown business district. This is so because eastbound vehicles cannot reach either SR 3 or the East Connector without first traveling through this portion of the historic district, and westbound vehicles coming from points on SR 3 north of Weaverville would also continue to travel via SR 3 to SR 299, and the west through the downtown historic district. The East Connector will, however, reduce congestion and delays at the intersection of SR 299 and SR 3. The historic district will not be “marooned” or in any way cut off or made inaccessible to vehicle or pedestrian traffic.

**Comment:** That the project would “cut through the heart” of the Trinity River Lumber Mill.

**Response:** The roadway would go along the eastern edge of the mill, through an area that is generally unused except for some outdoor storage of used equipment parts. Discussions with the mill owner and manager have indicated that the operations of the mill will not be adversely affected by this project.

**Comment:** That the project would “eliminate or make inaccessible” the collection of stores on Nugget Lane.

**Response:** There is one alternative that would eliminate a building housing two of these stores. There are two other alternatives available that would not eliminate any stores. None of the alternatives make the stores on Nugget Lane inaccessible. There are multiple access points onto Nugget Lane, both north and south of Glen Road. An additional access off of SR 299 to Nugget Lane south of Glen Road would be added. Access will be altered, and in some cases made slightly less convenient, but the businesses will remain visible and accessible from SR 299. This fact is disclosed and discussed in the EIR.

**5b. Comment Summary:** The project objectives derive from policies and objectives of outdated plans and inaccurate projections. The Weaverville Community Plan is out of date and inconsistent with the General Plan in major respects.

**Response:** The plans cited and quoted in the Project Objectives section are dated as follows:

Weaverville Community Plan: 1990 12 years old.

Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study: 1998; 4 years old.

Circulation Element of the General Plan: 2002; one year old.

As mentioned above, this project came out of a comprehensive and recent process where existing and projected traffic patterns were analyzed community-wide. (the WBTCs in 1998) Traffic projections were based on 1% per year population growth in Weaverville and 1.25% per year growth in through traffic on SR 299. Census data from 1990 to 2000 indicated that although the County population decreased, the population of Weaverville increased by 0.5% per year. The population growth rate of 1% used in the WBTCs is therefore not far off from what has actually occurred. It should also be noted that there are only two years of overlap (1998-2000) between the projections for 1998-2020 in the WBTCs and the 1990-2000 census data. The WBTCs projected population and traffic growth out to year 2020. Two years of growth data that is off by one half of one percent is not sufficient data to dismiss the growth projections in the WBTCs. If the data in this four-year old study is outdated, no major projects can ever be implemented in Weaverville, because it takes at least four years to implement a major project. To throw out a four year old study based on two years of actual data, and to go back and re-initiate transportation analysis and studies in Weaverville for the third time in 15 years would be bad planning, bad management, and a waste of County resources.

In addition, if Weaverville has not grown, as the OPTC insists, then this fact would tend to support the notion that the 12-year old Community Plan remains up-to-date, as few local circumstances have changed since 1990. As mentioned previously, this project and most of the other transportation improvement projects proposed in the WBTCs are included in the Weaverville Community Plan, at least conceptually. However, the WBTCs and Circulation Element have updated these proposals and the population projections in the Weaverville Community Plan. The Weaverville Community Plan assumed a population growth rate of 2.75% per year in Weaverville (WCP Page 7). The Citizen's Advisory Committee, in developing the WBTCs, recognized that that growth rate was not even close to what occurred between 1990 and 1998, and chose a much reduced population growth rate on which to base their analysis (WBTCs Page 50). However, even with the 1% annual growth rate, the traffic projections still indicated serious congestion and level of service problems by year 2020, and still indicated the need for the East Connector and several other transportation improvement projects envisioned in the Weaverville Community Plan.

The comment does not indicate in what "major respects" the Weaverville Community Plan is inconsistent with the General Plan, so it is not possible to directly respond to this allegation.

**6a. Comment Summary:** If the five major project components listed on page 1-10 of the DEIR are required to meet Project Objectives, then other alternatives such as Levee Road, a signal at Glen Road/SR 299 and a bicycle/pedestrian trail along the west bank of East Weaver Creek should have been considered as alternatives.

**Response:** This Project Description section of the DEIR lists the major components of this project. The physical components, or parts of the project are not the same as the project

objectives. The project objectives are discussed previously. The process of developing alternatives is also discussed above. The process of selecting projects from a wide range of completely different alternatives (different locations for new roads and trails, different approaches such as traffic control, added traffic lanes and turning lanes, changes in trip-generating land uses such as the post office, etc.) was done during the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study in 1998.

Although rated highly in the WBTCs, the Levee Road, upon further review in light of this environmental impact analysis for the East Connector has similar impacts and would not meet all of the project objectives. These considerations, in addition to those discussed above, provide additional reasons why a Levee Road alternative that would develop Levee Road as a County arterial. was not considered as a formal alternative in this EIR. The impacts on the downtown businesses would be identical, as both projects would be equally effective in providing an alternative to travel on SR 299. The Levee Road would be immediately adjacent to East Weaver Creek for most of its length, causing greater potential impacts to water quality, riparian vegetation, and wildlife, including listed Coho salmon. As described in the WBTCs, Levee Road would continue north of Brown's Ranch Road on the same alignment as Alternative 1 of the East Connector, having the same impacts on land uses on the north side of Brown's Ranch Road, including the Senior Center, as the East Connector Alternative 1. The WBTCs envisioned more impacts to Brown's Ranch Road from this alternative than from the East Connector. The only difference would be it would be farther away from certain residences on the south side of Brown's Ranch Road, and on Martin Road.

The existing Levee Road is a prescriptive public access across private properties. It is not a County Road. To make it a County arterial, right-of-way would have to be acquired, mostly from the Trinity River Lumber Mill. The Connector would be classified as an arterial roadway, by definition. The road would have to be upgraded and widened to County public road standards, which are the federal AASHTO standards for an arterial (same standard as the East Connector, with two 12 foot lanes and two 6 to 8 foot shoulders). The existing road would therefore have to be widened and completely rebuilt. It would also have to be wide enough to accommodate vehicles to maintain the Levee, as well as through traffic. There would not be sufficient width to accommodate a Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail separate from the roadway, unless there was significantly more right of way taken from areas of the mill that are developed and in active use.

Traffic would not be diverted from the section of SR 299 with the highest average daily traffic in the Weaverville Basin, between Washington Street and Glen Road. There is an existing route from SR 3 via Washington Street to Lowden Lane to Weaver Street that discharges vehicles to SR 299 across East Weaver Creek from where the Levee Road would discharge them. Therefore the Levee Road would not reduce congestion on SR 299 any better than what is already available. The Levee Road would not be as effective for emergency vehicle access and evacuation, particularly in the event of a flood, because the levee must be kept available to County equipment to monitor and repair the levee, and this may require closing the levee road to through traffic.

In short, creating a County arterial roadway on the Levee Road alignment is not environmentally superior to the alternatives already included in the EIR. Thus, nothing in CEQA suggests that, in order to be legally sufficient, the EIR must be modified to include such an alternative. (See *Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California* (1988) 47 Cal.3d 376, 403 (“*Laurel Heights I*”) (“alternatives and mitigation measures have the same function—diminishing or avoiding adverse environmental effects”; “alternatives are a type of mitigation”); *Goleta II, supra*, 52 Cal.3d at pp. 564, 566 (“[t]he core of an EIR is the mitigation and alternatives sections”; alternatives should “offer substantial environmental advantages over the project proposal”); CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (a) (“[a]n EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, or to the location of the project, that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project”) (emphasis added).)

Nor is the placement of traffic signals at a location other than at Glen Road/SR 299 a reasonable alternative. Such an alternative was not recommended in the Recommended Circulation Plan Section of the WBTCs. Under the second recommendation of the plan: *Construct a Traffic Signal at the SR 299/Glen Road Intersection*, (Pages 168-169), the WBTCs states, “The recommendation to install Trinity County’s first traffic signal is not made lightly. It is understood that, to a degree, a traffic signal impacts the small-town quality of the community. However, in comparison with the ongoing increases in traffic congestion absent a signal, this traffic signal is considered to be an unfortunate necessity. Placing this signal along the “straight stretch” (which already has a relatively suburban visual quality) is also seen as less of an impact than a traffic signal near the historic district. By helping to reduce left-turn volumes at SR 3 and Washington Street, moreover, the construction of a traffic signal at Glen Street will delay or eliminate the need for a traffic signal at these other, more sensitive, locations.” (This last sentence apparently assumes that the East Connector would also be built.)

In addition, traffic signals in or near the historic district are discouraged by the Circulation Element of the General Plan, which contains the following Policy:  
“Policy 1.16.A. Discourage the use of traffic signals in or near designated historic areas or similar areas of local significance.”

Even if the East Connector was not built, placing a signal at Glen Road and SR 299 would still impact access to businesses on Nugget Lane. The elimination of the movement from Nugget Lane to Glen Road is necessitated by the signal, and resulting queues backing up on Glen Road.

A signal at Glen Road alone may be too far away from the Washington Street or SR 3 intersections with SR 299 to provide create any beneficial gaps, or “pulsing” at these intersections. Even if the signal provided some breaks in the westbound traffic stream at these intersections, no gap in the eastbound stream would be provided. The comment is correct in stating that more than one signal would probably be needed.

The DEIR was prepared to study the environmental impacts of the East Connector Roadway, as described in the WBTCs. This is the project that was programmed in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for funding, following the recommendations of the WBTCs, and

the direction of the Trinity County Transportation Commission. A detailed study of signalization along the SR 299 corridor, and the implementation of such a study, is not part of this project.

(See also response to Comment 1 in Letter L-2, regarding the Levee Road alternative and a traffic signal at Glen Road, and Comment 3 in this Letter L-1 regarding the range of alternatives.)

Improving the existing trail on the west side of East Weaver Creek would not provide a crossing of East Weaver Creek or a new trail. Trinity County DOT has included the Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail and bridge as part of the East Connector Project, and obtained funding for their construction. TCDOT would not be able to obtain funding for a stand-alone trail on the west side of the creek that was not associated with a County road project. If an improved trail along the west side of East Weaver Creek is desirable, the Weaverville Basin Trails Committee should pursue funding and right-of-way for that project. This is not part of, or an alternative to, the East Connector Project, because it meets *none* of the stated Project Objectives.

**6b. Comment Summary:** Construction will span two years during the busiest economic period in Trinity County. The disruptive effect of construction on the community is nowhere addressed in the DEIR, nor is the cumulative impact of the construction on tourism considered in the context of other planned construction such as the proposed relocated Weaverville Airport.

**Response:** The DEIR does address these effects in Section 3.16 *Community Impacts*. The effects of the construction of the project (2 to 25 seasonal workers) are discussed on Page 3.16-17, and the cumulative effects of possible concurrent construction of the East Connector and Airport (up to 40 more seasonal workers) are discussed on Page 3.16-18. These economic effects are not called significant under CEQA, unless it can be demonstrated that they will result in a reasonably foreseeable adverse physical effect that is itself significant.

**6c. Comment Summary:** The DEIR defers analysis by stating that the project will have to comply with various state and federal permit requirements that will prevent pollution.

**Response:** The DEIR is not deferring analysis simply by stating the fact that the project will have to comply with state and federal permit requirements. “A condition requiring compliance with environmental regulations is a common and reasonable mitigating measure.” (*Leonoff v. Monterey County Board of Supervisors* (1990) 222 Cal.App.3d 1337, 1355.) In fact, the division of labor under CEQA – between a “lead agency” (such as the County) and “responsible agencies” (such as Fish and Game and the Regional Water Quality Control Board) that will use the EIR for approving permits related to the project – presupposes that EIRs will frequently identify agencies other than lead agencies that will be responsible for mitigation. These agencies often act pursuant to regulatory authority under laws other than CEQA (e.g., the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, the Endangered Species Act, the California Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, the California Clean Air Act, and numerous provisions of the California Fish and Game Code). In fact, in adopting findings at the time of project approval, lead agencies may find that specific proposed mitigation measures are “within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency[.]” (CEQA Guidelines, § 15091.) It is rare, in fact, for a lead agency to be responsible for all of the mitigation measures for a project. Even where a lead agency attempts to mitigate each and every impact of a project, however, that attempt would not change

the fact that a given project may still be subject to a panoply of federal and state laws other than CEQA, which must be implemented through the permitting authority of federal and state agencies other than the lead agency.

The DEIR does not rely on future conditions of these permits to provide impact analysis or mitigation. Impacts are analyzed and mitigated in Chapter 3, *Environmental Consequences and Mitigation Measures*. The Project Description Section mentions that the TCDOT will be required to obtain coverage under the General Construction Activity Storm Water Permit and prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. The same section also mentions numerous general and specific measures that will be implemented to prevent erosion and water pollution. In addition, mitigation measures, above and beyond measures in the project description, are committed to in the various applicable Impact and Mitigation Measures sections, such as 3.1, *Geology, Soils and Seismicity*, 3.2, *Hydrology, Water Quality, Stormwater Runoff*, 3.3, *Hazardous Waste/Materials*, 3.4, *Air Quality*, 3.7, *Waters of the United States (including wetlands)*, 3.8 *Vegetation and Invasive Species/Wildlife*, and 3.9 *Threatened and Endangered Species*. The reader should refer to these sections for analysis and mitigation of environmental impacts, rather than the Project Description section.

**6d. Comment Summary:** The DEIR does not identify any potential impacts from the eventual extension of the TCDOT maintenance yard into the area proposed for a Staging Area for the East Connector. This “project component” will have significant visual and noise-related impacts on surrounding residential areas, as well as affecting traffic flow on Highway 3.

**Response:** This future expansion of the DOT maintenance yard is addressed as a cumulative effect, rather than a project component. (DEIR Page 3.0-2) Creation and use of the staging area was treated as a project component. Removal of vegetation (Ponderosa Pine forest) from this entire area was included in the total permanent impacts and considered further in the cumulative effects analysis of Section 3.8 *Vegetation, Invasive Species and Wildlife*. It was not, however, considered in the cumulative impacts analyses in Section 3.5, *Noise*, or Section 3.19, *Visual*. The noise section does, however, address noise from staging areas and includes a mitigation measure to address the noise from stationary construction equipment located in staging areas. In addition, the mitigation measure for riparian vegetation, *Habitat Mitigation 3* commits TCDOT to replacing all woody riparian vegetation (trees and shrubs) removed for project construction at a 2:1 ratio along East Weaver Creek behind the County Maintenance yard. This mitigation restores an area of East Weaver Creek that has some gaps in the riparian vegetation, and provides a buffer between the road maintenance yard (both the existing and proposed expansion) and East Weaver Creek. This will provide protection of water quality and aquatic habitat from impacts generated by the road maintenance yard, and provide improved visual and noise screening for residences located across East Weaver Creek from the existing and expanded maintenance yard. The residences in closest proximity to the expansion would be on Five Cent Gulch Street. They would see some additional cleared areas across SR 3, north of the new intersection with the East Connector. However, TCDOT plans to leave some of the existing trees along SR 3 and between the expanded yard and the Trinity Medical Center, to screen views from SR 3 and Five Cent Gulch. The expansion will be used primarily for storage of parts and materials, such as culvert pipes and precast concrete structural elements. Maintenance of heavy equipment will remain in the existing maintenance shop. Activities in the expansion area will therefore not be generally

noisy, except for occasional loading and unloading activities. As for affecting traffic flow on Highway 3, there will be no new encroachments to Highway 3, and traffic in and out of the maintenance yard will not increase due to the expansion. Therefore there would be no affect on traffic flow on Highway 3.

**7a. Comment Summary: Section 1.5 Intended Uses of this EIR:** The proposed rezoning of a 2-acre parcel at the end of Martin Road is not analyzed in the EIR. The impacts are potentially very significant, including constraining expansion of the mill and possibly rendering it uneconomic, inducing growth by converting industrial to residential property and encroaching on the wetlands that are proposed to serve as a “set-off” for wetlands lost to this project. Deferring analysis of these project-related impacts is not permissible under CEQA, which requires disclosure and analysis at the earliest stage of the project.

**Response:** The commenter is incorrect in stating that the effects of the proposed rezoning were not analyzed in the EIR. They were analyzed, though only at a programmatic level, as explained below. The possible rezoning of this 2-acre parcel (APN 024-210-10) was requested by the owner of the Trinity River Lumber Mill. It was included in the project description and treated as a component of this project, so that the impacts of this proposal could be analyzed in this EIR, along with the other project components. The parcel was surveyed for plants, invasive weeds, special status wildlife species or their habitat, and cultural resources along with all other areas potentially disturbed by the project (called the “Environmental Study Limits”). The possible rezone, and resulting subdivision of this property was analyzed in the chapters where it would result in environmental effects, such as Section 3.8, *Vegetation, Invasive Species and Wildlife*, 3.14, *Land Use, Planning and Growth*, (this aspect of the project is called “directly growth inducing” on page 3.14-18.), Section 3.16, *Community Impacts* (under Fiscal Impacts on Page 3.16-15, Section 3.17-7 *Public Services and Utilities*, and Section 3.19, *Visual Resources/Aesthetics*. The “Uses of this EIR” section states that the EIR will serve as a “Program EIR” for this project component only, because this rezone and subdivision would not occur automatically with certification of this EIR and approval of the East Connector Project. Subsequent action would be required of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for approval of the rezone and subdivision. As stated, this future action could be “tiered off” the analysis in this EIR. In this way, the EIR does analyze and disclose the impacts at the earliest stage of this potential future project.

With regards to the impacts listed in the comment, County staff disagrees with several of the commenter’s conclusions:

- Contrary to the commenter’s suggestion, the rezone would not constrain expansion of the mill and possibly render it uneconomic. This was requested by the owner of the mill. The parcel in question is separated from the mill by topography, and is closer to the elevation of Martin Road than it is to the elevation of the mill. The grade would make it inconvenient to run mill equipment up and down the slope. Because this parcel is almost at the same elevation as Martin Road, industrial use of this area would conflict with surrounding residential uses to a greater degree than industrial use of the greater mill property below. If the mill chose to expand operations into this area, there would probably be complaints from residences immediately adjacent. Therefore, it is not useable as an industrial parcel. This is why the mill owner would like to convert the land use designation and zoning of this parcel to something more suitable. This is actually a

positive change in zoning and land use designation. Since the mill owner is the one who initiated this idea, he presumably does not believe it would render the mill uneconomic.

- The property in question, to be rezoned to residential, in no way encroaches on the existing wetlands or proposed wetland mitigation area. The commenter may be confused between this parcel, at the end of Martin Road above the mill property, and the piece of the parcel APN 024-210-08 (the 110-acre parcel that contains all of the mill operational areas), which will be severed by the East Connector. This small area at the northeast corner of the mill is adjacent to Lance Gulch and contains the existing wetlands. Wetlands created to compensate for wetlands lost due to this project would be created in this area, adjacent to Lance Gulch. Incidentally, existing wetlands cannot be used as a “set-off” for wetlands that will be lost. New wetlands must be created to compensate for the loss of wetlands.

**7b. Comment Summary: Section 1.5 Intended Uses of this EIR:** The EIR cannot defer analysis of impacts by saying that certain impacts will be addressed at the time those permits are issued. This occurs throughout the DEIR, as at page 1-17, where it states that potential pollution impacts will be prevented by obtaining a SWPPP permit.

**Response:** Nowhere does the DEIR say that certain impacts will be addressed at the time permits are issued. Page 1-24 of the EIR merely lists the various permits that will be required. This section is required by CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(d)(B)). It in no way expresses or implies that analysis or mitigation of impacts will be deferred until the permit process. Impacts are analyzed and mitigation is proposed for significant impacts throughout Section 3 of the DEIR. None of these analyses or mitigation measures is deferred to a future permit. See also Comment 6c in this letter (L-1) and response, which previously discussed the statement on Page 1-17 regarding the Storm Water Permit requirements.

**8. Comment Summary: Alternative Development Process:** The DEIR fails to offer decision-makers a reasonable range of alternatives.

**Response:** See responses to Comments 3, 4(b) and 6(a), in this letter (L-1), and Comment 1 in Letter L-2. Because this project resulted from a previous basin-wide analysis of a wide variety of potential projects to alleviate congestion problems in Weaverville, and because the project is implementing policy decisions embodied in the Weaverville Community Plan, the General Plan Circulation Element, and the Regional Transportation Plan, this EIR has no need to consider alternatives – except for No Project – that fail to carry out existing County policy to pursue an East Connector at approximately the locations shown in this EIR. In addition, because this project is part of an overall plan to implement the recommendations of that study, the other projects recommended in the WBTCS should not be considered as “alternatives” to this project. The County never intended to select only one of the recommended projects after an alternatives analysis. They intended to implement as many of the recommended projects as possible based on funding and the results of project-specific environmental analysis. The funding is available now, and the environmental analysis for the East Connector Roadway project (Alternative H in the WBTCS) is the subject of this EIR. County staff and funds would be ill-used in generating a third basin-wide traffic study in

Weaverville in less than 15 years, without implementing any of the major recommendations in the first two studies.

**9a. Comment Summary: Project Alternatives Considered in Detail:** All the alternatives presented are virtually identical, and all will have the same socioeconomic impacts to the community, i.e., isolating the historic downtown, destroying access to Nugget Lane, and imposing incompatible uses adjacent to Trinity River Lumber Mill. There is no environmentally superior alternative.

**Response:** See responses to Comments 3, 4(b) and 6(a), and 8 in this letter (L-1), and Comment 1 in Letter L-2 regarding the alternatives analysis process that was previously done in 1998 by the Citizen's Advisory Committee, resulting in the WBTCS. The "socioeconomic impacts" of the project listed in this comment have also been stated previously, and responded to in Comments 5a (re: isolating historic downtown and destroying access to Nugget Lane) and 7a (re: incompatible uses adjacent to the Mill). The DEIR states that while there is no clearly superior alternative, the alternatives were ranked, and Alignment Alternative 1, Nugget Lane Alternative C and Bicycle Pedestrian bridge Option A were slightly superior, overall.

**9b. Comment Summary: Project Alternatives Considered in Detail:** The DEIR is designed to insure that a pre-selected project, for which funds have already been earmarked, will be built. The decision makers have been deprived a real choice of ways to solve the Weaverville Basin circulation problems.

**Response:** The decision makers, and community, had ample opportunity throughout 1998 to have input in developing the overall plan that resulted in a recommendation that this, and several other projects, proceed toward implementation. If funds had not been earmarked for this project, then there would be no funds available to perform the environmental studies and prepare this EIR. This process, and the fact that funds are earmarked through construction, in no way "insures" that this project will be built or forces the Board of Supervisors to approve this project. They have the option of selecting the "No Project" alternative instead of the East Connector, and this would not prevent other projects recommended in the WBTCS from being implemented (unless environmental review and public input were to again result in selection of the "No Project" alternative for the other projects). If the "No Project" alternative is selected for the East Connector Project, the funds that have been programmed in the STIP for design, right-of-way and construction will be reprogrammed for other road construction or improvement projects in Trinity County on either County roads or the State Highways, subject to approval of the Trinity County Transportation Commission and the California Transportation Commission. As noted earlier, the decision for which this EIR will be used cannot be considered in a vacuum. The County and Transportation Commission have previously expressed its desire for an East Connector in at least three still-binding planning documents: the Weaverville Community Plan, the Circulation Element of the General Plan, and the Regional Transportation Plan. It is therefore not surprising, and is in fact entirely to be expected, that County staff has assumed that the Board of Supervisors will likely chose to pursue the project in some form, and will require funding for it. Although "No Project" of course remains an option, and although the County must complete this EIR

process before making any further binding commitments to actually proceed with funding and construction of the project, the alternatives set forth in this document are intended to carry out existing County policies, and have been formulated with those policies in mind. In any event, case law recognizes that public agencies can have “high esteem” or enthusiasm for proposed projects without being guilty of violating CEQA by effectively “preapproving” projects without first completing necessary environmental documents. (*City of Vernon v. Board of Harbor Commissioners* (1998) 63 Cal.App.4th 677, 688.)

**9c. Comment Summary: Project Alternatives Considered in Detail:** Staff must be directed to go back to the study phase and carry forward a number of alternatives that were “adopted” by the citizen advisory groups, which could be phased to address circulation problems in a manner that is timed to meet growth with far less environmental and socio-economic impacts such as manual traffic control, signals at Glen Road and/or Washington Street, turn pockets along Highway 299, etc.

**Response:** The Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study did exactly what the comment suggests the County do, only four years ago. County staff is now attempting to do exactly as suggested: “carry forward a number of alternatives recommended by a citizen advisory group”. As stated previously, the County did not select only one recommendation of the WBTCs, but directed staff to “carry forward” the entire “Recommended Circulation Plan”, consisting of 14 projects. As listed in response to Comment 4c, several of these have been implemented. Others are underway. The East Connector is one that was recommended for “implementation as soon as possible”. This EIR has been prepared as part of the process to “carry forward” this component of the Recommended Circulation Plan.

Manual traffic control was not considered by the advisory committee. This is not a realistic alternative in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Questions of jurisdiction, authority, funding and liability immediately arise. Scott White, Chief of Caltrans’ Office of System Planning, states that this is not an acceptable standard traffic control method, especially on the State Highway system. Turn pockets on SR 299 were not suggested by the advisory committee, either. There are adequate turn pockets on SR 299, and additional width would result in right-of-way take from downtown businesses and impacts to historic properties. Adding turn pockets on county roads at intersections with SR 299 was recommended, and new turn pockets have been added on Oregon Street and Forest Avenue. A right-turn pocket at Washington Street was analyzed by Fehr and Peers traffic consultants as part of the traffic studies for the East Connector, and by CCS Traffic Consultants as part of the Draft Program EIR for the Weaverville Airport Relocation. An additional lane for right-turns on Washington Street results in only a 1.8-second reduction in delay. Other methods are needed to improve level of service at the Washington Street/SR 299 intersection. The East Connector improves the level of service at the Washington Street/SR 299 intersection by reducing the delay to make a left turn onto SR 299 from 217 seconds to 49 seconds in 2020.

To “direct staff to go back to the study phase” at this time, when they are in the process of implementing the recommendations of a similar study that was done only four years ago, would be poor planning and poor management of the County’s staff and resources.

**10. Comment Summary: No Project Alternative:** The DEIR states that the No Project Alternative would have impacts, and does not identify the No Project Alternative as the environmentally superior alternative. The DEIR does not account for the fact that selection of the No Project Alternative would still allow decision-makers to make other changes in the Weaverville circulation patterns that would have less impact, whether or not such changes are offered as alternatives in the DEIR.

**Response:** CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(e)(2) state: “The “no project” analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, ...as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services. If the environmentally superior alternative is the “no project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.” The commenter is correct in stating that selection of the No Project Alternative would still allow decision-makers to make other changes in the Weaverville circulation patterns. On the other hand, the same options would also be open with selection of one of the Project alternatives. As stated previously, the East Connector is only one of 14 projects that comprised the Plan recommended by the Citizen’s Advisory Committee in the WBTCs. These other projects were intended to be implemented in addition to, not instead of, the East Connector. The projects were selected to complement each other, rather than as alternative ways to accomplish the same objectives. By naming these other projects as alternatives to the East Connector, the Board may have been forced into rejecting all but one as “infeasible” or “inferior”, which would tie their hands more than if they are implemented as components of an overall plan.

**11. Comment Summary: Environmentally Superior Alternative:** The DEIR “skews” the analysis of the environmentally superior alternative by “degrading” the No Project alternative. The impacts associated with “inconsistency” with the Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan, the Circulation Element of the General Plan, and the Weaverville Community Plan are inflated. These plans conceived “a Connector Road” as something that would have to be built to address future growth. The projections for growth that support this Project are outdated and unfounded. There is no inconsistency with the General Plan in not selecting the Project (or, in selecting the No-Project Alternative) when conditions for implementing provisions of the General Plan and other plans do not exist. The DEIR is “disingenuous” in portraying the No-Project Alternative as not environmentally superior.

**Response:** See response to Comment 10, above and the CEQA Guidelines citation (Section 15126.6(e)(2) quoted above regarding selection of the No-Project Alternative as environmentally superior. The DEIR presents a matrix rating all the alternatives for their relative environmental impacts. Disclosing the environmental impacts of the No Project Alternative is not “degrading” that alternative any more than disclosing the environmental impacts of the other alternatives is “degrading” them. This fair analysis is required by CEQA. The statements regarding General Plan consistency do not reflect good planning policy. Of course there were projects envisioned in the Community Plan to address future growth. That is the purpose of having a General Plan and Community Plan. By definition, general plans are supposed to be “long-term” in their focus. (Gov Code Sect. 65300). If

projects that were expressly identified in General Plans were deemed to be inconsistent with such plans simply because population growth was materializing more slowly than originally anticipated (i.e., in the commenters' words, "conditions for implementing the provisions of the General Plan and other plans do not exist"), then local agencies would be prohibited from approving projects that are facially consistent with, and even expressly called for, by the land use diagrams and/or circulation elements of their General Plans. Nothing in the law supports such an anomalous result.

The implication here is that the population growth projections in the Weaverville Community Plan have not panned out, therefore invalidating the entire plan. The Weaverville Community Plan did assume an annual population growth rate of 2.75% per year, which has not materialized. However, in viewing this in 1998, the Citizen's Advisory Committee selected a much lower annual population growth rate of 1% per year, and based the future growth and associated projections of future traffic conditions on that growth rate in preparing the WBTCs. The predicted levels of service and signal warrant analyses for year 2020 in the WBTCs are based on 1% per year population growth in Weaverville, and they still indicate the need for the East Connector and other recommended circulation improvements. Even if growth in the next 17 years occurs at a slower pace than envisioned today, long-term population growth in the Weaverville area seems a virtual certainty. If the growth takes longer to materialize than previously assumed, that fact would simply extend the life of the General Plan as a viable and up-to-date planning tool.

**12a. Comment Summary: Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences and Mitigation Measures:**

The description of the Environmental Setting or "Affected Environment" is discussed within the context of each environmental topic, and not as a whole, so the true impacts of the project on the community are masked entirely. A proper description of the environmental setting would disclose that "the Project slices across the face of the community, injuring virtually all of its most important features. The environmental setting of this project includes the historic district, the small retail center on Nugget Lane, the mill, East Weaver Creek and Lowden Park, the residential area overlooking the mill and accessed by Brown's Ranch Road, the senior center and Five Cent Gulch."

**Response:** The DEIR presents the affected environment of the project site itself, plus the local and regional perspectives for each impact chapter. This is standard practice for CEQA documents all over California. Nothing in CEQA requires that the "environmental setting" for a project be described in a stand-alone chapter separated from the discussions of individual categories of impacts. In this EIR, each chapter includes very thorough relevant information about the environmental setting as it relates to each specific impact category. By describing the environment in terms of each impact category, immediately preceding the impact analysis, more detail is presented without excess repetition requiring the reader to refer back to a single lengthy description of the overall affected environment. The County believes this approach to be very user friendly. CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(a) states that "The description of the environmental setting shall be no longer than is necessary to an understanding of the significant effects of the proposed project and its alternatives". Although the description is broken out into different subjects, such as "Geology" or "Vegetation and Wildlife", the description of the affected environment is nonetheless

complete, permitting the significant effects of the project to be considered in the full environmental context. This practice is acceptable under CEQA, is commonly followed all over California, and does not “mask entirely” the impacts of the project. The suggested “proper description of the environmental setting” is full of dramatic language inappropriate to an objective analysis. The land uses listed in this suggested “proper description” are all documented in the “Affected Environment” section of every chapter that discusses impacts to these particular features.

**12b. Comment Summary: Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences and Mitigation Measures:** The list of reasonably foreseeable projects which should be analyzed for cumulative effects should include: the widening and straightening of SR 299 over Buckhorn Summit, the proposed relocation of County offices and/or hospital to the Lonnie Pool Airport location, and the potential subdivision of Pioneer Heights, all of which will affect traffic and circulation in Weaverville.

**Response:** The Caltrans project over Buckhorn Summit is in the early phases of feasibility study and alternatives analysis. It can be considered “reasonably foreseeable”, and has been envisioned for a long time. The physical work would occur outside of Trinity County, on the other side of the Summit, in a different watershed that does not drain to the Trinity River. Therefore, most of the physical environmental effects are not considered cumulative with the physical effects of this project. As the comment states, the Buckhorn project could affect traffic and circulation in Weaverville. This was considered in the WBTCS, on Page 46, which concluded, “Because of the small savings in travel time estimated to result from the SR 299 corridor improvements, because not all improvements to the Buckhorn Grade are planned for completion in the 20 year horizon, and because other portions of the county (notably Lewiston) will be more convenient to jobs in the Redding area, it is assumed for this study that these improvements will not affect the rate of population growth in Weaverville.” Under “Growth in Through Traffic” on Page 54 of the WBTCS, a growth factor of 1.25% per year was developed for through traffic on SR 299, based on population growth projections for Humboldt and Shasta Counties, not on the Buckhorn proposal. Although the WBTCS did not anticipate the Buckhorn Grade Improvement Project contributing significantly to future traffic in Weaverville, it still used a population growth factor of 1% per year, and predicted a growth in through traffic on SR 299 of 1.25% per year. Inasmuch as comments from the OPTC and others have repeatedly stated that the growth projections used in this analysis are overestimated, they would presumably have a built-in margin which will accommodate any unexpected growth that results from the Buckhorn Grade Improvement Project.

The possibility of relocating County offices and/or the County Hospital to the existing airport site is not a formally pending or approved project to date, and there are many uncertainties surrounding that proposal, including when and if the Airport is relocated, and the financial survival of the Hospital. As the comment states, this project’s major impact would be on traffic and circulation in Weaverville. Impacts on the natural environment would probably not be cumulatively considerable, since the development would occur on an already developed site. Although this project is not listed in Section 3.0, the Traffic and Transportation analysis in Section 3.18 adds 250 peak hour trips per day coming from the Lonnie Pool Airport Site to the baseline data for year 2020, (which was derived from the

WBTCs), to account for a possible hospital relocation. This number would also serve as an estimate for County offices.

In addition, as noted above, and in the comment, the major cumulative impact of these two possible projects is on traffic and circulation. The East Connector has a positive affect on traffic and circulation patterns in Weaverville. Thus, the East Connector project would offset, rather than contribute to, the cumulative effects of these two projects.

Further subdivision of Pioneer Heights can only occur in the area above the end of Pioneer Lane. The majority of the area is already subdivided and almost completely built out. The area above Pioneer Lane is constrained from further development by lack of access above the upper end of the existing Pioneer Lane, and the expense of extending sewer and water laterals to the main lines on Martin Road. The Trinity County Planning Department does not consider this development “reasonably foreseeable”.

**13a. Comment Summary: Geology, Seismicity and Soils:** The DEIR fails to disclose that construction of the Project would introduce substantial impermeable road surface.

**Response:** The environmental impacts associated with the new impermeable surface are disclosed, discussed and mitigated in Chapter 3.2, *Hydrology, Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff*. It is apparent that the commenter is aware of this discussion as the comment itself cites Page 3.2-10 of the DEIR, which estimates 26 acres of impermeable surfaces. Thus, paradoxically, the comment first states that the existence of impermeable surfaces is not disclosed and then cites a page of the DEIR where impacts associated with these surfaces are clearly disclosed. The citation, moreover, is for the *Cumulative Impacts* section of Chapter 3.2, which attributes the 26 acres of surfaces as including not only those associated with the East Connector, but also those associated with the proposed new Weaverville Airport. The Project in itself will result in only 6 acres of new impermeable surfaces, as disclosed on Page 3.2-6 of the DEIR. There are two mitigation measures for this impact, one for the volume of increased runoff, and one for the water quality of runoff from the road into surface water bodies.

**13b. Comment Summary:** The increased impermeable surfaces will concentrate stormwater runoff, increasing the velocity of runoff and thereby increasing erosion.

**Response:** This phenomenon cited by the commenter occurs in large paved areas such as parking lots that collect drainage from a large area and channel it to a single pipe outlet. In the case of a linear roadway this concentration of runoff does not occur. The road surface will be crowned or sloped so that runoff will not collect on the paved surface, or run along the paved surface, but will drain directly to unlined, unpaved vegetated drainage ditches and swales along the side of the road, as described in Hydrology Mitigation 2. The vegetation will prevent the ditches from erosion and will slow flows so that erosion does not occur at the outlets of these ditches.

**13c. Comment Summary:** The conclusion that there are no significant cumulative impacts from off-site import of fill soils for the various projects is unsupported. Cumulative effects include reshaping the landscape and increased erosion. The analysis rests on the assumption that the other project will have to comply with SMARA, and this is deferred analysis.

**Response:** The comment seems to blend two different impacts together, one is the import or export of soils to or from off site locations, and the other is grading (the movement of soils within the project area). First, with respect to grading impacts, the County notes that the Weaverville Airport will visibly reshape the landscape by flattening the top of a ridge. The East and West Connectors, in contrast, will not result in a major reshaping of the landscape, although there will be minor alteration and introduction of new linear features. This limited amount of land alteration is not considered a significant contribution to the cumulative effect of reshaping the landscape of the Weaverville Basin. Erosion must be controlled for all projects. All three projects are subject to local, state and federal requirements and will be reviewed by state and federal agencies through the environmental, design and construction phases. The erosion affects of the East Connector Project will occur mostly during construction, and are controllable, due to the flat terrain, permeable soils and the fact that most of the alignment is not immediately adjacent to surface water bodies. The Mitigation Measures in the impact chapters, and the Best Management Practices in the Project Description section demonstrate that erosion and sedimentation impacts of this project can and will be effectively controlled. The contribution of the Project to the cumulative effect is therefore minimized.

Soil import and export is a separate issue. For cost reasons, engineers always strive to minimize the import of materials and the export of spoils. This can be easily done by raising or lowering the profile grade of the roadway (or runway). Very preliminary engineering estimates indicate that for the East Connector, Alternative 1 would generate 10,000 cubic yards of excess spoil material, while Alternative 2 would require 5,000 cubic yards of imported material. These estimates are preliminary, and these volumes will probably be reduced by altering the project design. As explained in the DEIR, soil import required for the East Connector can be obtained from the open field adjacent to the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center. The environmental effects of using this material were analyzed in the EIR. Therefore, analysis of these effects for the East Connector has not been deferred. The other two major grading projects would likewise endeavor to balance cut and fill quantities, and utilize onsite materials, for cost reasons.

Materials such as aggregate base and road surfacing will be purchased from a commercial source for the East and West Connectors. These existing commercial sources of rock materials have already complied with the requirements of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA), so analysis of the impacts of the commercial rock providers is not deferred. Federal and State funded transportation projects are required to purchase rock from commercial sources that have already complied with SMARA. SMARA does not apply to grading projects that are moving earth from one place to another within a construction site. It applies to quarries and mines that generate rock products for sale to outside parties. Therefore, the projects themselves will not have to comply with SMARA, as stated in the comment. The projects will purchase rock from sources that have already complied with SMARA.

**14a. Comment Summary: Hydrology, Water Quality, Stormwater Runoff:** The statement that “No portion of the East Connector Roadway project is located within the

quarter-mile management area of the wild and scenic portion of the Trinity River.” (in the “Affected Environment” section) obscures the fact that the project will have significant potential for erosion and sediment loading in East Weaver Creek. This, and cumulative effects of other projects, will have the potential to substantially alter the values that caused the Trinity River to be designated as a Recreational River under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

**Response:** The statement was made as part of the “Affected Environment” section, as a simple statement of fact. It was made as part of the disclosure of the affected environment. It was not made to “obscure the facts” of potentially significant cumulative erosion and sedimentation effects from this and other projects. As stated above, in response to Comment 11, Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices have been included in this project to minimize the discharge of sediment to East Weaver Creek, Lance Gulch or adjacent wetlands from this Project. Similar measures will be required for the West Connector and Airport projects. It is extremely unlikely that the combined projects would contribute enough sediment to the Weaver Creek system to result in an increase in turbidity of the Trinity River sufficient to have any effect on the values that make it designated as a Wild and Scenic River.

**14b. Comment Summary:** Detention ponds built to handle sediment loading from the Project and the Airport will have impacts, such as creating micro-climates, attract mosquitoes and wildlife and may require approval of the California Division of Dam Safety.

**Response:** See the response to comment 2 by Colleen O’Sullivan from the January 9 Public Meeting. The feasibility of Hydrology Mitigation 1 was questioned. Hydrology Mitigation 1 required a detention basin to meter flows from Lance Gulch into the subsurface drainage system beneath the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center, if hydrologic calculations indicated that the increased runoff from the new impermeable surfaces would exceed the capacity of that system. Design is not sufficient at this point to calculate the exact amount of increased runoff, but Trinity County DOT engineers performed a “worst case scenario” calculation, assuming 6 acres of new impermeable surfaces replacing permeable soils and all discharging to Lance Gulch. The analysis indicated that the increase in runoff would be only two cubic feet per second (cfs). The pipe now has an excess capacity of 89 cfs. Therefore, no detention ponds will be needed for this Project. Runoff from finished road surfaces will be treated in unlined vegetated swales and ditches of low gradient, rather than detention ponds. The East Connector Project therefore does not contribute to the cumulative effect of detention ponds installed for the Airport Project.

**15. Comment Summary: Hazardous Waste/Materials:** The DEIR does not address the risk to the public from hazardous materials periodically accepted at the transfer station from the general public being transported on the road. A plan for responding to such an event must be considered and included in this DEIR before the conclusion can properly be made that this impact is not significant.

**Response:** The comment quotes an introductory statement in the “Permanent Impacts” section of this chapter, and calls it a “conclusion”, then says this “conclusion” is unsupported by even a rudimentary review of the affected environment. In the following paragraph, the DEIR states, “There are no industrial facilities on north SR 3 that would attract or generate

trucks transporting hazardous materials in large quantities, or acutely hazardous materials or wastes. Trucks hauling solid waste from the transfer station at the previous landfill site to the Anderson Landfill may use the East Connector. However, the transfer station does not accept hazardous waste.” This statement supports the conclusion. The transfer station does accept “household hazardous waste” once a year. These are not acutely hazardous waste, and are not transported in large quantities. Even in the event of an accident, this type of waste does not represent a significant hazard to the public or the environment. As stated in the DEIR, (Page 3.3-2) the California Highway Patrol has the primary responsibility for the management of hazardous material spill sites on or adjacent to public roadways, including County roads. However, The TCDOT also has an Emergency Response Handbook that is distributed to all road maintenance crews. It documents general procedures for notifying appropriate agencies, taking immediate steps to protect human life and property, containing or preventing the spread of the material, protecting water bodies, evacuating the area if necessary and performing traffic control.

**16. Comment Summary: Air Quality:** The new burn-barrel restrictions soon to be imposed by the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District may have a noticeable effect on the analysis in this section, and the DEIR should be revised to “more accurately portray” the environmental setting, and then reconsider the significance of various alternatives (including the No Project Alternative) on air quality.

**Response:** The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15125(a), state that the Environmental Setting is a “description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published...”. This is so that an EIR does not have to be revised every time something in the Environmental Setting (which includes the regulatory framework) changes. The Notice of Preparation was published on March 15, 2001. No burn barrel restrictions were in effect at that time. Regardless, this change in the Environmental Setting, or background conditions, would have no effect on the amount of emissions generated by vehicles traveling through Weaverville whichever alternative project is selected.

**17a. Comment Summary: Noise:** To the extent the DEIR’s analysis of noise impacts and noise policies rests on the Trinity County General Plan’s Noise Element, it is deficient.

**Response:** The commenter states that the Trinity County General Plan’s Noise Element was adopted in 1974, but does not identify any specific deficiency in the Noise Element. Regardless, the DEIR’s analysis of noise impacts and noise policies does not rest solely on the Trinity County General Plan’s Noise Element. Standards and methods developed by Caltrans and Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) specifically to assess impacts of roadway noise were used, because they are most applicable to construction of a new road. By these standards, roadway noise predicted for the East Connector were determined not to be significant. Proposed standards from the draft Trinity County Noise Element were also mentioned. These standards have not yet been adopted, so they are not yet a regulatory standard and compliance is, at this point, voluntary. However, they are more stringent than the Caltrans/FHWA standards, so the project noise was also compared to these proposed standards. Even with the more stringent proposed Trinity County standard for new

transportation sources of 60 dB at outdoor activity areas of residences, the predicted noise levels are not significant.

**17b. Comment Summary:** The cumulative noise effects of construction of both the East Connector and the Airport simultaneously should have been analyzed.

**Response:** Residences on Martin Road would be the closest to construction activities on the airport site. These residences are at least 4,500 feet away. Residences at the upper end of Brown's Ranch Road are over 5,000 feet away. Noise affects would also be subject to attenuation as a result of intervening topography and vegetation. The Draft Program EIR for the Weaverville Airport presents a "worst-case" estimate of construction noise impacts, assuming that two pieces of construction equipment operate in the same area, within line-of-sight of the receiver, with no intervening topography or vegetation. An outdoor receiver located 3,200 feet away would be subject to noise levels of 55 dB. At 6,400 feet, the noise level would be 49 dB. In the unlikely event that both projects are constructed at the same time, construction noise would affect these same outdoor receivers with additional noise from the other direction, on the order of magnitude of 73 to 85 dB. These noise levels are not directly additive (55 db plus 73 dB do not add up to 128 dB), but the combination would be greater than either noise source would be alone. This "worst-case" analysis does not take into account the intervening topography and vegetation between the airport site and the Pioneer Heights/Martin Road/Brown's Ranch Road areas; the fact that residences closer to the airport, such as in Pioneer Heights or the end of Brown's Ranch Road, are further from the East Connector, or the fact that noise levels are attenuated by 12 dB for indoor receptors with windows wide open and 24 dB with windows closed. Therefore, a more realistic "worst case" expectation for the inside of a typical residence on Martin Road or Brown's Ranch Road, with the windows closed, would be on the order of 67 dB, periodically, for a limited time, during daytime hours. (Based on two pieces of heavy equipment operating within 50 feet in direct line of sight of the residence would be 91 dB, minus 24 dB for the windows closed equals 67 dB.)

**18a. Comment Summary: Waters of the U.S., including Wetlands:** The DEIR avoided consideration of practicable alternatives in order to avoid Federal policies and regulations prohibiting fill of wetlands when there is a practicable alternative.

**Response:** The basis for the selection of the range of alternatives discussed in this DEIR has been discussed previously in responses to Comments 3, 6a, 9a and 9b in this Letter L-1, and are discussed further in response to Comment 1 in Letter L-2, following. Alternative 1 minimizes the destruction and modification of wetlands. However, it should be noted that the regulations cited in the comment (Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines; implementing regulations for Executive Order 11990) do not require selection of alternatives solely on the basis of minimizing the area of Waters of the U.S. to be filled. They also consider other environmental effects that the alternative may have, prohibiting discharges only if "There is a practicable alternative to the proposed discharge that would have less adverse effect on the aquatic ecosystem, so long as such alternative does not have other significant adverse environmental consequences." (40 CFR Part 230 Section 404(b)(1); Subpart B Subsection 230.12((3)(i)). Alternative 1 results in fewer impacts to seasonal wetlands but slightly more impacts to East Weaver Creek. Because the maximum loss of

Waters of the U.S. for this entire project, including loss to East Weaver Creek for the vehicle bridge, totals less than 0.5 acre, the project should qualify for a Nationwide Permit, and the 404(b)(1) Guidelines Alternative Analysis should not be required. By providing a “streamlined” permitting process and waiving the Alternative Analysis for projects with minimal discharges, the Corps of Engineers encourages project proponents to minimize discharges of fill material into Waters of the U.S.

**18b. Comment Summary:** The DEIR describes the wetlands as having a “relatively low species richness”, and says no wildlife species were observed using the seasonal wetlands during any of the surveys”, and the wetlands are considered “low quality habitat.” The comment asks when the surveys were taken, and names a list of wildlife observed by local residents. The willows in the area provide habitat for “a number of endangered species”.

**Response:** The wetlands delineations were conducted by a Jones and Stokes Wetland Ecologist on May 3, June 6, and August 7 2001 and May 2 2002. More detail on the Wetlands Delineation was provided in *Delineation of Waters of the United States – Trinity County East Connector Roadway Project* by Jones & Stokes, October 2002. This report was listed in Appendix C of the Draft EIR, and was made available to the public. The Delineation Report is solely a delineation of the boundaries of Waters of the U.S., and does not include wildlife surveys. Wildlife surveys were conducted by Jones & Stokes Wildlife Biologists on March 23, April 19-20, June 15, June 26 and June 30 of 2001. The March 23 survey included a field review by a wildlife biologist from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The results of the wildlife surveys are documented in the DEIR in Section 3.8 *Vegetation, Invasive Species, Wildlife* and Section 3.9 *Threatened and Endangered Species*. Wildlife species observed by these professional wildlife biologists in each habitat type are listed in Section 3.8 of the DEIR under each habitat type. Observed, and potentially present, threatened and endangered species are further discussed in Section 3.9. More detailed information on the wildlife surveys, habitat types and wildlife observations can be found in the *Natural Environment Study Report – Trinity County East Connector Roadway Project* by Jones & Stokes, November 2002. This report was listed in Appendix C of the Draft EIR, and was made available to the public.

**18c. Comment Summary:** The “ultimate conclusion” (to the Waters of the U.S. Section of the DEIR) that since there will be “no net loss” (of waters of the United States), cumulative impacts are insignificant is unsupported because there will be harm to wildlife associated with disturbance of wetlands in the Project area as well as in the areas of other reasonably foreseeable projects, such as the airport.

**Response:** The conclusion on Page 3.7-12 of the DEIR states that any loss of waters of the United States resulting from this Project and other projects would be mitigated by avoiding and minimizing the losses to the extent possible, and then mitigating by replacing or restoring lost waters at a ratio of at least one to one. This conclusion relates to “loss of Waters of the U.S.” as defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (Federal Register Volume 66, No. 154 Page 42099). Impacts on wildlife, resulting from the Project and cumulative impacts of the project and other projects on wildlife are discussed in the following DEIR Section entitled “*Vegetation, Invasive Species, Wildlife.*”

**19a. Comment Summary: Vegetation, Invasive Species, Wildlife:** The species list in Appendix F of the DEIR does not include mammals and amphibians.

**Response:** Comment noted. The wildlife surveys were conducted by Jones & Stokes Wildlife Biologists. The species list in Appendix F includes only bird species. As mentioned above, other species, including mammals and amphibians that were observed during the surveys, or for which suitable habitat is present, are listed in the body of Section 3.19 of the DEIR, under each habitat type.

**19b. Comment Summary:** The DEIR fails to adequately analyze and mitigate the impact to the migration of deer to and from East Weaver Creek, as a result of the road and associated fencing along the mill, and the cumulative effect resulting from these deer, (possibly the same deer) being dislocated from the airport area.

**Response:** The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) has reviewed the *Natural Environment Study* (Jones and Stokes, November 2002) and the Draft EIR, and has declined to comment in writing. This seeming lack of concern about the project's effects on wildlife is itself evidence that DFG has no quarrels with the DEIR's analysis. (See *Gentry v. City of Murrieta* (1995) 36 Cal.App.4th 1359, 1380.) Even so, however, in response to this comment, Trinity County contacted CDFG Region 1 office in Redding to discuss this issue. David Smith, CDFG Wildlife Biologist, and Bob Williams, CDFG CEQA specialist, were asked about the issues of deer fawning in the project area and migrating across the road. Mr. Smith and Mr. Williams both stated that CDFG does not apply a formal designation of "deer fawning areas" or "deer habitat" to a location unless there is an unusually high concentration of deer congregating in that particular location. Mr. Smith stated that the deer would simply adjust their fawning locations in response to the project. Mr. Williams stated that CDFG does not consider the impacts on deer fawning at this location to be significant under CEQA. Neither gentleman was aware of any feasible and effective method of mitigating for deer being hit by cars on this or any road. Mr. Smith indicated that fencing the entire roadway to preclude deer from entering would further disrupt migration patterns and would be undesirable. There may be an increase in the number of deer hit by cars, and this effect is not mitigatable, but CDFG does not consider this a significant impact. See also Response to Comment 5 in Letter L-2.

**20a. Comment Summary: Threatened and Endangered Species:** Mitigation Measures to protect the "numerous threatened or endangered species in the Project's affected area" and to avoid take are only proposed to "obviate the need for issuance of a biological opinion regulating conduct during construction and operation of the project". Any risk of take and "potential violations of the Endangered Species Act" and "substantial County liability therefor" could be avoided if the DEIR considered alternatives such as traffic control, signals, and turn pockets.

**Response:** The County's approach to mitigating impacts on threatened and endangered species is not, as the commenter suggests, designed solely "obviate the need for a biological opinion regulating conduct during construction and operation of the project". Rather, the County strives to avoid any adverse impacts on such species to the extent feasible consistent with the objectives of whatever project is being proposed. For this project, as stated in the DEIR, there is only one Federally listed species present in the Project area, the Coho Salmon,

and one state listed species, the Willow Flycatcher, is potentially present but was not observed during the surveys. Even though there are extensive mitigation measures to avoid “take” of listed species, (and impacts to numerous unlisted species) a Biological Opinion from NOAA Fisheries (formerly National Marine Fisheries Service) will be required for potential effects to the Coho Salmon. Consultation with NOAA Fisheries is ongoing. If NOAA Fisheries determines that “take” of Coho Salmon may result from this project, an Incidental Take Statement will be issued with the Biological Opinion. This will protect the County from being charged with violations of the Endangered Species Act and associated liability.

The selection of the range of alternatives to be studied in this DEIR has been discussed previously in Response to Comments 3, 6a, 9a and 9b in this Letter L-1. The Levee Road Alternative has also been mentioned in previous comments as an alternative. However, as previously stated, construction and use of the Levee Road alternative would have greater adverse impacts on listed aquatic and riparian species than the proposed alignments for the East Connector Roadway would have.

**20b. Comment Summary:** Analysis of cumulative impacts on Coho Salmon in Weaver Creek from the West Connector and Airport projects is inadequate and deferred, because there is no adopted EIR for the West Connector and the previous version of the Airport DPEIR/EA, which contained several unmitigatable impacts, is being “reconsidered”.

**Response:** These two projects are reasonably foreseeable, regardless of the current state of their environmental documents. CEQA generally treats possible future projects as being “reasonably foreseeable” and “probable” if they are the subject of pending environmental review. (*San Franciscans for Reasonable Growth v. City and County of San Francisco* (1984) 151 Cal. App. 3d 61, 76-79). The fact that there is currently no adopted EIR for either project is why analysis of impacts from these projects must be somewhat “deferred” in this EIR. Even so, CEQA requires that the East Connector Project’s contribution to the cumulative impact is disclosed and mitigated or avoided, and this EIR has done so. This EIR is not required, however, to contain an analysis of the impacts of other projects at the same level of detail of the analysis of the East Connector Project itself. The West Connector project would have impacts similar to this project and the mitigation measures would be similar or identical to those in this DEIR. The Airport project’s impact on Threatened and Endangered species would be somewhat different because it would be located in a different habitat, higher in elevation, on steeper slopes and further from the creek. The unmitigatable impacts disclosed in the DPEIR/EA for the Airport project did not include impacts on threatened and endangered species. Feasible mitigation measures were included in that document for threatened and endangered species impacts. All three projects will be subject to the same state, federal and local regulatory requirements, including consultation with NOAA Fisheries resulting in a Biological Opinion, and, if deemed warranted by that agency, an Incidental Take Statement.

**21. Comment Summary: Wild and Scenic Rivers:** The degradation of water quality that is likely to occur during construction, and after construction due to increased impervious surfaces situated next to important tributary drainages, resulting from this and other

proposed projects makes the conclusion that there are no issues relative to the Wild and Scenic Rivers designation of the Trinity River unsupportable. Feasible mitigation measures for this impact should have been proposed.

**Response:** See response to Comment 14a. Feasible mitigation measures are included throughout the DEIR to prevent water quality degradation at the source, long before any pollution reaches the Trinity River. With the exception of the construction of bridges, none of the proposed or anticipated cumulative projects involve construction or increased impervious surfaces “next to important tributary drainages”. The commenter offers no evidence in support of its assumption that water quality degradation of tributaries to Weaver Creek will be significant enough to reach the Trinity River at levels that would adversely affect the Recreational uses for which the Trinity River is designated “Wild and Scenic”. The County is unaware of any such evidence.

**22a. Comment Summary: Parks, Recreational Areas, Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges:**

Potential impact of tourists “missing” the Joss House State Park and Jake Jackson Museum is “downplayed” in the DEIR and feebly avoided by measures such as limited access and signage. The Project will “maroon” the downtown district and cut it off completely. That is the very purpose of the project. This makes the project inconsistent with adopted plans and is a significant impact. The analysis is conclusionary and lacking in support.

**Response:** This socioeconomic impact is not downplayed, but clearly disclosed in the EIR, as quoted in the comment. In the strict sense, as explained at length in the response to Comments 5a, 29 and 32 in this Letter L-1, and Comments 2a and 2b in Letter L-2, CEQA does not require analysis of socioeconomic impacts, nor does it consider them significant, by themselves, under any circumstances. Rather, socioeconomic impacts are only relevant under CEQA where they directly relate to an environmental (i.e. “*physical*”) effect, and thus may be considered in determining whether such physical effect is significant, or where they contribute to the causation of a significant physical change to the environment. Nevertheless, this impact identified by the commenter is disclosed in the document and mitigation is proposed. The mitigation does not, however, involve “limited access”, as suggested in the comment. The downtown district will still be accessible to local traffic, tourists and vehicles passing through. It will not be “marooned” or “cut off completely”. (See also Response to Comment 5a in this Letter L-1.) There will be no physical changes to the existing route of SR 299 as it passes through the downtown area. The analysis, as quoted in the comment, leaves the question open as to “whether the Project will have a positive or negative effect on the number of recreational visitors to the downtown historic district sights”. County staff does not see how this statement can be called “conclusionary”. The comment calls the Project inconsistent with adopted plans because its “very purpose” is to cut off access to the downtown district. The project’s purpose, or objectives, are clearly stated in Section 1.3 of the DEIR. This issue is discussed in the response to Comment 5a. See also Comment 11, which states “There is no inconsistency in not selecting the Project (or, in selection the No-Project Alternative) when the conditions for implementing provisions of the General Plan and other plans do not exist.” The commenter claims General Plan inconsistency does not apply when defending the “No-Project” alternative, but it does apply here. The commenter’s logic suggests that, even though the Project is expressly called for in the Weaverville

Community Plan, the General Plan Circulation Element and the Regional Transportation Plan, actually building the project would somehow violate, or be inconsistent with, those plans.

**22b. Comment Summary:** The section mentions “improved parking” What improved parking is contemplated?

**Response:** The project does not provide new parking. However, if congestion downtown is reduced, parallel parking spaces along SR 299 will become more accessible. If a tourist wants to make an unplanned stop at a roadside attraction, and has to stop and back up on the highway to parallel park, and if there are other vehicles behind him, impatient to get through town, it is quite possible that tourist will decide not to stop. The increased ability of tourists to park along SR 299 might actually lead to increased sales in downtown Weaverville, at least with respect to those tourists who are prone to stop on impulse upon seeing an appealing shop or business. These are exactly the customers that the downtown businesses are concerned about losing if an alternative to passing through downtown is provided.

**23a. Comment Summary: Land Use, Planning and Growth:** Without updating the General Plan there are no clear objectives, criteria and procedures for evaluation of projects or the preparation of EIRs that affect land use decisions. The DEIR has not indicated such objectives, criteria and procedures, because it cannot.

**Response:** The DEIR cites the applicable goals, objectives and policies from the current County General Plan elements in each impact section. This project, and the EIR for this project, does not “affect land use decisions”. Land uses along, and in the vicinity of, the proposed new roadway are already designated and will not change, except for the possible rezoning of a parcel owned by the mill at the end of Martin Road from Industrial to Residential, making it more consistent with adjacent existing land uses. See also responses to Comments 5b in this Letter L-1, and the following Comments 23b and 23c.

**23b. Comment Summary:** Table 3.14-2 lists parcels within the environmental study limits, but these limits are not disclosed. The list omits parcels that will reasonably be affected by the Project during construction and after completion, including the one large agricultural parcel in Weaverville, and a large undeveloped parcel near the Golden Age Center. The DEIR should include a drawing of the study area, and an explanation of why it is limited so.

**Response:** The Environmental Study Limits are shown on Figures 1-3, 3.7-1 and 3.8-1. The term refers to the area within which direct effects from the project can be expected, such as disturbance of vegetation, habitat, wildlife and cultural resources. The list includes parcels that may be directly affected by right-of-way take, or parcels immediately adjacent to the proposed right-of-way that have residences or other uses that may be affected. Parcel 024-410-0700 is listed on the Table, but is erroneously labeled as Rural Residential instead of Agricultural. This has been corrected in the Final EIR. Impacts on agricultural use are discussed in the following Section 3.15, *Farmlands/Agricultural Lands*, which concludes that agricultural use of these parcels will not be affected. The OPTC did not comment on Section 3.15. Temporary construction impacts on nearby land uses are discussed in the noise, visual and air quality sections. However, these temporary affects are not considered impacts on permanent land uses or Land Use designations. The large parcel near the Senior Center is

currently undeveloped, so affects on its current Land Use are not considered significant. The issues associated with future land uses on this property resulting from the East Connector are discussed below in response to Comment 26.

**23c. Comment Summary:** Consistency with the Land Use Element is a finding that cannot be made, because the land use element does not contemplate a connector road of any type. The fact that this project is designed to address circulation problems that are identified in the land use element is not a basis for a finding of consistency.

**Response:** Nothing in the Planning and Zoning Law requires the County to make a finding that a proposed project is expressly contemplated in each statutorily mandated element of its General Plan. Although the law requires the correlation of land use and circulation elements (Gov. Code, Sect. 65302. subd. (b)), it is entirely permissible to approve a project shown in a Circulation Element without having to make a finding that the project is also “consistent” with the land use element. “Consistency” determinations required by statute look to general plans as integrated collections of elements, not as individual elements viewed separately. Here, notably, the pertinent portion of the General Plan affecting land use in Weaverville is the Weaverville Community Plan, which expressly contemplates an Eastern Connector. Furthermore, there is much in the more generic Land Use Element of the overall General Plan that supports the project. For example, the DEIR cites a policy from the Land Use Element of the General Plan, under Weaverville Findings and Policies, that states: “Improve parking and circulation in the downtown area to adequately accommodate commercial growth.” As the comment states, this project is designed to address this policy. A General Plan is meant to be general, and a Land Use Element for the entire County would not have every inch of the County mapped in detail, showing every location for everything that might possibly be constructed. It is the role of the Community Plan to provide more detail for a specific community, and the Weaverville Community Plan does “contemplate a connector road” in this location. In addition, a Land Use Element assigns zoning and land use designations, and Roads are not considered either zoning or land use designations. A land use element in a typical general plan would not necessarily include the exact location of a proposed roadway.

**24. Comment Summary:** The Weaverville Community Plan merely mentions a connector as a last resort to be considered if warranted by growth. No significant growth, or even negative growth has occurred in the County in the last decade or more since the Community Plan was adopted.

**Response:** The Weaverville Community Plan does not “merely mention a connector as a last resort”. It mentions seven “connectors” and recommends as Objective 1.1 of Goal #1 of the Transportation Section to “Improve the community’s circulation by implementation of the various roadway improvements identified on Exhibit T-2” (a map showing seven roads called “connectors”, two road extensions and a “West Weaver Bypass”). The East Connector proposed as the subject of this EIR is a combination of two of the “potential new roads” shown on Exhibit T-2 of the Weaverville Community Plan, namely the “Brown’s Ranch/Airport Connector” and the “Martin Road/Brown’s Ranch Road Connector”. Perhaps the commenter is confused by Objective 1.2, which speaks of an “alternate Route around the

downtown area in the future”. This discussion is in reference to the West Weaver Bypass, a State Highway with no connections to any local streets.

Negative growth has occurred County-wide, but Weaverville continues to grow. During the period from 1990 to 2000 the population of Weaverville grew at an average rate of one half of one percent per year. This is only one-half of one percent less than the 1% annual growth rate on which the need for this project is based (WBTC Page 51). The key fact is that Weaverville has been growing and is expected to continue to grow, increasing the need for a facility (the East Connector) that would provide traffic benefits even if the population of Weaverville remained stagnant for the indefinite future.

**25. Comment Summary:** The chronology of planning events makes it clear the Regional Transportation Plan and Circulation Element of the General Plan were designed to support this Project which was already selected and earmarked for funding.

**Response:** See Response to Comment 4c.

**26. Comment Summary:** Growth Inducement: The Project would bring access to two areas immediately adjacent to the developed residential areas; Pioneer Heights area and the area adjacent to the Golden Age Center. By bringing a road to these areas where none has existed, the Project removes a barrier to development thus fostering growth.

**Response:** Pioneer Heights was addressed in the DEIR on Page 3.14-17. The only remaining area that has not been developed in Pioneer Heights is beyond the east end of Pioneer Lane. This area is zoned for Residential use, with a one-half acre minimum parcel size. Development in this area is constrained by the expense of bringing lateral lines to the existing main sewer and water lines on Martin Road, and the expense of extending a private road from the east end of Pioneer Lane into the area. The extension of Pioneer Lane proposed as part of this project is to the west, across Martin Road and down to the East Connector. This extension will not facilitate access to the area east of Pioneer Lane, or remove any barriers to development of this area.

The other area, adjacent to the Golden Age Center, consists of three adjacent parcels (APN 024-400-03 & 04 and 024-370-06) totaling 105 acres, zoned Residential one-half acre minimum, presently all in the same ownership and all undeveloped. Only one of these three, a 20-acre parcel, would front near the East Connector. A private road would have to be built through this 20-acre parcel to access the other two parcels. As stated in the DEIR, Land Use Mitigation 4, “Future development along the East Connector shall only be allowed a single encroachment point for any entire development plan (subdivision, industrial park, etc.) Internal collector roads will be required for any development proposed along this route, connecting to a single encroachment point on the East Connector.” The Alternative 1 alignment would pass approximately 180 feet from the nearest property line. The Alternative 2 alignment would pass approximately 40 feet from the nearest property line. Under existing conditions, a developer would have to extend a road approximately 350 feet through County property to Brown’s Ranch Road. There is already a dirt/rock driveway from Brown’s Ranch Road to the Pruett Logging Yard (APN 024-400-02), with a dirt driveway off of it leading to the undeveloped parcels. Like Pioneer Heights, development is also constrained

by the expense of extending laterals to the existing water main on Brown's Ranch Road. Sewer is not available in this area, which precludes rezoning to a smaller minimum parcel size. Even if the Alternative 2 alignment was built, bringing the public road only 40 feet from the property line, the situation would be similar to the existing situation east of Pioneer Lane. A public road is adjacent to the property, but the developer would bear significant expense to extend a private road into this large undeveloped area in steep terrain. The savings of having to build a private road that is 310 or 70 feet shorter will probably not be a single deciding factor that leads to development of this acreage.

**27. Comment Summary:** The conclusion that the East Connector will not cause the mill to shut down is unsupported. The DEIR ignores the possible purchase and rezoning of a portion of the existing industrial land occupied by the mill as a growth-generating result. Although the DEIR recognizes this it dismisses the resulting growth-inducing impact because it would be consistent with adjacent land uses. This conclusion is false because the mill's occupation of that property is a limiting factor to development. Removing proximity of the mill, causing the mill to retreat from incompatible residential areas makes development of the surrounding residential areas more attractive.

**Response:** The County has discussed this proposal with the owner and manager of the mill, and these discussions are the basis for the statement that the Project will not cause the mill to shut down. (See also Response to Comment 5a in this Letter L-1.) The potential rezone of a 2 acre parcel, above the mill at the end of Martin Road, that is owned by the mill and not occupied, from Industrial to Residential ½ acre minimum is disclosed in the Project Description, analyzed in all the applicable impact chapters where impacts from the resulting development may occur, and is mentioned in the Growth Inducement Section of the DEIR, on Page 3.14-18. The DEIR states that "This aspect of the project would be directly growth inducing.", but that "the new zoning would be consistent with adjacent land uses and zoning densities." The comment first says this possibility is "ignored" and in the next sentence cites where it is addressed. The DEIR discloses the impact and determines it is not a significant environmental effect.

The mill is not currently occupying the property in question. It is possible the commenter is again confused between this separate parcel (APN 024-210-10) above the mill at the end of Martin Road, and the portion of the 110-acre parcel occupied by the mill (APN 024-210-08) that will be severed from the mill operational area by the roadway. (See Comment 7) This area will probably be purchased by the County, along with the road right-of-way, and dedicated to open space uses such as wetlands mitigation and a trail.

The new roadway will stand between the mill and nearby residential uses at the top of the bluff. With the proposed vegetation screening, the mill may, in affect, "retreat from incompatible existing residential areas". The idea that this may "make development of the surrounding residential areas more attractive" is in conflict with previous comments in this same letter that indicate that residential uses in this area will be adversely affected by the Project.

**28. Comment Summary:** Other possible alternatives not considered in the DEIR, such as a traffic cop, a signal, or turn pockets on SR 299, would not have the same growth-inducing impacts.

**Response:** This comment has been responded to previously. See response to Comments: Letter L-2 – Comment 1; and this Letter L-1 - Comments 3, 6a, 8 and 9.

**29. Comment Summary: Social, Economic, Community Impacts:** The DEIR misconstrues the importance of the statement regarding how CEQA treats socioeconomic affects. Social and economic effects may result in a finding of a significant environmental effect when tied to a Project-induced physical change in the environment even if this physical change in itself is not significant.

**Response:** CEQA Guidelines, Section 15131(b) states: “Economic or social effects of a project may be used to determine the significance of physical changes caused by the project. For example, if the construction of a new freeway or rail line divides an existing community, the construction would be the physical change, but the social effect on the community would be the basis for determining that the effect would be significant. As an additional example, if the construction of a road and the resulting increase in noise in an area disturbed existing religious practices in the area, the disturbance of the religious practices could be used to determine that the construction and use of the road and the resulting noise would be significant effects on the environment. The religious practices would need to be analyzed only to the extent to show that the increase in traffic and noise would conflict with the religious practices. Where an EIR uses economic or social effects to determine that a physical change is significant, the EIR shall explain the reason for determining that the effect is significant.”

There is an even better example within this DEIR. The construction of a curb along Glen Road across the Nugget Lane access would not, in itself, be a “significant physical change to the environment”. However, in view of the change in access to the businesses on Nugget Lane, and the potential economic effects, this minor physical change is considered significant. See Page 3.16-9, Community Impact – 1 “Commercial enterprises along Nugget Lane may lose business due to changes in access from Glen Road to Nugget Lane; Significance – Potentially significant, but mitigated. Community Impact 2 on Page 3.16-13, also calls the loss of sales revenues from traffic diverted away from the SR 299, SR 3 and downtown business districts in Weaverville “Potentially significant, but mitigated.” The CEQA guidelines state (above) that the socioeconomic issue (the “religious practices”) need only be analyzed to the extent to show that the physical change is significant. The DEIR complies with CEQA in this respect.

Nothing in CEQA can be interpreted to require the mitigation of purely economic effects. Rather, CEQA is concerned with economic effects solely as they relate to physical effects, which are to be the focus of mitigation. This approach is evident from the full text of the relevant CEQA Guidelines section --- 15064, subdivision (e). It reads as follows: “Economic and social changes resulting from a project shall not be treated as significant effects on the environment. Economic or social changes *may* be used, however, to determine that a physical change shall be regarded as a significant effect on the environment. Where a

physical change is caused by economic or social effects of a project, the physical change may be regarded as a significant effect in the same manner as any other physical change resulting from the project. Alternatively, economic and social effects of a physical change may be used to determine that the physical change is a significant effect on the environment. If the physical change causes adverse economic or social effects on people, those adverse effects *may* be used as a factor in determining whether the physical change is significant.” (Emphasis added.)

CEQA Guidelines section 15358, which defines “effects,” states emphatically that “[e]ffects analyzed under CEQA must be related to a *physical* change.” (Emphasis added.) As the Guidelines state, the economic changes to the downtown businesses are not treated as significant effects under CEQA. If the downtown businesses are economically affected, then that may be – but need not be – a reason to characterize as “significant” the “physical change” that caused the economic effect (i.e., construction and operation of the East Connector). That construction and operation of the East Connector will cause certain significant physical effects is not in question. The question of whether the effects on the downtown businesses is a significant adverse impact is not a CEQA question, because this is not a physical effect on the environment.

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15131, subdivision (b), is also on point. It states: “Economic or social effects of a project may be used to determine the significance of physical changes caused by the project. For example, if the construction of a new freeway or rail line divides an existing community, the construction would be the physical change, but the social effect on the community would be the basis for determining that the effect would be significant. As an additional example, if the construction of a road and the resulting increase in noise in an area disturbed existing religious practices in the area, the disturbance of the religious practices could be used to determine that the construction and use of the road and the resulting noise would be significant effects on the environment. The religious practices would need to be analyzed only to the extent to show that the increase in traffic and noise would conflict with the religious practices. Where an EIR uses economic or social effects to determine that a physical change is significant, the EIR shall explain the reason for determining that the effect is significant.”

Furthermore, the fact that a project subject to CEQA might cause adverse effects to certain businesses does not give rise to any presumption of any attendant physical effect resulting from such economic effects. Thus, an EIR for such a project need not consider the prospect of such an indirect physical change absent actual substantial evidence that the project’s economic effects “are reasonably likely to result in physical change in the environment.” (*Friends of Davis v. City of Davis* (2000) 83 Cal.App.4th 1004, 1020.)

The CEQA guidelines state (above) that the socioeconomic issue (the “religious practices”) need only be analyzed to the extent to show that the physical change is significant. Community Impact 2 on Page 3.16-13 analyzes the loss of sales revenues from traffic diverted away from the SR 299, SR 3 and downtown business districts in Weaverville and calls it “Potentially significant, but mitigated.” As stated at the beginning of Section 3.16, *Community Impacts*, on

Page 3.16-1, “Some of the affects analyzed in this section, such as fiscal effects and taxable sales cannot be reasonably tied to a physical change in the environment. Therefore their analysis is not required by CEQA, and these types of impacts are not considered significant under CEQA. However, the social and economic effects of the project are of concern to the community. They are discussed here in the interest of disclosure, for use by County decision makers, so that the social and economic consequences of their decisions will be fully understood.” The “significance statement” on Page 3.16-13 is made in the interest of public disclosure, and as a lead-in to the proposed mitigation, but this significance finding and associated mitigation are not required under CEQA.

**30. Comment Summary:** The DEIR “bends over backwards” to demonstrate that the Project would result in “overall improvements in traffic operations.”

**Response:** The text in the DEIR that this comment refers to describes both the beneficial and detrimental changes in access to various areas of Weaverville that will result from the Project (DEIR Page 3.16-8).

**31. Comment Summary:** The representations in the DEIR that the Project has safety benefits outweighing its other socio-economic effects are a blatant effort to skew the analysis in favor of the Project.

**Response:** A careful and objective review of Section 3.16 in general, and the Safety and Efficiency section on Page 3.16-11, reveals no “representations” that the safety benefits outweigh the other socio-economic effects. Both the positive and negative socio-economic effects are disclosed objectively, with no statements indicating which “outweigh” the others. The decision as to whether the project’s various perceived benefits – including those related to safety and congestion relief – outweigh its environmental impacts will lie with the Board of Supervisors, the final decision-maker for the project. Notably, however, the Board may not be called upon to adopt a formal “statement of overriding considerations” because all of the significant effects of the project alternatives can be mitigated to less than significant levels by mitigation measures recommended in the EIR. (See CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15093). The job of County staff, consistent with CEQA, is simply to provide objective information regarding the nature and extent of the project’s environmental impacts – The weighing and balancing of policy considerations is the Board’s job.

**32. Comment Summary:** The assumption that Community Mitigation 3, “The County would not place signs directing traffic to Trinity Lake or Trinity Alps via the East Connector and would discourage Caltrans from doing so” will adequately mitigate for loss of sales caused by diverting traffic away from the downtown area is unfounded. People will find out that “a way around town exists.”

**Response:** As mentioned in Response to Comment 29 in this Letter L-1, nothing in CEQA can be interpreted to require the mitigation of purely economic effects.

Frequent travelers and tourists making Trinity Lake and its surrounding areas their destination may soon discover the East Connector is a short-cut and a way to avoid the congestion of driving through downtown. Most of these return tourists will likely already be familiar with the attractions and amenities offered in downtown Weaverville. If they desire

to visit the shops and services downtown, there will be no roadblocks or physical changes to the current accessibility to prevent their patronage. In fact, if the traffic flow through the downtown area is reduced as a result of the East Connector, they might find driving, walking and parallel parking in the area less daunting. However, it is also likely that some of these tourists that make the north lake area their destination have all their provisions, and therefore would have no reason to stop at the businesses in downtown. This would be true even if they have no alternative but to drive through the downtown area. (See also Response to Comment 22b in this Letter L-1). The WBTCs saw a reduction in traffic congestion as a way of making the downtown area more attractive. (WBTCs Page 108; Evaluation Criteria includes "Improvement in historic downtown from traffic reductions") .

**33. Comment Summary: Traffic and Transportation:** The need for the East connector was based on traffic growth projections that are not valid. Caltrans data indicates that daily traffic on SR 299 at Washington Street was 12,300 in 1990, 12,700 in 1995, and 12,200 in 1999. Only 1,500 vehicles out of 12,300 represented through traffic, the balance was local traffic.

**Response:** The comment illustrates a good point: establishing a trend based on two end points can result in widely varying conclusions depending on the end points one selects. Had the study only looked at 1990 to 1995, it would show an increasing trend; if only 1995 to 1999 were viewed, a decrease would be indicated. Going back to the 1989 Nelson/Nygaard study, daily traffic on SR 299 at Washington Street in 1987 was 8,200, so, in 12 years from 1987 to 1999 through traffic increased by 4,000 vehicles.

The comment also points out that the vast majority of the traffic on SR 299 at Washington Street is local traffic. This is true, and this fact was recognized by the Citizen's Advisory Committee in preparing the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCs). The main reason for this phenomenon is the lack of through streets in Weaverville, which requires almost all vehicle trips in the area to travel on the state highway system, even to drive to the next block. That is why one of the project objectives stated in Section 1.3 of the DEIR is to "reduce the dependency on SR 299 for local travel within the Weaverville historic district." (See also Comment 2 in Letter L-8.)

**34. Comment Summary:** The Citizens Advisory Committee that "examined" the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCs) recommended against all proposed bypasses and suggested alternatives to them that the County has apparently decided to ignore. The reasons for the alternatives recommended by the Committee were based on a "reduced" population growth projected for the period of 1989 to 2000. Even this reduced projection did not materialize. The actual population of Weaverville in 19[8]9 was 3,412, the project[ed] increase for 2000 was 4,484, over 31%. The actual growth occurred at one half of one percent during this period, not the inflated 2.75 percent annual growth rate used by the Planning Department "in the underlying transportation plans and Project studies." *Note: nearly identical Comments 3a and 3b in Letter L-8 were used to decipher the reference year "1989" that was obscured by a typographic error in this comment.*

**Response:** The Citizens Advisory Committee did more than “examine” the WBTCs, they actively participated in its development, including its conclusions and recommendations. The word “bypass” in the study refers to an alternate route for State Highway 299, operated by Caltrans as a State Highway, around the west side of Weaverville, with overpasses crossing Mill Street and Oregon Street and no connection to Glen Road or Mountain View Street. A SR 299 Highway Bypass from the east end of Weaverville to the west end of Weaverville along the east side was not considered in the WBTCs. The WBTCs identified the East Connector as the best alternative to a bypass, calling it “most effective immediate means of addressing traffic congestion”. The County is not “ignoring” the other projects proposed in the WBTCs. This comment is responded to in detail in the response to Comment 4c in this letter. The East Connector is one of several projects proposed as an alternative to “all proposed bypasses”. Once again, the “bypasses” referred to in the WBTCs were State Highway facilities (rerouting of SR 299) with no connections to local streets. The word “bypass” does not refer to this or other suggested “Connector” routes, and the WBTCs did not recommend against all “Connector” routes.

This comment states correctly that the Weaverville Basin Traffic Study used population growth rate that was “reduced” from the rate used in the previous *Long Range Traffic Study* prepared by Consultants Nelson/Nygaard in 1989, and carried forward into the Weaverville Community Plan in 1990. Yet, the comment goes on to cite the exact same numbers and years that were used in those previous studies, saying that the 2.75% annual growth factor was used for the “underlying transportation plans and Project studies”. The WBTCs did not use a projection of 2.75% per year from 1989 to 2000. It used a growth projection of 1% per year from 1998 to 2020. The traffic projections generated in the WBTCs, using the 1% annual growth factor, were used in the Project Study Report for the East Connector, the DEIR for the East Connector, the Circulation Element of the General Plan, the Regional Transportation Plan, the Project Study Report for the West Connector, and the Draft Program EIR for the Weaverville Airport Relocation Project. (See also Comments #3a. and 3b. in Letter L-8).

**35. Comment Summary:** The DEIR should be revised to take into account the “actual growth projections”, to scale down the Project to a “suitable size” considering the limited growth is based on these “actual projections” and to offer meaningful alternatives. In short, this entire chapter needs to be discarded and a new analysis, supported by accurate current studies and projections, undertaken.

**Response:** There is nothing wrong with the traffic analysis in Section 3.18 of the DEIR, which is based on the professional judgement of expert traffic engineers. The County is entitled to rely on the professional judgement of trained experts. Some criticism of this analysis, as well as the growth projections on which it is based, has come from individuals who have not demonstrated that they have any particular expertise or training in traffic modeling or population growth forecasting. These individuals’ disagreement appears to be the result of a misunderstanding of what those growth projection assumptions actually are. Several commenters apparently think an annual growth factor of 2.75% was used, when the annual growth factor actually used was 1%.

The comment demands that “actual growth projections” be used. Projections are an educated (at best) guess as to what the future will bring. No one knows what the “actual” growth figures are until after they happen, and then they are no longer “projections”. Projections into the future are required for planning purposes. They cannot be avoided, and, by their nature, are somewhat speculative. Planners must use their best professional judgment based on history, reasonably foreseeable future conditions and expert opinion. As the response to Letter L-8 states, assuming that the growth rate for the next 20 years will be identical to the growth rate for the past 10 years (1/2 percent) may prove to be no more accurate an assumption than the 1% used for Section 3.18 of the DEIR and all of the underlying studies. The traffic section of the East Connector DEIR is based on accurate (correctly done, based on reasonable assumptions), current (four years old, projecting data 20 years ahead of the Notice of Preparation for this project) studies and projections . There is no reason to discard this section of the DEIR.

**36. Comment Summary: Significant, Unavoidable Adverse Impacts:** The DEIR fails to identify any significant and unavoidable adverse affects. This conclusion is unwarranted in the light of these comments.

**Response:** None of the comments on the draft EIR have revealed any impacts that are unavoidable, irreversible and significant, as analyzed in this Final EIR. The conclusion of the EIR still stands. There are no significant unavoidable adverse impacts that will result from this proposed project.

**37. Comment Summary:** “Because of the “serious deficiencies” outlined in these comments, OPTC respectfully requests that the Planning Commission recommend the DEIR be rejected as inadequate, and the Project be dropped from further consideration “under” such time as the General Plan and “related documents” are subjected to meaningful comprehensive review, and the need for such Projects is better understood.”

**Response:** Staff does not concur with this recommendation. First of all, staff and Legal Counsel believe that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA. Secondly, from its experience working with projects funded by the State Transportation Improvement Program, Staff is aware that to suspend this project indefinitely without making a formal decision could have serious fiscal impacts on the County. The Federal Highway Administration and California Transportation Commission have “timely use of funds” policies that do not condone projects being suspended indefinitely. It is possible that if no action or decision occurs on this project for 10 years after the first funds were allocated (\$250,000 was allocated for the environmental phase in May 2000), the County may have to pay back that allocation. This does not coerce the County to implement the project. If the Board of Supervisors decides the East Connector Roadway Project should not be built in the immediately foreseeable future, they should certify the EIR and select the No Project Alternative. Then there is no risk to the County of having to pay back the money spent on the Environmental Phase, and the money programmed for design, right-of-way and construction can be reprogrammed to other projects on the County road system or the State Highway System in Trinity County.

## **L-2: COLLEEN O’SULLIVAN**

**1. Comment Summary: Reasonable Range of Alternatives:** The DEIR should contain a “reasonable range of alternatives” including using the Levee Road as the “Eastside Connector” or placing one or more traffic signals along SR 299. The Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCs) found Levee road would provide all the same benefits as the East Connector, with lower cost, and no need for an extensive discussion of growth-inducing impacts. The WBTCs found that signals would improve Levels of Service of key intersections.

**Response:** The Levee Road Connector alternative described in the WBTCs ran along Levee Road to Brown’s Ranch Road, then followed the same alignment as the East Connector Alternative 1 described in this DEIR. The Citizens Advisory Committee for the WBTCs, in its Evaluation of Alternatives, did identify the same benefits from Levee Road as from the East Connector, and determined that the Levee Road rated slightly higher in the Analysis matrix. However, the Committee, with citizen input, selected the East Connector, and proposed improving Levee Road as a “Parkway” as described in the Recommended Plan, on Page 173, as follows: “Located along the banks of East Weaver Creek, Levee Road is an attractive bicycle and pedestrian corridor, as evidenced by the existing popularity of this corridor for these purposes. While there is a need for continued vehicular use along this corridor (to service existing properties), the construction of the new East Roadway will eliminate any future need for this corridor to carry significant traffic volumes. Putting these uses together, it is recommended that Levee Road be improved as a “parkway,” with a focus on providing an attractive facility for pedestrians, cyclists, and potentially equestrians”. In other words, the Levee Road, as conceived by the Citizens Advisory Committee, is not a true “alternative” to the East Connector, but a complementary, separate project serving a different, if related, need.

Given the prior planning decisions of both the Board of Supervisors, in the 1990 Weaverville Community Plan and the 2002 Circulation Element of the County General Plan, and the Trinity County Transportation Commission in the 2001 Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan, the County, as lead agency for this project-level EIR, need not consider alternatives that fail to implement those decisions. In each of those previously approved and still-effective plans, decision-makers have identified the need for an East Connector based on policy objectives formulated and considered in connection with the adoption of those plans. The Levee Road would not satisfy the policy objectives calling for an East Connector as a means of reducing vehicular motor traffic on Highway 299. Although the inclusion of the mandatory “No Project Alternative” gives County decision-makers a chance to abandon their prior planning decisions favoring an East Connector, this EIR appropriately focuses on the question of how best to carry out those objectives through formulating a design that minimizes environmental impacts while still meeting project objectives consistent with approved plans. Design issues involve locational issues to a degree, but do not involve second-guessing the fundamental need for an East Connector in approximately the location identified in previously approved planning documents.

The California Supreme Court has emphasized that, where a particular land use or project is consistent with, or mandated by, an approved general plan, a project-specific EIR should not

normally be a vehicle for revisiting the appropriateness of the land use or project type in question. (See *Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 553, 573 (“*Goleta II*”); see also CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6., subd. (f)(1) (“general plan consistency” is a factor to consider in determining feasibility of alternatives for possible inclusion in an EIR).) Here, the County Board of Supervisors has already identified the need for an East Connector, and this EIR is the vehicle for determining *how*, and not *whether*, to build such a facility.

The Citizens Advisory Committee, with public input, has recommended a plan consisting of 14 projects to be carried forward by Trinity County. The East Connector Project, as proposed, carries three of these recommended projects forward: The “East Roadway”, the traffic signal at SR 299/Glen Road and the bicycle/pedestrian bridge across East Weaver Creek. It also partially implements a forth, development of Levee Road as a Parkway. The County, in preparing this EIR, has given weight to the deliberations conducted by, and conclusions reached by, the Citizens Advisory Committee and traffic consultants Leigh, Scott and Cleary. It is reasonable for the County to carry forward only those alternatives that the Committee and its Consultants found to be most viable, and not to examine in detail each and every option considered by the Committee. According to CEQA case law, “the discussion of alternatives need not be exhaustive, and the requirement as to the discussion of alternatives is subject to a construction of reasonableness.” (*Residents Ad Hoc Stadium Committee v. Board of Trustees* (1979) 89 Cal.App.3d 274, 286.) The CEQA Guidelines add that “the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The range of feasible alternatives shall be selected and discussed in a manner to foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making.” (CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (f); see also *Rio Vista Farm Bureau Center v. County of Solano* (1992) 5 Cal.App.4th 351, 376 (“CEQA does not require analysis of every imaginable alternative or mitigation measure; its concern is with feasible means of reducing environmental effects”); *City of Rancho Palos Verdes v. City Council* (1976) 59 Cal.App.3d 869, 892 (CEQA “does not require that every conceivable alternative be stated in the [EIR] nor that the alternatives that are stated be described in every possible detail”; “[w]hat is required is that the EIR give reasonable consideration to alternatives in light of the nature of the project”).)

Although rated highly in the WBTCs, the Levee Road, upon further review in light of this environmental impact analysis for the East Connector has similar impacts and would not meet all of the project objectives. These considerations, in addition to those discussed above, provide additional reasons why a Levee Road alternative that would develop Levee Road as a County arterial. was not considered as a formal alternative in this EIR. The impacts on the downtown businesses would be identical, as both projects would be equally effective in providing an alternative to travel on SR 299. The Levee Road would be immediately adjacent to East Weaver Creek for most of its length, causing greater potential impacts to water quality, riparian vegetation, and wildlife, including listed Coho salmon. As described in the WBTCs, Levee Road would continue north of Brown’s Ranch Road on the same alignment as Alternative 1 of the East Connector, having the same impacts on land uses on the north side of Brown’s Ranch Road, including the Senior Center, as the East Connector Alternative 1. The WBTCs envisioned more impacts to Brown’s Ranch Road from this alternative than from the East Connector. The

only difference would be it would be farther away from certain residences on the south side of Brown's Ranch Road, and on Martin Road.

The existing Levee Road is a prescriptive public access across private properties. It is not a County Road. To make it a County arterial, right-of-way would have to be acquired, mostly from the Trinity River Lumber Mill. The Connector would be classified as an arterial roadway, by definition. The road would have to be upgraded and widened to County public road standards, which are the federal AASHTO standards for an arterial (same standard as the East Connector, with two 12 foot lanes and two 6 to 8 foot shoulders). The existing road would therefore have to be widened and completely rebuilt. It would also have to be wide enough to accommodate vehicles to maintain the Levee, as well as through traffic. There would not be sufficient width to accommodate a Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail separate from the roadway, unless there was significantly more right of way taken from areas of the mill that are developed and in active use.

Traffic would not be diverted from the section of SR 299 with the highest average daily traffic in the Weaverville Basin, between Washington Street and Glen Road. There is an existing route from SR 3 via Washington Street to Lowden Lane to Weaver Street that discharges vehicles to SR 299 across East Weaver Creek from where the Levee Road would discharge them. Therefore the Levee Road would not reduce congestion on SR 299 any better than what is already available. The Levee Road would not be as effective for emergency vehicle access and evacuation, particularly in the event of a flood, because the levee must be kept available to County equipment to monitor and repair the levee, and this may require closing the levee road to through traffic.

In short, creating a County arterial roadway on the Levee Road alignment is not environmentally superior to the alternatives already included in the EIR. Thus, nothing in CEQA suggests that, in order to be legally sufficient, the EIR must be modified to include such an alternative. (See *Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California* (1988) 47 Cal.3d 376, 403 (“*Laurel Heights I*”) (“alternatives and mitigation measures have the same function—diminishing or avoiding adverse environmental effects”; “alternatives are a type of mitigation”); *Goleta II, supra*, 52 Cal.3d at pp. 564, 566 (“[t]he core of an EIR is the mitigation and alternatives sections”; alternatives should “offer substantial environmental advantages over the project proposal”); CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (a) (“[a]n EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, or to the location of the project, that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project”) (emphasis added).)

Nor is the placement of traffic signals at a location other than at Glen Road/SR 299 a reasonable alternative. Such an alternative was not recommended in the Recommended Circulation Plan Section of the WBTCs. Under the second recommendation of the plan: *Construct a Traffic Signal at the SR 299/Glen Road Intersection*, (Pages 168-169), the WBTCs states, “The recommendation to install Trinity County’s first traffic signal is not made lightly. It is understood that, to a degree, a traffic signal impacts the small-town quality of the community. However, in comparison with the ongoing increases in traffic congestion absent a signal, this

traffic signal is considered to be an unfortunate necessity. Placing this signal along the “straight stretch” (which already has a relatively suburban visual quality) is also seen as less of an impact than a traffic signal near the historic district. By helping to reduce left-turn volumes at SR 3 and Washington Street, moreover, the construction of a traffic signal at Glen Street will delay or eliminate the need for a traffic signal at these other, more sensitive, locations.” (This last sentence apparently assumes that the East Connector would also be built.)

In addition, traffic signals in or near the historic district are discouraged by the Circulation Element of the General Plan, which contains the following Policy:

“Policy 1.16.A. Discourage the use of traffic signals in or near designated historic areas or similar areas of local significance.”

Even if the East Connector was not built, placing a signal at Glen Road and SR 299 would still impact access to businesses on Nugget Lane. The elimination of the movement from Nugget Lane to Glen Road is necessitated by the signal, and resulting queues backing up on Glen Road.

A signal at Glen Road alone may be too far away from the Washington Street or SR 3 intersections with SR 299 to provide create any beneficial gaps, or “pulsing” at these intersections. Even if the signal provided some breaks in the westbound traffic stream at these intersections, no gap in the eastbound stream would be provided. The comment is correct in stating that more than one signal would probably be needed.

The DEIR was prepared to study the environmental impacts of the East Connector Roadway, as described in the WBTCs. This is the project that was programmed in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for funding, following the recommendations of the WBTCs, and the direction of the Trinity County Transportation Commission. A detailed study of signalization along the SR 299 corridor, and the implementation of such a study, is not part of this project.

**2a. Comment Summary: Economic/Social Impacts:** The CEQA Guidelines state that if a physical change causes adverse economic or social effects on people, those adverse effects may be used as a factor in determining whether the physical change is significant. The economic impacts to downtown Weaverville are not adequately mitigated.

**Response:** Nothing in CEQA can be interpreted to require the mitigation of purely economic effects. Rather, CEQA is concerned with economic effects solely as they relate to physical effects, which are to be the focus of mitigation. This approach is evident from the full text of the relevant CEQA Guidelines section --- 15064, subdivision (e). It reads as follows:

“Economic and social changes resulting from a project shall not be treated as significant effects on the environment. Economic or social changes *may* be used, however, to determine that a physical change shall be regarded as a significant effect on the environment. Where a physical change is caused by economic or social effects of a project, the physical change may be regarded as a significant effect in the same manner as any other physical change resulting from the project. Alternatively, economic and social effects of a physical change may be used to determine that the physical change is a significant effect on the environment. If the physical change causes adverse economic or social effects on people, those adverse effects

*may* be used as a factor in determining whether the physical change is significant.”  
(Emphasis added.)

CEQA Guidelines section 15358, which defines “effects,” states emphatically that “[e]ffects analyzed under CEQA must be related to a *physical* change.” (Emphasis added.) As the Guidelines state, the economic changes to the downtown businesses are not treated as significant effects under CEQA. If the downtown businesses are economically affected, then that may be – but need not be – a reason to characterize as “significant” the “physical change” that caused the economic effect (i.e., construction and operation of the East Connector). That construction and operation of the East Connector will cause certain significant physical effects is not in question. The question of whether the effects on the downtown businesses is a significant adverse impact is not a CEQA question, because this is not a physical effect on the environment.

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15131, subdivision (b), is also on point. It states: “Economic or social effects of a project may be used to determine the significance of physical changes caused by the project. For example, if the construction of a new freeway or rail line divides an existing community, the construction would be the physical change, but the social effect on the community would be the basis for determining that the effect would be significant. As an additional example, if the construction of a road and the resulting increase in noise in an area disturbed existing religious practices in the area, the disturbance of the religious practices could be used to determine that the construction and use of the road and the resulting noise would be significant effects on the environment. The religious practices would need to be analyzed only to the extent to show that the increase in traffic and noise would conflict with the religious practices. Where an EIR uses economic or social effects to determine that a physical change is significant, the EIR shall explain the reason for determining that the effect is significant.”

Furthermore, the fact that a project subject to CEQA might cause adverse effects to certain businesses does not give rise to any presumption of any attendant physical effect resulting from such economic effects. Thus, an EIR for such a project need not consider the prospect of such an indirect physical change absent actual substantial evidence that the project’s economic effects “are reasonably likely to result in physical change in the environment.” (*Friends of Davis v. City of Davis* (2000) 83 Cal.App.4th 1004, 1020.)

The CEQA guidelines state (above) that the socioeconomic issue (the “religious practices”) need only be analyzed to the extent to show that the physical change is significant. Community Impact 2 on Page 3.16-13 analyzes the loss of sales revenues from traffic diverted away from the SR 299, SR 3 and downtown business districts in Weaverville and calls it “Potentially significant, but mitigated.” As stated at the beginning of Section 3.16, *Community Impacts*, on Page 3.16-1, “Some of the affects analyzed in this section, such as fiscal effects and taxable sales cannot be reasonably tied to a physical change in the environment. Therefore their analysis is not required by CEQA, and these types of impacts are not considered significant under CEQA. However, the social and economic effects of the project are of concern to the community. They are discussed here in the interest of disclosure, for use by County decision makers, so that the

social and economic consequences of their decisions will be fully understood.” The “significance statement” on Page 3.16-13 is made in the interest of public disclosure, and as a lead-in to the proposed mitigation, but this significance finding and associated mitigation are not required under CEQA.

**2b. Comment Summary:** The large, four-way intersection with a signal will be recognized as a way around town. Businesses in the vicinity will post advertising specifically targeting those folks traveling to the lake and other northern destinations.

**Response:** If a “large” four-way intersection with a signal will be recognized as a way around town, then the same would be true if a signal were placed at the intersection of Washington Street and SR 299, which is another way around town. Tourists unfamiliar with an area do not routinely turn off the highway just because they see a traffic signal at an intersection. There is a Trinity County ordinance that prohibits businesses from posting off-site advertising signs. CalTrans also restricts signs on SR299. It is not possible for businesses to post off-site advertising along SR299.

**2c. Comment Summary:** All of the “build” alternatives for the East Connector would bypass all of the currently operating gas stations in town, including the mini-mart on SR 3. This could lead to strip development along SR 3, and further east on SR 299, and relocation of businesses rather than an increase in business activity.

**Response:** This comment provides an example of why the East Connector will not devastate the downtown economy, as many comments have implied. If an individual, local or tourist, needs or desires services in Weaverville west or south of the East Connector, that individual will take the State Highway to those services. He or she may take the East Connector to Brown’s Ranch road and Brown’s Ranch Road to the mini-mart if he or she desires gasoline or other commodities offered there. The idea of further strip development east and north of the East Connector is too speculative to be considered a reasonably foreseeable indirect effect of this project.

**3. Comment Summary: Growth-Inducing Impacts:** The Pioneer Lane extension to connect the Martin-Pioneer Lane area to the East Connector must be considered growth inducing. The EIR states that parcels can develop in this area because Martin Road can provide adequate circulation. This may be true for the current density level in this area, but the potential for a 2 or 3-fold increase in parcels in the Pioneer Heights area will put significant pressure on Martin Road, which is narrow and a dead-end. The future of this area depends on many factors, including adequate circulation for fire and other emergency services. There is no reasonable way to justify allowing even a doubling of residences in this area without another access route or looped road system.

**Response:** The DEIR states that Martin Road provides adequate *access* to this area. Most of the area that is accessible from existing roads is already developed. A 2 to 3 fold increase could not occur without extending Pioneer Lane to the east, not to the west to meet with the East Connector. The area east of the end of Pioneer Lane has been subdivided into 2.5 acre parcels years ago. It is zoned for ½ acre parcels and is within the Sewer and Water Service District Boundaries. However, it has never been developed, at even the 2.5-acre density, mainly because of the expense of building a private road beyond the end of Pioneer Lane to

provide access into this area. There is presently no access at all to this area. Another factor is the expense of extending sewer and water lateral lines to tie into the existing main lines on Martin Road.

Extending Pioneer Lane to the west will not provide a looped access for these undeveloped properties in Pioneer Heights. They would still have only one way in and out of that area, via Pioneer Lane. Only when they got to Martin Road would the Pioneer Lane extension provide an additional choice of routes into or out of this area. To provide looped access to Pioneer Heights, a connection to Ransom Road or Oak Ridge Road would have to be constructed. The East Connector would not even provide initial access into this area, let alone a looped access. Nor would the East Connector Project widen or in any way improve Martin Road. The Pioneer Lane extension would slightly improve circulation by providing a loop only for the area south of Pioneer Lane. It would not loop the areas on Pioneer Lane or on Martin Road north of Pioneer Lane. It would therefore not make a significant difference in the future of development in this area. The issue of Growth Inducement is adequately addressed in the DEIR. (See DEIR, pp. 3.14-9 – 3.14-10, 3.14-15 - 3.14-20.)

**4. Comment Summary: Cumulative Impacts:** The DEIR does not adequately address the cumulative effects from the airport, Buckhorn realignment project and West Connector on basin circulation patterns, growth-inducing impacts, social/economic impacts, wildlife impacts and water quality/fisheries impacts. The project is one in a series of projects designed to increase the volume and efficiency of vehicular traffic on Highway 299. There is no discussion of the long-term economic impacts on downtown Weaverville from the combined East and West Connectors providing a virtual “circumvention” of Weaverville, development pressures on Weaverville, Douglas City and Lewiston from the Buckhorn Realignment, or the industrial uses at the new airport on the existing Industrial Park.

**Response:** CEQA requires the Project’s contribution to the cumulative effect to be analyzed. The EIR is not required to discuss cumulative impacts that do not result in part from the project evaluated in the EIR. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15130, subd. (a)(1).) This is the case regarding the effect of the industrial uses at the new airport affecting the existing Industrial Park. An EIR may determine that a project’s contribution to a significant cumulative impact will be mitigated to a less-than-significant level, and thus, is not significant. This is the case for all of the impacts analyzed in this DEIR, as is discussed in the Cumulative Impacts Section of each chapter.

The combined effect of the East and West Connectors on downtown businesses is disclosed under “Taxable Sales and Other Business Impacts” in the Cumulative Impacts section of the Community Impacts Chapter. Once again, these types of impacts, in and of themselves, are not considered to be significant effects on the environment under CEQA. The Buckhorn Project was not considered as contributing to the cumulative effects of the East Connector project, because it is outside of Trinity County, in a different watershed that does not connect with the Trinity River. The only affects the Buckhorn project may have on the Weaverville Basin is on population growth and through traffic on SR 299. The WBTCs dismissed the Buckhorn project as not likely to result in significant population growth in Weaverville or in significant increases in through traffic on SR 299 (WBTCs Pages 46 and 54). However, in as much as several commenters have stated a belief that both of these factors were

overestimated in the WBTCs, and those future growth factors are higher than what was observed in the period between 1990 and 2000, any increases in Weaverville population growth and through traffic on SR 299 due to the Buckhorn Project are already built in to the figures used in this DEIR.

In addition, the East Connector has a positive effect on traffic and circulation patterns in Weaverville. Thus, the East Connector project would offset, rather than contribute to, the cumulative effects of the Buckhorn Project. In other words, a congestion-relieving project will offset the effects of a project that contributes to congestion.

**5. Comment Summary: Wildlife Impacts:** The EIR mentions the barrier to wildlife movement, but not the deer fawning grounds located adjacent to, or on, the project site near Brown's Ranch Road. Much road kill will take place before the wildlife learn how to avoid the traffic. Are there studies or ways to quantify these impacts? Wildlife fencing should be installed along the mill property, instead of chain fencing.

**Response:** See also response to Comment 19b. in Letter L-1. Security fencing is desired by the mill and Yingling Construction, because of the increased public access to these property lines. The County would not install a fence all the way around the mill or construction yard, just along the shared boundaries between these uses and the road and trail. Further conversation with the mill manager indicates that safety and security are the main concerns, and these cannot be ensured with deer fencing that would allow pedestrian access. The mill would, however, agree to placing pipe gates that allow deer passage at the two entrance gates to the mill that would access the mill from the East Connector (one across from the Pioneer Lane extension and one north of there).

**6a. Comment Summary: Misc:** Do not allow construction on weekends.

**Response:** Contractors are discouraged from construction on weekends because they are required to pay overtime, which drives up the cost of the job. However, it is occasionally necessary to work on Saturday to meet specific deadlines, such as the requirement to complete work within the streams by October 15, or to accommodate specialty contractors. On a regular basis, no work will be done on weekends. However, to ensure that residents will not be subjected to construction noise at least one day a week, Noise Mitigation 1A shall be revised to read as follows "Construction activities producing significant noise sources shall be scheduled for periods of the day when construction noise would have the least impact on the residents of adjacent and nearby homes and businesses, specifically during normal working hours (7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) on weekdays, and the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. **No construction shall be allowed on Sunday. Emergency maintenance and repair of erosion control and pollution preventions devices will be allowed on Sunday, if necessary to protect the environment.**

**6b. Comment Summary** Have the Agricultural Commissioner inspect the construction site for noxious weeds instead of relying on road crews to identify these plants.

**Response:** In response to this comment, the Trinity County Agricultural Commissioner, Mark Lockhart, was asked what his role should be. He indicated that he, or a botanist from the Trinity County Resource Conservation District, could implement items 1 and 4 of Habitat

Mitigation 4, which are: 1. “Educate construction supervisors and managers on weed identification and the importance of controlling and preventing the spread of noxious weed infestations.” And 4. “Conduct a follow-up inventory of the construction area to verify that construction activities have not resulted in the introduction of new noxious weed infestations.”

The Mitigation Monitoring Plan, which specifies who is responsible for implementing and monitoring mitigation measures, and which would be adopted by the Board of Supervisors at the time the Board approves “CEQA findings” for the Project, will name both the Agriculture Commissioner and the Resource Conservation District as two alternative parties that may perform these functions.

**6c. Comment Summary** Have the Trinity County Division of Environmental Health make periodic visits to the site for inspection for possible contamination.

**Response:** The Mitigation Monitoring Plan, which specifies who is responsible for implementing and monitoring mitigation measures, and which would be adopted by the Board of Supervisors at the time the Board approves “CEQA findings” for the Project, will specify the TC Division of Environmental Health as one of the parties responsible for monitoring for Haz-Mat Mitigation 1, regarding contamination encountered during excavations, and Haz-Mat Mitigation 3, regarding Contractor practices in handling, storing and disposing of fuels, oils and other harmful materials, and the requirement to have adequate spill containment equipment on hands. In the event of a release of hazardous materials, the Division of Environmental Health would be immediately contacted, as specified in Haz-Mat Mitigation 3.

### **L-3 BOWER & MORRIS, Owners of building at Nugget Lane/ Glen Road / SR 299 intersection**

**1. Comment Summary:** The DEIR is deficient in establishing the need for the project. When this project first appeared in the Weaverville Community Plan and County Transportation Plan it was projected as needed after 20 years of steady traffic growth. That growth has not occurred and there is less logging traffic. The project will not pulse through traffic at the most congested intersections.

**Response:** It is not the purpose of an EIR to establish the need for the project. It is to analyze, disclose and mitigate the environmental effects of the project. The need for the project has been well established by numerous studies and plans, including the 1998 Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCs), which identified a need to implement this Project “as soon as planning, funding and construction scheduling allows”. (WBTCs Page 168). This conclusion was based on an analysis of existing traffic conditions in Weaverville and projected conditions in year 2020, assuming an annual population growth in Weaverville of 1% per year, and an annual increase in through traffic on SR 299 of 1.25% per year. There is nothing in the Weaverville Community Plan, Regional Transportation Plan or Circulation Element of the General Plan that states or implies that this project is “projected as needed after 20 years of steady traffic growth.”

In fact, the traffic modeling in the WBTCs and in Chapter 3.18 of this DEIR shows that levels of service (LOS) at the intersections of Washington Street/SR 299 and SR 3/SR 299 already have unacceptable delays for the left turn movement from the minor street onto SR 299 (30.4 seconds, or LOS E at Washington Street, and 22.4 seconds, or LOS D at SR 3). Therefore, even if traffic congestion did not increase by one car in the next 20 years, the project is still needed.

The comment is correct in stating that the Project will not effect “pulsing” of through traffic at the most congested intersections. These intersections are SR 299/Washington Street and SR 299/SR 3. The intersections are too far away from Glen Road to realize significant benefit from gaps created by the proposed traffic signal at Glen Road. The Project would, however, improve level of service at these intersections by reducing the time it takes to enter SR 299 from Washington Street, SR 3 and other side streets in Weaverville. Rather than creating gaps in the SR 299 traffic flow by placing traffic signals (“pulsing”), the Project will reduce the amount of traffic on SR 299, and the number of vehicles waiting to enter SR 299 from SR 3 and Washington Street, by providing an alternate route, to avoid these intersections. These Project effects are thoroughly discussed and analyzed in DEIR Chapter 3.18, *Traffic and Transportation*. (See also response to Comment 1d and 24 in Letter L-1)

**2. Comment Summary:** The DEIR is deficient in its analysis of the economic impacts to the community. It fails to analyze the economic impacts to merchants on Nugget Lane and merchants west of the project. Just as Washington Street funnels traffic away from downtown businesses so will the East Connector. Even with no signage, northbound travelers will recognize it as a shortcut and use it.

**Response:** The potential economic impacts to merchants on Nugget Lane and in the downtown business district are disclosed in the DEIR in Section 3.16 *Community Impacts*. As noted on

Page 3.16-1 of the DEIR, this is done for the purpose of public disclosure, and to inform the decision-makers (Trinity County Board of Supervisors) of the economic effects of this project. However, CEQA does not consider social or economic effects as environmental effects, unless they are related to a physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15358 subdivision b). Also, CEQA Guidelines Section 15131 subdivision (a) states, “Economic or social effects of a project shall not be treated as significant effects on the environment. An EIR may trace a chain of cause and effect from a proposed decision on a project through anticipated economic or social changes resulting from the project to physical changes caused in turn by the economic or social changes. The intermediate economic or social changes need not be analyzed in any detail greater than necessary to trace the chain of cause and effect. The focus of the analysis shall be on the physical changes.” (See also response to Comments 2a and 2b in Letter L-2, and Comment 29 in Letter L-1.)

As the comment states, the existing Washington Street already “funnels” traffic away from downtown, so this effect is already occurring, to some degree. One difference is that Washington Street “funnels” traffic between the Weaverville Elementary School and Lowden Park, which has additional impacts on safety. The effect is actually a “spreading” of traffic, rather than “funneling”, as more routes are provided to access the east and north ends of Weaverville. Nothing is forcing traffic to use either route, but a lack of options would “funnel” traffic on a single route. It is true that frequent travelers and tourists destined for points north of Weaverville may soon discover the East Connector as a short-cut, as many of them have already discovered Washington Street. However, persons wishing to obtain the goods and services available downtown will still go downtown to seek and obtain those services. (See also response to Comment 32 in Letter L-1.)

**3. Comment Summary:** Only the No Action alternative offers an acceptable outcome for Nugget Lane merchants. No alternative that left Nugget Lane open for traffic was analyzed, as was requested in the Scoping period. Alternative A leaves the shoe store and dollar store at the end of a dead end street, without a turn around, and eliminating parking. These stores now have excellent visibility, access and parking. Alternative B eliminates the building and perhaps the businesses, Alternative C allows ingress to Nugget Lane but no way out, necessitating an unsafe turn around and eliminating much of the parking. This alternative also eliminates three parking spots on Glen Road and 25% of the parking lot for the back of the premises.

**Response:** Alternative C was developed in response to the request made during the scoping period. Because of the proximity of Nugget Lane to SR 299, the proposed traffic signal will cause traffic queues to back up on Glen Road across the entrance to Nugget Lane. Transportation Analysts, Fehr & Peers Associates determined that vehicles entering Glen Road from Nugget Lane at this point cannot be allowed from a safety and operational standpoint, because of the traffic signal. Transportation engineers from Trinity County Department of Transportation and Caltrans concur with this assessment. The only way to keep Nugget Lane open is as an in-only access, where vehicles can enter Nugget Lane from Glen Road, but cannot exist Nugget Lane onto Glen Road (Alternative C). Alternative C also aligns the East Connector closer to the California Highway Patrol, enabling Glen Road to stay closer to its existing alignment, further from the shoe store building than Alternatives A or B. Therefore, Alternative C will not eliminate parking spots on Glen Road or any of the parking lot in back of the shoe

store premises. None of the three alternatives affect the visibility of the businesses from SR 299. A new access to Nugget Lane from SR 299, across from the existing Burger King driveway, is proposed for all three alternatives, as a way of mitigating the loss of access to Nugget Lane. All turning movements, in and out, would be allowed at this new access point. A few parking spaces may be lost, due to the need for vehicles to turn around in front of the shoe store. However, vehicles parked in perpendicular parking spaces in front of the shoe store can pull out of the parking spaces and head in the opposite direction. The in-only movement from Glen Road to Nugget Lane presents no greater hazard to vehicles backing out of parking spaces than the existing two-way condition presents. (See also Comment Letter L-9, and verbal comment 6 from the January 23, 2003 Public Hearing, from the affected business owners).

4. **Comment Summary:** The project should be put on hold for 10 years to see if more of a need develops. If it proceeds, two other alternatives need to be analyzed:
  - a. Place a limit line for Glen Road behind Nugget Lane to keep the intersection clear, leave Nugget Lane open for in and out traffic and keep the Glen Road alignment as it is, with a jog (in the intersection).
  - b. Leave Nugget and Glen Road as is and move the signalized intersection east to the Long's driveway. Make the East Connector intersection where the Long's driveway is now. This would channel the Long's/Tops traffic to a safe, better organized flow. Place a new in and out access to Nugget Lane at the signal directly across from the East Connector at the Long's driveway. This is a safer alternative than those offered in the draft EIR.

**Response:** Staff does not agree that the project should be "put on hold for 10 years". Funding for this project is subject to "timely use of funds" deadlines required by State and Federal law. If the Trinity County Board of Supervisors does not wish to proceed with this project in the immediately foreseeable future, they should select the "No Project" Alternative, rather than simply shelving the project for 10 years. In addition, waiting until a problem becomes acute before beginning the lengthy process of funding acquisition, environmental analysis, design, right-of-way acquisition and construction is poor planning and bad management. What has been done to date, (funding acquisition and environmental analysis) would have to be mostly, if not entirely, redone if the project is stopped and re-initiated in 10 years. See also Response to Comment 37 in Letter L-1.

The alternative designs for the Glen Road/Nugget Lane/East Connector/ SR 299 intersection were developed by Traffic Analysts Fehr & Peers and Registered Civil Engineers experienced in roadway design from Trinity County Department of Transportation and Psomas Engineers, in consultation with engineers and transportation planners from Caltrans. These experts have reviewed the additional alternative designs suggested in this comment, and do not agree that either of these would result in a safer intersection or "better organized flow".

Placing the "limit line" behind Nugget Lane on Glen Road would create sight distance problems for drivers waiting at the light at Glen Road, and would hide these vehicles from traffic on SR 299. The clear space in front of this "limit line" on Glen Road would be completely disorganized, with vehicles coming in and out of Nugget Lane from Glen

Road, the East Connector and SR 299. Vehicles coming out of Nugget Lane would compete with vehicles waiting behind the limit line on Glen Road for their place in the queue. The vehicles coming out of Nugget Lane would not be able to see the traffic signal.

The proposal to relocate the East Connector and traffic signal to the existing Longs driveway would also be detrimental to safety and operations. Traffic queues on SR 299 waiting for the signal would back up across both Glen Road and the Burger King driveway. “Keep Clear” striping across a four-lane section of State Highway is not acceptable to Caltrans. The volume of traffic approaching SR 299 on Glen Road is much higher than the volume on Nugget Lane. Vehicles trying to access SR 299 from Glen Road may tend to enter Nugget Lane and use the new signalized intersection, increasing Nugget Lane traffic beyond its design capacity, possibly requiring widening of the County Road right-of-way. These queues on Nugget Lane would back up in front of the Shoe Store and Dollar Store, interfering with access to parking spaces at these stores. There would be two opposing queues on Nugget Lane at the signal, one facing north, in front of the Bowling Alley, and another facing south, in front of the Pharmacy. There would be no way to organize this double queue.

Therefore, these suggested alternatives do not mitigate any of the Project’s impacts, and actually create additional impacts. They are not environmentally superior to the alternatives already included in the EIR. Nothing in CEQA suggests that, in order to be legally sufficient, the EIR must be modified to include such alternatives. (See *Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California* (1988) 47 Cal.3d 376, 403 (“*Laurel Heights I*”) (“alternatives and mitigation measures have the same function—diminishing or avoiding adverse environmental effects”; “alternatives are a type of mitigation”); *Goleta II, supra*, 52 Cal.3d at pp. 564, 566 (“[t]he core of an EIR is the mitigation and alternatives sections”; alternatives should “offer substantial environmental advantages over the project proposal”); CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (a) (“[a]n EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, or to the location of the project, that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project”) (emphasis added).)

See also Responses to Comments 3 and 6a in Letter L-1 and Comment 1 in Letter L-2 for further explanation of CEQA requirements regarding alternative analysis.

#### **L-4: ELLEN LEWIS**

**1. Comment Summary:** All residents present at both meetings prefer the No Project alternative. There was not one positive response.

**Response:** There have been 23 individuals and 2 public agencies that have responded, in writing and/or verbally at one or more meetings. One individual letter and one agency responded in support of the project. Less than one percent of Weaverville's population has publicly voiced opposition to this project.

**2. Comment Summary:** As a senior citizen living near the Golden Age Center, it is undesirable to contend with any more traffic on Browns Ranch Road. As a Center member, it is undesirable to lose any of the Center's property to this or any other project.

**Response:** Impacts on senior citizens walking, driving or riding wheelchairs between the Senior Apartments and Two Creeks Mobile Home Park are discussed in Section 3.14 *Land Use, Planning and Growth* of the DEIR. Alternative 2 would eliminate the impact of increased traffic on Brown's Ranch Road, but would take more right-of-way from the Golden Age Center. Alternative 1 would increase traffic in front of the Senior Center, but mitigation includes an all-way stop sign and a pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection of the East Connector and Brown's Ranch Road.

**3. Comment Summary:** The project would greatly diminish the quality of the environment in the vicinity and the lives of its residents. The pedestrian/bike path is tempting, but cost to the environment is too high.

**Response:** The DEIR discloses the various environmental impacts of the proposed project on its surroundings. The EIR concludes that these impacts are mitigated to less than significant levels. It is up to the Board of Supervisors to decide whether or not to proceed with the project, based on the information in the EIR, including the environmental analysis and the comments from the affected public and agencies.

**4. Comment Summary:** The suggested removal of a commercial building housing successful and desired businesses that provide local employment should not be considered an option.

**Response:** Based on the complete environmental analysis and public comments, the Final EIR will **not** recommend Nugget Lane intersection Alternative B as the preferred alternative. Alternative C, which leaves the commercial building and allows entry into Nugget Lane from Glen Road, will be the recommended Alternative.

**5. Comment Summary:** Stop lights in locations other than Glen Road are a good option to break up the flow of traffic and to allow pedestrians safe places to cross the highway.

**Response:** See responses to Comment 1 in Letter L-2, and Comments 3, 4b, 6a, and 8 in Letter L-1.

**6. Comment Summary:** If the Post Office would deliver mail or put annexes at Top's Mini Mart on SR 3 and Top's Market on SR 299, a substantial improvement could be made in the traffic problem.

**Response:** The Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Plan (WBTCS – 1998) includes this recommendation, as well as the recommendation to construct the East Connector. The Traffic Consultant and Citizens Advisory Committee considered both of these projects, and several others, to be necessary to improve the traffic congestion problem. However, the County does not have the authority to implement this recommendation. It is up to the U.S. Postal Service, and the Trinity County Board of Supervisors has brought this to the attention of the U.S. Postal Service.

**7. Comment Summary:** The project will cut the wildlife habitat in half, eliminate a large portion of it and endanger, if not remove, scores of animals and birds we now enjoy.

**Response:** The DEIR discloses and analyzes impacts on wildlife and their habitats in Sections 3.8 *Vegetation, Invasive Species, Wildlife*, and 3.9 *Threatened and Endangered Species*. Mitigation measures have been added to the project to minimize these impacts. The road will pass through some habitat for wildlife, but will not remove a large area of wildlife habitat. Alternative Alignment 1, which passes in front of the Golden Age Center where Brown's Ranch Road is now, has less impact on the wildlife habitat along Lance Gulch and behind the Golden Age Center. However, this Alternative has a greater impact on pedestrians traveling to and from the Golden Age Center. The California Department of Fish and Game was asked about the significance of impacts to the deer herd that would result from this project, and they determined it would not be a significant impact (See Response to Comment 5 in Letter L-2, below).

**L-5: BENJAMIN B. LEWIS**

**1. Comment Summary:** I see no reason for the East Connector. Any traffic problems in Weaverville can be solved with traffic signals at Highway 299 and Hwy 3, and at Hwy 299 and Washington Street.

**Response:** The East Connector Project is a result of a Basin-wide traffic circulation study, the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCS), that analyzed the effectiveness and environmental and social impacts of many ways to improve traffic circulation in Weaverville. The study recommended the East Connector (WBTCS Page 168), and recommended against traffic signals at locations other than at Hwy. 299 and Glen Road (WBTCS Page 171). See responses to Comment 1 in Letter L-3, Comment 1 in Letter L-2, and Comments 3 and 6a in Letter L-1.

**2. Comment Summary:** The East Connector would cut back on wildlife, and if it goes along Brown's Ranch Road between the Two Creeks Mobile Home Park, Senior Apartments and Golden Age Center (Alternative 1) it might "cut back on live seniors, too".

**Response:** The impacts of either alternative alignment on wildlife, residents of Brown's Ranch Road and users of the Golden Age Senior Center are addressed and mitigated in the Draft EIR. Chapters 3.8, *Vegetation, Invasive Species, Wildlife* and 3.9 *Threatened and Endangered Species* address impacts on wildlife, and mitigate them to a level of non-significance. Impacts on pedestrians crossing the road between the Two Creeks Mobile Home Park, Senior Apartments and the Golden Age Senior Center are addressed in Chapter 3.14, *Land Use, Planning and Growth*. This impact would only occur if Alternative Alignment 1 is selected, and is mitigated by placing an all-way stop at the intersection of the East Connector with the western end of Brown's Ranch Road (the segment that crosses East Weaver Creek and passes the Senior Apartments and Mobile Home Park), and placing a pedestrian crossing at that intersection. Unfortunately, there is a tradeoff between greater impacts to seniors and other pedestrians from Alternative Alignment 1 and greater impacts to wildlife from Alternative Alignment 2, which would pass behind the Golden Age Center. The Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors must weigh these impacts and select an alternative, based on the information contained in the EIR, including public comments.

## **L-6: JUDY AMES-RUIZ, FIVE-CENT GULCH MOBILE HOME PARK**

**1. Comment Summary:** The East Connector will detract tourists away from the historical downtown and businesses.

**Response:** See Chapter 3.16, *Community Impacts* in the DEIR, and responses to Comment 2 in Letter L-3, Comments 2a and 2b in Letter L-2, and Comments 5a, 22a, 29 and 32 in Letter L-1.

**2. Comment Summary:** Local Residents will still drive downtown for business and the Post Office, thus using the connector very seldom.

**Response:** County Staff agrees with the statement that residents will still drive downtown. The East Connector is not intended to prevent people from driving downtown. County Staff does not expect Weaverville Residents to use any one route exclusively. It depends on the origin and destination of the traveler, and personal choice. For example, residents of Five Cent Gulch Mobile Home Park might find the East Connector a convenient way to get to the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center. One of the purposes of this project is to provide an alternate route from northern Weaverville to eastern Weaverville, giving people a choice, and spreading traffic out so that neither route is congested.

**3. Comment Summary:** Expresses concerns for wildlife and traffic noise.

**Response:** DEIR Chapters 3.8, *Vegetation, Invasive Species, Wildlife* and 3.9 *Threatened and Endangered Species* address impacts on wildlife, and mitigate them to a level of non-significance. Chapter 3.5, *Noise* of the DEIR presents a scientific study of noise impacts by Noise Consultants Bollard & Brennan, Inc. The study concludes that increased noise from traffic on the East Connector will not cause noise levels at nearby land uses to reach 60 dB. This is not considered an adverse noise impact. Page 3.5-3 of the DEIR states that noise levels on SR 3 near Five Cent Gulch Street are currently at 61 dB, 75 feet from the edge of SR 3. Therefore, Five Cent Gulch Street Residents should not expect a significant increase in noise levels above existing conditions.

**4. Comment Summary:** More traffic will go down Five Cent Gulch Street, as people do now, turning too soon for the Juvenile Hall (one block north on the same side of SR 3).

**Response:** It is unlikely that people will turn off SR 3 in the wrong direction, looking for the East Connector. It is possible that a few individuals may proceed straight through the SR 3 intersection from the East Connector onto Five Cent Gulch Street. The County does not expect this to happen enough to become a significant nuisance or safety issue. Five Cent Gulch Street is a public County Road. However, the County Department of Transportation would consider placing a “Dead End Street” sign on Five Cent Gulch Street to reduce the number of vehicles entering Five Cent Gulch Street by mistake.

**5. Comment Summary:** The commenter does not feel the need for a traffic signal on the main street of Weaverville.

**Response:** The proposed traffic signal at Glen Road was recommended by professional traffic consultants Leigh, Scott and Cleary and the Citizen’s Advisory Committee, who

together created the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study and resulting Recommended Circulation Plan in 1998. These traffic experts and informed citizens, with public input, made the following recommendation:

“In order for the east side roadway to function effectively, it will be necessary for a traffic signal to be constructed at the SR 299/Glen Road/East Side Roadway intersection. Without a signal, the same conditions will be created at this intersection as already exist at SR 299/SR 3 and SR 299/Washington Street intersections during peak periods, namely, long delays for drivers attempting to make left turns out of the side street.”

The East Connector will also help reduce the delays at these other intersections, so that additional traffic signals may not be needed at other intersections closer to, or in, the downtown historic district, at least in the foreseeable future through 2020.

**6. Comment Summary:** The commenter requests a “Dead End Road” sign at the entrance to Five Cent Gulch Street, a change in the speed limit on SR 3 from 50 mph to 40 mph (presumably in the vicinity of Five Cent Gulch Street), and right and left turn lanes on SR 3 approaching the East Connector.

**Response:** As stated in response to Comment 4, above, the County Department of Transportation will consider placing a “Dead End Street” sign on Five Cent Gulch Street. Right and left turn lanes on SR 3 at the intersection with the East Connector and Five Cent Gulch Street are already part of the plan. (DEIR Page 1-10). The County does not have the authority to reduce the speed limit on SR 3. This is a Caltrans decision. Caltrans may decide to reduce the speed limit when they grant the Encroachment Permit to the County to construct the new intersection with the East Connector. Otherwise, the County Board of Supervisors can request Caltrans to reduce the speed limit. It is not, however, something the County can commit to or promise.

### **L-7: DARREL W. HODGES**

- 1. Comment Summary:** The “bypass” (East Connector) will not work. A “bypass” must be convenient, save time, and save mileage. This is not possible with this Project, which requires four 90-degree turns, well over a mile further in distance, and on a slow, curvy road.

**Response:** The project is not meant to function as a State Highway bypass. The design speed was reduced in response to public comments during the scoping period. There are only two prominent curves in the alignment, neither of which is 90 degrees. The savings in time and mileage depend on the origin and destination of the traveler. However, overall, Leigh, Scott and Cleary, Transportation Consultants for the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study, calculated that this project would result in a 1.1% reduction in daily vehicle miles traveled in the Weaverville Basin.

- 2. Comment Summary:** The “bypass” will not detour around the main section of town, but just make it harder to get through.

**Response:** The East Connector is not meant to be a “detour” around the main section of town. It is an alternate route for people traveling between the “straight stretch” east of downtown, and SR 3 north of downtown. It will not make travel through the main section of town harder. The objective is to make travel through downtown easier for those who chose to do so, by providing an alternative route for those with destinations elsewhere.

- 3. Comment Summary:** The commenter does not like the impacts on the Nugget Lane businesses. It is wrong to tear down the building where On Your Feet and the Dollar Mart are located and to make Nugget Lane a dead end road.

**Response:** The DEIR discloses and discusses the impacts to Nugget Lane businesses in Chapter 3.16 *Community Impacts*. Mitigation measures include a new access to Nugget Lane from SR 299 across from the Burger King driveway. There are two alternatives that do not take the building that houses the two businesses mentioned. One of these alternatives (Alternative C) also allows access to Nugget Lane from Glen Road. Unfortunately access from Nugget Lane onto Glen Road cannot be allowed because of the traffic signal. See also Responses to Comment 5a in Letter L-1, Comment 2 in Letter L-3, and Letter L-9.

**L-8: BOB ROWEN**

- 1. Comment Summary:** There is a clear need to update the Trinity County General Plan and the Weaverville Community Plan before proceeding with the East Connector Project, or any community-transforming project. The County is moving forward with piecemeal planning.

**Response:** The commenter has not identified any specific respects in which the Trinity County General Plan is allegedly out of date, so a response addressing any particular provisions of concern to the commenter is not possible. In any event, the Weaverville Community Plan is the General Plan document that is most relevant with respect to land uses and circulation improvements in the Weaverville area. The General Plan (Land Use Element, etc.) even if updated, would not include as specific a plan for the design of future Weaverville as is already contained the Community Plan. The Weaverville Community Plan is only 12 years old. While a 12-year old plan might be “old” in some of California’s communities, such as those subjected to extreme development pressure, a 12-year old document can remain up-to-date for all material purposes in a relatively slow growing jurisdiction such as Trinity County. A prototype of the East Connector and other possible new roads to improve circulation in Weaverville were envisioned in the Community Plan. Later, in 1998, further studies were done to predict future traffic conditions in Weaverville and to analyze the effectiveness of various projects to improve these conditions. The growth projections for Weaverville were revised downward significantly from those in the Weaverville Community Plan (1% annual growth instead of 2.75%). Still, with these reduced growth projections, the East Connector still emerged as a necessary and effective means of reducing congestion in downtown Weaverville. This project has long been envisioned as part of a comprehensive plan to solve a long-recognized problem. This is not “piecemeal planning”.

- 2. Comment Summary:** The need for the East connector was based on traffic growth projections that are not valid. Caltrans data indicates that daily traffic on SR 299 at Washington Street was 12,300 in 1990, 12,700 in 1995, and 12,200 in 1999. Only 1,500 vehicles out of 12,300 represented through traffic, the balance was local traffic.

**Response:** The comment illustrates a good point: establishing a trend based on two end points can result in widely varying conclusions depending on the end points one selects. Had the study only looked at 1990 to 1995, it would show an increasing trend; if only 1995 to 1999 were viewed, a decrease would be indicated. Going back to the 1989 Nelson/Nygaard study, daily traffic on SR 299 at Washington Street in 1987 was 8,200, so, in 12 years from 1987 to 1999 through traffic increased by 4,000 vehicles.

The comment also points out that the vast majority of the traffic on SR 299 at Washington Street is local traffic. This is true, and this fact was recognized by the Citizen’s Advisory Committee in preparing the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCs). The main reason for this phenomenon is the lack of through streets in Weaverville, which requires almost all vehicle trips in the area to travel on the state highway system, even to drive to the next block. That is why one of the project objectives stated in Section 1.3 of the

DEIR is to “reduce the dependency on SR 299 for local travel within the Weaverville historic district.” (See also Comment 33 in Letter L-1).

**3a. Comment Summary:** A citizen advisory committee responsible for examining the traffic circulation study recommended against all proposed bypasses and suggested alternatives to them.

**Response:** It is unclear which citizen advisory committee and which traffic circulation study the comment refers to; the 1989 Nelson/Nygaard Study or the 1998 WBTCS. The word “bypass” in both studies referred to an alternate route for State Highway 299, operated by Caltrans as a State Highway, around the west side of Weaverville, with overpasses crossing Mill Street and Oregon Street and no connection to Glen Road or Mountain View Street. A SR 299 Highway Bypass from the east end of Weaverville to the west end of Weaverville along the east side was not considered in either study. In both studies, the recommendations included the East Connector, or something very similar, as one of the alternatives to a bypass. The WBTCS identified the East Connector as the best alternative to a bypass, calling it “most effective immediate means of addressing traffic congestion”. (See also Comment 34 in Letter L-1.)

**3b. Comment Summary:** The suggested alternatives were based on a population growth projection for the Weaverville area for an 11-year period from 1989 to 2000. This projection did not materialize. Growth occurred at one half of one percent during this period.

**Response:** The comment is citing the wrong study. The Nelson/Nygaard study was prepared in 1989, and assumed a 2.75% population growth rate between 1989 and 2000. However, this project was programmed based on the 1998 Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study, and the traffic projections from that study were carried forward in the DEIR for the East Connector. A population growth rate of 1% per year was used in the WBTCS (Page 51) for years 1998 through 2020. Census data for the period 1990 through 2000 indicated a growth rate in Weaverville of one-half of one percent. There is only one-half of one percent difference between the reported census data for the past ten years and the projected rate for the next 20 years. More importantly, the Census data confirms that Weaverville’s population is growing. In addition, there are only two years of overlap between the period reported in the census and the period predicted in the WBTCS; 1998-2000. Two years is not sufficient data to determine the accuracy of a long-range projection. There is no way for anyone to predict the future, and in planning, assumptions are necessary. Any assumption can be challenged. In the light of the possible straightening of Buckhorn Grade and population growth occurring exponentially in Redding and throughout California and the entire world, a one-percent annual growth rate in Weaverville over the next 20 years is not unrealistic. (See also Comment 34 in Letter L-1.)

**4. Comment Summary:** The County needs to move away from “top down” strategic planning by a few to an approach that involves meaningful community input.

**Response:** County staff disagrees with the notion that County Planning does not provide for citizen input. The Weaverville Community Plan was developed by a Weaverville Community Plan Advisory Committee, which received input from experts and local residents and engaged in six months of neighborhood workshops. Approximately 250 citizens

attended these workshops and over 200 copies of the draft Plan were distributed. (WCP Page 1). The WBTCs was also developed by a Citizen's Advisory Committee of 14 members of the community and local business people, along with Planning Staff and a professional traffic consultant. The Committee met six times and held three public workshops. The plan was adopted at a public hearing before the Trinity County Transportation Commission. Both of these plans included the proposal for this project, or a similar project.

**L-9: Randall and JeriLyn Walters, Owners, On Your Feet**

**Comment Summary:** As owners of the shoe store on the corner of Glen Road and SR 299, the Walters' first choice is the termination of this project altogether. In lieu of that result, they find Alternative C the only acceptable plan for accommodating the needs of their customers and the continuing success of their business. Closing off the north end of Nugget Lane, blocking their access at Glen Road (Alternative A) is not an acceptable alternative. The possibility of losing the building (Alternative B) would mean the closing of On Your Feet.

**Response:** The Walters' concerns, and those of the community have been noted. The environmental analysis in the DEIR and the public and agency comments show that Alternative C has the least impact on Nugget Lane businesses and does not create any additional environmental impacts. It was designated the Environmentally Superior Alternative in Section 2.4 of the DEIR. The Board of Supervisors will consider this information in selecting the Project Alternative.

**L-10: ARDIS SIMMONS, KEN SIMMONS, Martin Road Residents:**

**1. Comment Summary:** The traffic and raised noise level of this road will greatly impact our residence and neighborhood. The trees that now shield us from the mill noises will have to be removed, increasing the noise levels and decreasing property values.

**Response:** Future noise levels for receptors on Martin Road were calculated by Noise Consultants Bollard & Brennan, Inc. Their analysis indicates that noise levels on Martin Road will increase by 5 to 7 dB due to traffic noise, resulting in noise levels of 50.5 to 55.9 dB. These noise levels are commonly considered acceptable for residential land uses. This analysis assumed there was no intervening trees or topography between the road and the residences. The existing noise levels in the area, which include noises from the mill, provided the background for the noise analysis, and were therefore included in the predicted noise levels. Vegetation removal during construction of the new road will be kept to the minimum necessary to construct the roadway and associated cut and fill slopes. Visual Mitigation 1, on Page 3.19-17 of the DEIR, requires, "Following project construction, the County will plant a screen of fast-growing evergreen trees and shrubs such as cypress, cedar and ceanothus between the East Connector and the Trinity River Lumber Company mill, and at other locations to screen or break up views of the roadway from adjacent land uses. Trees will only be planted outside the creek levees where space and solar exposure permit. Species that are fast growing and low maintenance and that have dense lower branches and foliage will be selected to establish a good screen as quickly as possible." There may be a temporary increase in noise and views of the mill, but the fast-growing vegetative screen will reduce this impact within a short period of time.

**2. Comment Summary:** The people from East Weaver area will have a private road to the shopping center, but still have to go through town daily to the Post office, hospital, schools, etc. The East Connector will become a "good drag strip for some".

**Response:** The East Connector would be a public County maintained road. No one segment of the community is getting a "private road". The East Connector is not intended to preclude or prevent people from going through town. It is meant to provide an alternative route for persons wishing to travel to destinations other than downtown Weaverville. The California Highway Patrol will patrol the East Connector as they do all other public County Roads and State Highways. Drag racers on the County Road will be subject to law enforcement.

**3. Comment Summary:** The environmental effect of this road will drastically change the Senior Center, residential areas, property values and wildlife habitat.

**Response:** The environmental effects of the project are disclosed in the DEIR. The EIR concludes that there are no "Significant Unavoidable Adverse Effects" (environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated to less-than-significant levels, as defined by CEQA).

**4. Comment Summary:** On the November 1992 Ballot, 65% favored a Bypass. What happened?

**Response:** On the November 1992 ballot there was an advisory measure requesting voters' opinions on the possibility of a Caltrans Highway Bypass around Weaverville. Sixty-five

percent of the voters favored a bypass along the West Weaver Creek drainage. In March 1997, Trinity County Board of Supervisors (sitting as the Trinity County Transportation Commission (TCTC)) held a public hearing to decide whether to request Caltrans to proceed with the West Weaver Bypass Project. At that hearing, a vocal minority consisting mostly of downtown businesses owners spoke out in opposition to a State Highway Bypass. The TCTC voted against requesting Caltrans to build the bypass, and decided instead to take a detailed look at other options for improving traffic circulation in the Weaverville Basin. This process resulted in formation of a Citizens Advisory Committee and hiring Transportation Consultants Leigh, Scott and Cleary, who, together with public input from several public workshops and hearings, developed the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCs). The WBTCs identified the East Connector as the top priority project to relieve congestion in downtown Weaverville without a State Highway Bypass. The WBTCs called the East Connector “the most effective immediate means of addressing traffic congestion while also expanding Weaverville’s roadway network to address possible future growth”. See Section 1.2 *Project Background* in the DEIR.

## L-11: DON CANTRELL

**1. Comment Summary:** We need this project completed as soon as possible. The costs of the project will not diminish with time.

**Response:** The comment is correct. In addition, State and Federal funds programmed for the design, right-of-way acquisition and construction of this project are subject to strict time limits. If the County wishes to continue with this project but does not do so in a timely manner, funds already secured would have to be reprogrammed, resulting in delays and uncertainty.

**2. Comment Summary:** Washington Street is not designed for the traffic that it now carries. The intersection at 299 does not permit long truck-trailer combinations to make a legal turn, and delays instigate unsafe behavior.

**Response:** Comment noted. The Project Objectives (DEIR Page 1-9) include, “Reduce delays at intersections with SR 299, particularly as SR 3, Washington Street and Glen Road”. and “Reduce traffic on Washington Street between Weaverville Elementary School and Lowden Park”.

**3. Comment Summary:** The 25 MPH zone past the Elementary School is ignored. This is also the area past Lowden Park where there is frequent levels of high activity, especially during sporting events.

**Response:** Comment noted. The Project Objectives (DEIR Page 1-9) also include, “Reduce traffic on Washington Street between Weaverville Elementary School and Lowden Park”.

**4. Comment Summary:** It is my personal opinion that anyone opposing either “Weaverville bypass project” is either following a selfish agenda or thinks so little of our community that they feel that travelers should be forced to travel through town. Parking, safety and attitude will be best served by allowing those that wish to hurry through to do so, and allow those that wish to visit us the opportunity to do so on their terms. Our downtown businesses may profit better when decreased traffic changes our image.

**Response:** Comment noted. These potential benefits of the Project are disclosed in the DEIR in Section 1.3, *Project Objectives*, and 3.16, *Community Impacts*, and 3.13, *Parks, Recreational Areas, Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges*.

## **January 9, 2003 Public Workshop:**

At the January 9 Public Workshop, staff presented the project, and announced that this was an informational workshop. Staff was there to answer questions from the public. Questions asked of staff and answered at the meeting. The minutes of the January 9 workshop are included in Section 3a of this Final EIR. The minutes document the questions asked by the public and the answers staff provided.

Staff also announced that Comments on the Draft EIR or on the project would not be responded to at the meeting. Responses to Comments are included in this Section of the Final EIR. In addition, any questions that could not be completely answered at the Public Workshop are responded to in this section.

### **1. Jerry Hauke: Douglas City Resident and Former Caltrans Engineer**

**Comment Summary:** The County should obtain all of the right of ways now for the future completed bike line or sidewalks. He stated that over the years he has seen how difficult it is to obtain land after a project is completed as opposed to getting the land right up front and then getting the funding to complete a project at a later date. He stated that having the extra right of way now gets pedestrians off of the street, provides safer working conditions for your road maintenance crews, and allows for erroneous cars to have a place to swerve if needed. He stated that now is the time to obtain all the right of way that is needed.

**Response:** Trinity County has no future plans for additional bicycle or pedestrian trails in this area. A Class 2 bike path along the shoulders of the East Connector is planned. A Class 1 bicycle/pedestrian path is planned along Levee Road and crossing East Weaver Creek. In addition, during scoping and project development, the County offered to provide access to the Weaverville Basin Trails Committee to construct and maintain an additional Class 1 bicycle/pedestrian trail within the area to be severed from the Trinity River Lumber Mill by the East Connector, from the Pioneer Lane extension to Brown's Ranch Road. The County does not "contemplate" acquiring additional right-of-way from the Golden Age Senior Center, Trinity River Lumber, Trinity Plaza Shopping Center or other private property owners along the East Connector Roadway, other than what is included in this project.

### **2. Colleen O'Sullivan, Weaverville resident:**

**Comment Summary:** TCDOT should conduct the hydrology studies that are necessary to determine if Hydrology Mitigation 1 is feasible. The Mitigation states that if hydrologic calculations by a Registered Civil Engineer determine that the capacity of the subsurface drainage system under the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center will be exceeded by the additional runoff generated by new impermeable surfaces proposed for this project, then detention basins will be constructed to meter flows.

The commenter is concerned that there may not be sufficient space to install the detention basins.

**Response:** See also response to Written Comments, Letter L-1 Comment 14b. Design is not sufficient at this point to calculate the exact amount of increased runoff, but, in response to this comment, a Registered Civil Engineer of Trinity County DOT performed a “worst case scenario” calculation, based on previous calculations done by the Registered Civil Engineer for the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center, who originally designed the subsurface drainage system. The TCDOT engineer assumed that 6 acres of new impermeable surfaces would replace 6 acres of permeable surfaces, and that all runoff from the new road would discharge to Lance Gulch. The analysis indicated that the increase in runoff would be only two cubic feet per second (cfs). The pipe now has an excess capacity of 89 cfs. Therefore, no detention ponds will be needed for this Project. Runoff from finished road surfaces will be treated in unlined vegetated swales and ditches of low gradient, rather than detention ponds.

### **3. Colleen O’Sullivan, Weaverville resident:**

**Comment Summary:** The Commenter stated that the alternative preferable to her would be the one that does not involve removing businesses from Nugget Lane and Glen Road.

**Response:** Comment noted. Alternative C, which does not remove businesses, and provides an “in-only” access to Nugget Lane from Glen Road, was designated as the Environmentally Superior Alternative in the Draft EIR (DEIR Page 2-9). The Trinity County Board of Supervisors will select an alternative, based on the whole of the environmental analysis in the EIR, on the record of public comments, both written and verbal, and on the Recommendations of County Staff and the Planning Commission.

### **4. Colleen O’Sullivan, Weaverville resident:**

**Comment Summary:** There were numerous traffic studies with conflicting information. The commenter does not believe the traffic counts on SR 299 reflect a growing trend.

**Response:** The Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study, prepared by Consultants Leigh, Scott and Cleary and an appointed Advisory Committee of Weaverville citizens and business owners in 1998 was used as the background analysis of projections of growth in Weaverville and future increases in traffic on SR 299 through 2020. These projections were carried forward in the Traffic Analysis in Chapter 3.18, *Traffic and Transportation* of the Draft EIR. See also Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comment 33, and Letter L-8 Comment 2.

### **5. Ed Bates, Weaverville Resident and Business owner:**

**Comment Summary:** The commenter is concerned about the traffic flow studies. He stated that waiting 30 seconds to make a turn is not that substantial. Safety should be the main concern. He stated that he uses Weaver Street instead of Washington Street because the sight distance is greater. He also stated that safety to schoolchildren should be a main concern. He stated that the East Connector or

something like it is needed for the safety of children walking to and from the elementary school and to and from the park.

**Response:** See Response to Comment 4, above, regarding the traffic flow studies. Future conditions forecast in those studies predict much longer delays for vehicles entering SR 299 from SR 3 and Washington Street. The studies in the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study and the East Connector DEIR predict a delay of 168 seconds to make a left turn onto SR 299 from SR 3; and a 217 second delay to make a left turn onto SR 299 from Washington Street, in the year 2020 without the East Connector. (DEIR Page 3.18-20. County Staff concurs with the statement that safety of schoolchildren is a major concern. Many vehicles that now use Washington Street, between the Elementary School and Lowden Park, are expected to use the East Connector for the same purpose. (DEIR Page 1-9 *Project Objectives*). Staff also concurs that many people (including DOT staff) use the Weaver Street route to access SR 299 instead of the Washington Street route, due to better sight distance. However, this route still requires travel on Washington Street past the School and Park, and is still subject to significant delays in entering SR 299.

## **January 23, 2003 Public Hearing:**

All comments made by members of the public at the formal Public Hearing are summarized and responded to in this section. The minutes of the Public Hearing are included in Section 3b of this Final EIR.

### **1. Joseph Bower, Owner of the building on Nugget Lane that contains the Dollar Store and On Your Feet.**

**Comment Summary:** The EIR and finds it insufficient in three areas:

- 1) establishing the need for the project.
- 2) Analysis of the economic impacts to the community
- 3) Failure to consider alternatives with less impact that would better meet the project objectives. Mr. Bower mentioned two alternatives for the Nugget Lane/Glen Road/East Connector/SR 299 intersection that had not been considered in the DEIR.

He also stated that he hoped that the Commission would direct the staff to consider these two alternatives, unless the Commission sees the need for a “No Action Alternative”.

**Response:** Mr. Bower submitted his verbal comments in writing at the Public Hearing. These comments are addressed in the Response to Written Comments, Section 4 of this Final EIR, Letter L-3.

### **2. Trudy Furst, Pioneer Lane resident.**

**Comment Summary:** She would rather see the road run along the creek. She also stated that it would be interesting to know what the charges would be for the easements for the creek side or for the street. She stated that it would keep all of the merchants in that area available to Hwy 299. She believes that it would cost less in the long run.

**Response:** Running the road along the creek would have greater environmental impacts than the proposed project, particularly in the areas of water quality, vegetation and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and aesthetics. This alternative would not meet all of the project objectives, because traffic would still be discharged to the section of SR 299 between Washington Street and Glen Road, which has the highest average daily traffic in the Weaverville Basin. This alternative would also require purchase of right-of-way from private property owners, and would also require construction. If the comment refers to the Levee Road alignment, it should be understood that the existing “Levee Road” is not a County road. It is a prescriptive public access across private property. To convert it into a County arterial road, the County would have to acquire the right-of-way and completely reconstruct and widen the road. See also Response to Written Comments, Letter L-1 Comment 6a and Letter L-2, Comment 1.

**3. Jeff Morris, Weaverville resident and business owner:**

**Comment Summary:** He does not see the real need for the project. The traffic projections are not panning out currently and the population is actually shrinking. He stated that regardless of whether the project was signed or not, people are going to learn about the shortcut, just like they learned to use Washington Street. There were some simple solutions that were proposed in the traffic circulation plan that have been leap-frogged over without even testing some of them. An example would be right hand turn pockets, peak times of year when you have congestion at Hwy 299 and Hwy 3, put in a traffic cop with white gloves, he would cost less, the impact would also be less. He stated that he did not see how diverting traffic from Main Street would promote economic development.

**Response:** See Response to Comment 1, above, and Response to Written Comments: Letter L-1, Comment 1d, 3, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 6a, 8, 9c, 22a, 22b, 24, 29 32, 33, 34 and 35; Letter L-2 Comments 1 and 2b; Letter L-3 Comment 1; and Letter L-8 Comments 2, 3a and 3b.

**4. Jeff Morris, Weaverville resident and business owner:**

**Comment Summary:** The road skips all of the gas stations in town. Unless someone puts a gas station at one end or the other of the road, individuals who need gas are going to end up going downtown anyway. He also stated that if someone did put a gas station on the road, they would be taking away from the people that already have gas stations in this town.

**Response:** The comment illustrates the fact that people who have business downtown will seek the goods and services they need downtown. If these services are not available on the East Connector, travels will seek them elsewhere. Nothing in this project prohibits them from doing so. The new owner of the Weaver Valley Market, at Nugget Lane and Glen Road, intends to restore the previous gasoline tanks and pumps that were removed by the previous owners. It is not the County's business to regulate free enterprise and free competition among businesses. See also Response to Written Comments Letter L-2 Comment 2c.

**5. Jeff Morris, Weaverville resident and business owner:**

**Comment Summary:** The traffic studies are based on a 10-year period. The accident data at Hwys 299 and 3 was taken from 1998 to 2001. Traffic and accident data need to have the same year base for the study. You can't base a decision to alleviate congestion on data from two different time periods.

**Response:** The comment confuses projections of future conditions with data that reflects existing conditions. The accident data included in the *Existing Conditions* Section of Chapter 3.18 *Traffic and Transportation* of the DEIR (Page 3.18-8) was actual data from January 1999 through December 2001. Projections of future conditions were for a 20-year period (not a 10 year period), from 2000 to 2020. The study for the EIR was prepared by professional traffic consultants Fehr and Peers Associates, based on data and projections done previously by professional traffic consultants Leigh, Scott and Cleary for the Weaverville Basin Traffic

Circulation Study. The studies were done according to commonly accepted methods.

**6. Jeff Morris, Weaverville resident and business owner:**

**Comment Summary:** Mr. Morris stated that his preference would be the “No Project Alternative”.

**Response:** Comment noted. The Trinity County Board of Supervisors will select an alternative, based on the whole of the environmental analysis in the EIR, on the record of public comments, both written and verbal, and on the Recommendations of County Staff and the Planning Commission.

**7. Jeff Morris, Weaverville resident and business owner:**

**Comment Summary:** There is a possibility that this project and the airport project may be going on at the same time, we need to look at both of those together as cumulative impacts to our economy in the short term and the long term.

**Response:** Mr. Morris made a similar comment during public hearings for the Weaverville Airport Relocation Project. At those hearings, he expressed a concern that if all of the motels in Weaverville were filled with construction workers, tourists would be turned away and may not return. This concern is discussed in the Draft EIR in Chapter 3.16 *Community Impacts*, 3.16-18. See also Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comment 6b.

**8. Colleen O’Sullivan, resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The social and economic impacts have been adequately analyzed in this document. If you have a major intersection improvement with a signal, folks coming into town are going to figure out pretty quick that the road goes someplace pretty important. The fact that the Department of Transportation is not signing the road will not prevent people from finding it and using it. She believes that this is going to result in a significant social and economical impact. She stated that under CEQA that issue needs to be analyzed, and that she believes that this impact is significant.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 5a, 22a, 29 and 32, and Letter L-2 Comment 2a and 2b.

**9. Colleen O’Sullivan, resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The “No Project Alternative” would be the environmentally superior alternative. It has no effects on the environment. She recommended the “No Project Alternative” be seriously considered.

**Response:** The No Project will have effects on the future environment, as stated in the DEIR Page 2-8 and Table 2-1. CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(e)(2) state: “The “no project” analysis shall discuss the existing conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, ...as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community

services. If the environmentally superior alternative is the “no project” alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.” See also Response to Written Comments, Letter L-1 Comments 10 and 11.

10. **Colleen O’Sullivan, resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The connector from Pioneer Lane through the East Connector is a good idea. Martin Road and Pioneer Lane are dead end streets. If that area is going to grow, and there is some potential for growth in Pioneer Heights above Martin Road, then it will be imperative to have through circulation in that part of town, in case of emergency. However, this will be growth inducing. The Growth Inducement section of the EIR is inadequate and should be revised. There may be other constraints in Pioneer Heights now that prevent it from being developed, but one of them surely is transportation and with that solved we will have a lot more pressure to develop that area.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comments, Letter L-1 Comments 12b and 26, and Letter L-2 Comment 3.

11. **Colleen O’Sullivan, resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The range of alternatives that have been provided are basically small variations of how Nugget Lane is going to be affected and where they are going to cross the creek up on Hwy 3. They did not consider any other alternatives that are not that route. This is required under CEQA Section 15126.6: Under “alternative locations” the key question and first step in analysis is whether any of the significant effects of the project would be avoided or substantially lessened by putting the project in another location. Only locations that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project need to be considered for inclusion in the EIR. The levee road was another location that could be considered. She mentioned that even though in the traffic circulation study in 1998 the east side connector came up as the top project, the consultant also stated that levee road would provide the same relief if it was developed. It would have substantially less impacts to the community than building a brand new road. She stated that under the range of alternatives, why not just put in a traffic light. She stated that there could be a signal light at Levee Road without improving Levee Road, or at Glen Road without a big intersection and the impacts to businesses. Not including solutions to the problem that have been provided that have been identified in all these traffic analyses, studies and plans is a fundamental flaw in the document.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 3, 4c, 6a, 4b, 8, 9c and 24, Letter L-2 Comment 1.

12. **Jeff Clark, resident of Lewiston:**

**Comment Summary:** He is not too familiar with the project; but did have some concerns regarding the effects on the County’s economic base which is stabilized by small business people. This project is hurting a viable business and a new business that provides a valuable service.

**Response:** County staff does not agree that this project will hurt the County's economic base. Two viable Alternatives (Alternatives A and C) have been developed to avoid taking the building that houses two businesses at Nugget Lane. Alternative C further minimizes this impact by providing an "in-only" access to Nugget Lane from Glen Road. All alternatives maintain all accesses to Nugget Lane from SR 299, and add an additional access to Nugget lane from SR 299 across from the Burger King Driveway.

13. **Shelly Harmon, Owner of Dollar Mart:**

**Comment Summary:** Closing of the Dollar Mart would cost 3.5 jobs. She stated that she could not move into another area because it is too costly. She would have to pay twice the rent, plus upgrade the building. She mentioned that her business is a service to the community. She believes that the project should be stopped.

**Response:** See Response to Comment 12, above. There are viable alternatives to removing the building that houses the Dollar Store.

14. **Ed Bates, Weaverville resident:**

**Comment Summary:** Other alternatives have not been considered. One alternative was written off, but not through the EIR process. He stated that this should be done as an extension of Martin Road. This would be a road that the local residents would use, not tourist. It would divert some people but not all of them. Locals would still go downtown. Anything you do will harm the downtown businesses to some degree. Also, if something were done at the airport, whether it is redoing the existing airport or putting it on top of the ridge, now that the dump is closed, there is a possible alternative in the future to have one connector road that takes off from Ransom Road in the general area of the current U-Haul. He stated that the road could go from Ransom road up the drainage behind Tops and across the landfill, behind the high school and back to hwy 299. He stated that he is not saying he would support this project but he believes that the County needs to take a closer look at were, and if, we want development to occur.

**Response:** If Martin Road were extended to intersect with SR 3 it would no longer be classified as a local road. A road that connects two state highways is, by definition, an arterial. The County has adopted AASHTO road design standards. The standards for an arterial are two 12 foot lanes and two 6 to 8 foot shoulders. This would require widening of Martin Road, which in turn would require take of right-of-way from private residences. The project would have more severe noise, visual and safety impacts on residents on Martin Road than the proposed project. It would also have the same, or greater impacts on residences on Brown's Ranch Road, as the extension of Martin Road would logically pass through residential and agricultural parcels east of the proposed East Connector alignment. The other suggested alternative, from Ransom Road across the landfill and behind the high school and back to SR 299 is similar to the East Side Highway Bypass that was rejected by the voters in November 1992. This project does not meet many of the project objectives, and has much greater impacts than

any of the alternatives that were carried forward in the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study. Topography would require large cuts and fills, this alternative would disrupt the Martin Road and Brown's Ranch Road neighborhoods as least as much as the proposed project, and would also disturb residential areas on the west side of SR 3. Placing a road through a closed landfill would have significant health and water quality impacts, and passing by the High School would have safety impacts and would potentially take land from the school. Even the one individual suggesting this alternative does not necessarily support it.

CEQA does not require an EIR to look at alternatives that do not reduce the environmental impacts of a project. (See *Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California* (1988) 47 Cal.3d 376, 403 (“*Laurel Heights I*”) (“alternatives and mitigation measures have the same function—diminishing or avoiding adverse environmental effects”; “alternatives are a type of mitigation”); *Goleta II, supra*, 52 Cal.3d at pp. 564, 566 (“[t]he core of an EIR is the mitigation and alternatives sections”; alternatives should “offer substantial environmental advantages over the project proposal”); CEQA Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (a) (“[a]n EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, or to the location of the project, that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project”) (emphasis added).)

Since numerous alternatives with less adverse effects than these proposal have already been studied, it would be counterproductive for the County to initiate a detailed study of two additional alternatives that do not appear to have merit. See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comment 6a, and Letter L-2 Comment 1.

**15. Ed Bates, Weaverville resident:**

**Comment Summary:** The project should be put on hold, that is, go with the “No Project Alternative”. The Weaverville Community Plan should be updated first, prior to this project being approved.

**Response:** Comment noted. See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 4c, 5b, 23a, 23c, and 37, and Letter L-8 Comment 1 regarding the Weaverville Community Plan.

**16. Mary Whitmore, Browns Ranch Road resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** This project is based on projections of what traffic flow would be into the future. The entire project is based on an assumption that has not born itself out. We are currently in economically difficult times and could go into more difficult times.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 1d, 5b, 33, 34 and 35, Letter L-3 Comment 1 and Letter L-8 Comments 2 and 3b.

**17. Mary Whitmore, Browns Ranch Road resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The option of a traffic signal in a strategic place would help with the flow of traffic. The problem with the traffic is not volume, but flow. There are problems getting onto the highway, no one would disagree with that. A traffic light, while unpopular, may be more popular than the East Side Connector.  
**Response:** See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 3, 4b, 4c, 8, 9c and 24, and Letter L-2, Comment 1.

18. **Mary Whitmore, Browns Ranch Road resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** There is something about this community that attracts her and others. It is a sense of community. Most of us are forced to flow into the downtown area at some point and time during the day, which is where and when we see our neighbors. Her understanding of the project is to take local people and get them away from down town. She stated that this was the wrong direction to go.

**Response:** The project will in no way interfere with the freedom of movement downtown. It will, however, provide an alternative for those wishing to travel on a route that does not involve using the more congested segments of SR 299.

19. **Mary Whitmore, Browns Ranch Road resident of Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The project would impact her more than anyone else on Brown's Ranch Road, because she is the closest. Visual and noise impacts would be "huge". The East Side Connector would alter the character of the neighborhood. Alternative 1 places the new road in front of the Senior Center. If Alternative 2, which places the new road behind the Senior Center, where to be chosen, it would personally affect her. There is a seasonal creek that drops down off of the bluff where staff is suggesting placing the second alternative. This creek was not mentioned in the E.I.R. at all. It puts a huge amount of water onto Alternative 2. This is a bad alternative, and she prefers Alternative 1.

**Response:** The "creek" in the vicinity of Alternative 2 is discussed in DEIR Chapter 3.7 *Waters of the United States* and mapped as "ED-1" on Figure 3.7-1 *Location of Wetlands and Other Waters of the United States*. Alternative 2 would not result in filling of this creek, or other direct impacts. The road would go along this creek for a short distance, behind the Senior Center. Alternative 2 would be closer to the Whitmore residence than Alternative 1, but may actually have less visual impact, because the residence is at the top of a bluff, and Alternative 2 would run along the base of the bluff. The view from the Whitmore residence would therefore look over the East Connector, and it would probably not be directly visible unless one were to walk to the edge of the Whitmore property and look straight down.

20. **Chuck Johnson, resident of Weaverville, former Director of Trinity County Planning**

**Comment Summary:** These comments would be limited to the County's General Plan. He stated that there are seven elements that make up the General Plan; the most significant is the Land Use Element. He stated that the Trinity County Land Use Element was 12 years old. The other elements have not been

updated in almost 30 years. He mentioned that before the County takes on a project like this they need to update their General Plan. (Commissioner Mark Groves corrected Mr. Johnson, stating that the General Plan was updated 27 years ago.)

**Response:** Since these comments specifically concern the Trinity County General Plan, and not the East Connector EIR, they need not be responded to here.

**21. Al Wilkins, resident of Weaverville**

**Comment Summary:** If there was ever a project that would impact the community, this was it. This project would begin by impacting the Golden Age Center, then a quiet residential district, a deer herd, disturbing wildlife habitat and the Mill, which is the community's only industry, then knock out a couple of thriving businesses at Nugget Lane. He believes that this is "no project".

**Response:** The environmental impacts of the East Connector Project, including those listed in the comment, are discussed in the appropriate sections of the EIR for the East Connector. The comment makes no specific statements regarding the adequacy of these analyses, therefore it will not be responded to in greater detail here.

**22. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** If the Commission approved the EIR, it was going to cost the county a lot of money to defend it.

**Response:** Comment noted. The Board of Supervisors would certify the EIR, not the Planning Commission.

**23. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** CEQA requires that you offer a reasonable range of alternatives, including changes in location, scale and direction, not just a different curve or angle in the alignment, maybe you don't even need a road.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comments, Letter L-1 Comments 3, 4b, 4c, 6a, 8, 9c and 24 and Letter L-2 Comment 1.

**24. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** There is virtually no discussion of growth inducing effects. There are potential growth inducing effects with this project. This information must be disclosed.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 12b and 26, and Letter L-2 Comment 3.

**25. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The selection of the environmentally superior alternative was based on which project meets the project goals. It is not that the selection is environmentally superior.

**Response:** The environmentally superior alternative is identified based on a matrix (Table 2-1) that rates each alternative (including the “No Project” alternative) according to their relative environmental impacts in each of the impact categories discussed in the EIR. This ranking did not include consideration of project objectives. See also Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 8, 9a, 9b, 9c, 10 and 11.

**26. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The initial study is not in the E.I.R.

**Response:** An Initial Study is not a required component of an EIR. An Initial Study is used to determine if an EIR is necessary. A Lead Agency may determine at the outset that an EIR will be prepared, and skip the Initial Study phase. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a)). The EIR does, however, use the Initial Study Checklist (CEQA Guidelines Appendix G) as its significance criteria.

**27. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The E.I.R. does not point the reader to the data that supports the analysis and the conclusions. She stated that there is a list of technical appendices but it is listed by title, you can’t tell what is in these documents. When she went in to look for the basis of the traffic projections, she could not find any information because she did not know where to look. She stated that this information is to be in the document or in a publicly accessible place.

**Response:** Appendix C of the DEIR, and the Legal Advertisement announcing the EIR that was published four times in the Trinity Journal, indicated that “Documents referenced in the Draft Program EIR/EA may be viewed at the Planning Department, Department of Transportation or Weaverville Library.” The addresses of these agencies was stated in the advertisement and in Appendix C. Neither Planning or Transportation staff recalls any inquires about these documents being made during the review period of the Draft EIR.

**28. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The E.I.R. rests on studies that have been done with connection to the airport construction. She stated that the airport EIR was stopped and is being completely reanalyzed. She stated that the water shed impacts and water quality impacts that were presented in the airport EIR are carried forward in this EIR. She stated that this EIR should not rest on the airport EIR, it is non-existent.

**Response:** The only analysis in the Draft EIR that is based on the Draft Program EIR for the Weaverville Airport Relocation Project is the analysis of cumulative effects of the Airport Project combined with the East Connector Project. The Weaverville Airport EIR is the best available information on the environmental effects of that project. A certified final EIR does not have to be available in order to assess cumulative impacts of a “reasonably foreseeable project”.

29. **Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The E.I.R. fails to mention any impacts on the deer that will be affected. There is a deer migration corridor that will be affected by the construction of a major roadway. Deer are already being slaughtered on hwy 3.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comment 19b, and Letter L-2 Comment 5.

30. **Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The creek that Ms. Whitmore had mentioned (Comment 19, above) is a wetland all year. It is a stream for part of the year. There needs to be a thorough analysis of the wetlands species. You probably need a Corps permit to deal with anything in that area.

**Response:** Wetlands and other waters of the United States were delineated by Wetland Ecologists from Jones & Stokes Environmental Consultants. A Delineation Report was prepared and submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (*Delineation of Waters of the United States* Jones and Stokes, October 2002) A Corps of Engineers representative has visited the site and confirmed the jurisdictional delineation. The jurisdictional delineation indicated there were three seasonal wetlands, east of the proposed roadway and south of Brown's Ranch Road. The locations are shown on Figure 3.7-1 *Location of Wetlands and Other Waters of the United States* and described in Chapter 3.7 *Waters of the United States*. The stream behind the Senior Center was identified as an ephemeral drainage "ED-1" on Figure 3.7-1. However, neither the Wetland Ecologist nor the Corps of Engineers representative identified anything in this location as seasonal or permanent wetlands.

31. **Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The General Plan needs to be updated and this kind of development should not be resting on an "antique" document. The project is inconsistent with the Community and General Plans. It leap-frogs over the prescribed, step-by-step approach to these circulation problems that are contained in those documents.

**Response:** The only document with a "prescribed step-by-step approach" to circulation problems in Weaverville is the Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study (WBTCs). That document contains a "Recommended Circulation Plan" WBTCs Page 167-175. That Recommended Plan identifies the East Connector as its first priority, to be "implemented as soon as planning, funding, and construction scheduling allows". (WBTCs page 168). Therefore this project directly implements the above referenced "step by step approach" and does not "leap-frog" over other projects in the plan. See Response to Written Comments Letter L-1 Comments 4c, 5b, 23a, 23c, and 37, and Letter L-8 Comment 1 regarding General Plan consistency.

32. **Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** This project seems to be a part of a strategy that comes from the upper authority of the county, to have a Strategic Plan for Weaverville consisting of several parts – a series of dominos - that has never been adopted. This Strategic Plan consists of several distinct projects not analysed together, not adopted in public or environmental review. What is this plan? Let's have a community plan process to deal with this up front, from the community first. She wants to know the connection between the Bypass, the East Connector, the Airport, Hospital closure/relocation, etc. How do these all affect the community and why are they being dropped on us one by one? They should all be taken together.

**Response:** The “Strategic Plan” referred to here is not a General Plan Element or Community Plan, planning Land Use in Weaverville or the County. The “Strategic Planning Committee” is a body of County Department Heads that meet periodically to plan for the physical plant needs of the County government, such as the acquisition and maintenance of office space, courthouse facilities and the physical hospital building. The Weaverville Airport Relocation has become involved in these discussions, because if the airport is relocated the existing site may be used to relocate either County offices, the Court House or the Hospital. The East Connector and West Connector (there is no “Bypass” proposed by Trinity County or Caltrans) are not part of this discussion, because these are road facilities not involved in the issue of County government buildings. There is no document called the “Strategic Plan”. The reasonably foreseeable elements of these ideas are considered in the Cumulative Impacts analysis of this DEIR, and each project will undergo the environmental review required by CEQA.

**33. Liz Johnson, attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** The Planning Commission should recommend against certifying the EIR. It is defective, and heading for litigation. She also recommended the Commission not select any alternative except the “No Project Alternative”. She recommended that the Commission direct staff to do further study of the omitted environmental effects, and recommend to the Board of Supervisors that further work on this project be discontinued until the Community Plan and Land Use Element of the General Plan are updated properly.

**Response:** Comment noted. County Staff does not concur with these recommendations. County Staff and legal Counsel believe the EIR meets the requirements of CEQA, and no environmental effects are omitted from the Final EIR. Staff and legal Counsel also believe an update of the Weaverville Community Plan or Land Use Element of the General Plan are needed before this project can legally proceed.

**34. Judy Ames-Ruiz, Five Cent Gulch Mobile Home Park:**

**Comment Summary:** Representing most of the people from the mobile home park, she stated that they go downtown and wouldn't use the East Connector. She stated that they all feel that this project is not necessary. The only possible good thing coming from the new road and intersection would be the slowing down of traffic on hwy 3. She tried to get Caltrans to drop the speed limit on hwy 3 from

55 to 45, but she only got it lowered to 50. She stated that they do get people on Five Cent Gulch that get lost. She asked that if the road does get built, that a sign be placed on the Five Cent Gulch Street stating that it is a dead-end road.

**Response:** See Response to Written Comment, Letter L-6, which states the identical comments.

**35. Cindy Angel, Attorney in Weaverville:**

**Comment Summary:** She “is so emotional about this needless project that she is having a problem articulating her objections”. She offered free legal services to anyone who wanted to go against the project.

**Response:** Comment noted. No specific comments on the Draft EIR for the East Connector are made, so no specific response can be made.

## Section 6

Revised Pages of Draft EIR

## CHAPTER 3.0

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### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This chapter provides an integrated presentation of the affected environment, environmental consequences and mitigation measures for the identified issue areas. Potential effects of implementing the proposed project, including permanent, temporary (construction phase), and cumulative effects, are identified, along with mitigation measures recommended to lessen or reduce the identified impacts.

The affected environment describes the environment in the project area as it exists before the commencement of the project. The affected environment is presented from site, local, subregional and/or regional perspectives, as appropriate to each environmental topic. Environmental consequences describe estimated changes to the affected environment – physical, biological, social, and economic – of implementing each of the project alternatives described in Chapters 1 and 2.

Environmental consequences may be either direct or indirect impacts, and direct and indirect impacts may also be described as either permanent or temporary in nature. These terms are defined as follows:

- **Direct impacts:** Any alteration, disturbance, or removal of biological resources that would result directly from project-related activities on the landscape is considered a direct impact. Examples of direct impacts include the removal of vegetation for a new road or other development, and the compaction of soils due to heavy equipment use.
- **Indirect impacts:** Impacts may also occur, not as a direct result of project actions, but indirectly as an unintentional consequence of project-related activities. Examples of indirect effects include elevated noise and dust levels in the vicinity of project actions that would affect wildlife behavior; the reduction of wildlife habitat contiguity due to new development; and the introduction of invasive wildlife and plants.
- **Permanent impacts:** All impacts that result in the irreversible changes are considered permanent. Examples include the loss of vegetation and wildlife habitat due to development. Permanent, direct impacts would be limited to the footprints of the developed area. Examples of permanent, indirect impacts would be ongoing maintenance actions or elevated noise in the project vicinity that would affect wildlife behavior in the project vicinity.
- **Temporary:** Any impacts considered to have reversible effects can be viewed as temporary. Examples of a temporary, direct impact would be the use of a construction equipment storage area that would recover to natural habitat after completion of the project. Examples of

indirect, temporary impacts include the generation of noise and fugitive dust during construction that would affect wildlife behavior in the vicinity.

In this chapter, permanent, temporary, and cumulative impacts are discussed separately for each issue area. Environmental consequences (whether permanent, temporary, or cumulative) are identified and determined to be less than significant, potentially significant, cumulatively significant, or significant and unavoidable. According to CEQA *Guidelines* Section 15382, a significant impact is "... a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project...". For each issue area evaluated, criteria for significance have been developed using the CEQA *Guidelines*, local (Trinity County or Weaverville) standards, or the "significance thresholds" of federal, state, regional, or local agencies. Significance criteria vary for each environmental issue analyzed and are defined at the beginning of each impact analysis section.

Cumulative impacts result when the incremental effects of the project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects producing similar effects, regardless of what agency, organization, or person undertakes such actions. The estimated cumulative effects from the proposed East Connector Roadway project include the following approved or reasonably foreseeable projects in the area:

- Proposed new Weaverville airport
- Proposed West Connector Roadway project
- Ongoing maintenance and removal of riparian vegetation along a segment of East Weaver Creek from 100 feet upstream of Brown's Ranch Road to 100 feet downstream of the SR 299 bridge that is designated as a local flood protection
- Vegetation removal and grading within a parcel of land at the north end of Weaverville that Trinity County recently acquired to expand its existing road maintenance station
- Caltrans widening project on SR 299 and the bridge over East Weaver Creek for bike lanes and sidewalks. The widening would be from Mill Street to Mountain View Street, along both sides of SR 299. The bridge widening will clear span East Weaver Creek and will not encroach on the creek's floodplain or ordinary high water mark. The project includes bike lanes, but does not include new parking.

Other reasonably foreseeable projects include:

- Caltrans widening and straightening of SR 299 over Buckhorn Summit. Effects on Weaverville consist only of possible increase in population and/or through traffic on SR 299. The East Connector would offset, rather than contribute to, this effect. Therefore this effect is not considered cumulative. Physical effects of this project will occur outside of the Weaverville

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Basin and outside of the Trinity River watershed, and therefore are not considered cumulative with the physical effects of the East Connector Project.

- The proposed relocation of County offices and/or hospital to the Lonnie Pool Airport location is factored into the traffic generation numbers used in the traffic analysis. The East Connector would offset, rather than contribute to, this effect. Therefore this effect is not considered cumulative. Physical effects of this project involve an already developed site, therefore the physical effects are not considered cumulative with the physical effects of the East Connector Project.

Mitigation measures may be: 1) necessary to reduce the identified impact below a level of significance; 2) recommended to reduce the magnitude of a significant impact, but not below a level of significance; and 3) recommended to reduce the magnitude of a less than significant impact. In some cases, implementation of more than one mitigation measure is needed to reduce an impact below a level of significant.

Mitigation follows the strategy of avoid/minimize/rectify/reduce over time/compensation. This strategy includes:

- **Avoiding** the impacts altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- **Minimizing** impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of an action and its implementation.
- **Rectifying** the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment.
- **Reducing** or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of an action.
- **Compensating** for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

Where no impact is identified, or where an impact will be less than significant, mitigation is not required. Significant, unavoidable effects that cannot be fully mitigated are addressed in Section 3.21. As noted in Section 3.21, the project is not expected to result in significant unavoidable effects.

Some proposed mitigation measures mitigate for impacts in more than one resource area. In such cases, the mitigation measure is discussed in detail for one resource area (generally the first resource area

discussed in the EIR) and then briefly summarized in other resource areas. For example, mitigation measures addressing project impacts to riparian habitat are discussed in detail in Section 3.8, (Vegetation, Invasive Species, Wildlife), but these measures also mitigate impacts to water quality, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, and floodplains and are referred to in the sections discussing these resources (Section 3.2, 3.7, 3.9, and 3.10). In each section, the mitigation measures are identified by the section in which they are discussed in detail (i.e., the first EIR section in which they appear).

## 3.2 HYDROLOGY, WATER QUALITY, STORMWATER RUNOFF

### 3.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section describes the existing hydrological resources within the project area, including the regional hydrology, regional surface water quality, groundwater supply and quality. Floodplain impacts are addressed separately in Section 3.10, *Floodplains*.

#### *REGIONAL HYDROLOGY*

The project area is located within the watershed of the Trinity River, below Trinity and Lewiston Lakes, and is drained by East Weaver Creek, which flows along portions of the proposed road and bike/pedestrian alignments, and Lance Gulch, which flows along the base of the bluff on the east side of the road alignment.

East Weaver Creek joins West Weaver Creek at Mill Street in southern Weaverville, and the joined branches of Weaver Creek flow to the Trinity River at Douglas City. The Trinity River is a major tributary of the Klamath River system and has been subject to extensive water development as part of the federal Central Valley Project (CVP). Major features of the Trinity River Division (TRD) of the CVP include Trinity Lake (2,448 million acre-feet), Lewiston Lake (14,700 acre-feet), Whiskeytown Lake, Buckhorn Dam, and the tunnels and penstocks which transport approximately 75 percent of the annual flow of the upper Trinity River to the Sacramento River via Judge Francis Carr powerhouse at Whiskeytown Lake and the Spring Creek Tunnel which discharges to Keswick Reservoir.

Total annual diversions from the TRD to the Sacramento River have averaged slightly less than 1.0 million acre-feet since completion of the TRD in 1964. Current annual Trinity River minimum instream flows at Lewiston Dam are 340,000 acre-feet (af), but may increase up to 815,000 af/year, pending resolution of litigation and preparation of a supplemental environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Trinity River Record of Decision, signed by former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt on December 19, 2000. Trinity River flows below Lewiston reflect the high degree of control imposed by upstream facilities. Prior to completion of the TRD dams on the Trinity River, flows at Lewiston exceeded 75,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), and have, at times, exceeded 100,000 cfs. Following completion of the TRD, the highest recorded release below Lewiston Dam was approximately 14,500 cfs in 1974. Currently, the Bureau of Reclamation limits such releases to 6,000 cfs unless an emergency were to occur. With distance downstream, flows are increased by unregulated contributions from side channels and major tributaries, increasing the volume and seasonal variability in river flows.

The USGS maintained a monitoring station on Weaver Creek from 1959 to 1969. Weaver Creek is predominantly uncontrolled, with the exception of Weaverville CSD diversions upstream of the community of Weaverville on West and East Weaver Creeks. Flows in Weaver Creek vary widely seasonally, with the highest flows generally occurring from January through March. This is typical of snowmelt and rainfall-dominated watersheds. The maximum flow of record on Weaver Creek was 2,570 cfs, recorded in December 1965. Minimum flows on Weaver Creek occur from August through October and range from no flow at all to a few cfs. Similar variations, with adjustments for smaller drainage areas, would apply to the other tributary drainages.

Lance Gulch is a spring-fed intermittent drainage that flows from Shasta Springs on Musser Hill, and crosses Brown's Ranch Road east of the project site. Upstream of Station 109+00, Lance Gulch has a well-defined bed and bank and a fairly well developed riparian corridor. Downstream of this location, where the proposed alignment would cross Lance Gulch, the channel and banks have been disturbed by previous mining and present mill operations. Lance Gulch feeds the mill ponds and then flows into a subsurface drainage system that conveys it beneath the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center and SR 299. Lance Gulch discharges into the industrial park at the south end of Weaverville, where it feeds a series of wetlands that are being protected and restored through a Wetland Reserve Program Easement between Trinity County and the NRCS.

### *REGIONAL SURFACE WATER QUALITY*

As characterized in the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region (NCRWQCB, 1996), the Trinity River has been severely impacted by sediment, primarily because of land use practices and water diversions by the TRD. The Trinity River is listed by the California SWRCB, in conjunction with the USEPA, as a Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 303(d) impaired waterbody. The impairment is from sediment, largely a result of "flow depletion" by the TRD. The beneficial uses of the Trinity River include municipal, agricultural and industrial water supply, groundwater recharge, contact and non-contact recreation, commercial fisheries, cold freshwater fish habitat and wildlife habitat. Sediment impairs the use of the river as cold freshwater fish habitat.

As with other north coastal rivers and streams, the Trinity River is renowned for salmon and steelhead fishing. In addition to in-river sport fisheries, the Trinity River also supports tribal fishing for ceremonial, subsistence and sometimes commercial fisheries. The Trinity River also supports ocean sport and commercial fishing. However, major diversions of water from the basin since the 1960s have resulted in significant changes in the river, including changes in temperature regime and disruption of physical cues for migration and spawning. Over the years since dam construction, anadromous fisheries have declined to an estimated 10 percent of their former levels (NCRWQCB, 1996). Trinity River coho (silver) salmon are listed as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), and are being

considered for listing under the California ESA. Additional detail on fishery concerns is provided in Section 3.9, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

The Trinity River is included in the inventory of rivers protected by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (PL 90-542, as amended). The primary management objective for wild and scenic rivers is enhancement and maintenance of the "outstanding remarkable values" for which the rivers were designated. No portion of the East Connector Roadway project is located within the quarter-mile management area of the wild and scenic portion of the Trinity River.

Primary responsibility for water quality protection rests with the NCRWQCB. In accordance with the federal Clean Water Act, the NCRWQCB prepares and implements the basin Water Quality Control Plan, which is intended to provide "a definitive program of actions designed to preserve and enhance water quality and to protect beneficial uses of water in the north coast region. The plan establishes specific temperature objectives for the Trinity River and references an existing cooperative management program for operation of the TRD of the CVP, a mitigation program designed to protect and restore the river. The basin plan establishes specific objectives for water quality, summarized as follows:

- Free of coloration
- No increase in turbidity exceeding twenty percent above naturally occurring background levels
- No taste or odor-producing substances
- No floating material
- No substances which cause deposition of materials
- No increase in suspended sediment load and suspended sediment discharge
- No toxic substances in concentrations that are harmful
- No biostimulatory substances

As mentioned above, the SWRCB, in conjunction with the USEPA, has listed the Trinity River as an "impaired waterway" for sedimentation. As an impaired waterway, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan was completed by USEPA in December 2001. The intent of the TMDL is to contribute to achievement of adopted water quality standards and restoration/protection of beneficial uses; in this case, the Trinity River salmon and steelhead fishery. TMDLs address point as well as non-point sources and naturally-occurring sources. TMDLs are established measurable indicators of quality and numeric targets for subject pollutants. Subsequently, the NCRWQCB will be required to develop an implementation and monitoring plan that will regulate land uses that may impact water quality.

### *REGIONAL GROUNDWATER*

There are no major groundwater aquifers in the project area. The porous recent alluvial deposits along the Trinity River, Weaver Creek and other waterways in the vicinity are recharged by surface water flows in these streams and are frequently tapped for domestic water supplies. The majority of Weaverville is served with a public water system, which draws primarily from surface waters of East and West Weaver Creeks and the Trinity River. Most private wells in the area are established in streamside alluvial deposits.

### *PLANNING DOCUMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES*

#### *Trinity County General Plan*

The *Open Space/Conservation Elements* of the *Trinity County General Plan* (Trinity County Planning Department, 1973) contains the following objective and recommendation relevant to the proposed East Connector Roadway project:

- **Objective:** To preserve the quantity and quality of the existing water supply in Trinity County and adequately plan for the expansion and retention of valuable water supplies for future generations.
- **Recommendation:** Disapprove of any development which may pollute the existing streams and lakes or become the source of silt which washes down into water areas.

#### *Weaverville Community Plan*

The Natural Resources section of the *Weaverville Community Plan* (Trinity County, 1990) contains the general goal “to maintain and protect the high water quality for domestic use, fisheries and wildlife in the basin” and the following specific objectives that are relevant to the proposed East Connector Roadway project:

- **Objective 4.3.** Prevent land uses which result in siltation and pollution of lakes and streams. Such uses should be carefully monitored, and if necessary corrected to assure a clean and productive habitat.
- **Objective 4.4.** Encourage federal and private actions necessary to prevent degradation of water quality in the East and West Weaver watersheds, which are the sources of Weaverville’s domestic water supply.
- **Objective 4.6.** Disapprove of any development which may pollute the existing streams and lakes or become the source of silt which washes down into water areas.

### 3.2.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the CEQA Environmental Checklist, poses the following questions to be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant hydrological or water quality impacts:

Would the project:

- Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?
- Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?
- Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?
- Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?
- Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?

As discussed below, the proposed East Connector Roadway project would not cause violations of any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements. The project would not impact groundwater resources or alter existing drainage patterns substantially. The project includes a roadside drainage system and would help solve an existing drainage problem at the Trinity River Lumber mill property. The project would generate additional surface water runoff, and direct additional flows to Lance Gulch, which drains to an existing subsurface drainage system beneath the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center and SR 299. Increased erosion and roadway runoff could potentially degrade water quality in East Weaver Creek. However, with measures incorporated into the Project Description (Section 1.4.4) and proposed as mitigation (below), these impacts are reduced to less than significant.

### 3.2.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

The project will not generate wastewater subject to waste discharge requirements. Stormwater discharge during construction will be regulated by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board through a water quality certification covering discharge of fill material into waters of the state, and through the General Stormwater Permit for Construction Activities under the NPDES system.

Due to the limited area of impermeable pavement, the East Connector project would not alter groundwater flows or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge. The public water supply source on East Weaver Creek is upstream of the project location, so the project will not impact the public water supply. The project will not alter the course of a river or stream, or divert drainages outside of their original watersheds, but the roadside drainage system would be a minor alteration in drainage patterns.

The East Connector Roadway project would contribute a minor amount of additional stormwater runoff to East Weaver Creek and Lance Gulch due to paving and/or compaction. The East Connector will introduce 6 acres of impermeable surface to the drainage basin. The additional impermeable surface is linear, (40 feet by 1.25 miles), with unpaved areas of permeable alluvium and mine tailings on both sides. The northern end of the project, including the bridge, will drain to East Weaver Creek through vegetated swales. The increase in runoff to East Weaver Creek from this short length of roadway will not be significant. Effects on the capacity of East Weaver Creek to convey flood flows are addressed in Section 3.10, *Floodplains*.

The central and southern portions of the alignment will drain to Lance Gulch. Stormwater from the Pioneer Heights area presently drains onto the mill at this location, interfering with the mill's wastewater and stormwater treatment facilities. The East Connector project would include a roadside drainage system along the east side of the road that would direct this runoff to the existing subsurface drainage system that conveys Lance Gulch beneath the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center and SR 299. This would remove an existing drainage problem from the mill property, resulting in a beneficial project impact. However, it may increase the flows in Lance Gulch through the subsurface system. If it is determined that the additional runoff generated from the road surface, combined with the drainage from Pioneer Heights, will exceed the capacity of the existing subsurface drainage system that conveys Lance Gulch beneath the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center and SR 299, then a detention basin will be constructed on the east side of the East Connector, in the vicinity of the intersection with Pioneer Lane. The detention basin will meter flows and attenuate storm peaks, to reduce peak volumes of discharge to the Lance Gulch system. The basin will also serve as a sedimentation basin, reducing sediment discharge to Lance Gulch from both the East Connector and the Martin Road/Pioneer Heights area.

Minor degradation of water quality could occur due to erosion or stormwater runoff from road surfaces. Roadside areas are of low gradient and high permeability. This will facilitate treatment of roadside runoff in natural, unlined drainage ditches before it is released to surface water bodies. The detention basin mentioned above will serve to settle out solids before they reach the subsurface drainage system of Lance Gulch.

**Hydrology Impact-1**      An additional 6 acres of new impermeable surfaces resulting from construction of the East Connector Roadway and concentration of runoff from Pioneer

Heights could cause additional loads of surface runoff to the subsurface drainage system of Lance Gulch.

**Significance:** Potentially significant/indirect impact, but mitigated

**Hydrology Mitigation 1** Drainage plans will be completed during project design by a California-registered civil engineer. The drainage system will be adequately sized to handle anticipated flows from a 100-year storm event. If it is determined by the Rational Formula that the additional runoff generated from the road surface, combined with the drainage from Pioneer Heights, will exceed the capacity of the existing subsurface drainage system that conveys Lance Gulch beneath the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center and SR 299, then a detention basin will be constructed on the east side of the East Connector, in the vicinity of the intersection with Pioneer Lane. The detention basin will meter flows and attenuate storm peaks, to reduce peak volumes of discharge to the Lance Gulch system. The basin will also serve as a sedimentation basin, reducing sediment discharge to Lance Gulch from both the East Connector and the Martin Road/Pioneer Heights area.

Note: A California Registered Civil Engineer with Trinity County DOT has performed a “worst case scenario” calculation, assuming 6 acres of new impermeable surfaces replacing permeable soils and all runoff from the new impermeable surfaces discharging to Lance Gulch. The analysis indicated that the increase in runoff would be only two cubic feet per second (cfs). The subsurface drainage system currently has an excess capacity of 89 cfs. Therefore, Hydrology Mitigation 1 has been satisfied, and no detention ponds will be needed for this project.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

**Hydrology Impact-2** Road surfaces could carry pollutants such as sediments, fuels and oils to surface water bodies such as East Weaver Creek or Lance Gulch.

**Significance:** Potentially significant/indirect impact, but mitigated

**Hydrology Mitigation 2** Road runoff will not be discharged directly to East Weaver Creek or Lance Gulch. It will be conveyed through unlined, vegetated ditches and swales to surface water bodies. Vegetation and soils in the ditches will slow flows, trap solids and absorb liquid pollutants such as fuels and oils.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### 3.2.4 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

Construction activities will disturb soils and could result in the discharge of sediment, construction materials or chemicals such as fuels, oils, concrete or drilling muds into surface waters. Potential for erosion due to surface water flow would be primarily limited to cut and fill slopes and areas disturbed by grading during construction.

The SWRCB and Federal Law (40 CFR Parts 122-124) require that best available technology economically achievable and best conventional pollutant control technology be used to reduce pollutants. The TCDOT or its construction contractor would be required to prepare a SWPPP, which would include information on runoff, erosion control measures to be employed, and any toxic substances to be used during construction activities. Additional measures to reduce impacts to a less than significant level are included in the Project Description (Chapter 1.0) or as mitigation measures below. The Project Description (see Section 1.4.4, *Construction Methodology*) contains Caltrans Standard Specifications pertaining to runoff, erosion control, and pollution prevention. All of the measures in the ~~project-Project description~~Description, Caltrans Standard Specifications and the mitigation measures listed below will be included in the ~~project-Project plans~~Plans and ~~specifications~~Specifications. The TCDOT will oversee the contractor to ensure the plans and specifications are followed.

Project construction will involve work in or near East Weaver Creek to install the bridges and roadway approaches and bicycle/pedestrian path. Construction Staging Areas 1 and 2 will be located near the vehicle bridge site on East Weaver Creek. Portions of the construction area will be near Lance Gulch, including Staging Area 4.

**Hydrology Impact-3** Temporary water quality impacts could occur as a result of construction of the East Connector Roadway roadway, bridge and bicycle paths.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated.

**Hydrology Mitigation-3** The following measures will be implemented:

- No contact of wet concrete with the live stream will be allowed. Groundwater that comes in contact with wet concrete during construction of the footing excavations will not be allowed to enter the creek but will be pumped to a truck or upland for disposal or treatment, or it may be discharged to a sediment-stilling basin and percolated back into the soil.
- If drilling muds are used to drill holes within the ordinary high-water zone, all drilling muds and fluid within all drilled holes will be pumped through a closed system,

contained on-site in tanks, removed from the project area, and disposed of off-site at an appropriate facility.

- The TCDOT contractor will remove all spoils materials from the drilled pier holes and dispose of the material in a manner that will not result in discharge of runoff of sediment into Waters of the United States.
- Heavy equipment will not be operated in the active flow channel of East Weaver Creek.
- No diversion of surface flows will be allowed.
- Maintenance and refueling areas for equipment will be located a minimum of 150 ft away from the active stream channel. If equipment must be washed, washing will occur where the water cannot flow into the creek channel.
- Spill containment booms will be maintained on-site at all times during construction operations and/or staging or fueling of equipment.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

Additional measures are also listed in Sections 3.1, 3.3 and 3.7 through 3.9 of this EIR. In addition to the mitigation measures above, long-term impacts on Waters of the United States and riparian habitat will be minimized by developing and implementing a SWPPP (as described in the *Project Description*, Chapter 1) and compliance with Caltrans standard specifications and practices described in the Project Description, as well as any additional conditions resulting from Section 7 consultation with NOAA Fisheries (formerly NMFS), or included in the conditions of the following state and federal permits:

- ACOE's Section 404 permit (Nationwide Permit No. 14)
- RWQCB's Section 401 water quality certification
- RWQCB's General Stormwater Permit for Construction Activities
- CDFG's Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA)

**Hydrology Impact-4** Use of staging areas near East Weaver Creek or Lance Gulch could result in discharge of construction materials or chemicals to the water bodies.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated.

**Hydrology Mitigation-4** The County will prohibit using the portions of Staging Areas 1, 2, and 4 that run through and immediately adjacent to Lance Gulch and East Weaver

Creek. TCDOT will limit the use of Staging Area 4 to the south side of Lance Gulch. The north side of Lance Gulch is heavily vegetated and shall not be used for staging equipment and material. All staging areas will be established at least 50 feet from the top of the stream bank or 50 feet from the outer edge of the riparian habitat, whichever is farther. This buffer will be clearly identified on the design drawings and delineated in the field with orange construction barrier fencing. Sedimentation fencing or other erosion and sediment control measures will be installed between the staging area and the riparian area to prevent sediment and pollutant discharges to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. There will be no removal of riparian vegetation for staging purposes.

### 3.2.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

The proposed Weaverville Airport project will result in creation of a nearly level airport surface and up to 20 acres of additional paved areas. The west side of the airport will drain to East Weaver Creek. The northwest corner of the airport site may drain to the Lance Gulch system. Other portions of the east side of the airport will drain to existing unnamed drainages that cross beneath SR 299 in culverts before reaching Lance Gulch and/or East Weaver Creek. However, the proposed airport project also includes detention ponds designed to meter flows and prevent increase in peak flows in existing channels and downstream drainage facilities. Therefore, the combined increase in runoff from the East Connector Roadway (2 cfs) and Weaverville Airport projects would not be expected exceed the capacity of the existing culverts beneath SR 299.

**Hydrology Impact-5** An additional 26 acres of new impermeable surfaces resulting from construction of the East Connector Roadway and proposed Weaverville Airport could cause additional loads of surface runoff to East Weaver Creek or Lance Gulch.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated by **Hydrology Mitigation-1** (see above) and detention ponds proposed to mitigate surface runoff impacts from the airport project.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### 3.3 HAZARDOUS WASTE/MATERIALS

Taber Consultants conducted an HMA to assess the potential for hazardous materials or petroleum projects to exist within the immediate project site (Taber Consultants, 1999b; see Appendix C). In addition, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was prepared for the land that Trinity County acquired from BLM that includes the north end of the project alignment and areas where the County plans to grade, log, and extend the existing road maintenance yard. (BLM 2001). The County recently acquired this land and has not used it for any operations that could potentially cause contamination. The HMA was included in the *East Connector Roadway Project Study Report*.

#### 3.3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

##### *HAZARDOUS WASTE/HAZARDOUS MATERIALS REGULATIONS*

Hazardous waste is defined as any waste material that is a potential threat to human health and environment, having the capacity to cause serious illness or death. In any urbanized environment, hazardous waste and its safe handling and disposal is an issue that must be addressed. Hazardous materials are materials considered dangerous to people or the environment that are still in use. The use, transport, storage and disposal of hazardous waste and hazardous materials are subject to numerous laws and regulations at all levels of government. .

##### *Federal Regulations*

At the federal level, exposure of humans, and in some cases the environment and wildlife, to hazardous chemical agents, is regulated primarily by four regulatory agencies: the USEPA, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The FDA and CPSC play a limited role in regulating hazardous materials as they pertain to the proposed project. In addition to these regulatory agencies, the Department of Transportation (DOT) regulates the interstate transport of hazardous materials.

##### *State Regulations*

At the state level, hazardous materials and hazardous waste are regulated through a number of statutes and regulations. These laws, many similar to their federal counterparts, regulate the use, storage, disposal, and transport of hazardous materials. The primary state regulatory authorities, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), SWRCB, and California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (CalOSHA), administer many of these laws.

The California State Highway Patrol under CCR Section 1150-1194, and the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 49 regulates transport of hazardous materials. When a hazardous material/waste spill originates on a highway, the California Highway Patrol is responsible for direction of cleanup and enforcement (CCR Section 2450-2454b). “Highway” is defined as a way or place of whatever nature, publicly maintained and open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel. Highway includes streets and county maintained roads. A highway does not include a way or place under the jurisdiction of a federal governmental agency, which lies on National Forest or private lands, is open to public use, and for which the cost of maintenance of such way or place is borne or contributed to directly by any users thereof (Trinity County Planning Department, 2002b).

When a hazardous material/waste spill occurs on public land, it is the managing agencies’ responsibility to direct cleanup and enforcement. They will initiate all investigations and cleanup, and contact the necessary personnel. When a hazardous material/waste spill occurs on private lands, the property owner is responsible for cleanup. Trinity County Environmental Health is contacted and ensures that proper cleanup and followup is conducted according to federal, state, and local regulations (Trinity County Planning Department, 2002b).

#### *HMA METHODS*

The HMA was based upon a review of the available records, discussion with County personnel, and a field reconnaissance of the site. It did not include subsurface investigation, sampling or testing of air, soils, surface water or groundwater; or assessment for the presence of radon or other naturally-occurring hazardous materials, lead-based paint, lead in drinking water, asbestos, materials containing asbestos or physical hazards (Taber Consultants, 1999b).

#### *Database Searches*

As part of the effort to identify sites with known releases of hazardous materials or petroleum products likely to affect the project corridor, or sites with potential for such releases, databases and site lists maintained by environmental regulatory agencies were searched for listed properties in proximity to the study corridor. Search distances varied for different databases, and ranged from a radius of 400 meters to 1,600 meters. A complete listing of the databases and site lists searched is provided in the HMA report (Taber Consultants, 1999b).

#### *Local Agency Contacts*

Local agencies responsible for hazardous waste management (i.e, Trinity County General Services, Trinity County Environmental Health Department and the NCRWQCB) were contacted to ascertain whether any agency record or personal knowledge of the study area indicated potential contamination sites.

### *Site Reconnaissance*

Taber Consultants conducted a brief reconnaissance of the project corridor and nearby vicinity on July 20, 1999. The traverse consisted of observation made walking approximately along the alignments for proposed Alternatives 1 and 2.

### *HMA RESULTS*

#### *Database Searches*

The potential for a site with an existing hazardous materials or hazardous waste condition to affect the project depends, in part, upon the nature of the proposed construction. For the East Connector Roadway, excavations for road cuts up to 5.5 meters (18 feet) deep are expected. Contaminants that have migrated from their original source might be encountered if the contaminant source is hydrologically up-gradient from the site and if the excavation extends below the depth of historic high groundwater. In general, East Weaver Creek is expected to act as a hydrologic barrier to contaminant transport.

The database search returned a total of 80 records, representing approximately 45 sites with potential contamination within 1,600 meters (1 mile) of the project site. In September 2002, Trinity County updated the information regarding these sites. **Table 3.3-1** summarizes the findings concerning individual sites with existing conditions that are located within or in close proximity to the proposed project area.

The record search conducted by Taber Consultants identified additional sites with environmental concerns within a 1 mile radius of the East Connector Roadway project. After reviewing the remaining sites, Taber Consultants concluded that these sites are too far away to significantly affect the project, or are hydrologically separated from the project by East Weaver Creek and are therefore not likely to have an effect on the project. Information regarding these other sites is available in the HMA report in the *East Connector Project Study Report*. None of the sites reported in the environmental record search for which locations could be identified appears to have a significant potential to affect the project.

**Table 3.3-1.  
Sites with Environmental Conditions Within or in Proximity to the Project**

<b>SITE</b>	<b>Distance from Project</b>	<b>Database Listings</b>	<b>Potential Hazard Assessment</b>
Weaver Landfill Disposal Site 1.5 mile NE Weaverville off SR 3 (City Dump Road)	~0.5 mi N	CALSITES, NFA, SWIS	No groundwater contamination known at this site (B. Rapinak, Trinity County General Services). Groundwater testing is ongoing.
Trinity River Lumber 1121 Main Street	Within project limits	LUST(S), UST	Tanks and dispensers removed. LUST(S) indicates “case closed.”
CHP Weaverville 1261 Main Street	60’ west	LUST(S), UST, HWIS	LUST(S) indicates “case closed.”
Trinity Family Medical Group (listed as “Tronmesh Repac 10”) 500 Trinity Lakes Blvd. (SR 3)	~200’ S of northern terminus	HWIS	No evidence of contamination release.
Weaver Valley Market SR 299 and Glenn Road	500 meters (1640 ft) SW	UST	Gasoline release confirmed during tank removal in 2000. Investigation and remediation ongoing. Potential low-level soil contamination (C. Tuckey, Trinity Co. Health Dept.).
Weaverville Maintenance Yard (Trinity County Road Maintenance Yard) Trinity Lakes Blvd (SR 3)/North Street	~150 meters (500 ft) N	CALSITES UST, HWIS	No evidence of contamination release. USTs replaced, remediation performed, “case closed”

Source: Taber Consultants, 1999b; updated by Trinity County, September 2002.

### **Site Reconnaissance**

Taber Consultants observed no evidence indicating a significant potential for hazardous material or petroleum product contamination that could affect the project. Taber Consultants looked at both alignments. Both roadway alternatives traverse tailing piles from old mining activity, but no evidence of potential hazardous materials or wastes from these activities was observed. Alternative 2 goes through previously undisturbed areas never used for industry. Specific observations made during the project site reconnaissance are presented below (with locations identified by project station number).

**Station 100+00**—Approximately 150 m (500 ft) north of the project alignment is the Trinity County Road Maintenance Yard. Fuel dispensers are located adjacent to SR 3. No evidence of hazardous materials or contamination was observed at this location.

**Station 101+60 to 103+00**—The property east of this location is occupied by trucks and heavy equipment (the Pruett Logging yard). A large tank on concrete supports appears to be used for fuel storage. Otherwise, no evidence of hazardous materials was observed at this location. No evidence of contamination was noted.

**Station 108+60 to 109+60**—A large debris disposal area adjacent to this segment appears to be west of the proposed alignment. Debris is primarily piles of soil, asphalt, and concrete rubble, with some piles of logs and wood. No evidence of hazardous materials or contamination was observed at this location.

**Station 113+20 to 114+00**—This section of the proposed project crosses an area that appears to have been used for equipment maintenance. Debris in the area includes large gears, old tracks, tires, cables, nuts and bolts and other equipment parts. A small shed on or west of the project at approximately Station 113+60 has a sign that reads, “Notice: Do Not Leave Unattended While Pumping Fuel or Chemicals” and “No Smoking Within 50 Feet of Fueling Area.” No evidence of fuel containers or underground fuel storage was noted at this location. Wood at the base of the shed is oily.

**Station 120+00 to 120+80**—The property north of the project is occupied by the CHP. A fuel pump island is location on the back (north side) of the property. Otherwise, no evidence of hazardous materials was observed at this location. No evidence of contamination was noted. There is a fiberglass underground fuel tank at this location; installed in 1996. There is no evidence of contamination from this tank, but it is scheduled to be removed in 2003. (Information updated by Trinity County Environmental Health Division in September 2002.)

**Station 121+00**—The property on the northwest corner of SR 299 and Glen Road is occupied by the Weaver Valley Market. Fuel tanks and pumps were removed in 2000. Trace amounts of gasoline and MBTE were identified in soil and water in the tank excavation. Case closure is pending, but was not finalized at the time of this writing. (Information updated by Trinity County Environmental Health Division in September 2002.)

### ***HMA Conclusions***

There do not appear to be contaminated sites within the project area with the potential to affect the proposed project and proposed construction is not likely to encounter significant hazardous materials or petroleum product contamination that could affect the project. Tailing piles from old mining activities are present along much of the project corridor, but no evidence of potential hazardous materials was observed in these piles. Much of the project corridor traverses Trinity River Lumber Company property; however, the corridor primarily cuts through inactive portions of this property and the operations here do not appear to be a potential contamination threat within the project area.

## ***PLANNING DOCUMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES***

### ***Trinity County General Plan***

The Hazardous Materials/Waste section of the *Safety Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan* (Trinity County Planning Department, 2002b) contains the following goal related to hazardous materials/waste

safety: “Reduce threats to the public health and the environment caused by the use, storage, and transportation of hazardous materials and hazardous waste.” Objectives and policies that relate to the proposed East Connector Roadway project are as follows:

- **Objective S.3.2.** Ensure adequate cleanup of hazardous materials and hazardous waste.
- **Policy S.3.1 (A).** The County should encourage cooperation between all agencies involved in the cleanup and regulation of hazardous materials.

### *Weaverville Community Plan*

The *Weaverville Community Plan* (Trinity County, 1990) does not specifically address hazardous material and hazardous waste management.

### **3.3.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the CEQA Environmental Checklist, poses the following questions to be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant floodplain impacts:

Would the project:

- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?
- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonable foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?
- Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?
- Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

These significance criteria were used to evaluate impacts of the proposed East Connector Roadway project. As discussed below, the project is not expected to have significant impacts involving hazardous materials or wastes.

### 3.3.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

Taber Consultants reviewed the proposed East Connector Roadway design and evaluated potential hazardous materials and public health impacts of the project. No permanent impacts associated with hazardous materials were identified. There does not appear to be an issue of the County acquiring contaminated property, nor an issue of exposing the public to hazardous materials or waste while using the roadway. The finished project will improve emergency response by providing an additional route that could be used by emergency vehicles, for evacuations, or as a detour in the event of a toxic spill or other emergency on SR 299 or SR 3 near downtown Weaverville.

The East Connector is not expected to be a route used for through transport of loads of hazardous waste. Most through trucks will stay on SR 299 and SR 3. There are no industrial facilities on north SR 3 that would attract or generate trucks transporting hazardous materials in large quantities, or acutely hazardous materials or wastes. Trucks hauling solid waste from the transfer station at the previous landfill site to the Anderson Landfill may use the East Connector. However, the transfer station does not accept hazardous waste. [The transfer station does accept “household hazardous waste” once a year. These are not acutely hazardous waste, and are not transported in large quantities. Even in the event of an accident, this type of waste does not represent a significant hazard to the public or the environment.](#)

[The California Highway Patrol has the primary responsibility for the management of hazardous material spill sites on or adjacent to public roadways, including County roads. However, The TCDOT also has an Emergency Response Handbook that is distributed to all road maintenance crews. It documents general procedures for notifying appropriate agencies, taking immediate steps to protect human life and property, containing or preventing the spread of the material, protecting water bodies, evacuating the area if necessary and performing traffic control.](#)

### 3.3.3 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

Hazardous waste contamination is not known to be present within the proposed action right-of-way, therefore, construction of the project is not expected to result in the exposure of the public, including construction workers, to contaminated soils or groundwater. Although hazardous contaminants are not expected to be encountered, there is a possibility that excavation may result in exposure of contaminated soils or groundwater.

No major equipment repairs will be done at the construction site, but maintenance and fueling may occur at designated staging areas. This may involve the transfer of fuels, oils, greases and solvents. The contractor must be prepared for the possibility of an accidental release of these materials.

### *ALTERNATIVE B*

Under Alternative B, one commercial property (shoe store) on the south side of Glen Road at Nugget Lane may be modified or demolished in conjunction with the project. This work may involve exposure or handling of hazardous building materials such as asbestos or lead based paint.

**Haz Mat Impact-1** Construction of the proposed East Connector Roadway could result in the exposure of construction workers to contaminated soils or groundwater.

**Significance** Potentially significant/indirect, but mitigated (**Haz Mat Mitigation-1**)

**Haz Mat Mitigation-1** If obvious signs of contamination in soils or groundwater are encountered during excavation (odors, sheens or discolored soil), work in that excavation will stop immediately. The TCDOT and the Trinity County Division of Environmental Health will be notified. The soils and/or groundwater will be sampled and tested for suspected contaminants. A Workplan and Site Safety Plan will be prepared addressing safety procedures for completing the excavation, and disposal of the spoils and wastewater generated by the excavation. The workplan shall be approved by the Trinity County Division of Environmental Health and/or the NCRWQCB. Only workers with current Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training shall be permitted to work in this area. Grading and construction on uncontaminated sections of the project may continue. Remediation of the contaminated soil and or groundwater in the surrounding area shall be the responsibility of the party responsible for the contamination.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

**Haz Mat Impact-2** Construction of the proposed East Connector Roadway could result in the exposure of the public, including construction workers, to contamination in demolition debris (Alternative B only).

**Significance** Potentially significant/indirect, but mitigated (**Haz Mat Mitigation-2**)

**Haz Mat Mitigation-2** If any structure is to be demolished as part of this project, the building will be

surveyed and tested for lead based paint and asbestos-containing building materials by a qualified consultant. If present, the contractor will be notified of the presence and location of the materials, and will be required to prepare a Health and Safety Plan (HSP) prior to the initiation of building demolition. The HSP would meet OSHA and Cal-OSHA requirements and other state and local regulations for the handling and disposal of lead-based paint and/or asbestos, and other potentially hazardous materials associated with the demolition of structures. If asbestos-containing building materials are present, the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District (NCUAQMD) will be notified at least 10 working days prior to the start date of the demolition. The Contractor shall follow the recommendations of the NCUAQMD regarding demolition, dust control, removal and disposal of asbestos-containing building materials.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

**Haz Mat Impact-3** Fuels, oils, greases, solvents, concrete or other materials used in construction or construction equipment could be accidentally released to the environment.

**Significance** Potentially significant, but mitigated (**Haz Mat Mitigation-3 and Hydrology Mitigation-3 and -4**).

**Haz Mat Mitigation-3** The Contractor shall exercise every reasonable precaution to protect streams from pollution with fuels, oils and other harmful materials. The Contractor will be required to have adequate spill containment equipment on hand at all times. All waste petroleum products and empty petroleum product containers will be disposed of properly at a recycling or disposal site legally authorized to accept that type of waste. The Trinity County Environmental Health Department and NCRWQCB must be notified immediately in the event of a release of significant quantities of hazardous materials. In the event of a release into East Weaver Creek, CDFG must also be notified.

**Hydrology Mitigation-3** The following measures will be implemented:

- No contact of wet concrete with the live stream will be allowed. Groundwater that comes in contact with wet concrete during construction of the footing excavations will not be allowed to enter the creek but will be pumped to a truck or upland for disposal or treatment, or it may be discharged to a sediment-stilling basin and percolated back into the soil.
- If drilling muds are used to drill holes within the ordinary high-water zone, all drilling muds and fluid within all drilled holes will be pumped through a closed system,

contained on-site in tanks, removed from the project area, and disposed of off-site at an appropriate facility.

- The TCDOT contractor will remove all spoils materials from the drilled pier holes and dispose of the material in a manner that will not result in discharge of runoff of sediment into Waters of the United States.
- Heavy equipment will not be operated in the active flow channel of East Weaver Creek.
- No diversion of surface flows will be allowed.
- Maintenance and refueling areas for equipment will be located a minimum of 150 ft away from the active stream channel. If equipment must be washed, washing will occur where the water cannot flow into the creek channel.
- Spill containment booms will be maintained on-site at all times during construction operations and/or staging or fueling of equipment.

**Hydrology Mitigation-4** The County will prohibit using the portions of Staging Areas 1, 2, and 4 that run through and immediately adjacent to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. TCDOT will limit the use of Staging Area 4 to the south side of Lance Gulch. The north side of Lance Gulch is heavily vegetated and shall not be used for staging equipment and material. All staging areas will be established at least 50 feet from the top of the stream bank or 50 feet from the outer edge of the riparian habitat, whichever is farther. This buffer will be clearly identified on the design drawings and delineated in the field with orange construction barrier fencing. Sedimentation fencing or other erosion and sediment control measures will be installed between the staging area and the riparian area to prevent sediment and pollutant discharges to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. There will be no removal of riparian vegetation for staging purposes.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

In addition to the mitigation measures above, potential impacts will be minimized by developing and implementing a SWPPP (as described in the *Project Description*, Chapter 1) and compliance with Caltrans standard specifications and other practices described in the Project Description, as well as any additional conditions resulting from Section 7 consultation with NOAA Fisheries (formerly NMFS), or included in the conditions of the following state and federal permits:

- ACOE's Section 404 permit (Nationwide Permit No. 14)
- RWQCB's Section 401 water quality certification

- RWQCB's General Stormwater Permit for Construction Activities
- CDFG's Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA)

### **3.3.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

No cumulative impacts associated with hazardous materials have been identified. Since the East Connector project will not result in Hazardous Materials impacts, it will not contribute to a cumulative impact.

## 3.5 NOISE

This section presents existing noise conditions in the project vicinity, based on a combination of measured and modeled noise levels, and identifies the effects that noise from construction and operation of the East Connector roadway will have on the surrounding community. Noise abatement measures that may be used to reduce the significance of project effects are presented. The section also considers project-related vibration effects and cumulative noise effects of the roadway project and other foreseeable projects in the affected area. The environmental noise analysis was completed by Bollard & Brennan, Inc.

### 3.5.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

#### *NOISE EXPOSURE AND COMMUNITY NOISE*

Noise is often defined simply as unwanted sound, and thus is a subjective reaction to characteristics of a physical phenomenon. Researchers have generally agreed that A-weighted sound pressure levels (sound levels) are very well correlated with community reaction to noise. Throughout this analysis, A-weighted sound pressure levels will be used to describe community noise unless otherwise indicated. The unit of sound level measurement is the decibel (dB), sometimes expressed as dBA. Noise descriptors used to describe the existing noise environment and project noise impacts in the project area are summarized below:

- Leq: The equivalent sound level is used to describe noise over a specified period of time, typically one hour, in terms of a single numerical value. The Leq is the constant sound level that would contain the same acoustic energy as the varying sound level, during the same time period (i.e., the average noise exposure level for the given time period).
- CNEL The Community Noise Equivalent Level, or CNEL, is defined as the 24-hour average noise level with noise occurring during evening hours (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) weighted by a factor of three times, and nighttime hours (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) weighted by a factor of 10 times.
- Ldn: The 24-hour day and night A-weighted noise exposure level accounts for the greater sensitivity of most people to nighttime noise by weighting noise levels at night (“penalizing” nighttime noises). Noise between 12:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. is weighted (penalized) by adding 10 dB to take into account the general annoyance of nighttime noises. The Ldn (Day/Night Level) is similar to the CNEL, but does not have an evening (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) weighting factor.

For the most part, the CNEL and Ldn are used interchangeably. Both the CNEL and Ldn descriptors represent a 24-hour average noise level. The Ldn descriptor is generally used for evaluating traffic or

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aircraft noise levels, and is one of the conventional descriptors used throughout the United States. The CNEL descriptor was developed by the State of California Division of Aeronautics, specifically for evaluating aircraft noise levels within the State of California. For traffic noise levels and community noise levels, the CNEL and Ldn generally agree within 0.5 dB to 1 dB.

**Table 3.5-1** provides examples of A-weighted maximum sound levels associated with common noise sources.

<b>Table 3.5-1 Typical A-Weighted Maximum Sound Levels of Common Noise Sources</b>	
Decibels	Description
130	Threshold of pain
120	Jet aircraft take-off at 100 feet
110	Riveting machine at operators position
100	Shot-gun at 200 feet
90	Bulldozer at 50 feet
80	Diesel locomotive at 300 feet
70	Commercial jet aircraft interior during flight
60	Normal conversation speech at 5-10 feet
50	Open office background level
40	Background level within a residence
30	soft whisper at 2 feet
20	Interior of recording studio

Source: Bolt, Beranek and Newman 1971.

*EXISTING NOISE CONDITIONS IN THE PROJECT AREA*

Noise levels in the project vicinity are dominated by traffic on SR 299, SR 3, other local roadways, and operations from the lumber mill. Existing land uses adjacent to the proposed connector road are varied. The land uses which are the primary concern with regards to noise generated by the proposed project include single family residential, multifamily residential, recreational parks, and mobile home park.

*MODELED EXISTING TRAFFIC NOISE*

Bollard & Brennan, Inc. used the FHWA model for determining existing traffic noise levels in terms of peak hour Leq and 24-hour Ldn along the existing street system. Bollard & Brennan, Inc. used the Sound-32 Model for evaluating existing noise at 15 receiver locations along the proposed East Connector Roadway. The Sound-32 and FHWA models were developed to predict hourly Leq values for free-

flowing traffic conditions, and are considered to be accurate within 1.5 dB. Traffic volumes were provided by the traffic consultant, and were used as direct inputs to the models. Truck percentages and day/night traffic split information were based on Caltrans data.

Tables 3.5-2 and 3.5-3 show the results of the analysis. Table 3.5-2 shows the modeled existing traffic noise levels along the existing street system. Table 3.5-3 shows the modeled existing traffic noise levels at receiver locations along the East Connector. Figure 3.5-1 shows the locations of affected receivers. These locations include potential noise-sensitive land uses in the project vicinity: single family residences, multi-family residences (the Weaver Creek Senior Apartments), a mobile home park (Two Creeks Mobile Homes), and the Golden Age Senior Center.

It is difficult to summarize the existing (without project) traffic noise levels at each receiver location along the proposed roadway, due to the fact that most of these receivers are located a considerable distance from any major existing roadway. Therefore, existing background and traffic noise levels shown in Table 3.5-3 are based upon a combination of measured and modeled noise levels.

<b>Table 3.5-2</b>				
<b>Predicted Traffic Noise Levels Along the Existing Roadway System (Exterior Levels, in dBA)</b>				
<b>(Based Upon FHWA RD-77-108 Traffic Noise Prediction Model)</b>				
Roadway	Traffic Noise Level at 75'		Distance to Ldn Contour*	
	Peak Hr. Leq	Ldn	60 dB Ldn	65 dB Ldn
<i>STATE ROUTE 3</i>				
SR 299 to Washington Street	60.4 dB	60.2 dB	77'	36'
Washington Street to 5 Cent Gulch Rd.	64.7 dB	61.4 dB	93'	43'
North of 5 Cent Gulch Rd.	65.0 dB	61.0 dB	87'	40'
<i>STATE ROUTE 299</i>				
West of SR 3	64.3 dB	58.8 dB	63'	29'
SR 3 to Washington Street	64.0 dB	64.7 dB	155'	72'
Washington Street to Glen Road	66.9 dB	66.2 dB	195'	91'
Glen Road to Martin Road	64.7 dB	64.1 dB	141'	65'
East of Martin Road	64.7 dB	63.8 dB	135'	63'
<i>WASHINGTON STREET</i>				
SR 299 to SR 3	59.7 dB	58.9 dB	63'	29'

\* Distance to traffic noise contours is from the roadway centerline.

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**Table 3.5-3  
Estimated Existing Background and Traffic Noise Levels  
at Receiver Locations (Exterior Levels, in dBA)**

Receiver #	Land Use	Assessor Parcel No.	Leq	Ldn
R-1	Logging Equipment Yard	024-400-0200	51 dB	48 dB
R-2	Mobile Home Park	024-390-3000	58 dB	58 dB
R-3	Single Family Residence	024-410-0800	49 dB	50 dB
R-4	Senior Center	024-390-2800	49 dB	50 dB
R-5	Senior Apartments	024-390-6200	49 dB	50 dB
R-6	Single Family Residence	024-410-0700	51 dB	48 dB
R-7	Single Family Residence	024-430-0100	51 dB	48 dB
R-8	Single Family Residence	024-430-0500	51 dB	48 dB
R-9	Single Family Residence	024-430-0700	51 dB	48 dB
R-10	Single Family Residence		51 dB	48 dB
R-11	Single Family Residence	024-430-1600	51 dB	48 dB
R-12	Single Family Residence	024-430-1500	51 dB	48 dB
R-13	Single Family Residence	024-430-1400	51 dB	48 dB
R-14	Single Family Residence	024-430-6200	51 dB	48 dB
R-15	Single Family Residence	024-430-1300	51 dB	48 dB

*MEASURED EXISTING TRAFFIC NOISE*

Bollard & Brennan, Inc. conducted short-term traffic noise level measurements adjacent to the project site at four locations and conducted continuous hourly noise level at two locations adjacent to the proposed project site for a 24-hour period on January 3 and 4, 2002. The short-term noise level measurements were conducted to determine typical background noise levels during the morning and evening peak hour periods, and for comparison to future predicted noise levels. The continuous noise level measurements were conducted for comparison to the Sound-32 and FHWA models. In addition, continuous 24-hour noise measurement data collected along Glen Road by Brown-Buntin Associates, Inc., for the *Trinity County General Plan Noise Element Update*, were also used to assist in quantifying background noise levels. Locations of the short-term and continuous traffic measuring sites and results of short-term and continuous noise measurements are shown in **Figures 3.5-2, 3.5-3, 3.5-4, and 3.5-5**.

Figure 3.5-1

Figure 3.5-2

Figure 3.5-3

Figure 3.5-4

Insert 3.5-5

### *PLANNING DOCUMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES*

#### *Trinity County General Plan*

The purpose of the *Trinity County General Plan Noise Element* (Trinity County, 1974) is to provide mechanisms to mitigate existing noise conflicts and to minimize future noise conflicts by the adoption of policies and implementation measures designed to achieve land use compatibility for the proposed development. The Noise Element expresses the County's intent to minimize the impact of existing noise levels and to prevent adverse noise levels from occurring in the future. Note that Trinity County is currently updating the General Plan Noise Element. The revised Noise Element and corresponding Noise Ordinance are expected to be adopted in January 2003. The following specific recommendations contained in the current Noise Element (Trinity County, 1974) are relevant to the proposed project:

- Where feasible, alternate routes around densely populated areas should be provided for large trucks, thus reducing not only noise exposure but also traffic problems.
- Quiet forms of transportation such as walking and bicycling should be encouraged.
- The Noise Insulation Regulation in the State Administrative Code should be enforced. A special zoning overlay is proposed to encompass all areas in the County within L10 contours of 55 dBA (approximately equal to a CNEL of 60 dBA).

#### *Weaverville Community Plan*

The *Weaverville Community Plan* Hazards section goal and objective regarding noise that relates to the proposed East Connector Roadway project are as follows:

- **Goal #4:** To protect the public from adverse noise impacts.
- **Objective 4.1:** Assess new projects and their noise impacts on individual neighborhoods.

### **3.5.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the CEQA Environmental Checklist, poses the following questions to be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant noise impacts:

Would the project cause:

- Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?
- Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

- A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?
- A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?
- For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

The following noise standards apply to the proposed project:

*FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION/CALTRANS CRITERIA*

The criteria for evaluating noise impacts that are used by the FHWA and Caltrans are contained in the Caltrans Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol (The Protocol). Based upon The Protocol, the proposed project is considered a Type 1 project. The project has also been determined to pass the screening procedures for determining the need for a Traffic Noise Impact Analysis, and is therefore required to perform a Traffic Noise Impact Analysis. (Is this all we're keeping in the EIR from the discussion of these criteria?)

The Protocol establishes Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) for various land uses which have been categorized based upon activity. Land uses in these documents are categorized on the basis of their sensitivity to noise. The Category A criterion applies to lands on which serenity and quiet are of extraordinary significance and where the preservation of those qualities is essential if the area is to continue to serve its intended purpose. The Category A criterion is an hourly exterior sound level that approaches (within 1 dB) or exceeds the hourly NAC of 57 dBA, Leq. The Category B criterion applies to residences, hotels, motels, churches, schools, recreation areas, active sport areas, and parks, and is an hourly exterior sound level that approaches (within 1 dB) or exceeds the hourly NAC of 67 dBA, Leq. This criterion is generally applied at the outdoor activity areas where frequent human use occurs. The Category C criterion applies to commercially developed land uses, and is an hourly exterior sound level that approaches or exceeds 72 dB Leq. The Category E criterion applies to residences, motels, hotels, schools, hospitals, and similar uses, and is an hourly interior sound level of 52 dB Leq. The interior sound level criterion only applies in those situations where there are no exterior activities to be affected by the traffic noise. The Protocol also goes on to state that a noise increase is considered substantial when the predicted noise levels with the project exceed existing noise levels by 12 dBA, Leq.

Under The Protocol, a traffic noise impact must be mitigated when the predicted noise levels "approach or exceed" the NAC (Criterion B, or 67 dBA, for this project) or when the predicted noise levels

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substantially exceed existing noise levels (an increase of 12 dBA or more) and it is reasonable and feasible to mitigate.

*TRINITY COUNTY GENERAL PLAN NOISE LEVEL CRITERIA*

Trinity County is currently updating the General Plan Noise Element. The revised Noise Element and corresponding Noise Ordinance are expected to be adopted in January 2003. The current draft Noise Element contains a policy stating that "Noise created by new transportation noise sources shall be mitigated so that resulting noise levels do not exceed 60 dB Ldn in outdoor activity areas or 45 dB Ldn in interior spaces of noise-sensitive land uses including residences, hotels, hospitals, churches and meeting halls.

Construction of the East Connector Roadway project will generate short-term noise levels in excess of applicable standards; however, proposed mitigation would reduce the impact of these noise levels to sensitive receptors in the project area to less than significant. Ground vibration due to traffic on the proposed East Connector Road will not be detectable at adjacent land uses, and is therefore not considered significant. Noise impacts due to traffic will be below established standards at all receptor locations. Although there will be noticeable increases in noise levels associated with vehicle traffic along the East Connector at some locations adjoining the project, due to attenuation and the fact that most receptors are separated from the road by topography, vegetation and/or East Weaver Creek, these increases are not considered "substantial." Cumulative noise impacts from the proposed roadway and proposed new Weaverville airport would be less than significant.

### 3.5.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

*PROJECT TRAFFIC NOISE IMPACTS*

Changing traffic patterns will change noise distribution patterns. Noise in the Brown's Ranch Road/Martin Road area will increase. Noise along Washington Street, in the vicinity of the elementary school and Lowden Park will decrease. **Table 3.5-4** shows the modeled traffic noise levels along the existing street system for the year 2020 Future No Project and Future Plus Project Conditions. **Table 3.5-5** shows the modeled Future (Year 2020) Without Project traffic noise levels at receiver locations along the East Connector. Noise levels shown in **Table 3.5-5** are estimated based upon a combination of measured background noise levels and modeled traffic noise levels. This is because, as noted for **Table 3.5-3**, it is difficult to summarize the without project traffic noise levels at each receiver location along the proposed roadway since most of these receivers are located a considerable distance from any major existing roadway. **Table 3.5-6** shows the modeled Future (2020) Plus Project traffic noise levels at receiver locations along the East Connector.

<b>Table 3.5-4</b>								
<b>Predicted Future (Year 2020) Traffic Noise Levels (Exterior in dBA)</b>								
<b>(Based Upon FHWA RD-77-108 Traffic Noise Prediction Model)</b>								
Roadway	Future No Project				Future With East Connector			
	Traffic Noise Level at 75'		Distance to Ldn Contour*		Traffic Noise Level at 75'		Distance to Ldn Contour*	
	Leq	Ldn	60 dB	65 dB	Leq	Ldn	60 dB	65 dB
<i>STATE ROUTE 3</i>								
SR 299 to Washington Street	63.6	63.9	137'	63'	63.8	63.4	126'	59'
<i>STATE ROUTE 299</i>								
SR 3 to Washington Street								
Washington Street to Glen Road	65.1	65.3	168'	78'	64.7	65.0	162'	75'
Glen Road to Martin Road	68.1	68.1	261'	121'	67.5	67.5	239'	111'
	67.6	66.6	206'	96'	66.4	66.3	197'	91'
<i>WASHINGTON STREET</i>								
SR 299 to SR 3	61.9	61.1	89'	41'	56.4	55.6	38'	18'
<i>EAST CONNECTOR ROAD</i>								
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	63.6	60.2	78'	36'
* Distance to traffic noise contours is from the roadway centerline.								

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<b>Table 3.5-5</b>				
<b>Predicted Future (2020) Traffic Noise Levels at Receiver Locations without East Connector Road Project (Exterior Levels, in dBA)<sup>1</sup></b>				
Receiver #	Land Use	Assessor Parcel No.		
			Leq	Ldn
R-1	Logging Equipment Yard	024-400-0200	52 dB	52 dB
R-2	Mobile Home Park	024-390-3000	50 dB	51 dB
R-3	Single Family Residence	024-410-0800	50 dB	51 dB
R-4	Senior Center	024-390-2800	50 dB	50 dB
R-5	Senior Apartments	024-390-6200	50 dB	51 dB
R-6	Single Family Residence	024-410-0700	47 dB	48 dB
R-7	Single Family Residence	024-430-0100	48 dB	48 dB
R-8	Single Family Residence	024-430-0500	48 dB	48 dB
R-9	Single Family Residence	024-430-0700	48 dB	48 dB
R-10	Single Family Residence		48 dB	48 dB
R-11	Single Family Residence	024-430-1600	48 dB	49 dB
R-12	Single Family Residence	024-430-1500	49 dB	49 dB
R-13	Single Family Residence	024-430-1400	49 dB	49 dB
R-14	Single Family Residence	024-430-6200	49 dB	49 dB
R-15	Single Family Residence	024-430-1300	48 dB	48 dB

<sup>1</sup> Approximate levels in dBA (rounded).

Table 3.5-6 Predicted Future (2020) Traffic Noise Levels at Receiver Locations with East Connector Road Project (Exterior Levels, in dBA)						
Receiver #	Land Use	Assessor Parcel No.	Alternative 1		Alternative 2	
			Leq	Ldn	Leq	Ldn
R-1	Logging Equipment Yard	024-400-0200	55.8 dB	56.1 dB	56.1 dB	56.4 dB
R-2	Mobile Home Park	024-390-3000	55.4 dB	55.7 dB	53.2 dB	53.5 dB
R-3	Single Family Residence	024-410-0800	51.1 dB	51.4 dB	55.5 dB	55.8 dB
R-4	Senior Center	024-390-2800	55.7 dB	56.0 dB	57.1 dB	57.4 dB
R-5	Senior Apartments	024-390-6200	53.3 dB	53.6 dB	50.3 dB	50.6 dB
R-6	Single Family Residence	024-410-0700	50.7 dB	51.0 dB	51.8 dB	52.1 dB
R-7	Single Family Residence	024-430-0100	50.5 dB	50.8 dB	50.6 dB	50.9 dB
R-8	Single Family Residence	024-430-0500	50.9 dB	51.2 dB	50.8 dB	51.1 dB
R-9	Single Family Residence	024-430-0700	50.7 dB	51.0 dB	50.6 dB	50.9 dB
R-10	Single Family Residence		52.6 dB	52.9 dB	53.1 dB	53.4 dB
R-11	Single Family Residence	024-430-1600	55.3 dB	55.6 dB	55.6 dB	55.9 dB
R-12	Single Family Residence	024-430-1500	55.6 dB	55.9 dB	55.9 dB	56.1 dB
R-13	Single Family Residence	024-430-1400	53.8 dB	54.1 dB	54.1 dB	54.4 dB
R-14	Single Family Residence	024-430-6200	53.8 dB	54.1 dB	54.0 dB	54.3 dB
R-15	Single Family Residence	024-430-1300	54.7 dB	55.0 dB	54.6 dB	54.9 dB

Based upon the results shown in **Table 3.5-6**, predicted noise levels with the project will not exceed the FHWA/Caltrans Protocol noise level criterion of 67 dB Leq at the representative receiver locations. The noise levels with the project will not exceed the recommended Trinity County noise level criterion of 60 dB CNEL/Ldn.

**Table 3.5-7** shows the predicted increases in background noise levels due to the project. The predicted future (2020) noise levels with the project (**Table 3.5-6**) are compared to the estimated background noise levels shown in **Table 3.5-5**. Based upon the analyses, the predicted noise levels are expected to increase overall background noise levels at residential uses between 2 dB and 7 dB Leq/Ldn. Increases in noise levels of 5 dB or more will be noticeable. However, this is not considered a significant increase in noise levels based upon the FHWA/Caltrans protocol. Most receptors are separated from the road by topography, vegetation and/or East Weaver Creek. Although noticeable, the increase in noise of up to 7dB does not represent a substantial increase in ambient noise levels. This would not be considered a significant increase in noise levels based upon the FHWA/Caltrans Protocol.

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<b>Table 3.5-7</b>				
<b>Predicted Increases in Exterior Noise Levels at Receiver Locations</b>				
Receiver #	Land Use	Assessor Parcel No.	Increase in Noise Due to Project	
			Alternative 1	Alternative 2
R-1	Logging Equipment Yard	024-400-0200	+4 dB	+4 dB
R-2	Mobile Home Park	024-390-3000	<b>+5 dB</b>	+3 dB
R-3	Single Family Residence	024-410-0800	+1 dB	<b>+5 dB</b>
R-4	Senior Center	024-390-2800	<b>+6 dB</b>	<b>+7 dB</b>
R-5	Senior Apartments	024-390-6200	+3 dB	No change
R-6	Single Family Residence	024-410-0700	+3 dB	+4 dB
R-7	Single Family Residence	024-430-0100	+3dB	+3 dB
R-8	Single Family Residence	024-430-0500	+3 dB	+3 dB
R-9	Single Family Residence	024-430-0700	+3 dB	+3 dB
R-10	Single Family Residence		<b>+5 dB</b>	<b>+5 dB</b>
R-11	Single Family Residence	024-430-1600	<b>+7 dB</b>	<b>+7 dB</b>
R-12	Single Family Residence	024-430-1500	<b>+7 dB</b>	<b>+7 dB</b>
R-13	Single Family Residence	024-430-1400	<b>+5 dB</b>	<b>+5 dB</b>
R-14	Single Family Residence	024-430-6200	<b>+5 dB</b>	<b>+5 dB</b>
R-15	Single Family Residence	024-430-1300	<b>+7 dB</b>	<b>+7 dB</b>

**Bold** = Represents a noticeable change in noise.

*PROJECT VIBRATION IMPACTS*

As a means of determining the potential for vibration impacts associated with the project, Bollard & Brennan, Inc. used previous vibration measurement data collected for a roadway widening project in the Sacramento area. Bollard & Brennan, Inc. conducted vibration measurements at the edge of the pavement adjacent to a major roadway. A LDL Model 2900 analyzer was used with a Bruel & Kjaer Type 4382 accelerometer. The sample period was 15 minutes, during which time a large volume of vehicles passed the vibration measurement site, including buses and heavy trucks. During the vibration measurements, peak particle velocity of less than five thousandths (0.005) of an inch per second were measured. Based on research conducted by Caltrans, peak particle velocities of less than 0.005 inches per second are below the threshold of human perception and do not pose a threat to either humans or structures.

It is important to note that the vibration measurements focused on ground-transmitted vibration in order to ascertain if traffic-induced ground vibration could result in structural failure of a residential foundation. As stated previously, the measured vibration levels were well below those identified by Caltrans as being

potentially damaging to structures. Based upon that analysis, it can be assumed that ground vibration due to traffic on the proposed East Connector Roadway will not be detectable at adjacent land uses.

*Impacts Common to All Alternatives*

Although there will be noticeable increases in noise levels associated with the project at some locations adjoining the project, these increases are not considered "substantial." Exterior noise levels will remain below 60 dB at all receptors, within standards proposed in the Trinity County draft noise element. Noise impacts due to traffic are therefore not considered significant. Ground vibration due to traffic on the proposed East Connector Road will not be detectable at adjacent land uses, and is therefore not considered significant.

*Alternative 1*

Operation of the proposed East Connector Roadway would increase overall traffic noise levels at six nearby single-family residences, and at the Two Creeks Mobile Home Park and Golden Age Senior Center by approximately 5 to 7 dB Ldn/Leq.

*Alternative 2*

Operation of the proposed East Connector Roadway would increase overall traffic noise levels at seven single-family residences and the senior center by approximately 5 to 7 dB Ldn/Leq.

*Alternatives A, B, and C*

The effect on noise will be the same for all three SR 299/Glen Road intersection alternatives.

*Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail and Bridge*

This component of the project will have no noticeable effect on ambient noise levels.

**Noise Impact-1**      Operation of the proposed East Connector Roadway would increase overall traffic noise levels at six nearby single-family residences, and at the Two Creeks Mobile Home Park and Golden Age Senior Center (Alternative 1), or at seven single-family residences and the senior center (Alternative 2), by approximately 5 to 7 dB Ldn/Leq.

**Significance:**      Less than significant (no mitigation required).

**Noise Impact-2** — Operation of the proposed East Connector Roadway would generate traffic-induced vibration.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

### 3.5.4 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS

#### *Impacts Common to All Alternatives*

During the construction phases of the project, noise from construction activities would dominate the noise environment in the immediate area. Activities involved in construction would generate noise levels, as indicated in **Table 3.5-8**, ranging from 70 to 90 dB at a distance of 50 feet. Construction activities would be temporary in nature, typically occurring during normal working hours. Construction noise impacts could be significant, as nighttime operations or use of unusually noisy equipment could result in annoyance or sleep disruption for nearby residences outside of the project area.

<b>Table 3.5-8 Construction Equipment Noise</b>	
<b>Type of Equipment</b>	<b>Maximum Level, dBA at 50 feet</b>
Scrapers	88
Bulldozers	90
Heavy Trucks	88
Backhoe	85
Pneumatic Tools	85

Source: Environmental Noise Pollution, Patrick R. Cunniff, 1977.

Construction noise is addressed by Caltrans standard specifications Section 7-1.01I "Sound Control Requirements". These requirements specify that noise levels generated during construction shall comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations, and that all equipment shall be fitted with adequate mufflers according to the manufacturer's specifications. The Caltrans standard specifications will be incorporated by reference into the Specifications for this project.

During construction, traffic noise generated by approaching traffic would be reduced due to a reduction in speed required by working road crews. Conversely, traffic noise levels of vehicles leaving the construction area would be slightly higher than normal due to acceleration. The net effect of the accelerating and decelerating traffic upon noise would not be appreciable, especially since this is a new

road with no existing traffic traveling through the work area, except at the two roadway terminals at SR 3 and SR 299 and where the new road intersects existing Brown's Ranch Road. The most important project-generated noise source would be truck traffic (associated with transport of heavy materials and equipment) and construction equipment (bulldozers, scrapers, etc.). There may be pile driving for the bridge piles (roadway bridge only). This noise increase would be of short duration and limited to daytime hours. Therefore, no significant noise impacts are expected.

Contractors are discouraged from construction on weekends because they are required to pay overtime, which drives up the cost of the job. However, it is occasionally necessary to work on Saturday to meet specific deadlines, such as the requirement to complete work within the streams by October 15, or to accommodate specialty contractors. On a regular basis, no work will be done on weekends. However, to ensure that residents will not be subjected to construction noise at least one day a week, Noise Mitigation 1A shall prohibit noisy construction work on Sunday.

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**Noise Impact-3** Construction activities associated with the proposed East Connector Roadway project (road and bridge construction) would temporarily increase noise levels in nearby areas.

**Significance:** Potentially significant, but mitigated

**Noise Mitigation-1A** Construction activities producing significant noise sources shall be scheduled for periods of the day when construction noise would have the least impact on the residents of adjacent and nearby homes and businesses, specifically during normal working hours (7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) on weekdays, and the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, ~~or Sunday.~~ No construction shall be allowed on Sunday. Emergency maintenance and repair of erosion control and pollution prevention devices will be allowed on Sunday, if necessary to protect the environment.

**Noise Mitigation 1B** Locate stationary construction equipment, such as compressors and generators, within designated staging areas, as far away as possible from sensitive receptors. Impact tools and intake and exhaust ports on power construction equipment shall be muffled or shielded. Construction activities shall comply with appropriate noise-related ordinances and regulations, including Caltrans standards specifications Section 7-1.01I "Sound Control Requirements."

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### 3.5.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

#### *Impacts Common to All Alternatives*

##### Permanent Impacts:

The cumulative analysis of traffic noise impacts assumes that an access road to a proposed new airport intersects with the East Connector. The traffic report estimates an additional 150 peak hour vehicles. Based upon that increase in traffic, noise levels would increase by less than 0.8 dB Leq/Ldn. An increase in noise of less than 1 dB is considered to be imperceptible. Therefore, the cumulative traffic noise impact is less than significant.

This future expansion of the DOT maintenance yard is considered a cumulative effect. *Habitat Mitigation 3* commits TCDOT to replacing all woody riparian vegetation (trees and shrubs) removed for project construction at a 2:1 ratio along East Weaver Creek behind the County Maintenance yard. This mitigation restores an area of East Weaver Creek that has some gaps in the riparian vegetation, and provides a buffer between the road maintenance yard (both the existing and proposed expansion) and East Weaver Creek. This will improved visual and noise screening for residences located across East Weaver Creek from the existing and expanded maintenance yard. The expansion will be used primarily for storage of parts and materials, such as culvert pipes and precast concrete structural elements. Maintenance of heavy equipment will remain in the existing maintenance shop. Activities in the expansion area will therefore not be generally noisy, except for occasional loading and unloading activities.

The cumulative noise effect from operation of the East Connector Roadway and the expanded DOT Maintenance Yard are therefore not considered significant.

##### Temporary (Construction) Noise Impacts

In the unlikely event that the Weaverville Airport and East Connector are constructed simultaneously, receptors on Martin Road and Brown's Ranch Road may hear both activities.

Residences on Martin Road would be the closest to construction activities on the airport site. These residences are at least 4,500 feet away. Residences at the upper end of Brown's Ranch Road are over 5,000 feet away. Noise affects would also be subject to attenuation as a result of intervening topography and vegetation. The Draft Program EIR for the Weaverville Airport presents a "worst-case" estimate of construction noise impacts, assuming that two pieces of construction equipment operate in the same area, within line-of-sight of the receiver, with no intervening topography or vegetation. An outdoor receiver located 3,200 feet away would be subject to noise levels of 55 dB. At 6,400 feet, the noise level would be 49 dB. In the unlikely event that both projects are constructed at the same time, construction noise would affect these same outdoor receivers with additional noise from the other direction, on the order of magnitude of 73 to 85 dB. These noise levels are not directly additive (55 db plus 73 dB do not add up to 128 dB), but the combination would be greater than either noise source would be alone. This "worst-case" analysis does not take into account the intervening topography and vegetation between the airport site and the Pioneer Heights/Martin Road/Brown's Ranch Road areas; the fact that residences closer to the airport, such as in Pioneer Heights or the end of Brown's Ranch Road, are further from the East

Connector, or the fact that noise levels are attenuated by 12 dB for indoor receptors with windows wide open and 24 dB with windows closed. Therefore, a more realistic “worst case” expectation for the inside of a typical residence on Martin Road or Brown’s Ranch Road, with the windows closed, would be on the order of 67 dB, periodically, for a limited time, during daytime hours. (Based on two pieces of heavy equipment operating within 50 feet in direct line of sight of the residence would be 91 dB, minus 24 dB for the windows closed equals 67 dB.)

These noise levels are not extreme, and will only occur at a specific residence for a limited period of time. No single residence in the area will be subject to these “worst case” noise levels for the entire duration of both construction projects, as construction activities on each job will move from place to place as construction progresses. Mitigation is provided for both projects, specifying where stationary noise generators will be located in staging areas, and requiring mufflers on all equipment. Therefore, cumulative impacts from construction noise are not considered significant.

## 3.8 VEGETATION, INVASIVE SPECIES, WILDLIFE

### 3.8.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section describes the biological communities known to occur in the project area and the wildlife that may inhabit each of these communities. The section also discusses invasive plant species. Jones & Stokes (J&S) biologists conducted biological surveys of the project study area between March and August 2001. The complete Natural Environment Study Report (NES) for the East Connector Roadway project is available for review (J&S 2002g; see Appendix C).

#### *BIOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES*

The project study area encompasses a range of biological communities, including ponderosa pine forest, foothill pine forest, riparian forest, stream habitat, seasonal wetland, and ruderal and developed areas (Figure 3.8-1 shows the location of these communities). Table 3.8-1 summarizes the hectares (acres) of each biological community in the project study area.

**Table 3.8-1. Total Hectares (Acres) of Biological Communities  
in the Project Study Area**

<b>Biological Community</b>	<b>Hectares (Acres)</b>
Ponderosa pine forest	11.04 (27.27)
Foothill pine forest	3.89 (9.62)
Riparian forest	0.80 (1.97)
Stream habitat	0.30 (0.74)
(East Weaver Creek, Lance Gulch, and three unnamed ephemeral drainages)	
Seasonal wetland	0.0008 (0.023)
Ruderal and developed areas	8.70 (21.49)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24.74 (61.11)</b>

As shown above, approximately 60 percent of the project study area is occupied by upland pine forest (ponderosa and foothill pine forest); approximately 35 percent of the project study area is occupied by ruderal and developed areas; and the remaining 5 percent is occupied by stream habitat, riparian forest, and seasonal wetlands. Each of these biological communities is described below.

#### ***Ponderosa Pine Forest***

Ponderosa pine forest is the dominant biological community in the project study area and occupies approximately 11.04 hectares (27.27 acres). In the project study area, it is characterized by a relatively

open canopy dominated by ponderosa pine, with scattered foothill pine, Douglas fir, Oregon oak, and black oak mixed in the canopy. Shrub cover is variable; but commonly encountered shrubs include manzanita, deerbrush, and redbud. Herbaceous understory species include yarrow, goat's beard, lotus, Kentucky bluegrass, and cheat grass.

Representative wildlife species observed in this habitat during the field surveys include Steller's jay, hairy woodpecker, spotted towhee, purple finch, and pine siskin.

#### ***Foothill Pine Forest***

Foothill pine forest is present in a small portion of the project study area, approximately 3.89 hectares (9.62 acres). Within the project study area, it is characterized by a dense shrubby understory of manzanita and deerbrush. The tree canopy is dominated by foothill pine with other scattered trees, such as Oregon and black oaks. Herbaceous understory species include yarrow, cat's ear, pussy ears, wild oats, and medusa head.

Representative wildlife species observed in this habitat during the field surveys include hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, Steller's jay, and blue-gray gnatcatcher.

#### ***Riparian Forest***

A total of 0.80 hectare (1.97 acres) of riparian forest habitat occupies the banks and floodplain of East Weaver Creek in the project study area. The riparian forest community is variable in the project study area, from an open canopy dominated by willows to a dense canopy dominated by alders and cottonwoods. The community is characterized by little herbaceous cover and a dense shrubby understory. Common shrubs include blackberries, California grape, Oregon ash, and American dogwood.

The riparian forest habitat in the project study area provides food, water, migration, and dispersal corridors, as well as escape, nesting, and thermal cover for many wildlife species (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988). Representative wildlife species observed in this habitat during the field surveys include black-tailed deer; downy woodpecker; tree swallow; winter wren; American robin; yellow-breasted chat; orange-crowned, yellow, MacGillivray's and Wilson's warblers; and song sparrow.

#### ***Stream Habitat***

A total of 0.30 hectare (0.74 acre) stream habitat is present in the project study area in the form of East Weaver Creek, Lance Gulch (an intermittent stream), Five Cent Gulch and two other unnamed ephemeral drainages. East Weaver Creek is a perennial drainage. Lance Gulch is an intermittent, spring-fed stream. Five Cent Gulch and the two other ephemeral drainages are characterized by a defined bed and bank, and flow only periodically after storm events and during the rainy season..

**Figure 3.8-1**

The open water habitat of streams provides habitat, prey, and drinking water for a variety of wildlife species. Representative wildlife species observed in this habitat during the field surveys include black-tailed deer, green heron, and belted kingfisher. East Weaver Creek is a tributary Weaver Creek, which is a tributary to the Trinity River. It provides habitat for coho and chinook salmon, and steelhead as well as numerous non-game species. East Weaver Creek is a perennial creek characterized in the project study area by low gradients and primarily cobble and gravel substrate.

It should be noted that East Weaver Creek from 100 feet upstream (north) of Brown's Ranch Road to 100 feet downstream (south) of the SR 299 bridge is designated as a local flood protection project and was constructed by ACOE in 1963. The flood control facility consists of a graded trapezoidal channel with levees on both banks. Trinity County is responsible for maintaining the channel, including keeping it "clear of debris, weeds, and wild growth," according to the terms of an agreement with the ACOE Readiness Branch (ACOE 1966). Irregular maintenance has allowed a dense riparian habitat to develop. The County now has a 5-year routine maintenance agreement with CDFG, which was recently renewed (November 2001). The program consists of hand crews trimming all vegetation from alternating 100-foot-long sections of banks between October and December of each year. In the following year, the alternate bank is trimmed. Trees over 6 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) are left. All trees along the center of the channel are cut. No roots are dug out, and no sediment is removed under the existing Section 1601 agreement. No vegetation can be planted in this section. The proposed bicycle path and bridge (either option) is located within this section of East Weaver Creek. Maintenance requirements of the flood protection project may limit mitigation options and habitat value at this location. Upstream and downstream of the flood control section, dense riparian forest and shade cover occurs along the banks of the creek, providing essential fish habitat.

CDFG regulates activities that would interfere with the natural flow of, or substantially alter the channel, bed, or bank of a lake, river, or stream. These activities are regulated under California Fish and Game code Section 1601 for public agencies and Section 1603 for private individuals. Requirements to protect the integrity of biological resources and water quality are often conditions of streambed alteration agreements. Conditions that may be required by CDFG include avoidance or minimization of vegetation removal, use of standard erosion control measures, limitations on the use of heavy equipment, limitations on work periods to avoid impacts on fisheries and wildlife resources, and requirements to restore degraded sites or compensate for permanent habitat losses.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) regulates the discharge of dredge or fill material to "Waters of the U.S." under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. East Weaver Creek, Lance Gulch, Five Cent Gulch and the two unnamed ephemeral drainages have defined beds and banks, and a defined "ordinary high water mark". The portions of these streams within the ordinary high water marks are considered

“Waters of the U.S.” Any discharge of fill material within the ordinary high water marks of these streams will require a permit from the ACOE (see also Section 3.7, *Wetlands and Other Waters of the U.S.*).

### ***Seasonal Wetland***

Waters of the U.S. (including wetlands) are also addressed in Section 3.7. Three small seasonal wetlands totaling 0.008 hectare (0.023 acre) were delineated in the project study area. Although the seasonal wetlands are located near Lance Gulch, they appear to have been created by excavation in the area. Two are isolated from Lance Gulch by the topography in the area. One wetland, SW-2 is connected by a small drainage channel, and is considered to be adjacent to Lance Gulch. The wetlands were ponded to a depth of approximately 7.6 centimeters (3.0 inches) on May 3, 2001 and were dry during a subsequent field visit on June 6, 2001. The following year, they were ponded to a depth of 12.7 centimeters (5 inches) on May 2, 2002. The seasonal wetlands likely are receiving runoff from the surrounding land and pond for a very short duration during the rainy season. The seasonal wetlands are dominated by typical seasonal wetland species found in the region, including Pacific rush, spikerush, and bird's-foot-trefoil.

The open water habitat created by ponding in the seasonal wetlands during the rainy season can provide drinking water for a variety of wildlife species. The wetlands appear to pond for a very short duration. Although no wildlife species were observed using the seasonal wetlands, representative species expected include black-tailed deer and small migratory birds.

Seasonal wetlands adjacent to other waters of the U.S. are considered waters of the U.S., and are regulated by the ACOE under section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Discharge of fill to SW-2, the seasonal wetland considered to be adjacent to Lance Gulch, will require a permit from the ACOE. The isolated wetlands are not considered waters of the U.S. under the jurisdiction of the ACOE since the January 9, 2001 SWANCC ruling (SWANCC v. United States Army Corps of Engineers [121 S.Ct. 675, 2001]), which resulted in the determination that non-navigable, isolated waters may not be regulated by ACOE. The ACOE has reviewed the wetlands delineation and visited the site. On September 20, 2002, they issued a formal determination that wetlands SW-1 and SW-3 are isolated and non-jurisdictional, but wetland SW-2 is a jurisdictional water of the U.S. and will be regulated under Section 404 of the CWA.

### ***Ruderal and Developed Areas***

Approximately 8.70 hectares (21.49 acres) of the project study area is occupied by ruderal and developed areas. These areas include existing roads; residential areas; vacant lots; and cleared areas resulting from activities at the Trinity River Lumber Mill, Yingling Construction Company yard on Levee Road, Pruitt Logging equipment yard at the north end of the project study area, Trinity County road maintenance yard at the north end of the project study area, and the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center at the south end of the project area. Vegetation in this habitat type is variable, but typically is dominated by introduced weedy vegetation, including lotus, woolly mullein, Kentucky bluegrass, and medusa head.

Ruderal habitats at the edges of natural communities can provide foraging habitat for wildlife species. Representative wildlife species observed in this habitat during the field surveys include black-tailed deer, American robin, white-crowned and golden-crowned sparrows, and Brewer's blackbird.

#### *EXISTING LEVEL OF DISTURBANCE*

The project study area is located in the town of Weaverville and is bordered on the south by SR 299 and on the north by SR 3. The proposed project will cross some disturbed and native areas. Portions of the area have been logged in the past. Current land use in the area includes commercial uses, such as a lumber mill, a shopping center, a County corporation yard, a construction company equipment yard, a logging equipment yard, a senior citizens activity center, and residential dwellings. A portion of the area is vegetated by native vegetation and has not been recently disturbed. East Weaver Creek from 100 feet above (north of) Brown's Ranch Road, to 100 feet below (south of) SR 299 is a local flood protection facility. The graded trapezoidal channel has levees on both banks, and vegetation is routinely removed from the channel.

#### *INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES*

The following sources of information were reviewed to develop a list of invasive species that could occur in the project study area:

- Information on noxious weed species of concern to the Trinity County Agricultural Commissioner,
- The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA's) list of noxious weeds, and
- The California Exotic Pest Plant Council's (CEPPC's) list of pest plants of ecological concern.

Field surveys documented the presence of 10 species that are included on one or more of these lists (**Table 3.8-2**). These plants occur in scattered locations throughout the project study area. The Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) conducts a program of education and eradication of these noxious weeds. The TCRCD and Shasta-Trinity National Forest are implementing a Weed Management Program, with cooperation from Trinity County.

**Table 3.8-2. Invasive Plant Species Identified in the Project Study Area**

Common Name	Scientific Name	CDFA Rating <sup>a</sup>	CA Exotic Pest Plant
			Council Rating <sup>b</sup>
Poison hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>	None	None
Scotch broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	List C	List A-1
Dalmatian toadflax	<i>Linaria genistifolia</i> ssp. <i>Dalmatia</i>	List A	None
Himalayan blackberry	<i>Rubus discolor</i>	None	List A-1
Medusa head	<i>Taeniatherum caput- medusae</i>	List C	List A-1
Yellow star-thistle	<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>	List C	List A-1
Bull thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	None	List B
Black mustard	<i>Brassica nigra</i>	None	List B
Klamath weed	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	List C	List B
Black locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	None	List B

<sup>a</sup> California Department of Food and Agriculture pest ratings:

List A= An organism of known economic importance subject to state- (or commissioner when acting as a state agent) enforced action, involving eradication, quarantine, containment, rejection, or other holding action.

List C=State-endorsed holding action and eradication only when found in a nursery; action to retard spread outside nurseries at the discretion of the commissioner.

<sup>b</sup> California Exotic Pest Plant Council pest ratings:

List A-1=Most invasive wildland pest plants; widespread.

List B= Wildland pest plants of lesser invasiveness.

#### PLANT AND WILDLIFE SPECIES OBSERVED IN THE PROJECT STUDY AREA

J&S conducted biological surveys of the project study area between March and August 2001. J&S completed floristic field surveys, conducted during the appropriate times of year (May and August) when special-status plants that could occur in the project study area would be evident and identifiable. **Appendix F** contains a list of plant species observed during the surveys.

J&S biologists qualified to identify all wildlife to the species level conducted wildlife surveys. These surveys varied according to the natural histories of each special-status species. Surveys for northwestern pond turtle, tailed frog, and other amphibians followed methods developed by Dr. Hartwell Welsh of the Redwood Sciences Laboratory, U.S. Forest Service (Welsh pers. comm.). Surveys for birds followed a modification (not limiting to three 20-minute periods) of the complete area search method (Ralph et al. 1993), with one or two biologists recording all species seen or heard while slowly walking throughout the entire project study area. Surveys for raptor nests included areas within 0.5 mile line-of-sight of the

project study area. Raptor nest surveys included listening and looking for raptors, especially those exhibiting territorial behaviors, and searching large trees that could support nest structures.

A reconnaissance-level site visit was conducted on March 23, 2001. A biologist surveyed for migrating birds and nesting raptors during April 19-20, 2001. Two biologists surveyed for turtles, amphibians, and little willow flycatcher and other breeding birds on June 26 and 30, 2001. **Appendix F** contains a list of wildlife species observed during the surveys.

#### *MIGRATORY BIRDS*

Several species of migratory birds were detected in the project study area during the spring and summer field surveys (see list in **Appendix F**). The territorial behaviors of these birds indicated that they were nesting in the project study area. Suitable habitat for nesting migratory birds is present within riparian habitats and upland forest habitats in the project study area.

#### *PLANNING DOCUMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES*

##### **Trinity County General Plan**

The *Land Use Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan* (Trinity County, 1988) contains the following general policy regarding wildlife habitat that relates to the proposed East Connector Roadway project:

- To strive to conserve those resources of the county that are important to its character and economic well-being.
- By protecting not only rare and endangered species, but also required habitat for the more plentiful species.

The *Open Space and Conservation Elements* of the *Trinity County General Plan* (Trinity County, 1973) contain the following objectives and recommendations regarding wildlife habitat that relate to the proposed East Connector Roadway project:

- Objective: To preserve and maintain open space as a means of providing natural habitat for all species of wildlife is the prime objective.
- Recommendation 1. To maintain all species of fish and wildlife for their intrinsic and ecological values as well as for their direct benefit to mankind.
- Recommendation 4. Any plans to alter the present environment should be considered on the basis of protecting fish and wildlife and their habitat.
- Recommendation 7. Outstanding wildlife habitats that have an unusually high value for fish and wildlife should be carefully considered before any development altering this environment is permitted.

### **Weaverville Community Plan**

The Natural Resources section of the *Weaverville Community Plan* (Trinity County, 1997) addresses the value of plants and wildlife in the Weaverville Basin, emphasizing the importance of riparian corridors and deer winter range for the Weaverville herd of black-tailed deer. Portions of the basin below 3,500 feet in elevation are considered Critical Deer Winter Range. Because 17,000 acres of deer winter range were inundated with construction of the Trinity and Lewiston reservoirs, maintenance of existing deer winter range has become more important for the herd's survival. The Community Plan contains the following goals and objectives regarding vegetation, invasive species, and wildlife (including deer winter range) that relate to the proposed East Connector Roadway project:

- Goal #2: To conserve and maintain streams and forest open space as a means of providing natural habitat for all species of wildlife.
  - Objective 2.1: Retain riparian corridors along West Weaver, Sidney Gulch, East Weaver and Weaver Creeks.
  - Objective 2.2: Plans to alter the present environment should be considered on the basis of protecting fish and wildlife and their habitat.
  - Objective 2.4: Retain wetlands in accordance with Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife directives.

### **3.8.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the CEQA Environmental Checklist, poses the following questions to be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant floodplain impacts:

Would the project:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) or US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)?
- Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, Coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?
- Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

- Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?
- Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

As discussed below, the East Connector Roadway would have a significant adverse effect upon riparian habitat along East Weaver Creek. Mitigation is proposed to avoid or minimize this effect. Mitigation was developed through consultation with CDFG, USFWS, and NOAA Fisheries (formerly NMFS). The project would also impact two seasonal wetlands. This impact and proposed mitigation are discussed in Section 3.7, *Waters of the U.S. (Including Wetlands)*. The project would create a linear barrier to the movement of deer from the Musser Hill area to East Weaver Creek. Winter range for the Weaverville Deer Herd is considered by CDFG to be highly valuable, because of habitat losses originating from construction of Trinity and Lewiston lakes. Impacts to deer and other wildlife migration patterns are discussed below. The County is currently developing policies to minimize impacts on listed anadromous fish species from County Road maintenance activities. The County is also participating with the Shasta-Trinity National Forest and the Trinity County Resource Management District in an noxious weed management program. Since measures are proposed to mitigate these and other impacts to less than significant, the project will not conflict with any local policies or ordinances regarding vegetation, invasive species or wildlife. There are no adopted Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Community Conservation Plans, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans in affect in the project area.

### 3.8.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

Impacts on biological communities were determined using field data, an environmental study limit map, and layout and profile maps for each project alternative. The impact acreages presented in this section include the acreage amounts for potential direct impacts within the project footprint and the acreage amounts for indirect impacts outside the project footprint, but within the environmental study limits.

Some forest vegetation will only be trimmed and topped to allow construction access and will then be allowed to grow back. These impacts may be considered temporary. Impacts to pine forest vegetation within the construction staging areas are considered permanent, because the trees will grow back slowly, and may be out-competed by shrub species in the near-term. Riparian vegetation at or near the bridge locations will be permanently removed and not allowed to grow back.

A change in the diversity of animal species is unlikely due to the small project footprint and the proposed mitigation for loss of riparian habitat. However, vegetation removal may result in the loss of some birds' territories or reduction in their size and suitability. The subsequent population declines will be small and will not affect the viability of the local populations.

The small area of the project will not remove a significant amount of wildlife habitat from the basin. However, it will create a linear barrier between habitat and a reliable source of water in East Weaver Creek. This will affect migration of deer and other terrestrial wildlife. Proposed fencing between the East Connector and the mill, and the bicycle/pedestrian trail and the mill and construction yard will also impede migration to and from East Weaver Creek. The most suitable wildlife habitat is along the northern half-mile of the proposed alignment. During the winter and spring, water is available in Lance Gulch and the seasonal wetlands. When these sources dry up in the late summer and fall, most wildlife species would simply cross the road. However, this potentially hazardous behavior will be discouraged by the proposed fencing around the mill. Wildlife will most likely alter their routes to approach the creek upstream from the new bridge. Wildlife crossing roads in their daily migration routes is a common occurrence in Trinity County, especially in the more developed areas, such as Weaverville. Because of this, and the short increase in migration distance to reach the upstream end of the project, this impact would not have a significant effect on deer and other wildlife populations.

Trinity County contacted CDFG Region 1 office in Redding to discuss this issue, and the issue of deer fawning in the project area. David Smith, CDFG Wildlife Biologist, and Bob Williams, CDFG CEQA specialist, were asked about the issues of deer fawning in the project area and migrating across the road. Mr. Smith and Mr. Williams both stated that CDFG does not apply a formal designation of "deer fawning areas" or "deer habitat" to a location unless there is an unusually high concentration of deer congregating in that particular location. Mr. Smith stated that the deer would simply adjust their fawning locations in response to the project. Mr. Williams stated that CDFG does not consider the impacts on deer fawning at this location to be significant under CEQA. Neither gentleman was aware of any feasible and effective method of mitigating for deer being hit by cars on this or any road. Mr. Smith indicated that fencing the entire roadway to preclude deer from entering would further disrupt migration patterns and would be undesirable. There may be an increase in the number of deer hit by cars, and this effect is not mitigatable, but CDFG does not consider this a significant impact. In further discussion with the manager of Trinity River Lumber Mill, the mill agreed to placing pipe gates that allow deer passage at the two entrance gates to the mill that would access the mill from the East Connector (one across from the Pioneer Lane extension and one north of there).

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Because of the numerous habitat values provided by riparian habitat and because of the statewide losses that have occurred in riparian habitats, it is considered a sensitive resource locally, regionally, and statewide. Substantial statewide decline of riparian communities in recent years has increased concerns

about dependent plant and wildlife species, leading state and federal agencies to adopt policies to arrest further loss. Riparian vegetation provides a variety of functions, such as bank stabilization, erosion control, and wildlife habitat. The CDFG has adopted a no-net-loss policy for riparian habitat value. In addition, the USFWS mitigation policy identifies California's riparian habitats in Resource Category 2, for which no net loss of existing habitat value is recommended (46 FR 7644, January 23, 1981).

Soil-disturbing activities during construction and maintenance of the project could promote the introduction of plant species not currently found in the project study area, including exotic pest plant species. Exotic pest plants include noxious weeds designated as federal noxious weeds by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and listed by the CDFA, as well as other exotic pest plants designated by the CEPPC (California Exotic Pest Plant Council 2000), and the County Agricultural Commissioner. Roads, highways, and related construction projects are some of the principal dispersal vectors for exotic pest plants. The introduction and spread of exotic pest plants adversely affect natural plant communities by displacing native plant species that provide shelter and forage for wildlife species. This impact is considered potentially significant, and mitigation is proposed below.

Because of the proximity of the ponderosa and foothill pine forest communities to the town of Weaverville, they have been disturbed previously and do not provide high-quality habitat for local wildlife. In addition, these communities are common both locally and regionally, and are not considered sensitive natural communities by the CDFG. Based on these factors and the relatively small size of the habitats affected compared to their extent in the region, the impact is considered less than significant.

Ruderal and developed areas do not contain sensitive biological resources or provide important habitat for local wildlife. In addition, these areas are common both locally and regionally, and are not considered sensitive natural communities by the CDFG. Based on these factors and the relatively small size of the habitats affected compared to their extent in the local area, the impact to this type of habitat is not considered significant.

Differences in the impacts between the various alternatives are discussed below. The impact acreages listed under Alternatives 1 and 2, below, assume all four construction staging areas shown on Figure 1-3 are entirely occupied. Impacts to wetlands, streams and creeks are addressed in Section 3.7, *Waters of the U.S. (Including Wetlands)*. Impacts to threatened and endangered species and nesting raptors are addressed in Section 3.9, *Threatened and Endangered Species*.

#### *ALTERNATIVE 1*

Under Alternative 1, approximately 0.53 hectare (1.3 acres) of riparian forest habitat consisting of 89 mature alder and cottonwood trees would be removed or disturbed. Approximately 4.69 hectares

(11.59 acres) of ponderosa pine forest and 2.45 hectares (6.05 acres) of foothill pine forest would be removed or disturbed. Approximately 3.49 hectares (8.63 acres) of ruderal and developed areas would be removed or disturbed.

#### *ALTERNATIVE 2*

Under Alternative 2, approximately 0.38 hectare (0.95 acre) of riparian forest habitat consisting of 49 mature alder and cottonwood trees would be removed or disturbed. Approximately 6.24 hectares (15.42 acre) of ponderosa pine forest and 2.45 hectares (6.05 acres) of foothill pine forest would be removed or disturbed. Approximately 2.14 hectares (5.29 acres) of ruderal and developed areas would be removed or disturbed.

#### *BICYCLE TRAIL/BRIDGE OPTIONS*

The proposed bicycle/pedestrian bridge could result in the loss or disturbance of 0.06 hectare (0.15 acre) of riparian habitat (Option A), or 0.01 hectare (0.03 acre) of riparian habitat (Option B), consisting of riparian shrubs but no large trees. Both Options A and B could result in the loss or disturbance of 0.18 hectare (0.45 acre) of ponderosa pine forest, but would not disturb foothill pine forest. The proposed bicycle/pedestrian path along Levee Road could result in the loss or disturbance of 0.46 hectare (1.13 acres) of ruderal or developed areas (Option A), or 0.87 hectare (2.15 acres) of ruderal or developed areas (Option B).

#### *NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE*

The No Project Alternative would have no impact on riparian forest habitat, ponderosa/foothill pine forest habitat, or ruderal and developed areas.

- Habitat Impact-1** Implementation of the proposed project may result in a barrier to movement of turtles, amphibians, and mammals, such as deer and raccoon, to East Weaver Creek from the surrounding upland and wetland habitats.
- Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).
- Habitat Impact-2** Riparian forest vegetation along East Weaver Creek would be removed or disturbed during construction of the two-lane arterial road and associated bicycle lanes, roadway bridge, and bicycle/pedestrian bridge over East Weaver Creek.
- Significance:** Significant, but mitigated
- Habitat Mitigation-1** Minimize removal and disturbance of riparian habitat along East Weaver Creek.

The County will ensure that the removal or disturbance of riparian habitat that is not required for construction or access to the project site will be prohibited by installing orange construction barrier fencing (and sedimentation fencing in some cases) between the construction site and the riparian/creek area. The protected area will be designated as an “environmentally sensitive area.”

The fencing will be installed before construction activities begin and will be maintained throughout the construction period. The following paragraphs will be provided in the construction specifications for environmentally sensitive areas:

“The Contractor’s attention is directed to the areas designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas. These areas are protected, and no entry by the Contractor for any purpose will be allowed. The Contractor shall take measures to ensure that Contractor’s forces do not enter or disturb these areas, including giving written notice to his employees and subcontractors.

Temporary fences around the Environmentally Sensitive Areas shall be installed as the first order of work. Temporary fences shall be furnished and constructed, maintained, and later removed as shown on the plans, as specified in the special provisions, and as directed by the Project Engineer. Fabric for temporary fences shall be commercial-quality polypropylene, orange in color, a minimum of 48 inches high, and approved by the County.”

**Habitat Mitigation-2** Avoid long-term impacts on woody riparian vegetation and associated habitat by trimming trees and shrubs rather than removing the entire woody species, where possible when creating temporary access to the construction site. Where possible, shrubs and trees shall be cut at least 1 foot above the ground level to leave the root systems intact and allow for more rapid regeneration following construction.

**Habitat Mitigation-3** Woody riparian vegetation (tree and shrub species) that will be removed entirely (including their root systems) for construction of the bridge, road or trail will be replaced at a minimum of a 2:1 ratio (two trees/shrubs planted for every one tree/shrub removed). The replacement trees and shrubs will be planted along a 1,000 foot long section of the west bank of East Weaver Creek behind the County maintenance yard. Native riparian plants will be replaced in kind at a 2:1 ratio. Non-native plants will be replaced with native plants at a 2:1 ratio. A detailed Riparian Revegetation Plan will be developed during the design phase

of this project, in coordination with CDFG, ACOE and/or NOAA Fisheries. The plan will include planting specifications, an implementation plan and schedule, success standards, maintenance requirements, and a monitoring program. Minimum success standard shall be two surviving, healthy plants per one removed at the end of two years. Monitoring will be conducted for a minimum 2-year period, or until established success/survival standards are met. Remedial actions will be implemented if success standards are not achieved in two years. Annual monitoring reports will be submitted to CDFG, ACOE and NOAA Fisheries, if requested in support of the Section 7 consultation process, until success standards have been achieved.

**Hydrology Mitigation-4** The County will prohibit using the portions of Staging Areas 1, 2, and 4 that run through and immediately adjacent to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. TCDOT will limit the use of Staging Area 4 to the south side of Lance Gulch. The north side of Lance Gulch is heavily vegetated and shall not be used

for staging equipment and material. All staging areas will be established at least 50 feet from the top of the stream bank or 50 feet from the outer edge of the riparian habitat, whichever is farther. This buffer will be clearly identified on the design drawings and delineated in the field with orange construction barrier fencing. Sedimentation fencing or other erosion and sediment control measures will be installed between the staging area and the riparian area to prevent sediment and pollutant discharges to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. There will be no removal of riparian vegetation for staging purposes.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

In addition to the mitigation measures above, long-term impacts on riparian habitat will be minimized by any additional conditions resulting from Section 7 consultation with NOAA Fisheries (formerly NMFS), or included in the conditions of the following state and federal permits:

- ACOE's Section 404 permit (Nationwide Permit No. 14)
- RWQCB's Section 401 water quality certification
- RWQCB's General Stormwater Permit for Construction Activities
- CDFG's Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA)

All of the measures in the Project Description, Caltrans Standard Specifications and the mitigation measures listed above will be included in the Project Plans and Specifications. The TCDOT will oversee the contractor to ensure the plans and specifications are followed.

**Habitat Impact-3** The project could result in the introduction or spread of noxious weed species, which could displace native species, changing the diversity of species or number of species of plants.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated (**Habitat Mitigation-4**)

**Habitat Mitigation-4** Avoid the introduction or spread of noxious weeds into previously uninfested areas or the spread of existing noxious weeds.

The County will implement the following measures:

1. Educate construction supervisors and managers on weed identification and the importance of controlling and preventing the spread of noxious weed infestations.
2. Clean construction equipment immediately prior to transporting into Trinity County.

3. Seed all disturbed areas with certified weed-free native mixes. Mulch with certified weed-free mulch. Rice straw may be used to mulch upland areas.
4. Conduct a follow-up inventory of the construction area to verify that construction activities have not resulted in the introduction of new noxious weed infestations. If new noxious weed infestations are located during the follow-up inventory, the TCRCDD will be contacted to determine the appropriate species-specific treatment methods, which will not include chemical (herbicide) spraying, to be performed by Trinity County or the TCRCDD.

**Post-mitigation Significance: Less than significant**

**Habitat Impact-4** Construction of the two-lane arterial road, bicycle lanes along this road, bicycle/pedestrian path along Levee Road, bridges across East Weaver Creek, and residential development on the 2 acre parcel belonging to Trinity River Lumber mill, could result in the loss or disturbance of ponderosa pine and foothill pine forest communities.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

**Habitat Impact-5** Construction of the two-lane arterial road, bicycle lanes, and bicycle path would result in the loss or disturbance of ruderal and developed areas.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

### 3.8.4 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL PROJECT ALTERNATIVES*

As noted above, some riparian vegetation will only be trimmed and topped to allow construction access and will then be allowed to grow back. These impacts may be considered temporary. Temporary impacts to riparian vegetation within Staging Areas will be avoided by Hydrology Mitigation-4, stated above.

Removal of nearby trees could impact migratory bird nursery sites by causing nest abandonment and death of young or loss of reproductive potential at active nests located nearby. Removal of a tree containing an active nest could result in direct mortality to eggs or chicks. Although no active nests were located during the surveys, several species of migratory birds were detected exhibiting territorial behaviors that indicated that they were nesting in the project study area. Potential nesting habitat for various migratory birds was identified within the riparian and upland forests.

### NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

The No Project Alternative would have no temporary impact on riparian forest habitat.

**Habitat Impact-6** Riparian forest vegetation along East Weaver Creek would be removed or disturbed during construction of the road and pathway alignments or use of staging areas.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated (see **Habitat Mitigation-1, -2, -3, and Hydrology Mitigation-4**).

**Habitat Mitigation-1** Minimize removal and disturbance of riparian habitat along East Weaver Creek.

**Habitat Mitigation-2** Avoid long-term impacts on woody riparian vegetation and associated habitat by trimming trees and shrubs rather than removing the entire woody species.

**Habitat Mitigation-3** Develop and implement a Riparian Revegetation Plan to compensate for the removal of riparian vegetation along East Weaver Creek.

See discussions of **Habitat Mitigation-1, -2, and -3** in Section 3.8.3

**Hydrology Mitigation-4** The County will prohibit using the portions of Staging Areas 1, 2, and 4 that run through and immediately adjacent to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. TCDOT will limit the use of Staging Area 4 to the south side of Lance Gulch. The north side of Lance Gulch is heavily vegetated and shall not be used for staging equipment and material. All staging areas will be established at least 50 feet from the top of the stream bank or 50 feet from the outer edge of the riparian habitat, whichever is farther. This buffer will be clearly identified on the design drawings and delineated in the field with orange construction barrier fencing. Sedimentation fencing or other erosion and sediment control measures will be installed between the staging area and the riparian area to prevent sediment and pollutant discharges to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. There will be no removal of riparian vegetation for staging purposes.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant.

**Habitat Impact-7** Tree removal associated with the project could result in the disturbance of nesting migratory birds or the removal of occupied nests if construction occurs during the breeding season (generally between March 15 and August 1).

**Significance:** Potentially significant/indirect, but mitigated (**Habitat Mitigation-5**)

**Habitat Mitigation-5** To prevent the take of eggs or nestlings of migratory birds, the cutting of woody

vegetation will be limited, to the extent possible, to the nonbreeding season (August 1–March 15). Root removal or other ground-disturbing clearing activities would not be conducted until after June 15. If woody vegetation must be removed during the breeding season, a wildlife biologist will survey the area to ensure that no migratory bird would be affected by the vegetation removal. If nests are present, the vegetation will not be removed until the nests are abandoned.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant. Removing woody vegetation during the non-breeding season will ensure that active nests will not be disturbed or destroyed by removal of trees supporting or adjacent to nests.

### 3.8.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

In addition to the East Connector Roadway, two other projects also will affect the riparian habitat along East Weaver Creek: Caltrans' proposed SR 299 bridge widening project over East Weaver Creek and Trinity County's ongoing maintenance activities associated with its local flood control project on East Weaver Creek. For the bridge widening project, approximately 30 square feet of riparian vegetation would have to be removed at each corner of the bridge. Riparian vegetation on the upstream side of the bridge is already cleared in conjunction with flood control efforts. The downstream side of the bridge is not cleared for flood control, but would have to be cleared for the bridge widening project.

The County's flood control project maintenance project involves removing riparian vegetation from 100-foot sections of alternating banks of East Weaver Creek between Brown's Ranch Road and SR 299, annually between October 1 and December 31.

In addition to the East Connector Roadway, several other projects in the local area have the potential to affect upland trees: The County is preparing a timber harvest plan to log the area directly south of its existing road maintenance station on SR 3, in the area of proposed project Staging Area 1. After logging, the County will grade and fill the area and use it to expand the County maintenance yard. Upland ponderosa and foothill pine forest communities may also be impacted by the proposed Weaverville Airport project and West Connector Roadway project. However, the disturbance to these forest communities from these projects would be relatively small compared to their overall extent in the local area. Furthermore, as noted above, the disturbed upland communities are locally and regionally common, and are not considered sensitive natural communities by the CDFG. Therefore, significant cumulative impacts are not expected.

**Habitat Impact-8** The proposed project would result in cumulative impacts on riparian habitat along East Weaver Creek.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated (**Habitat Mitigation-1, -2, -3, Hydrology-4, and Habitat Mitigation-6**).

**Habitat Mitigation-1** Minimize removal and disturbance of riparian habitat along East Weaver Creek.

**Habitat Mitigation-2** Avoid long-term impacts on woody riparian vegetation and associated habitat by trimming trees and shrubs rather than removing the entire woody species.

**Habitat Mitigation-3** Develop and implement a Riparian Revegetation Plan to compensate for the removal of riparian vegetation along East Weaver Creek.

See discussions of **Habitat Mitigation-1, -2, and -3** above.

**Hydrology Mitigation-4** The County will prohibit using the portions of Staging Areas 1, 2, and 4 that run through and immediately adjacent to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. TCDOT will limit the use of Staging Area 4 to the south side of Lance Gulch. The north side of Lance Gulch is heavily vegetated and shall not be used for staging equipment and material. All staging areas will be established at least 50 feet from the top of the stream bank or 50 feet from the outer edge of the riparian habitat, whichever is farther. This buffer will be clearly identified on the design drawings and delineated in the field with orange construction barrier fencing. Sedimentation fencing or other erosion and sediment control measures will be installed between the staging area and the riparian area to prevent sediment and pollutant discharges to Lance Gulch and East Weaver Creek. There will be no removal of riparian vegetation for staging purposes.

**Habitat Mitigation-6** The cumulative effects of vegetation removal will be minimized by timing vegetation removal for the proposed East Connector project to coincide with vegetation removal for flood control maintenance along East Weaver Creek. This will minimize the amount of vegetation that is removed and the duration of the disturbance and will help avoid tree removal during the nesting season. In the year the bicycle/pedestrian bridge is constructed, the vegetation removal for flood control will be adjusted to compensate for loss of vegetation from both sides of the creek for bridge construction, by leaving vegetation on both sides of the creek in the 100-foot sections upstream and downstream of the bicycle/pedestrian bridge.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

**Habitat Impact-9**      The proposed project would result in cumulative impacts on upland trees.

**Significance:**        Less than significant (no mitigation required).

### 3.14 LAND USE, PLANNING AND GROWTH

This section includes information concerning the land use effects of the project. It describes existing land use in the project area, summarizes the planning history of the currently proposed East Connector Road project and the project’s consistency with existing local plans and policies. The section addresses land use incompatibilities between the proposed roadway and adjacent land use. Finally, the section addresses the growth-inducing potential of the project.

#### 3.14.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

##### REGIONAL SETTING

Trinity County contains no incorporated cities. The largest population centers in the County are Weaverville, Hayfork, and Lewiston, with Weaverville serving as the County seat and economic center of the County. Trinity County’s total population for 2000 was estimated at 13,022 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The 1997 population for the community of Weaverville was estimated at 3,555 (California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit). **Table 3.14-1** shows population and growth rate estimates for Trinity County and Weaverville for the years 1970 to 1997.

Over the past 10 years, the County’s population has fluctuated, exhibiting a moderate population increase between 1990 and 1996 and a decrease between 1996 and 2000. Population growth has slowed in the past decade, compared to the previous two decades. Population estimates prepared by the California Department of Finance predict a gradual increase in Trinity County to an estimated population of 15,026 by the year 2020. The population forecasts reflect an average annual growth rate of 0.84 percent between 2000 and 2010 and 0.61 percent between 2010 and 2020, or less than one percent per year. These growth rates are significantly lower than the State of California average.

**Table 3.14-1. Historical Population and Growth Rates,  
Trinity County and Weaverville**

<b>Population</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1997</b>
Trinity County	7,615	11,858	13,063	13,400
Weaverville	1,489	2,787	3,370	3,555
<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>	<b>1970-80</b>		<b>1980-90</b>	<b>1990-97</b>
Trinity County	4.5%		1.0%	0.4%
Weaverville	65%		1.9%	0.8%
Source: California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit				

For the years 2000-2010, the County's greatest population growth (still low at 1.31 percent) is expected to occur in the 20- to 64-year-old age bracket. During these years, a decline in population is expected in the 0- to 19-year-old bracket. This trend is expected to change between 2010 and 2020, however, when the retired population (age 65 and over) is expected to show the greatest increase and the 20- to 64-year old population is expected to decline. Additional population and demographic data is provided in the project *Community Impact Analysis* for the East Connector Roadway project (Hughes Environmental Consultants 2002a; see Appendix C).

Weaverville is the most "urban" of all the communities in Trinity County and the community therefore contends with many of the problems related to urban areas, including problems related to utilities and capacities, traffic and circulation, land use conflicts, and concerns about architectural consistency and compatibility (Trinity County, 1990).

Trinity County covers an area of approximately 2.0 million acres (3,191 square miles). Approximately 72 percent of this land area is federally- or state-owned, including a large portion of the Trinity National Forest, Six Rivers National Forest, and the Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area. The remaining 28 percent of the County in private ownership is divided into industrial timber lands (15 percent) and agricultural, commercial, and residential lands (13 percent) (Trinity County, 2001).

The Weaverville planning area (the area encompassed by the *Weaverville Community Plan*) covers approximately 12,300 acres (approximately 19.25 square miles). Approximately 46 percent of this area is managed by the federal government (Trinity County, 1990).

Due to the mountainous terrain and rural nature of the area, a significant proportion of the commercial development in the area is focused along the State Highway corridors. Commercial uses in Weaverville are concentrated along Main Street (SR 299), with some commercial use located along SR 3. The community's primary industry is the Trinity River Lumber Company. The company mill is centrally located on the north side of SR 299, east of SR 3. There is also an industrial park located at the east end of Weaverville south of SR 299. Public and government uses are dispersed throughout the community. Open space includes the mountains and hills that surround Weaverville, as well as land along East Weaver Creek, including Lowden Park, public lands managed by the BLM or Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and the undeveloped privately-owned lands of the Sierra Pacific Lumber Company.

The southeastern part of Weaverville, along Martin Road and stretching east along Pioneer Lane, is an area of residential growth. This area is made up primarily of single family dwellings with a 1/2-acre minimum parcel size (R-1A zoning). Stretching east along Brown's Ranch Road, in the northeastern section of Weaverville, is an area of lower-density residential growth. This area is made up of single-family dwellings with a 5-acre minimum parcel size (RR-5 zoning). The Weaverville area has not experienced significant growth in its residential, commercial, or industrial sectors in recent years.

### *PROJECT AREA*

The proposed East Connector Roadway would be located on a mix of developed commercial, industrial, residential and forest land between SR 3 and SR 299. Most of the project is located on the Trinity River Lumber Company mill property. At its north end, the roadway passes through County land recently acquired from BLM and zoned for Public Facilities use (PF). As it crosses East Weaver Creek, the route passes through privately owned lands zoned for Heavy Commercial use (C-3). The route continues through the Special Unit Development (SUD) area of the Golden Age Senior Center. The remainder of the route runs through the eastern edge of Trinity River Lumber property, primarily through land zoned for Industrial use (I) and through small sections of the Open Space (OS) buffer that defines the mill's eastern boundary, and then through General Commercial (C-2) properties, including an undeveloped phase of the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center and the CHP office, partially within an existing right of way set aside for the East Connector. Other General Commercial properties along Nugget Lane will be affected by changes at the intersection of Glen Road and Nugget Lane. Rural Residential uses (RR-5, residential with a 5-acre minimum) in the Brown's Ranch Road area, and Residential uses (R-1A, residential with a ½-acre minimum) in the Martin Road/Pioneer Heights area are located to the west, and approximately 35 feet above, the majority of the alignment.

The proposed bike trail is located primarily along the Levee Road, through property owned by the Trinity River Lumber Company and Yingling Construction, zoned for Industrial use (I). The Option A trail would cross East Weaver Creek immediately south of the Yingling Construction Yard, through county property adjacent to Lowden Park, zoned Public Facilities (PF). The Option B trail would continue along the mill side of Levee Road, to cross East Weaver Creek through the Weaverville Community Services District yard (zoned Single Family Residential (R-1)) to the intersection of Park Avenue, Weaver Street and Lowden Lane. Levee Road is not a County Road, but the County has a Flood Control Easement along its length. The underlying ownership of this portion of Levee Road is primarily Trinity River Lumber Company. However, a few of the residential properties zoned for Residential Duplexes (R-2) that front on Park Avenue may extend across East Weaver Creek. Property boundary surveys would be required to determine this. In any case, these residential uses would be separated from the trail by East Weaver Creek, except where it crosses the creek at the County (Option A) or WCSD (Option B) property.

### *SPECIFIC LAND USE DESIGNATIONS*

A total of 40 land parcels are located within the environmental study limits (ESL) for the proposed East Connector Roadway Project. This ESL includes areas of temporary and permanent use, all alternatives for the road alignment, and the bike trail proposed in conjunction with the project. **Table 3.14-2** lists the affected parcels, their current land use, zoning, and the alternatives in which they are included.

**Table 3.14-2  
Summary of Affected Parcels**

Assessors Parcels Number	Land Use	Zoning	Alternative(s)
024-200-1900	Public Facilities	PF	Alts 1, 2
024-390-5900	Public Facilities	PF	Alts 1, 2
024-390-1400	Heavy Commercial	C-3	Alts 1, 2
024-390-2800	Special Development Unit	SUD	Alts 1, 2
024-410-0800	Rural Residential	RR-5	Alt. 2
024-410-0700	<del>Rural Residential</del> Agriculture	<del>RR-5A-10</del>	Alt. 2
024-210-0800	Industrial, Open Space	I, OS	Alts. 1, 2, Bike path (Options A & B)
024-210-1000	Industrial	I	Alts. 1, 2
024-430-5300	Single Family Residential	R1A	Alts. 1, 2
024-210-0900	Industrial	I	Alts. 1, 2
024-500-6900	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. 1, 2, A, B, C
024-500-5700	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-4000	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-610-2900	Highway Commercial	H-C	Alts. A, B, C
024-480-2600	Single Family Residential	R-1	Alts. A, B, C
024-480-3100	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-480-0600	Retail Commercial, Residential Office	C-1, R-O	Alts. A, B, C
024-480-0700	Single Family Residential	R-1	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-6500	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-5000	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-0500	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-0600	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-6400	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-5600	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-5500	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-1000	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-1100	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-500-1200	General Commercial	C-2	Alts. A, B, C
024-210-0600	Industrial	I	Bike path (Options A & B)
002-100-0200	Industrial	I	Bike path (Options A & B)
002-100-5200*	Public Facilities	PF	Bike path (Options A & B)
002-100-7000*	Residential Duplex	R-2	Bike path Option B
002-100-7100*	Residential Duplex	R-2	Bike path Option B
024-210-1100	Industrial	I	Bike path Option B
002-100-7200*	Residential Duplex	R-2	Bike path Option B
002-100-6000*	Residential Duplex	R-2	Bike path Option B
002-100-1900*	Residential Duplex	R-2	Bike path Option B
002-100-2800*	Residential Duplex	R-2	Bike path Option B
002-100-2500*	Residential Duplex	R-2	Bike path Option B
002-100-2700	Single Family Residential	R-1	Bike path Option B

\* These parcels affected only if they extend east of East Weaver Creek to Levee Road

#### REGULATORY FRAMEWORK – ADOPTED PLAN CONSISTENCY

Congestion on the state highways in the downtown Weaverville area has been a recognized problem by Caltrans and the TCTC since 1984. A variety of planning efforts to improve transportation capacity in the

Weaverville Basin have occurred since that time (see discussion in Sections 1.2, *Project Background* and 1.3, *Project Objectives*). The proposed East Connector Roadway Project is consistent with the *Trinity County General Plan*, including the *Land Use Element* (Trinity County, 1988) and *Circulation Element* (Trinity County, 2002a) of the General Plan, and is also consistent with the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* (Trinity County, 2001) and *Weaverville Community Plan* (Trinity County, 1990).

The East Connector Roadway is fully within the existing growth/planning boundary for the community of Weaverville. The following policies regarding land use, contained in the *Land Use Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan* under “Weaverville Findings and Policies,” relate to the proposed East Connector Roadway project:

- **Policy 1.e.:** Improve parking and circulation in the downtown area to adequately accommodate commercial growth.

The *Circulation Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan* (Trinity County, 2002a) and the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* (Trinity County, 2001) both describe the East Connector in detail under their descriptions of the existing transportation system as an anticipated project currently in the planning phase. In addition, the *Circulation Element* contains the following findings, goals, objectives and policies regarding land use and planning that are relevant to the proposed project:

- **Finding 1:** Increasing seasonal traffic congestion in Weaverville creates potential safety issues and adverse impacts to the community.
- **Finding 2:** State Route 299 in Weaverville operates at level of service E during peak periods. During peak periods, vehicle movements along SR 299 are slowed, while movements onto the highway experience significant delay. Conflicting traffic movements (turns from side streets, parking ingress and egress, delivery vehicles, etc.) cause additional delays.
- **Finding 5:** Facilities for non-motorized travel, including sidewalks and bicycle/pedestrian paths, are limited and do not provide safe continuous routes that link to recreational activity, commercial and residential areas.
- **Goal 1:** Provide for the long-range development of the county’s roadway system that is consistent with adopted land use patterns, ensures the safe and efficient movement of the people and goods, minimizes impacts on the attractiveness of the community, meets environmental and circulation objectives and implements funding strategies for construction, improvement, and maintenance of existing and new roadways.

- Goal 4: Increase bicycle and pedestrian travel by developing a safe and convenient system of bicycle routes, trails, storage facilities and pedestrian walkways, connecting all of Trinity County's major activity centers.
- Objective 1.2: Determine and, as appropriate, address the probable land use impacts of transportation projects prior to approving or funding the projects.
  - *Policy 1.2.A:* Location, design and development of transportation project shall be consistent with the adopted land use policies of the county.
  - *Policy 1.2.B:* Identify potential impacts and/or conflicts between potentially growth-inducing transportation projects and the adopted land-use policies of the county.
  - *Policy 1.2.C:* Require mitigation for transportation projects with potentially significant impacts to existing or planned land uses in the county.
- Objective 1.4: Develop road systems which are compatible with the areas they serve.
- Objective 1.5: Utilize environmental protection/mitigation measures that consider environmental, social, and economic factors when designing, constructing and operating transportation facilities.
  - *Policy 1.5.E:* Ensure that social and economic issues are considered along with the natural and man made environments when environmental review is conducted for proposed projects.
- Objective 1.6: Identify anticipated street and road congestion/capacity problems before they become critical in order to program preventative measures and reduce the cost of correction.
  - *Policy 1.6.A:* The minimum acceptable Level of Service (LOS) standard for roadway and intersection operation in Trinity County is "D". No public highway or roadway should be allowed to fall to or below LOS "E".
  - *Policy 1.6.B:* Traffic analysis, engineering judgment and/or special studies should be utilized to assess whether roadways or intersections are operating near or at LOS "E". If a roadway or intersection is at or near LOS "E", improvements or other strategies to remedy the condition should be considered a priority.
- Objective 1.13: As feasible under financial constraints, expand the transportation system to accommodate and attract new businesses and visitors.
  - *Policy 1.13.B:* Assess each project's contribution to the aesthetics of the area in which it is implemented and support those projects that enhance the visitor's experience in the region.
- Objective 1.14: Support and promote economic development through the efficient movement of freight and tourist travel to, and through Trinity County.

- *Policy 1.14.A:* Support efforts to maintain and improve Trinity County’s highway system as important inter-regional trucking routes, as well as connecting highways in adjacent counties.
- **Objective 4.1:** Increase the total mileage of safe bike routes, trails and pedestrian walkways.
  - *Policy 4.1.A:* A minimum of four-foot paved shoulders should be provided when any new State highway lane miles are added in Trinity County. Four-foot paved shoulders should also be provided when any new county road classified as a major or minor arterial is constructed.
  - *Policy 4.1.B:* Bicycle and pedestrian facilities shall be developed in accord with applicable County and State regulations.

The *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* (Trinity County, 2001) also contains the following goal and objective relevant to land use and the proposed project:

- **Goal #2:** To assure the coordination of transportation facilities with adopted land use plans.
  - **Objective 2.1:** Design and construct future streets serving residential areas in keeping with the neighborhood existing characteristics and right-of-way conditions.

#### *Weaverville Community Plan*

The *Weaverville Community Plan*, adopted in 1990, updates and implements the *Trinity County General Plan* relative to the Weaverville Plan Area (Trinity County, 1990). The *Weaverville Community Plan* addresses all applicable sections and issues of the various General Plan Elements. The East Connector Roadway Project would be consistent with the following major proposal presented in the *Weaverville Community Plan*:

- Provide for a number of circulation improvements throughout the Community, including an eventual truck alternate route.

The *Transportation* section of the *Weaverville Community Plan*, (Trinity County, 1990) contains the following goals relevant to the proposed project:

- **Goal #1:** To provide a streets and highways system which effectively, efficiently and safely serves the variety of transportation needs of the community.
- **Objective #1.1:** Improve the community’s circulation by implementation of the various roadway improvements identified on Exhibit “T-2”

- **Objective #1.2:** Plan for improved capacity and level of service of State Highway 299, which will not impact the historic nature of the downtown area. The Plan specifically rejects the implementation of four traffic lanes through this area.
- **Goal #4:** To increase bicycle and pedestrian traffic by developing a safe and convenient system of bicycle routes, trails, storage facilities, and pedestrian walkways.
- **Goal #5:** To preserve the historic nature and rural atmosphere of the County.

The Transportation Element of the *Weaverville Community Plan* goes on to say that “One of the major proposals of this Plan consists of a series of traffic and roadway improvements which are intended to improve, or at least maintain, the basin’s circulation system with the least disruption of Weaverville’s neighborhoods.” The Plan includes “Exhibit “T-2”, a map showing several “Potential New Roads” in Weaverville, including: “Brown’s Ranch/Airport Connector” and “Martin Road/Brown’s Ranch Connector” which together make up the presently proposed East Connector. The Plan specifically “prepares for the possibility of an alternate Route [sic] around the downtown area in the future.” Other relevant objectives from the *Transportation* section of the *Weaverville Community Plan* include:

- **Objective 4.1:** Increase the total mileage of safe bike routes, trails and pedestrian walkways by requiring paved shoulders on roads where pedestrian or bicycle usage is anticipated.
- **Objective 5.1:** Implement incremental traffic control improvements, such as crosswalk relocations and turn lanes, within the downtown area to the extent possible. Allow intersection signalization only when these measures are not adequate to safely control traffic movements.

The following specific goals and objectives regarding land use, contained in the Land Use section of the *Weaverville Community Plan*, relate to the proposed East Connector Roadway Project:

- **Goal #1:** To develop a land use pattern which implements other elements of the Community Plan.
- **Objective 1.4:** Retain and encourage further development of pathways, as opposed to sidewalks, except along state highways and the central business district, where sidewalks are warranted.
- **Objective 1.6:** Encourage the development of “pedestrian friendly” improvements within the Central Business District in recognition of the high degree of pedestrian use in this area.

### 3.14.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

#### *LAND USE*

Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the CEQA Environmental Checklist, poses the following questions to be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant land use impacts:

Would the project:

- Physically divide an established community?
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?

The East Connector Roadway would not physically divide a community, but the Alternative 1 alignment would pass between an apartment complex for senior citizens and a senior center on Brown's Ranch Road. This impact is discussed below. The proposed project alternatives would not conflict with applicable land use plans, policies or regulations and is consistent with the goals and policies of local planning documents to provide an alternative transportation route to improve the existing congestion on SR 299 and SR 3. There are no habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans that apply to the project area.

#### *GROWTH INDUCEMENT*

According to Appendix G, additional questions may be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant growth-inducing impacts (listed under "Population and Housing" in the checklist):

Would the project:

- Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?
- Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

- Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The East Connector Roadway project, in itself will not directly induce growth in the project area, for the reasons stated below. A minor indirect effect could occur to the degree that benefits to traffic circulation and congestion reduction in the downtown area make development there more desirable. Other growth-inducing effects could result from two projects associated with construction of the East Connector: construction of a new water main along the proposed road and the rezone of a 2 acre industrial parcel to 0.5-acre residential use. The project would not displace houses or people, but one business may be displaced if intersection Alternative B is selected. As discussed in Section 3.16, the project would draw upon the regional labor pool for construction and labor forces. The anticipated 2 to 25 construction workers from outside the local area would be able to find temporary housing in local hotels, motels and RV parks during the period of construction, without displacing local residents or requiring construction of new housing.

### 3.14.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

#### *LAND USE IMPACTS*

##### *Impacts Common To All Alternatives*

The land use evaluation is based on qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the proposed East Connector Roadway project's effect on existing and future planned land uses in the project area. The proposed project would represent a minor, but permanent effect on land use patterns in the project area by changing existing land uses to roadway right-of-way. The project would encroach on public facilities land uses, heavy commercial land uses, light industrial land uses, and open space land uses. As noted above (Section 1.3), the project is consistent with adopted environmental plans and goals of the community, including the *Trinity County General Plan*, *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan*, and *Weaverville Community Plan*. These documents discuss the need to provide an alternative route within Weaverville to address existing traffic and circulation problems.

A narrow sliver of the Trinity River Lumber Company property (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 024-210-0800) would be severed by either alternative of the East Connector Roadway. A portion of this land, along Lance Gulch, is designated as Open Space, as a buffer between industrial use and Lance Gulch. Trinity County will acquire this land, which could then be used to construct a Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail along the east side of the East Connector from Pioneer Lane to Brown's Ranch Road. As noted in Chapter 1, construction of the trail would be the responsibility of the Weaverville Basin Trails Committee. As discussed in Section 3.7, this area would also be used to create seasonal wetlands and a

vegetated buffer to compensate for wetlands lost due to this project. The use of this land for trails and wetlands would be consistent with its Open Space land use designation, and would actually expand the area of land dedicated to Open Space uses.

An adjacent parcel owned by the Trinity River Lumber Company, (APN 024-210-1000), at the end of Martin Road, may be rezoned from industrial to a residential zoning designation (R1A, 0.5-acre minimum) as part of the project. Trinity River Lumber would retain this parcel, which would be accessed by Martin Road. The general types and distribution of land uses within the project area would not be directly or indirectly altered, however, because this property is adjacent to existing residential parcels of the same density.

The proposed roadway would generate traffic noise, vehicular emissions, and visual impacts that would be incompatible with adjacent rural residences and senior facilities at the north end of the project. In addition, there would be pedestrian safety impacts associated with the new roadway.

The project would not pass through, or divide, the established residential communities on Brown's Ranch Road or Martin Road/Pioneer Lane. These neighborhoods would be separated from the roadway by topography. The road would be approximately 35 feet below the adjacent residential properties, at the base of a steep slope. The topographic separation would reduce the visual and noise impacts and safety hazards, because the road will not pass directly in front of any of the nearby homes. Land use incompatibilities with residential properties are therefore not considered significant.

Both the Mill and Yingling Construction Yard on Levee Road have expressed concerns over security for their facilities, because of increased traffic along their boundaries. Placing the roadway through or adjacent to an operating lumber mill would create potentially significant safety and aesthetic conflicts. Mitigation for this impact is discussed below.

#### *Alternative 1*

East Connector Roadway Alternative 1 would pass between an apartment complex for senior citizens and a senior center on Brown's Ranch Road, making it more difficult to pass between the two. This could be considered "dividing" a community, although not physically. Pedestrian traffic along Brown's Ranch Road between the Weaver Creek Senior Apartments and the Golden Age Senior Center, which are located on opposite sides of Brown's Ranch Road, would be impacted since the road would utilize the segment of Brown's Ranch Road between these properties. This is considered a significant impact on the Senior Citizen community.

This alternative would also take more property from the Trinity River Lumber Company mill than Alternative 2, but the mill would remain operational.

### *Alternative 2*

Alternative 2 would convert a greater amount of existing uses to roadway right-of-way and would require acquisition of additional right-of-way from privately owned lands, particularly the senior center property east of the building. On the other hand, less property would be taken from the Trinity River Lumber Mill.

The incompatibility between the proposed roadway and rural residences to the east of the project on Brown's Ranch Road may be greater under Alternative 2 since this alignment would be closer to these land uses. This alignment would be placed closer to residents along Brown's Ranch Road who have expressed a concern regarding impacts to pedestrian safety and the safety of playing children due to the proximity of the proposed roadway. The impact to pedestrian safety between the senior apartments and the senior center would be eliminated under Alternative 2, since this alignment would be to the east of the senior center and would intersect Brown's Ranch Road at only one point, southeast of the center.

This alternative would have a greater effect on future plans to add senior apartments on the south side of the senior center property, south of the existing parking lot. The SUD Guidelines developed for the Senior Center include a proposal for up to 10 apartment units. This proposal has been delayed due to lack of funding and limitations of the center's sewage disposal capacity. Alternative 2 would come close to the northeast corner of the proposed development, as shown on the SUD Guidelines. The senior apartments could still be developed, but would have to be slightly rearranged or reduced by one or two units to establish appropriate setbacks from the road right-of-way.

### *Intersection Sub-Alternative A*

Businesses located at the south end of the project, in particular the shoe store (On Your Feet) and the mini market/car wash (the Weaver Valley Market), located at the corner of Glen Road and Nugget Lane, would experience reduced access due to the closure of Nugget Lane at Glen Road. This is considered a significant effect on these businesses.

### *Intersection Sub-Alternative B*

Similar to Alternatives A, the businesses located at the south end of the project would experience reduced access as a result of the closure of Nugget Lane at Glen Road. In addition, under Alternative B, realignment of Glen Road would necessitate the modification or removal of the commercial building located on APN 024-500-4000 (On Your Feet shoe store). Reduced access and removal of the shoe store are considered significant adverse effects, and mitigation is discussed below.

#### *Intersection Sub-Alternative C*

Under this sub-alternative, in-only access to Nugget Lane from Glen Road would be maintained, but traffic would be prohibited from exiting Nugget Lane onto Glen Road. Access to the businesses along Nugget Lane near Glen Road would be reduced, but to a lesser extent than with the other sub-alternatives. The commercial building on APN 024-500-4000 (On Your Feet shoe store) would remain.

#### *Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail and Bridge*

Option A and B would both be consistent with adopted environmental plans and goals of the community, including the *Trinity County General Plan*, *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan*, and *Weaverville Community Plan*. These documents discuss the community's goal of increasing bicycle and pedestrian travel by developing a safe and convenient system of bicycle routes, trails, storage facilities and pedestrian walkways.

The bike trail and bridge would not result in any significant land use incompatibilities or in any changes in the general pattern and distribution of land use in the project area. There are potential safety concerns from vehicular traffic on Levee Road and from truck traffic entering and exiting Yingling Construction Yard. The proposed trail crosses this property before the Option A bridge crossing of East Weaver Creek. However, vehicular traffic is not heavy at this location or along other portions of Levee Road. Mitigation for this impact is addressed below.

In addition, there are right-of-way and compatibility/safety issues associated with Option B that are not an issue with Option A. Under Option B, the proposed trail would terminate at a three-way intersection of Weaver Street, Park Avenue, and Lowden Lane. There is a stop sign on Park Avenue, but Weaver Street and Lowden Lane have no stop controls. Under Option B, County roads would have to be traveled to reach Lowden Park or the elementary school. The three-way intersection and use of County roads to reach the park or school pose potential safety hazards to bicyclists and pedestrians. Under Option A, access to the park is more direct and the three-way intersection is avoided. The Option A bridge crossing East Weaver Creek would be located entirely on County lands adjacent to Lowden Park, beyond the end of Park Avenue.

The Option B bridge crossing would require that the County obtain right-of-way along Levee Road. This right-of-way is currently with the County's Flood Control Easement, which requires access to the levee be kept clear at all times. Therefore the land within the easement cannot be used for buildings or storage. The County would acquire the right-of-way on these parcels in fee title, relieving the property owners of the tax burden and liability for property that is unusable to them due to the existing flood control easement. The majority of this land is owned by Trinity River Lumber mill. However, a few of the residential properties that front on Park Avenue may extend across East Weaver Creek. Property

boundary surveys would be conducted at the time of right-of-way acquisition. The bicycle trail along levee road would not be incompatible with residential uses across East Weaver Creek.

Under Option B, the trail would also pass through the Weaverville CSD yard. This would reduce the size of the maintenance yard, and have a minor impact on CSD operations. A fence would be constructed between the bike path and CSD yard, for security.

#### *No Project Alternative*

The No Project Alternative would not result in land use incompatibilities in the project area. However, this alternative would also not support the adopted plans and goals of the community to provide an alternative route and improve the existing congestion on SR 299. Although there would be no immediate costs or environmental impacts from this alternative, it would not provide a long-term solution for the operational issues and circulation issues in the Weaverville area. This alternative would not meet the objectives to relieve congestion within the community or provide a viable alternative for local traffic within Weaverville, and truck and through-traffic traveling between SR 299 and SR 3. This alternative would therefore be inconsistent with the goals of the *Weaverville Community Plan* and *Circulation Element of the Trinity County General Plan*.

**Land Use Impact-1** The East Connector Roadway project would affect land use patterns in the project area by changing existing land uses to roadway right-of-way.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

**Land Use Impact-2** Alternative B would alter or remove one existing commercial property located at the SR 299 and Glen Road intersection.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated (**Land Use Mitigation-1**).

**Land Use Mitigation-1** If Alternative B is selected, the County will purchase the affected property and provide appropriate compensation to the property owner, building owner, and business owner in compliance with federal and state law and provide relocation assistance to the business owner, if necessary.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

**Land Use Impact-3** The East Connector Roadway and bicycle/pedestrian trail could create land use and safety incompatibilities with adjacent industrial properties and senior facilities.

**Significance:** Potentially significant, but mitigated (**Land Use Mitigation-2 and -3**).

**Land Use Mitigation-2** If Alternative 1 is selected, the northern intersection of the East Connector with Brown's Ranch Road would be all-way stop controlled. A pedestrian crossing would be provided at the all-way stop intersection. The pedestrian crossing will be clearly marked with "Pedestrian Crossing" signs and pavement striping.

**Land Use Mitigation-3** The County will provide fencing along property lines separating the East Connector and Class I bicycle trail from the mill and construction yard. In addition, fast-growing trees and shrubs, such as cedar or cypress trees, will be planted between the East Connector and the mill, to screen views of the mill. The bicycle/pedestrian path will be routed along the creek side of Levee Road where it crosses the entrance to the construction yard.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

#### *GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS*

According to CEQA, a project would normally be considered to have a significant effect on the environment if it would induce substantial growth or concentration of population. Caltrans' *Community Impact Assessment Environmental Handbook Volume 4* (Caltrans 1997) provides guidance for determining whether a project will be growth-inducing. According to the Caltrans document, "a traditional shorthand way of looking at growth inducement is as the removal of obstacles to growth. The question is, will the project promote future economic or population growth?"

Land use planning in California is primarily implemented at the local level, through the general plans of local cities and counties. General Plans are required to balance local resources, fiscal capabilities and the quality of life concerns of each community to determine the appropriate type, level and pace of growth. Since the General Plan of a community defines the location, type and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California. An important consideration in assessing the potential growth impact of a proposed project is whether the capacity of the project could permit a level of growth in excess of that planned by local jurisdictions (i.e., whether the project creates "excess" infrastructure capacity). Infrastructure projects that could accommodate the level and character of growth identified in local General Plans are generally "growth-accommodating" rather than "growth-inducing." However, as noted in Caltrans' *Community Impact Assessment Environmental Handbook Volume 4* (Caltrans 1997), a project's consistency with adopted plans and policies is not sufficient evidence that the project will not be growth-inducing. A more detailed discussion of growth impacts in the context of the proposed East Connector Roadway is presented below.

### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

The proposed East Connector Roadway does not provide access to lands that cannot currently be developed or are underdeveloped because of access limitations. The proposed project is intended to accommodate the rate of growth anticipated in the *Weaverville Community Plan* and *Land Use Element of the General Plan*, as identified in the *Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study*. (Trinity County 1998). However, the road itself will not cause further development for the following reasons:

- The road will be a limited access arterial. The only individual driveways allowed to encroach onto the East Connector will be those for already existing adjacent land uses, such as Trinity River Lumber Mill, Trinity Plaza Shopping Center, California Highway Patrol and the Golden Age Senior Center (Alternative 1 only). Any new development would be required to include an interior road with a single shared encroachment onto the new road.
- Most of the alignment goes through the mill property, which is zoned Industrial. If the mill were to close, the Trinity County Planning Department expects the property would be rezoned to Commercial. The property might then be subdivided into smaller commercial parcels. The mill property includes 110 acres, which is mostly flat and is mostly occupied by the mill. Right-of-way for the East Connector would acquire approximately 23 acres. The internal road required by the “limited access” design of the East Connector would take at least another 5 to 10 acres. If the mill were to go out of business, its property would likely be subdivided for commercial, or possibly residential, use, regardless of whether the East Connector Roadway is constructed or not. Therefore, with or without the East Connector, the new commercial district would have to build an internal road to access either Brown's Ranch Road, the East Connector, SR 299 or Levee Road. Without the East Connector, there would be an additional 23 acres available for development. Since a road would have to be built to connect all the parcels in any case, the East Connector is not helping or encouraging the mill property to subdivide. The East Connector is not taking away usable operational areas of the mill that may cause it to shut down.
- The County will acquire the portions of the mill parcel east of the East Connector, and this will be dedicated to a separate bicycle/pedestrian trail and open space designed to protect and enhance the seasonal wetlands and Lance Gulch.
- Use of the East Connector to facilitate development on parcels to the east of the mill property, including constructing driveways from these properties to the proposed roadway, is precluded by topography. Lance Gulch and a steep bluff immediately east of the Gulch make it impossible to use the East Connector to access this area. The road would be at the base of the approximately 35-foot-high bluff, with adjacent residential properties at the top of the bluff. Furthermore, this area is already accessible, from private driveways off Brown's Ranch Road or Martin Road.
- The Brown's Ranch Road area is zoned Rural Residential 5 acre minimum. Residential areas on Brown's Ranch Road are nearly at full buildout. All but one parcel is currently the minimum size

and cannot be further subdivided. This one parcel (024-410-6000), which could potentially be further subdivided, would be easily accessed by Brown's Ranch Road. In the Brown's Ranch Road area, septic systems are the limiting factor for development, not access.

The Martin Road area is already almost fully developed, in the absence of the East Connector roadway project. There are a few parcels that could still be subdivided. They would access Martin Road or Pioneer Lane. Development is occurring in this area because community water and sewer systems and County roads are already available. The existing access from this area to SR 299 via Martin Road is quite efficient and is not limiting development there. Residential areas on Martin Road are nearly at full buildout. Additional residential construction on Pioneer Lane east of Martin Road is planned, with or without the proposed project. That area is beyond the east end of Pioneer Lane. The area is zoned for Residential use, with a one-half acre minimum parcel size. Development in this area is constrained by the expense of bringing lateral lines to the existing main sewer and water lines on Martin Road, and the expense of extending a private road from the east end of Pioneer Lane into the area. The extension of Pioneer Lane proposed as part of this project is to the west, across Martin Road and down to the East Connector. This extension will not facilitate access to the area east of Pioneer Lane, or remove any barriers to development of this area.



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- The proposed Pioneer Lane extension to the East Connector project will go through property that could easily access Martin Road for development. The County does not intend to allow encroachment of private driveways onto the Pioneer Lane extension.
- Commercial areas at the south end of the alignment at SR 299 are already developed. There is a proposed new fuel facility at Weaver Valley Market that would replace a previous fuel facility removed due to the Underground Storage Tank upgrade requirements in 1998. This new facility is not being proposed because of the East Connector, but because it is on the existing commercial throughfare of SR 299, and a good location for a gas station. There is another gas station at the intersection of Brown's Ranch Road and SR 3 that will be easily accessible from the East Connector. The East Connector would not cause the need for additional gas stations in Weaverville.
- Properties at the north end of the alignment are zoned either Heavy Commercial (existing logging yard) or Public Facilities (existing County Road Maintenance yard and proposed expansion). These are fully developed, except for the County maintenance yard expansion. The expansion is occurring because the County has acquired the land from BLM, along with other land around the existing airport and county landfill, and because it is adjacent to the TCDOT's existing yard, which requires more space. This expansion will occur regardless of whether the East Connector Roadway is built.
- There are three adjacent parcels (APN 024-400-03 & 04 and 024-370-06) totaling 105 acres, in the vicinity of the Golden Age Center. The parcels are zoned Residential one-half acre minimum, presently all in the same ownership and all undeveloped. Only one of these three, a 20-acre parcel, would front near the East Connector. A private road would have to be built through this

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20-acre parcel to access the other two parcels. The Alternative 1 alignment would pass approximately 180 feet from the nearest property line. The Alternative 2 alignment would pass approximately 40 feet from the nearest property line. Under existing conditions, a developer would have to extend a road approximately 350 feet through County property to Brown's Ranch Road. There is already a dirt/rock driveway from Brown's Ranch Road to the Pruett Logging Yard (APN 024-400-02), with a dirt driveway off of it leading to the undeveloped parcels. Like Pioneer Heights, development is also constrained by the expense of extending laterals to the existing water main on Brown's Ranch Road. Sewer is not available in this area, which precludes rezoning to a smaller minimum parcel size. Even if the Alternative 2 alignment is built, bringing the public road only 40 feet from the property line, the situation would be similar to the existing situation east of Pioneer Lane. A public road is adjacent to the property, but the developer would bear significant expense to extend a private road into this large undeveloped area in steep terrain. The savings of having to build a private road that is 310 or 70 feet shorter will probably not be a single deciding factor that leads to development of this acreage. Land Use Mitigation 4, stated below, limits encroachments onto the East Connector to single encroachment point for any entire development plan (subdivision, industrial park, etc.) Internal collector roads will be required for any development proposed along this route, connecting to a single encroachment point on the East Connector.

As noted above, the proposed project's objectives are consistent with the goals and policies of the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan*, *Trinity County General Plan Land Use Element and Circulation Element*, and the *Weaverville Community Plan* to provide an alternative route to improve the existing congestion on SR 299 and SR 3 (see Section 1.3). These documents attempt to address the potentially adverse implications of development and growth through policies, programs, and proposals for adequate infrastructure, promotion of a reasonable balance between jobs and housing, and protection of environmentally sensitive resources. The East Connector Roadway project was conceived to deal with projected growth in the Weaverville Basin, as projected in the *Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study* (WBTCs), based on an annual population growth rate of 1 percent in the basin. Therefore, in general, the project is considered growth-accommodating.

Improved traffic capacity and operating conditions could enhance development potential and indirectly support development in the downtown area. This is generally considered desirable by the community, as evidenced by numerous Community Plan policies. This possible indirect effect is not quantifiable, but is not expected to be substantial.

The possible rezone of a 2-acre parcel of land owned by the Trinity River Lumber Company, separate from the Mill parcel and adjacent to Martin Road, is discussed in the Project Description. This aspect of the project would be directly growth inducing. The R-1A (0.5-acre minimum) land use designation for

this parcel would allow a maximum of four more parcels to be developed for residential use. This would not comprise a significant contribution to recent development in the Weaverville Basin. The new zoning would be consistent with adjacent land uses and zoning densities.

The East Connector is included in the Weaverville CSD's Master Plan for improvements to the Weaverville water supply system. The CSD proposes to install a water main within the new road right-of-way. For cost efficiency and to save later disruption of the new paved road surface, this water line would be installed during construction of the East Connector. The Master Plan does not propose any expansion of the CSD boundaries, or extension of service into currently unserved areas. The new line would loop sections of Weaverville together, giving the CSD the ability to supplement the system with Trinity River water from their existing diversion at Douglas City if the source at East Weaver Creek failed, or bypass the existing line from East Weaver Creek if the pipe failed. The purposes of these improvements are circulation, better gravity feed and reliability rather than expansion. The new line would not increase the overall community water supply or change the amount of water drawn from the Weaver Creek/Trinity River watersheds.

Although no expansion is planned, the proposed new water main would improve water pressure and reliability, eliminating an existing barrier to development because some areas in the community cannot currently be served by the Weaverville Fire District due to inadequate water pressure and/or supplies. Thus, the improvements proposed in the Weaverville CSD's Master Plan, including the proposed new water main along the East Connector project, could indirectly induce growth in some areas of the community. This indirect effect is difficult to quantify, but is not expected to make a significant difference in the growth rate of the Weaverville community.

#### *ALTERNATIVES 1, 2, A, B, C*

There is no difference in the growth-inducing impacts of the alternatives. All alternatives would be consistent with land use and growth policies contained in existing plans for the project area, including policies to address circulation problems expected to occur due to growth anticipated in these plans. Although the alternatives are not expected to directly induce growth, improved traffic capacity and operating conditions could enhance development potential and indirectly support development in the community. As noted above, the proposed rezoning of a severed lumber mill parcel could result in a direct minor growth impact of four new residences if the mill decides to subdivide the parcel and develop it for residential use. In addition, construction of a new water main along the East Connector could indirectly induce growth by removing an existing barrier to development (inadequate water supplies and pressure for fire fighting).

### *BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN TRAIL AND BRIDGE*

Neither Option A nor Option B would cause growth-inducing effects and would be consistent with land use and growth policies contained in existing plans for the project area.

### *NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE*

The No Project Alternative would not induce growth in the project area. However, this alternative would also not support polices to provide an alternative route to improve the existing congestion on SR 299 and increased congestion due to anticipated growth. This alternative would not provide a long-term solution for the operational issues and circulation issues in the Weaverville area and would not meet the objectives to relieve congestion within the community or provide a viable alternative for local traffic within Weaverville and truck and other through-traffic traveling between SR 299 and SR 3.

**Land Use Impact-4** Creation of a new roadway could indirectly induce development along its length.

**Significance:** Potentially significant/indirect, but mitigated (**Land Use Mitigation-4**).

**Land Use Mitigation-4** The County would, as a condition of project approval, limit access to the East Connector as follows. The East Connector is to be classified as a limited-access minor arterial route and adjacent property access will be minimized to preserve the functionality of the route as an Arterial. The TCDOT is the agency responsible for issuing Encroachment Permits on County Roads. The TCDOT will only issue permits for encroachment onto the East Connector on a limited basis, as follows: Land uses existing on properties immediately adjacent to the East Connector at the time of construction of the East Connector may be allowed up to two encroachments, provided proposed encroachments can be located and designed to meet TCDOT standards at the time of their construction. This includes Trinity Plaza Shopping Center, Trinity River Lumber Company, California Highway Patrol, and Golden Age Senior Center. Future development along the East Connector shall only be allowed a single encroachment point for any entire development plan (subdivision, industrial park, etc.) Internal collector roads will be required for any development proposed along this route, connecting to a single encroachment point on the East Connector. No parking will be allowed on the East Connector, and any adjacent development (existing or future) shall be required to provide adequate off-street parking. All other applicable building, zoning, land use, subdivision ordinance, encroachment permit requirements, etc. shall apply. In no case shall future encroachments onto the East Connector be spaced closer than 300 feet from any other encroachment or roadway intersection.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

**Land Use Impact-5** Construction of a new water main along the proposed road and creation of four new residential properties may result in four new residences and an unquantifiable indirect effect on growth within the Weaverville CSD or Fire District service areas.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

### 3.14.4 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS IN COMMON FOR ALL ALTERNATIVES*

Construction activities are tentatively scheduled over two construction seasons. There would be some disruption and temporary land use incompatibilities with adjacent residential and commercial land uses during the construction period.

**Land Use Impact -5** Construction of the proposed East Connector Roadway project would produce short-term adverse effects on adjacent residential and commercial areas in the community of Weaverville from construction activities.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated (**Land Use Mitigation-5**)

**Land Use Mitigation-5** During construction activities, the County shall limit the amount of daily construction equipment traffic by staging most construction equipment and vehicles on the project site at the end of each work day rather than removing them.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### 3.14.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

#### *IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

The project will meet existing traffic needs and, as a limited access roadway, is not expected to contribute to cumulative growth in the project area. If access to a new airport in northeast Weaverville is provided from the East Connector, the combined traffic from the airport and through-traffic on the East Connector would contribute cumulatively to land use and safety incompatibilities with adjacent residential properties and senior facilities along Brown's Ranch Road.

**Land Use Impact-6** Combined traffic from the East Connector Roadway project and a proposed new airport access road could create land use and safety incompatibilities with adjacent residential properties and senior facilities along Brown's Ranch Road.

**Significance:** Potentially significant, but mitigated (see **Land Use Mitigation-2**, above).

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### **3.16 COMMUNITY IMPACTS (SOCIAL, ECONOMIC)**

This section identifies the social and economic impacts of the proposed project, including population/ demographic/ workforce impacts, safety and efficiency impacts, taxable sales impacts and other impacts to local businesses, fiscal impacts related to acquisition of right-of-way and loss of property taxes, and relocation impacts. Social and economic effects are usually considered significant effects under CEQA only if they are reasonably tied to physical effects on the environment.

Some of the affects analyzed in this section, such as fiscal effects and taxable sales cannot be reasonably tied to a physical change in the environment. Therefore their analysis is not required by CEQA, and these types of impacts are not considered significant under CEQA. However, the social and economic effects of the project are of concern to the community. They are discussed here in the interest of disclosure, for use by County decision makers, so that the social and economic consequences of their decisions will be fully understood.

#### **3.16.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

Trinity County's population has fluctuated over the past 10 years, showing a general trend towards slower growth than in previous decades. Population growth trends and projections are discussed in Section 3.14, *Land Use, Planning and Growth*. Additional demographic and economic patterns are discussed below.

The 1999 average population density for Trinity County (4.1 persons per square mile) is significantly below the statewide average (212.5 persons per square mile) (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). The number of housing units in the County was estimated to be 8,074 in 1999 (California Department of Finance 2001). Of these, 5,523 were occupied at least six months of the year, while the remaining 2,551 were vacant at least six months of the year, resulting in a vacancy/second home rate of approximately 31.6 percent. The high percentage of vacant housing in the County is attributed to the high volume of second homes in the vicinity of Trinity Lake, located in the northeastern portion of Trinity County (Trinity County, 1998). By comparison, in 1997, Weaverville had 1,574 occupied housing units and 126 vacant units, for a vacancy/second home rate of approximately 7.4 percent. The high vacancy/second home rate in the County is expected to remain relatively constant over the next decade and is not reflective of an area that has a high demand for new housing development.

Total 2000 employment in Trinity County, including wage and salary employment, self-employed and all other categories, was estimated at approximately 4,150. Employment in Weaverville was 1,230, representing 28 percent of the County's employment.

Historically, the local economy has been based on government, forestry, light manufacturing, and tourism. The predominant sector of employment in the County is government, largely due to employment

with the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, as well as schools and other governmental agencies. The retail and service sectors play an increasingly important role in County employment. The principal manufacturing industry in the County, lumber and wood products, supports nearly all of the County's manufacturing workers. More recently, however, there has been a decline in forestry jobs, due to poor market conditions and increasing environmental limitations on timber harvesting. The Trinity River Lumber Company mill in Weaverville is the last operating mill in the County.

A profile of Trinity County employment in February 2000 is provided in **Table 3.16-1**.

**Table 3.16-1. Trinity County Employment Profile, February 2000**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>No. of Jobs</b>	<b>% Employed by Industry</b>
Government	1,360	44.6
Agriculture	100	3.3
Manufacturing	260	8.5
Wholesale Trade	40	1.3
Retail Trade	560	18.4
Services	390	12.8
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	80	2.6
Transportation, Communication, Public Utilities	140	4.6
Construction and Mining	120	3.9
Wage & Salary Employment	3,050	100.0
Self Employment and Other Categories	1,100	
Source: Labor Market Information Division of the California State Employment Development Department, February 2000.		

Economic forecasts for the County indicate employment growth in transportation and public utilities, in relatively high-wage industries, such as business and health services, and in the trade and services employment sectors. Governmental employment, on the other hand, is expected to experience low growth at less than one percent during the same period (California Employment Development Department, 2000).

The California Employment Development Department reports that Trinity County's unemployment rate declined from an annual average of 14.7 percent in 1995 to 12.4 percent in 2000. This compares with the statewide annual average of 4.9 percent in 2000. The unemployment rate reflects the seasonal nature of employment in the economy, with an average high unemployment of 18.1 in February and an average low unemployment rate of 7.8 percent in September. Unemployment in February 2000 was 16.3 percent for the County and 6.2 percent for Weaverville.

Per capita personal income in Trinity County grew from \$12,997 in 1988 to \$18,704 in 1998. Recent census data estimate the County's median household income at \$27,042, compared to the statewide median income of \$39,595. An estimated 19.4 percent of the County's population lives below poverty, compared to 3.4 percent of the statewide living below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau 2001).

The majority (87.3 percent) of workers residing in Trinity County are employed within County. The remaining percentage, approximately 12.7 percent of the available work force residing in Trinity County, works outside the County.

Taxable sales data and trends can provide an indication of the success of local businesses and demand for goods and services. Trinity County sales data available from the State Board of Equalization reflect the seasonal nature of sales in the County, with peak sales occurring from late spring to early fall.

Weaverville is the most populated community in Trinity County and has more convenient access to areas with larger population and commercial bases (e.g., Redding, Lake Shasta, the Interstate 5 corridor, and Eureka) than many other communities in the County. Businesses in the Weaverville area are predominately of three types, as described in the *Weaverville Community Plan* (Trinity County, 1990):

- Community-oriented commercial services
- Recreation-oriented commercial services
- Industrial and resource base activities

A description of the business characteristics and constraints to growth of each of these is provided below.

#### *COMMUNITY-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL SERVICES*

This type of business includes retail stores, professional services, etc. and is dependent upon local residents to provide the majority of their business activity. These businesses are scattered along the SR 299 and SR 3 corridors and within the "downtown" central business district in Weaverville. Challenges and constraints to the continuing success and growth of these businesses include:

- Competition with similar businesses in more populated areas (e.g., Redding and Eureka)
- Infrastructure deficiencies (need for sewer and water main extensions), particularly at the north end of SR 3 and southeast end of SR 299
- Inadequate parking and circulation in the downtown area to adequately accommodate commercial growth

### *RECREATION-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL SERVICES*

Recreation-oriented commercial services include hotels, restaurants, retail outlets and tourist attractions that cater more to seasonal or weekend trade. These businesses are concentrated within Weaverville's central business district, with some restaurants and hotels scattered along the SR 299 and SR 3 corridors. Challenges and constraints to the continuing success and growth of these businesses include:

- The largely seasonal nature of this business, relying upon the tourist season which is concentrated between Memorial Day and Labor Day
- Lack of public awareness of the area's tourist attractions and historical significance
- Inadequate funding for promoting area tourism
- Insufficient accommodations or services to support major growth in tourism
- Inadequate parking and circulation in the downtown area to adequately accommodate commercial growth
- Physical distance of the area from major population centers reduces the number of impulsive, spontaneous visitors visiting the area (high fuel costs also factor here)
- Limited scope of recreational development on specially protected federal lands (e.g., wilderness or wild and scenic areas)

### *INDUSTRIAL AND RESOURCE-DEPENDENT ACTIVITIES*

Industrial activities include bulk petroleum plants, warehousing, and manufacturing businesses. Resource based activities include timber management and harvesting, mining, and subsequent milling or processing of the resources. Weaverville has two main industrial areas: one extending from Washington Street to the Trinity River Lumber mill on SR 299, and the other located at the southeast end of town along SR 299. An increase in business in this area has the opportunity to significantly increase employment. Low electricity rates of the Trinity County Public Utility District are an inducement to growth of this type of activity. Challenges and constraints to the continuing success and growth of these businesses include:

- Changes in federal land management policies that disfavor industrial and resource-based businesses
- Changes in the demand for industrial and resource-based products
- Transportation constraints posed by mountainous roads that can restrict winter-time travel

Businesses in the East Connector Roadway project area consist of commercial and light industrial establishments located along SR 299 and SR 3, the Trinity River Lumber Company mill, and other light industrial businesses located at the north end of the roadway alignment and along the bike path proposed to parallel Levee Road (e.g., Yingling Construction Yard).

### *REGULATORY SETTING*

As noted above, social and economic effects are not considered significant effects under CEQA unless a chain of cause and effect can be established between the social or economic effect and an adverse physical effect on the environment.

### *RELOCATION*

Under CEQA, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if it would displace a large number of people. The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution (as well as the State Constitution) requires just compensation for the taking of private property for public use. Trinity County must compensate the affected property owners at fair market value for the acquisition of property (land and improvements) needed for the project.

In addition to compensation for property acquisition, the federal *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Properties Acquisition Policies Act* and state law (California Government Code, Chapter 16, Section 7260, et seq.) require that relocation assistance be provided to any person or business displaced because of acquisition of real property by a public entity for public use. Comparable replacement properties must be made available or provided within a reasonable time prior to displacement. Relocation assistance may also be provided. These measures help those displaced find adequate replacement properties and cover certain expenses involved in finding, purchasing or renting, and moving to a new location.

### *SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

#### *Trinity County General Plan*

The *Land Use Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan*, (Trinity County, 1988) contains the following goals regarding socioeconomic development relevant to the proposed project:

- Improve parking and circulation in the downtown area to adequately accommodate commercial growth.

The *Circulation Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan*, (Trinity County, 2002a) and the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* (Trinity County, 2001) both describe the East Connector in detail under their descriptions of the existing transportation system as an anticipated project currently in the planning phase. In addition, *the Circulation Element* contains the following findings, goals, objectives and policies regarding socioeconomic development that are relevant to the proposed project:

- **Finding 1:** Increasing seasonal traffic congestion in Weaverville creates potential safety issues and adverse impacts to the community.

- **Finding 2:** State Route 299 in Weaverville operates at level of service E during peak periods. During peak periods, vehicle movements along SR 299 are slowed, while movements onto the highway experience significant delay. Conflicting traffic movements (turns from side streets, parking ingress and egress, delivery vehicles, ect.) cause additional delays.
- **Objective 1.13:** As feasible under financial constraints, expand the transportation system to accommodate and attract new businesses and visitors.
- **Objective 1.14:** Support and promote economic development through the efficient movement of freight and tourist travel to, and through Trinity County.
- **Policy 1.14.A:** Support efforts to maintain and improve Trinity County’s highway system as important inter-regional trucking routes, as well as connecting highways in adjacent counties.

The *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* also contains the following goals, objectives and policies regarding socioeconomic development that are relevant to the proposed project:

- **Goal #5.1:** Improve the transportation system to support access to and economic viability of locally-operated businesses for economic enhancement.
- **Objective 5.1.1:** As feasible under financial constraints, expand the transportation system to accommodate and attract new businesses and visitors. *Performance Measure: Countywide retail sales.*
- **Goal #5.2:** Preserve high quality viewsheds along State highways and County roads in an effort to improve visitor experience and economic enhancements.

#### *Weaverville Community Plan*

The Transportation section of the *Weaverville Community Plan*, (Trinity County 1990) contains the following goals:

- **Goal #1:** To provide a streets and highways system which effectively, efficiently and safely serves the variety of transportation needs of the community.

The *Weaverville Community Plan* goes on to say that “One of the major proposals of this Plan consists of a series of traffic and roadway improvements which are intended to improve, or at least maintain, the basin’s circulation system with the least disruption of Weaverville’s neighborhoods.” The Plan includes “Exhibit “T-2”, a map showing several “Potential New Roads” in Weaverville, including: “Brown’s Ranch/Airport Connector” and “Martin Road/Brown’s Ranch Connector” which together make up the presently proposed East Connector.

- **Objective #1.1:** Improve the communities circulation by implementation of the various roadway improvements identified on Exhibit “T-2”
- **Objective #1.2:** Plan for improved capacity and level of service of State Highway 299, which will not impact the historic nature of the downtown area. The Plan specifically rejects the implementation of four traffic lanes through this area.

The *Economic Development* section of the *Weaverville Community Plan*, contains the following goals regarding socioeconomic development relevant to the proposed project:

- **Goal #4:** To construct and maintain a more adequate State and County road system, in order to provide better all-weather access to all parts of the County.

### 3.16.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The impact discussion below looks at areas of impact that are not addressed in Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, including population, demographic, and workforce impacts, access impacts, safety and efficiency impacts, taxable sales and other business impacts, fiscal impacts, and relocation impacts. As mentioned above, strictly social and economic effects that do not result in a physical change in the environment are not considered significant effects under CEQA. Therefore, there are no CEQA significance criteria that apply to these effects. In each case, the criterion for significance is whether the social or economic impact can be reasonably tied to a physical change to the environment that would have a significant effect.

### 3.16.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

#### *POPULATION / DEMOGRAPHIC / WORKFORCE IMPACTS*

##### *Impacts Common to All Alternatives*

As explained in Section 3.14, *Land Use*, the project is not expected to induce significant residential, commercial, or industrial growth. Therefore, changes to the population or demographic character of the project area are not expected. The project will draw largely upon the local and regional labor force to construct the project. Workers may reside for the short-term of construction in one of the area’s hotels, motels or RV parks, but would probably not permanently relocate to the Weaverville area as a result of the project.

### *No Project Alternative*

The No Project Alternative would not result in displacement impacts, or changes in population, housing or demographic characteristics; however, the No Project Alternative would also fail to meet local community goals, objectives, and planning policies.

### *CHANGES IN ACCESS*

#### *Impacts Common to All Project Alternatives*

The East Connector project would result in overall improvements in traffic operations, circulation, and access to parking spaces along SR 299 from reduced congestion on the SR 299 corridor within the business district. The project would also improve access between the east end of SR 299 and north end of SR 3 within Weaverville and between SR 299 and the Trinity Lake/Trinity Alps area to the north of Weaverville.

Businesses located at the south end of the project, near the intersection of SR 299 and Glen Road would experience reduced access as a result of the new traffic signal at Glen Road/SR 299 and changes to the Glen Road/SR 299/Nugget Lane intersection.

#### *Alternative A*

Glen Road would be slightly realigned at its terminus with SR 299 to line up with the new East Connector. Access to the Nugget Lane frontage road from Glen Road would be eliminated. The existing driveway between the car wash and Coast Central Credit Union would remain open to two-way in and out traffic. No turn pockets would be provided on Glen Road for this private driveway, but left and right turns would be allowed. Changes in access may negatively impact businesses at this location, and mitigation for this impact is discussed below and in Section 3.18, *Traffic and Transportation*.

#### *Alternative B*

Access impacts from this alternative would be similar to Alternative A. Access to the Nugget Lane frontage road would be eliminated. This alignment would also require removing all or part of the building currently occupied by On Your Feet shoe store, the Dollar Store, and Trinity Transit. Glen Road would be realigned further south at its terminus with SR 299 to better line up with the new East Connector across SR 299. A new access to Nugget Lane would be provided from Golf Course Drive, through the area currently occupied by the shoe store building. This would provide an access to Glen Road and SR 299 from this end of Nugget Lane, preserving access to and from Glen Road for the remaining businesses on Nugget Lane south of Glen Road. Like Alternative A, the existing driveway between the car wash and Coast Central Credit Union on the other side of Glen Road would remain open to two-way in and out traffic. Changes in access may negatively impact businesses at this location, and

mitigation for this impact is discussed below and in Section 3.18, *Traffic and Transportation*. Impacts from removal of the shoe store building are discussed under *Relocation*, below.

### *Alternative C*

Under Alternative C, the East Connector curve at the CHP building would be tightened to minimize the skew of the intersection across SR 299, while allowing the shoe store to remain. An in-only access to Nugget Lane would be provided on both sides of Glen Road. Northbound and southbound cars and trucks on SR 299 would be able to turn onto Glen Road and enter Nugget Lane on either side. The southbound turn onto Glen Road and then to northbound Nugget Lane would be nearly a U-turn, but the turning radius would be sufficient to accommodate trucks. Alternatively, southbound trucks could enter at the driveway in front of Ben Franklin, at the north end of Nugget Lane, but would have to turn around to exit, or use the existing driveway between the car wash and Coast Central Credit Union which would remain open to two-way in and out traffic. “Keep Clear” striping would be provided across Glen Road at Nugget Lane to prevent eastbound traffic stopped at the signal from blocking entry to south Nugget Lane. The Golf Course Drive access would not be provided (see Alternative B).

Provision for in-only access to Nugget Lane from Glen Road would result in less impact on access to commercial properties along Nugget Lane than Alternatives A or B. Inbound traffic would be able to access the businesses as they do now. However, southbound trucks at the Weaver Valley Market would have to either turn around to exit or drive around the existing car wash and make a tight turn onto Glen Road. This difficulty may discourage some trucks from stopping at Weaver Valley Market. On the south side of Glen Road, inbound trucks could enter Nugget Lane from Glen Road, and exit from the other end of Nugget Lane, across from Martin Road. There would not be sufficient room for a truck to turn around on Nugget Lane.

Although the impact is minimized by the Alternative C intersection configuration, changes in access may still negatively impact businesses at this location, and mitigation for this impact is discussed below and in Section 3.18, *Traffic and Transportation*.

**Community Impact -1** Commercial enterprises along Nugget Lane may lose business due to changes in access from Glen Road to Nugget Lane (Alternatives A, B, C).

**Significance:** Potentially significant, but mitigated (**Community Mitigation-2 and -3, and Traffic Mitigation-1**).

**Community Mitigation-1** If Alternative A is selected, the County will vacate their right-of-way on Nugget Lane across the properties that contain the Weaver Valley Market (APN 024-480-3100) and the On Your Feet Shoe Store (APN 024-500-4000). This will provide additional flexibility to the businesses to improve internal circulation and

parking. If Alternative B is selected, the County will vacate only Nugget Lane north of Glen Road (APN 024-480-3100). South of Glen Road, Nugget Lane would continue to a new intersection with Golf Course Drive.

~~**Community Mitigation-2** Under all three intersection alternatives, on-street parking would be provided on the west (eastbound) side of SR 299 adjacent to Weaver Valley Market. This would allow eastbound trucks to park on SR 299 and walk to the Market, without having to perform any tight radius turns.~~

### **Traffic Mitigation-1**

**Sub-alternative A:** Allow on-street parking on the south side of Glen Road adjacent to the existing shoe store .

**Sub-alternatives A, B and C:** Add a new entrance to Nugget Lane from SR 299 approximately half way between Glen Road and Martin Road, across from the existing Burger King driveway.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

Note that, at the request of the property owners and business owners, the County is currently in the process of abandoning Nugget Lane north of Glen Road. This action was initiated by the new owner of the Weaver Valley Market, who wishes to rearrange the parking and circulation at the market in order to add new services, including fuel sales. The existing Nugget Lane north of Glen Road is ill-defined and vehicles often park in the County right-of-way. Adjacent businesses and property owners and the Trinity County DOT agree that the added flexibility in parking and circulation would be desirable for the entire segment of Nugget Lane north of Glen Road. Therefore, pending Board of Supervisor's approval, Community Mitigation-1 will be partially implemented independent of the East Connector project.

### *Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail and Bridge*

Children using the proposed bike path to access the Weaverville Elementary School and Lowden Park would benefit from this project. As discussed in Section 3.14, the Option A alignment for the trail and bridge would provide a safer route for children and others than Option B.

### *No Project Alternative*

Under the No Project Alternative, poor circulation and access would continue to impair the economic potential of downtown Weaverville. Increasing congestion would continue to result in inefficiencies for patrons, service and delivery vehicles and employees/business people. Access to Nugget Lane would remain open, but levels of service at the Glen Road/SR 299 intersection would continue to degrade.

## SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY

### *Impacts Common to All Alternatives*

The proposed project would result in beneficial effects in terms of savings in fuel, maintenance and repair, and operating expenses. Mobility improvements would also reduce emergency response times in Weaverville and surrounding areas.

The project is proposed to enhance safety and transportation efficiency by providing a limited access arterial route between SR 3 and SR 299, relatively free of driveways, adjacent development and on-street parking, as an efficient alternative means for residents and frequent visitors to get around in Weaverville without passing through the historic district or using Washington Street, past the elementary school and Lowden Park.

The reduction in traffic on SR 299 would improve pedestrian and bicycle safety as well as vehicular safety. In addition, replacement of the existing two-way left turn lane with exclusive left-turn pockets and addition of a traffic light at the SR 299/Glen Road intersection would improve vehicle and pedestrian safety at this location.

The CHP, Trinity River Lumber Company, and Yingling Construction have expressed concerns about security of their facilities, due to the expected project-related increase in traffic adjacent to their properties. This impact is discussed and mitigated in Section 3.14, *Land Use*, as follows:

**Land Use Mitigation-3** The County will provide fencing along property lines separating the East Connector and Class I bicycle trail from the mill and construction yard. In addition, fast-growing trees and shrubs, such as cedar or cypress trees, will be planted between the East Connector and the mill, to screen views of the mill. The bicycle/pedestrian path will be routed along the creek side of Levee Road where it crosses the entrance to the construction yard.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### *Alternative 1*

Alternative 1 will have an adverse effect on the safety of senior citizens who use the Golden Age Senior Center. Many senior citizens live in the senior apartments or the Twin Creeks Mobile Home Park on Brown's Ranch Road west of East Weaver Creek, and walk, drive or take powered wheelchairs or carts to the senior center across Brown's Ranch Road. Alternative 1 runs along the existing Brown's Ranch Road alignment at this location. Although the senior citizens already have to cross a street to get to and from the senior center, the East Connector would be a wider street with more traffic and potentially higher speeds. This impact is discussed and mitigated in Section 3.14, *Land Use*, as follows:

**Land Use Mitigation-2** If Alternative 1 is selected, the northern intersection of the East Connector with Brown's Ranch Road would be all-way stop controlled. A pedestrian crossing would be provided at the all-way stop intersection. The pedestrian crossing will be clearly marked with "Pedestrian Crossing" signs and pavement striping.

### *Alternative 2*

Selection of Alternative 2 would eliminate the impact on the Senior Citizens who travel between the Center and Senior Apartments or Mobile Park on Brown's Ranch Road.

### *Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail and Bridge*

The bike path along Levee Road would pass across the entrance to the Yingling Construction yard, creating potential safety and operational impacts. The construction company also has concerns regarding security of the construction yard, due to the increase in foot and bicycle traffic along its borders. This impact is discussed and mitigated in Section 3.14, *Land Use* (see Land Use Mitigation 3, repeated above) As also discussed in Section 3.14, the Option A alignment for the trail and bridge would provide a safer route for children and others than Option B since it would be more direct, and would avoid a three-way intersection and the use of county roads.

### *No Project Alternative*

Under the No Project Alternative, there would be no new safety or efficiency impacts. However, safety risks from vehicle congestion in the Weaverville business district and inefficiencies from the traffic and idling vehicles would continue. Safety problems in the vicinity of Glen Road, Nugget Lane and the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center associated with the two-way left turn lane in the median of SR 299 and pedestrians crossing SR 299 between retail shops would continue.

## *TAXABLE SALES AND OTHER BUSINESS IMPACTS*

### *Impacts Common to All Project Alternatives*

The proposed project would provide an alternative route between the eastern and northern portions of Weaverville. As a result, there would be potentially less traffic through the eastern portions of the downtown historic and commercial district, and the southern end of SR 3. Potential economic effects on community-oriented commercial businesses and recreation-oriented commercial businesses along SR 299 and SR 3 would be offset by improvements in access for potential patrons due to overall improvements in traffic operations, circulation, and access to parking spaces along SR 299, that would result from reduced congestion on the SR 299 corridor within the business district. Also, as noted in Section 1.3, *Project Objectives*, the project would primarily have an effect on east-to-north through-traffic from Redding to the Trinity Lake area, and would be used primarily by locals and truck through-traffic. Those who do not

know the area would likely continue to use the SR 299 to SR 3 route, rather than the East Connector. Residents as well as non-residents who know the area would also continue to use the SR 299 to SR 3 route when they have some particular purpose for obtaining services or goods along SR 299 west of the East Connector or SR 3 south of the East Connector.

The impact would not be so great as to cause significant physical effects such as relocation of a significant number of businesses or physical degradation of the downtown area. However, a mitigation measure to help prevent diversion of economically valuable visitors from the downtown area is presented below.

**Community Impact -2** The loss of sales revenues from traffic diverted away from the SR 299, SR 3, and downtown business districts in Weaverville could impact the local economy.

**Significance:** Potentially significant, but mitigated (**Community Mitigation-3**).

**Community Mitigation-3** The County would not place signs directing traffic to Trinity Lake or Trinity Alps via the East Connector and would discourage Caltrans from doing so.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

#### *Alternative A*

Businesses located on Nugget Lane near the intersection of SR 299 and Glen Road may experience long-term economic impacts and loss of business as a result of the proposed permanent closure of Nugget Lane at Glen Road and permanent changes in access to these businesses from SR 299 (see discussion under *Changes in Access* section above). Several of these businesses cater to truck traffic and other through-traffic along SR 299 that patronize these businesses partly because of the convenient access from SR 299. Particularly affected would be the shoe store (On Your Feet) and the mini market/car wash (the Weaver Valley Market), located at the corner of Glen Road and /Nugget Lane. Businesses along Nugget Lane at this location have expressed a concern regarding these impacts and at least one business (On Your Feet) has indicated that they would close and/or relocate if the project is constructed blocking off convenient entry to Nugget Lane from Glen Road. The County is working with these businesses to develop a solution that minimizes the economic impact and meets County and Caltrans traffic turning movement requirements. The development of Alternative C is part of this effort.

#### *Alternative B*

In addition to impacts from this alternative similar to Alternative A, this alternative would require the shoe store, and possibly the Dollar Store to relocate or close. Taxable sales would be lost if these businesses closed or relocated to less desirable locations (see also discussion under *Changes in Access* section above, and *Relocation*, below).

### *Alternative C*

Provision for in-only access to Nugget Lane from Glen Road would result in less impact on access to commercial properties along Nugget Lane than Alternatives A or B (see also discussion under *Changes in Access* section above). Inbound traffic would be able to access the businesses as they do now. However, southbound trucks at the Weaver Valley Market would have to either turn around to exit or drive around the existing car wash and make a tight turn onto Glen Road. This difficulty may discourage some trucks from stopping at Weaver Valley Market. On the south side of Glen Road, the additional access to SR 299 from Nugget Lane should provide adequate circulation for customers and delivery trucks. Eastbound trucks could enter Nugget Lane from Glen Road, and exit from the midblock or southerly accesses to SR 299, and would not have to turn around on Nugget Lane.

### *Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail and Bridge*

Neither bridge Options A nor B would result in impacts from losses of taxable sales or in other impacts to local businesses. However, Option B would take a portion of the Weaverville CSD's maintenance yard.

### *No Project Alternative*

The No Project Alternative would not directly result in impacts from losses of taxable sales or in other impacts to local businesses. However, circulation and parking problems in the downtown area would continue or worsen. This may indirectly result in loss of taxable sales, or cause downtown businesses to relocate outside of the downtown area, or close.

## *FISCAL IMPACTS*

### *Impacts Common to All Project Alternatives*

Funding for design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of the East Connector comes from local, state, and federal transportation funds, which are derived primarily from road and fuel taxes. These funds are specifically designated for road construction and cannot be used for other purposes. Maintenance of the East Connector will be the responsibility of TCDOT. Road maintenance is performed using County Road Funds derived from fuel taxes, the County Roads share of "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act" funds, Governor's Traffic Congestion Relief Program (TCRP) and other sources specifically designated for road maintenance. No State or County General Funds can be used for design, right-of-way acquisition, construction or maintenance of the East Connector. Therefore, these activities will not take away funding from other State or County non-road projects.

The County would need to acquire portions of private parcels for right-of-way to build the roadway project and bike path. All alignment alternatives would sever the Trinity River Lumber Mill property.

The new road would create a narrow sliver of property on its east side that would become practically unusable to the mill. This area is not currently in use by the mill operations. It consists of seasonal wetlands, Lance Gulch, and mine tailings piles. It is doubtful if the mill could develop this area to support mill operations in the future. The County would purchase this severed portion of the Mill property as part of right-of-way acquisition, thereby compensating the mill owners for loss of usefulness of this area. As further compensation, the Trinity River Lumber Company is interested in having an adjacent parcel rezoned from Industrial to Residential. If the County agrees, the Company may subdivide the 2-acre parcel, located at the end of Martin Road, into four residential parcels.

The proposed project would result in a very minor loss of property taxes from direct conversion of portions of private properties to right-of-way and their removal from the tax rolls, but no whole properties will be taken for right-of-way. These minor property tax revenue losses may be offset to some degree by changes in assessed value of the 2-acre parcel belonging to the Trinity River Lumber Company, that would be re-zoned from Industrial to Residential, ½-acre Minimum. Reductions in traffic and noise levels would contribute to property values and the overall quality and character of the Weaverville downtown area, but this could be partially offset by loss of property values on Martin Road or Brown's Ranch Road. These changes in property values and corresponding tax revenues are expected to be minor.

#### *Alternative 1*

Overall, Alternative 1 would require the acquisition of less right-of-way easements from private property owners than Alternative 2. However, Alternative 1 would sever a larger portion of the Trinity River Lumber Mill than Alternative 2, resulting in loss of more area for the mill, and more right-of-way acquisition costs and associated property tax revenue loss from this property.

#### *Alternative 2*

Alternative 2 would require the acquisition of more right-of-way from the senior center than Alternative 1, because Alternative 1 would use a portion of the existing Brown's Ranch Road alignment in this area. However, less property would be acquired or severed from the mill.

#### *Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail and Bridge*

Bike path Options B would result in slightly more economic impacts from right-of-way acquisitions and associated loss of property tax revenues, due to acquisition of additional land along Levee Road. The county would acquire the land in fee title, rather than relying on the existing Flood Control Easement.

### *No Project Alternative*

The No Project Alternative would not result in economic impacts from right-of-way acquisitions or loss of property tax revenues.

### *RELOCATION IMPACTS*

#### *Impacts Common to All Alternatives*

There are no housing units within this roadway corridor. No population would be displaced and no acquisition or demolition of housing would be required.

#### *Alternatives 1 and 2*

Alternatives 1 and 2 (not including the Glen Road/SR 299 intersection at the south end of the East Connector Roadway; see discussion for Alternatives A, B, and C below) would not require any relocations. Thus, these alternatives would not require that Trinity County provide relocation compensation or assistance to private property owners in the project area.

#### *Alternatives A and C*

Although access to businesses near the intersection of Glen Road and SR 299 would be negatively impacted (see discussion under *Changes in Access* above), Alternatives A and C would not require any relocations. Thus, these alternatives would not require that Trinity County provide relocation compensation or assistance to private property owners in the project area.

#### *Alternative B*

This alignment would require removal of one commercial building on the south side of Glen Road, (currently occupied by On Your Feet shoe store, the Dollar Store and Trinity Transit) and the acquisition of the underlying property. The County would have to compensate the property and building owners for this loss. The building owner has expressed a preference to sell the property to the County, rather than having a reduced building or parking area. If the building is demolished, the County would also have to provide relocation assistance or other compensation to the affected businesses, and possibly relocate their own transit facility. This impact is discussed and mitigated in Section 3.14, *Land Use*, as follows:

**Land Use Mitigation-1** If Alternative B is selected, the County will purchase the affected property and provide appropriate compensation to the property owner, building owner, and business owner in compliance with federal and state law and provide relocation assistance to the business owner, if necessary. (See Section 3.14.)

This impact could indirectly result in a physical effect on the environment if any of these relocated businesses were to construct a new building elsewhere. For business reasons, the new facility(ies) would likely be located in an area already zoned for commercial use, because these areas are the more desirable business locations in the Weaverville area. The relocation of one to three small businesses to an already developed area would probably not result in a significant impact. If the businesses desired to relocate to an area that was not zoned for commercial use, the Trinity County Planning Department would conduct a CEQA review prior to the County granting the rezone.

#### *Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail and Bridge*

Neither bridge Options A nor B would result in the need for relocation of homes or businesses. A narrow sliver immediately adjacent to Levee Road would be taken from the Trinity River Lumber Mill and/or Yingling Construction. This would not affect their operations, because this area is not useable due to the County's existing flood control easement along the east levee of East Weaver Creek. The Option B alignment would cross the bridge, and pass through the Weaverville CSD maintenance yard on the west side of the creek, taking some property from the CSD. But, the take of property would not be significant enough to cause the CSD to relocate their facility.

#### *No Project Alternative*

The No Project Alternative would not result in relocation impacts.

### **3.16.3 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS**

#### *POPULATION / DEMOGRAPHIC / WORKFORCE IMPACTS*

An estimated 2 to 25 seasonal workers would be required to construct the East Connector Roadway and proposed bike path over an 8-month period, spread over two construction seasons. Most construction-related workers are expected to be existing full-time employees of their respective firms. The project would not likely create new jobs in the area. The construction labor force typically follows job opportunities throughout a large geographic area while maintaining their principal place of residence in a single location. If this project did not require construction labor, they would likely find employment on other projects in the region. Therefore, it is probable that the project would result in no substantive changes in employment patterns, the unemployment rate, or the distribution of the present population and labor force. Some of the construction workers would come from out of town and use transient local housing, primarily RV parks. Since project construction is scheduled to take place during the peak tourist season, if construction workers elect to move to temporary housing in the Weaverville vicinity, they and possibly their families may compete with visitors and local residents for RV spaces, hotel rooms and

apartments in the Weaverville area. However, this short-term intermittent impact on the order of 2 to 25 temporary residences is not considered significant.

#### *CHANGES IN ACCESS*

Businesses located at the south end of the project, near the intersection of SR 299 and Glen Road would experience short-term disruptions and possible loss of some business during construction work at this intersection, due to less convenient access to these businesses during construction. However, there are additional access points to all of these businesses from SR 299 and/or Martin Road, which would be undisturbed. Neither Nugget Lane nor Glen Road would be completely closed at any time.

#### *TAXABLE SALES AND OTHER BUSINESS IMPACTS*

Construction of the proposed project would result in construction expenditures within Trinity County and specifically within the Community of Weaverville. Local construction-related businesses and skilled tradespeople that are available in Trinity County could benefit from contracts or special orders for construction work. There could be some increases in activity for local retail and service businesses such as fast-food restaurants, grocery stores, gasoline stations, RV parks, and the like, as workers purchased meals or other goods and services during construction. Any potential beneficial effect of the project on the economic base would be widely distributed and not of substantial magnitude for the local businesses, due to the limited scope of the proposed project. Most sales generated by directly and indirectly by project construction would be taxable. Sales tax revenues would accrue to local agencies. These beneficial impacts would be spread throughout the region and would not be substantial when compared to overall sales tax revenues.

### **3.16.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

#### *POPULATION / DEMOGRAPHIC / WORKFORCE IMPACTS*

The number of construction workers needed for the West Connector is expected to be roughly equivalent to the East Connector. According to the proposed Weaverville Airport Relocation EIR, construction of the proposed new Weaverville airport would employ up to 40 workers over a three-year period. Construction of the East Connector and the Airport could occur concurrently. The West Connector is not expected to be constructed until after these two projects are complete. The local and regional labor pool should still be adequate to cover construction needs of both the East Connector and the airport. Construction workers would compete with other visitors for local accommodations. On the other hand, local businesses would reap the cumulative benefits from direct and indirect construction-generated sales, including living accommodations.

*TAXABLE SALES AND OTHER BUSINESS IMPACTS*

If both the proposed East Connector and West Connector roadways are constructed, there may be a cumulative economic impact to the Weaverville business community as traffic is diverted away from the SR 299, SR 3, and downtown business districts. As mentioned in Community Mitigation-3, the County would not place signs directing traffic to Trinity Lake or the Trinity Alps via the East Connector. Similarly, the County will not place signs directing traffic to points east or west of Weaverville via the West Connector. Persons unfamiliar with the area (i.e. tourists) would tend to stay on the State Highways, which would route them through downtown. Residents and persons familiar with Weaverville would continue to go downtown to purchase goods and services that are provided there. Reduced congestion in the downtown area would make this area more attractive and safer for pedestrians, which may result in an overall benefit to the business community.

*FISCAL IMPACTS (RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION AND PROPERTY TAXES)*

The cumulative fiscal impacts from acquisition of new right-of-way, loss of property taxes, and changes to property values for all three proposed projects is unknown. However, acquisition costs would be funded by federal grants, from the FHWA in the case of the East and West Connectors, and by the FAA in the case of the Airport and Airport access road. Most of the land to be acquired for the airport is privately owned timberland zoned “Resource”. Most of the land to be acquired for the West Connector is tax-exempt public lands. The cumulative loss in property tax revenues is not expected to result in a significant reduction in the property tax base.

### 3.18 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

This section describes the existing and proposed traffic and circulation conditions that occur and would occur in the project area. This section also describes existing transportation conditions within the community of Weaverville, including the existing public transit system and existing bicycle and pedestrian system. It presents traffic assumptions and methodologies used to conduct the transportation analysis for the proposed project, and submits results from the operational analysis at study intersections. The project traffic analysis was completed by Fehr & Peers Associates, Inc., Transportation Consultants.

#### *METHODOLOGY*

Level of Service (LOS) is a term used to describe the operating performance of an intersection or roadway. Service levels are measured on a scale from A to F, with “A” representing the best performance and “F” the worst. Project study intersections were analyzed using the methodology contained in the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) (Transportation Research Board, 2000). The methodology determines the LOS by comparing delay for all vehicles passing through an intersection. Unsignalized intersections were analyzed using HCM 1994 methodologies by applying Highway Capacity Software (HCS) version 2.1g. This version of the HCM was used to match methodologies used in other studies involving the East Connector such as the *East Connector Project Study Report Traffic Analysis* (Fehr and Peers, 1999), the new *Weaverville Airport EIR Study* (Jim Wallace Environmental Consulting Services, 2002), and the *Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study* (WBTCS; Trinity County, 1998).

Signalized intersections for the “with project” and “cumulative” conditions were optimized using SYNCHRO-5 computer software based on HCM 2000 methodologies. SYNCHRO-5 was chosen to analyze signalized project intersections because of its intersection timing and optimization capabilities. Intersection capacity analyses determine the LOS by estimating the average delay of all vehicles passing through an intersection during a specified period (see **Table 3.18-1**).

Traffic signal warrant analyses were performed for the “2020 with” and “2020 without” project conditions at major intersections using the Peak Hour Volume Warrant (Warrant 3) from *The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, 2000 Edition (MUTCD).

**Table 3.18-1. Peak Hour Intersection LOS Thresholds**

LOS	Signalized Average Delay <sup>1</sup>	Unsignalized <sup>2</sup> Average Delay <sup>3</sup>	Description
A	≤ 10.0	≤ 5.0	Very low delay. Most vehicles do not stop (signalized).
B	10.1 to 20.0	5.1 to 10.0	Generally good progression of vehicles. Slight delays
C	20.1 to 35.0	10.1 to 20.0	Fair progression. Increased number of stopped vehicles.
D	35.1 to 55.0	20.1 to 30.0	Noticeable congestion. Large portions of vehicles stopped.
E	55.1 to 80.0	30.1 to 45.0	Poor progression. High delays and frequent cycle failure.
F	> 80.1	> 50.1	Over-saturation. Force flow. Extensive queuing.
<sup>1</sup> Highway Capacity Manual 2000 (Synchro 5) <sup>2</sup> Highway Capacity Manual 1994 (HCS 2.1g) <sup>3</sup> Delay in seconds per vehicle			

### 3.18.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

#### *EXISTING ROADWAY SYSTEM AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC (AADT)*

The primary routes in the existing roadway system near the proposed East Connector are SR 299 and SR 3. Following are descriptions of SR 299, SR 3, and adjacent roadways (with references in parentheses):

- *State Route 299 (SR 299)* is a two-lane east-west state highway connecting Weaverville to Redding to the east and Eureka to the west. SR 299 carries about 11,300 vehicles per day AADT near the downtown area of Weaverville (Caltrans). Portions of SR 299 in Weaverville have center two-way left turn lanes.
- *State Route 3 (SR 3)* is a two-lane north-south state highway connecting Weaverville and Yreka. SR 3 carries approximately 4,100 AADT near downtown Weaverville with traffic volumes decreasing away from the downtown area (Caltrans).
- *Washington Street* is a two-lane collector road that carries approximately 2,700 AADT during peak season and connects SR 299 and SR 3 (WBTCS).
- *Glen Road* is a two-lane residential collector road terminating at SR 299. Glen Road carries approximately 1,600 AADT (WBTCS).
- *Five Cent Gulch Street* is a two-lane local street terminating at SR 3. Five Cent Gulch carries an estimated 120 AADT based on the number of residences on Five Cent Gulch Street (Fehr and Peers).

- *Nugget Lane* is a two-lane road that parallels SR 299 between Glen Road and Martin Road. This road serves as a frontage road and provides commercial/retail access.

### *EXISTING TRAFFIC OPERATIONS*

#### *Existing Traffic Volumes*

Fehr & Peers Associates performed PM peak-period turn-movement intersection counts on March 25, 2001 along SR 299 at the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center driveways and at Martin Road/Nugget Lane, to supplement counts contained in the *Weaverville Basin Traffic Circulation Study* (WBTCS) (Trinity County, 1998) and in the *Traffic Analysis for the East Connector Weaverville Project Study Report* (Fehr and Peers, 1999). **Figures 3.18-1** and **3.18-2** display PM peak-hour intersection volumes and **Figure 3.18-3** shows the AADT on state highways (Caltrans 2001) and on other local streets (Trinity County, 1998).

#### *Existing Lane Configuration and Traffic Control Devices*

These two figures also display existing lane configurations as marked on the pavement and traffic control devices present at each study intersection when field visits were conducted during March 2001. All study intersections were unsignalized as of March 2001.

#### *Existing Intersection LOS*

Estimated LOS at the study intersections are presented in **Table 3.18-2** (see **Appendix D** for LOS calculations). The average intersection LOS is “A” during the p.m. peak hour at all study intersections. The Trinity County Regional Transportation Plans’ (RTP) minimum LOS requirements applies to the overall average intersection LOS. However, individual approach LOS is helpful in the understanding of traffic patterns and operations. For example, the left turning movement from southbound SR 3 to eastbound SR 299 is shown to be LOS E. LOS E or worse for a left turning movement onto the major street is common at a two-way stop-controlled intersection when through traffic is unimpeded by upstream or downstream signals or has a high relative traffic volume. Left-turning vehicles have to yield to through traffic in both directions, causing long delays.

**Table 3.18-2. Existing PM Peak-Hour Intersection LOS in the Project Vicinity**

Location N/S = North/South Direction E/W = East/West Direction	Control	P.M. Peak Hour Operations	
		Delay (seconds)	LOS
1. SR 3 (N/S)/Five Cent Gulch (E/W)	Unsignalized	0.2 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Right		5.9	B
Northbound Left		3.4	A
2. SR 3 (N/S)/Washington Street (E/W)	Unsignalized	1.7 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		6.7	B
Westbound Left/Through		9.1	B
Westbound Right		4.0	A
Northbound Left		2.8	A
Southbound Left		3.1	A
3. SR 299 (E/W)/SR 3 (N/S)	Unsignalized	3.6 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Southbound Left		30.4	E
Southbound Right		5.8	B
Eastbound Left		4.7	A
4. SR 299 (E/W)/Washington Street (N/S)	Unsignalized	2.0 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		9.4	B
Southbound Through/Right Left		22.4	D
Eastbound Left		4.5	A
Westbound Left		4.3	A
5. SR 299 (E/W)/Glen Road (N/S)	Unsignalized	1.6 <sup>1</sup>	A
Northbound Left/Right		11.4	C
Westbound Left		3.6	A
6. SR 299 (E/W)/Martin Road (N/S)	Unsignalized	1.3 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		5.4	B
Southbound Left/Through		7.6	B
Southbound Right		3.8	A
Eastbound Left		3.1	A
Westbound Left		2.6	A
1. Average intersection delay and LOS; Source: HCM 1994			

Figure 3.18-1

Figure 3.18-2

Figure 3.18-3

**Existing Accident History**

Three-year accident data was obtained from Caltrans for the years of 1999 through 2001 and is summarized in **Table 3.18-3**. Four of the six study intersections have overall accident rates greater than the statewide average for similar facilities. The two remaining study intersections had either no reported accidents or rates below the statewide average during the three-year period. No fatalities were reported at any study intersection during the same period.

The high relative accident rates can partially be credited to the long delays for vehicles turning left from minor streets. Drivers will take more chances when delays are long and will pull out in busy cross-traffic. Accidents are often not head-on collisions and the injuries and property damage are often minor.

**Table 3.18-3. Accident Data for January 1999 through December 2001 in the Project Vicinity**

Intersection	Injury Accident			Accidents Per Million Vehicles	
	Crashes	Injuries	Fatalities	Accidents per Million Vehicles	Average for Similar Facility
SR 299 & Martin Rd/ Nugget Ln.	1	0	0	0	.33
SR 299 & Glen Rd.	4	1	0	.44	.22
SR 299 & Washington St.	5	1	0	.39	.33
SR 299 & SR 3	10	2	0	.81	.22
SR 3 & Washington St.	3	2	0	.69	.33
SR 3 & Five Cent Gulch	0	0	0	0	.22

Source: Caltrans

**EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM**

Trinity County Transit provides service along two routes: Weaverville/Hayfork and Weaverville/Lewiston. Each route provides two daily round trips to Weaverville, Monday through Friday. The Weaverville/Hayfork route leaves Hayfork for Weaverville at 6:45 a.m., returns to Hayfork, and provide a second round trip at 1:50 p.m. The Weaverville/Lewiston route leaves Lewiston for Weaverville at 7:00 a.m. (first round trip) and again at 2:45 p.m. (second round trip). There is also a “Let’s Go” program that provides medical transportation to Redding twice a week (reservation only).

**EXISTING BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM**

The *Weaverville Community Plan-1990* (Trinity County Planning Dept. 1990) states that the existing sidewalks and pedestrian/bicycle facilities are limited. Most of the sidewalks exist only in the downtown

area where there are shops and restaurants, whereas bicycle facilities exist as on-street bike lanes (Class II) primarily along SR 299, SR 3, and Washington Street, away from the downtown area.

One of the *Weaverville Community Plan's* goals is “to increase bicycle and pedestrian traffic by developing a safe convenient system of bicycle routes, trails, storage facilities, and pedestrian walkways.”

There is discontinuity in the bike lane on SR 299 between Martin Road and Glen Road, with no bike lane striping on the northeast side of SR 299 in front of the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center.

The *Trinity County 2001 Regional Transportation Plan* also shows that future bikeways and pedestrian paths are to be mainly on SR 3, SR 299, and Washington Street.

#### *PLANNING DOCUMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES*

##### *Trinity County General Plan*

The *Circulation Element of the Trinity County General Plan*, (Trinity County 2002a) and the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan*, (Trinity County 2001), both describe the East Connector in detail under their descriptions of the existing transportation system as an anticipated project currently in the planning phase. In addition, the *Circulation Element* contains the following findings, goals, objectives and policies that are relevant to the proposed project:

- Finding 1: Increasing seasonal traffic congestion in Weaverville creates potential safety issues and adverse impacts to the community.
- Finding 2: State Route 299 in Weaverville operates at level-of-service E during peak periods. During peak periods, vehicle movements along SR 299 are slowed, while movements onto the highway experience significant delay. Conflicting traffic movements (turn from side streets, parking ingress and egress, delivery vehicles, etc.) cause additional delays.
- Objective 1.6: Identify anticipated street and road congestion/capacity problems before they become critical in order to program preventative measures and reduce the cost of correction.
  - Policy 1.6.A: The minimum acceptable Level of Service (LOS) standard for roadway and intersection operation in Trinity County is “D”. No public highway or roadway should be allowed to fall to or below LOS “E”.
  - Policy 1.6.B: Traffic analysis, engineering judgement and/or special studies should be utilized to assess whether roadways or intersections are operating near or at LOS

- “E”. If a roadway or intersection is at or near LOS “E”, improvements or other strategies to remedy the condition should be considered a priority.
- Objective 1.13: As feasible under financial constraints, expand the transportation system to accommodate and attract new businesses and visitors.
  - Objective 1.14: Support and promote economic development through the efficient movement of freight and tourist travel to, and through Trinity County.
  - Policy 1.14.A: Support efforts to maintain and improve Trinity County’s highway system as important inter-regional trucking routes, as well as connecting highways in adjacent counties.
  - Objective 4.1: Increase the total mileage of safe bike routes, trails and pedestrian walkways.

### ***Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan***

The *2001 Regional Transportation Plan*, incorporates a series of county-wide goals for transportation and circulation purposes. The following goals, objectives, and policies from the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* are relevant to the proposed project:

- **Goal #1.2:** To provide a streets-and-highways system (including bridges), which effectively, efficiently and safely serves the variety of transportation needs in Trinity County.
  - **Objective 1.2.3:** Identify anticipated street and road congestion/capacity problems before they become critical in order to program preventative measures and reduce the cost of correction.
    - Policy 1.2.3.A. The minimum acceptable level of service (LOS) standard for roadway and intersection operations in Trinity County is “D”. No public highway or roadway should be allowed to fall below this operating level.
    - Policy 1.2.3.B. Traffic analysis, engineering judgment and/or special studies should be utilized to assess whether roadways or intersections are operating near or at LOS “E”. If a roadway or intersection is at or near LOS “E”, improvements or other strategies to remedy the condition should be considered a priority.
- **Goal #2:** To assure the coordination of transportation facilities with adopted land use plans.
  - **Objective 2.1:** Design and construct future streets serving residential areas in keeping with the neighborhood existing characteristics and right-of-way conditions.

### ***Weaverville Community Plan***

The *Weaverville Community Plan* (Trinity County, 1990) identifies a series of traffic and roadway improvements intended to improve, or at least maintain, the basin’s circulation system with the least disruption of Weaverville’s neighborhoods. These included a “Brown’s Ranch/Airport Connector” and a

“Martin Road/Brown’s Ranch Connector,” which together make up the presently proposed East Connector. The Community Plan also contains general goals and specific objectives related to traffic and transportation impacts of the proposed East Connector Roadway project, including:

**Goal #1:** To provide a streets-and-highways system which effectively, efficiently, and safely serves the variety of transportation needs of the community.

- **Objective 1.1:** Improve the community’s circulation by implementation of the various roadway improvement identified on Exhibit “T-2.” (a map showing several “Potential New Roads” in Weaverville, including: “Brown’s Ranch/Airport Connector” and “Martin Road/Brown’s Ranch Connector” which together make up the presently proposed East Connector.)
- **Objective 1.2:** Plan for improved capacity and LOS of State Highway 299, which will not impact the historic nature of the downtown area. The Plan specifically rejects the implementation of four traffic lanes through this area. The Plan prepares for the possibility of an alternative route around the downtown area in the future. It emphasizes the importance of prohibiting commercial development along this route to insure that commercial-bound traffic goes through Weaverville. It recommends other roadway and transportation management proposals be pursued aggressively before the “bypass” is funded. It further recommends that voter approval be obtained prior to constructing the bypass.
- **Goal #2:** To assure the coordination of transportation facilities with adopted land use plans.
  - **Objective 2.1:** Design and construct future streets serving residential areas in keeping with the neighborhood existing characteristics and right-of-way conditions.
- **Goal #4:** To increase bicycle and pedestrian traffic by developing a safe convenient system of bicycle routes, trails, storage facilities, and pedestrian walkways. This goal notes that proposed improvements along the area’s creeks should be constructed out of materials and in a manner that is compatible with these areas. In general wooden walkways are preferred. Locate pedestrian and bicycle paths parallel, where possible, and off major arterials.
  - **Objective 4.1:** Increase the total mileage of safe bike routes, trails and pedestrian walkways by requiring paved shoulders on roads where pedestrian or bicycle usage is anticipated.

### 3.18.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the CEQA Environmental Checklist, poses the following questions to be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant transportation/traffic impacts:

Would the project:

- Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?
- Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?
- Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?
- Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature, (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?
- Result in inadequate emergency access?
- Result in inadequate parking capacity?
- Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?

Trinity County has established a local level of service standard of LOS “D” or better for intersection operation (see the *Circulation Element of the Trinity County General Plan*). The standard is applied to the overall average of all turning movements at the intersection, rather than individual turning movements. Projects that would cause an overall intersection LOS of “D” or worse are considered to have a significant traffic impact.

### 3.18.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

#### *TRAFFIC VOLUME ANALYSIS*

##### *Base Year 2020 Volumes Without Project*

Base traffic volumes for the year 2020 were estimated using the *WBTCs*, the *Traffic Analysis for the East Connector Weaverville PSR*, and the *Airport EIR*. To best establish a 2020 base condition, modifications to 2020 peak hour model volumes were included in the analysis and described below. **Figures 3.18-4 and 3.18-5** display the Year 2020 Without Project p.m. peak hour vehicle trips at study intersections derived from the above referenced sources with the following additions:

- Trip generation for the proposed hospital relocation (250 p.m. peak hour trips) was provided by Trinity County. Traffic from the relocated hospital was distributed to the study area road network based on existing traffic patterns.
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) trip generation was performed to account for the existing 20 homes that have direct access onto Five Cent Gulch, but were not included in the

WBTCs. Estimated p.m. peak hour vehicle trips from the 20 homes were added, and distributed to the road network.

- Traffic from the County Building and a single home on the west leg of the intersection of SR 3 with Washington Street was added to the study area road network. County Building traffic was estimated based on the number of employees and the number of vehicles in the parking lot during business hours. Vehicle trips from the one home were estimated using the average trip generation rates for a single-family home in the Institute of Transportation Engineers *Trip Generation Manual* - 1998.
- Not all of the retail/commercial pads in the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center were occupied when the existing traffic count data on SR 299 was obtained. It was assumed that by the year 2020, all of the remaining vacancies would be occupied. Trip generation was performed using ITE rates to account for an estimated 13,300 square feet of retail and 3,000 square feet of fast food vacancies. This traffic was then distributed and added to the driveway counts on SR 299.
- The 2020 travel-demand model output shows some p.m. peak hour turning movement volumes to be *less* than existing turning movement counts. Variations in low-volume turning movements are understandable when forecasting future peak hour volumes. Some 2020 model output volumes were increased to be as much as existing turning movement counts. Each 2020 model volume adjustment was increased by not more than 20 vehicles. The average increase per adjustment was 12.5 vehicles.

#### *Base Year 2020 With Project Volumes*

The East Connector itself does not generate traffic. However, traffic model volumes show that traffic patterns change in the Weaverville area with the inclusion of the East Connector. **Figure 3.18-6** shows “2020 With Project” and “2020 Without Project” AADT road segment volumes near the study area. **Figures 3.18-7** and **3.18-8** display p.m. peak hour vehicle trips at study intersections. To establish a “2020 With Project” condition, modifications to the 2020 peak hour model volumes were included in the analysis and described below.

- P.M. peak hour traffic volumes on SR 299 were annually increased to provide balanced intersection and driveway volumes between Glen Road and Martin Road.

Figure 3.18-4

Figure 3.18-5

Figure 3.18-6

Figure 3.18-7

Figure 3.18-8

RTP and Circulation Element policies, LOS D is acceptable. However, some individual turning movements are worse than LOS D, and the overall intersection LOS average is at the bottom of the acceptable range.

*Level of Service – Base Year 2020 With Project*

The “2020 With Project” condition analyzes the affects the East Connector has on the road network due to changes in traffic distribution. LOS and delay were then estimated and the results are shown in **Table 3.18-5**. **Table 3.18-6** shows a comparison of LOS between the “With” and the “Without Project” conditions.

The LOS at the intersection of SR 299 with Glen Road is estimated to be worse than LOS D as a stop sign-controlled intersection. After signalization, the SR 299/Glen Road intersection is estimated to operate at LOS C. The overall intersection LOS of SR 299 with SR 3 improves from a C to a B. Although the left-turning movement from SR 3 to SR 299 remains at LOS F, the delay for this movement is reduced by nearly a minute.

The East Connector is also expected to reduce delays for the left turn movements onto SR 299 from Washington Street. The overall average LOS would improve from LOS D to LOS A. Although the letter grades for some specific movements do not change, the reduction in seconds of delay is significant. For example, the combined left/through/right turn movement from the single southbound Washington Street lane in the “2020 Without Project” condition is shown to have an average delay per vehicle of 217 seconds. Under the “2020 With Project” condition, the average delay per vehicle for the same movement is reduced to 49 seconds, nearly a three-minute per vehicle savings.

**Table 3.18-4. Base Year 2020 Without Project P.M. Peak Hour Intersection LOS**

Location N/S = North/South Direction E/W = East/West Direction	Control	P.M. Peak Hour Operations	
		Delay (seconds)	LOS
1. SR 3 (N/S)/Five Cent Gulch (E/W)	Unsignalized	0.2 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Right		8.7	B
Northbound Left		4.5	A
2. SR 3 (N/S)/Washington Street (E/W)	Unsignalized	2.4 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		10.6	C
Westbound Left/Through		14.3	C
Westbound Right		4.9	A
Northbound Left		3.0	A
Southbound Left		3.7	A
3. SR 299 (E/W)/SR 3 (N/S)	Unsignalized	11.9 <sup>1</sup>	C <sup>1</sup>
Southbound Left		168	F
Southbound Right		8.0	B
Eastbound Left		6.6	B
4. SR 299 (E/W)/Washington Street (N/S)	Unsignalized	22.3 <sup>1</sup>	D <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		14.5	C
Southbound Left/Through/Right		217	F
Eastbound Left		5.7	B
Westbound Left		5.1	B
5. SR 299 (E/W)/Glen Road (N/S)	Unsignalized	25.3 <sup>1</sup>	D <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Right		246	F
Westbound Left		6.7	B
6. SR 299 (E/W)/Martin Road (N/S)	Unsignalized	2.0 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		13.7	C
Southbound Left/Through		25.6	D
Southbound Right		6.1	B
Eastbound Left / Westbound Left		4.9	A
Westbound Left		3.8	A

1. Average intersection delay and LOS; Source: HCM 1994

**Table 3.18-5.** Base Year 2020 With Project P.M. Peak Hour Intersection LOS

Location	Control	Delay (seconds)	LOS
SR 3 (N/S)/Five Cent Gulch & East Connector (E/W)	Unsignalized.	4.0 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		19.4	C
Westbound Left/Through		22.1	D
Westbound Right		7.2	B
Northbound Left		3.0	A
Southbound Left		4.5	A
2. SR 3 (N/S)/Washington Street (E/W)	Unsignalized	0.9 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		6.5	B
Westbound Left/Through		9.4	B
Westbound Right		3.9	A
Northbound Left		3.0	A
Southbound Left		3.1	A
3. SR 299 (E/W)/SR 3 (N/S)	Unsignalized	8.9 <sup>1</sup>	B <sup>1</sup>
Southbound Left		109.7	F
Southbound Right		7.2	B
Eastbound Left		5.9	B
4. SR 299 (E/W)/Washington Street (N/S)	Unsignalized	4.2 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		13.7	C
Southbound Left/Through/Right		49.1	F
Eastbound Left		5.0	A
Westbound Left		4.7	A
5. SR 299 (E/W)/Glen Road (N/S) - Sub-Alt. A & C (Sub-Alt. B)	Unsig./Sig.	37.2 <sup>1</sup> / 25.3 <sup>1</sup> (23.3)	E <sup>1</sup> / C <sup>1</sup> (C <sup>1</sup> ) (reversed?)
Northbound Left/Through – Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Left - Sub-Alt B)		184 / 41.7 (33.8)	F / D (C)
Northbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Through/Right – Sub-Alt B)		24.2 / 28.9 (32.1)	D / C (C)
Southbound Left/Through - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Left/Through - Alt B)		219 / 46.3 (43.6)	F / D (D)
Southbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Right – Sub-Alt B)		5.4 / 19.8 (18.9)	B / B (B)
Eastbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Eastbound Left - Alt B)		5.8 / 31.1 (29.8)	B / C (C)
Westbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Westbound Left – Sub-Alt B)		3.8 / 29.9 (29.0)	A / C (C)
6. SR 299 (E/W)/Martin Road (N/S)	Unsignalized	1.8 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		13.7	C
Southbound Left/Through		29.5	D
Southbound Right		6.2	B
Eastbound Left		5.0	B
Westbound Left		4.1	A
1. Average intersection delay and LOS; Source: HCM 1994			

**Table 3.18-6. Base Year 2020 With and Without Project P.M. Peak Hour Intersection LOS Comparison**

Location	Control	LOS Without Project	LOS With Project
SR 3 (N/S)/Five Cent Gulch & East Connector (E/W)	Unsignalized.	A <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		B	C
Westbound Left/Through		N/A	D
Westbound Right		N/A	B
Northbound Left		A	A
Southbound Left		N/A	A
2. SR 3 (N/S)/Washington Street (E/W)	Unsignalized	A <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		C	B
Westbound Left/Through		C	B
Westbound Right		A	A
Northbound Left		A	A
Southbound Left		A	A
3. SR 299 (E/W)/SR 3 (N/S)	Unsignalized	C <sup>1</sup>	B <sup>1</sup>
Southbound Left		F	F
Southbound Right		B	B
Eastbound Left		B	B
4. SR 299 (E/W)/Washington Street (N/S)	Unsignalized	D <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		C	C
Southbound Left/Through/Right		F	F
Eastbound Left		B	A
Westbound Left		B	A
5. SR 299 (E/W)/Glen Road (N/S) - Sub-Alt A & C (Sub-Alt. B)	Unsig./Sig.	D <sup>1</sup> / N/A (N/A)	E <sup>1</sup> / C <sup>1</sup> (C <sup>1</sup> )
Northbound Left/Through – Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Left - Sub-Alt B)		F / N/A (N/A)	F / D (C)
Northbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Through/Right – Sub-Alt B)		F / N/A (N/A)	D / C (C)
Southbound Left/Through - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Left/Through - Alt B)		N/A / N/A (N/A)	F / D (D)
Southbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Right – Sub-Alt B)		N/A / N/A (N/A)	B / B (B)
Eastbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Eastbound Left - Alt B)		N/A / N/A (N/A)	B / C (C)
Westbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Westbound Left – Sub-Alt B)		B / N/A (N/A)	A / C (C)
6. SR 299 (E/W)/Martin Road (N/S)	Unsignalized	A <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		C	C
Southbound Left/Through		D	D
Southbound Right		B	B
Eastbound Left		A	B
Westbound Left		A	A
1. Average intersection delay and LOS; N/A = No comparison available.			
Source: HCM 1994 & HCM 2000			

*SIGNAL WARRANT ANALYSIS*

The MUTCD provides a national standard for signing, striping, and other traffic control devices. Included in the MUTCD are criteria for determining when a traffic signal is “warranted” at an intersection. Since one peak hour of data was available, Warrant No. 3 (*Peak Hour Vehicular Volume*) was considered to determine if signals are warranted at the three major study intersections during both the “2020 Without Project” and “2020 With Project” conditions. The results are shown in **Table 3.18-7** and warrant calculations are included in **Appendix D**.

**Table 3.18-7.** Signal Warrant Analysis Results

Intersection	Base Year 2020 No Project Condition		Base Year 2020 With Project Condition	
		Warrant Met?		Warrant Met?
SR 3 / SR 299	1,077 <sup>1</sup> /80 <sup>2</sup>	No	998 <sup>1</sup> /83 <sup>2</sup>	No
SR 299 / Washington Street	1,282 <sup>1</sup> /130 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	1,138 <sup>1</sup> /74 <sup>2</sup>	No
SR 299 / Glen Road	1,389 <sup>1</sup> /127 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	1,086 <sup>1</sup> /170 <sup>2</sup>	Yes
Major Street <sup>1</sup> : Includes left, through, & right turning movement volumes of both approaches on major street. Minor Street <sup>2</sup> : Includes left and through volumes only of high volume approach of minor street.				
Source: MUTCD 2000				

Signal warrant analyses show that the intersection of SR 299/Glen Road (East Connector) warrants signalization after the project is complete. The SR 299/Washington Street intersection warrants signalization prior to the East Connector project, but the East Connector will draw traffic away from the SR 299/Washington Street intersection so that a signal is no longer warranted. The signalization of the SR 299/Glen Road intersection is included in the East Connector Project Description (see Section 1.4.3). A detailed intersection and signal design would have to be complete prior to signal installation.

### *Impacts Common to All Alternatives*

The East Connector project was developed and designed to help alleviate existing and projected future traffic and circulation problems in the Weaverville Basin. In addition, the project would add bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including Class I and II lanes along the East Connector and a proposed new bike/pedestrian path along Levee Road, in line with existing planning goals and objectives for the project area. Therefore, project traffic and transportation impacts would be largely beneficial.

The exception is at the SR 299/Glen Road intersection, where the addition of vehicle trips from the East Connector would result in a deterioration in average LOS from D to E compared to that expected without the project (see discussion below). Therefore signalization of the intersection is included as part of the East Connector project. Installing a traffic signal at this intersection is expected to obtain an estimated LOS C.

In addition, the signal would increase the safety of pedestrians crossing SR 299 at this location. Pedestrian traffic is common between the Nugget Lane and Trinity Plaza Shopping areas, across four lanes of highway traffic. Also, the project would replace the two-way center left-turn lane with isolated left-turn pockets, reducing the chance of head-on collisions. The installation of the signal will necessitate elimination of traffic entering Glen Road from Nugget Lane. The intersection of Nugget Lane and Glen Road is too close to the intersection of Glen Road and SR 299. Queues of vehicles waiting at the signal on Glen Road would conflict with vehicles attempting to enter Glen Road from Nugget Lane. Therefore, access to existing businesses on Nugget Lane near Glen Road will be removed or changed after the construction of the East Connector. Various access alternatives were presented to stake holders and are discussed below.

Three alternatives were determined by Trinity County staff to be reviewed further: No Project, Alignment Alternative 1, and Alignment Alternative 2. Both Alignment Alternatives 1 and 2 connect SR 299 with SR 3 at Glen Road and Five Cent Gulch (see **Figure 3.18-9**). There are three sub-alternatives, independent of Alignment Alternatives 1 and 2, which address specific access configurations near Glen Road, SR 299, Nugget Lane, and Martin Road. **Figures 3.18-10, 3.18-11, and 3.18-12** display the three sub-alternative intersection configurations and roadway layouts. Detailed engineering drawings would be required prior to construction and should include items such as curb return radii, curb, gutter, and sidewalk locations, bike paths/lanes, specific roadway dimensions, signing, and traffic signal design at this signalized intersection.

### *No Project Alternative*

If the East Connector is not built, congestion levels in downtown Weaverville will continue to increase. As a result, LOS would continue to deteriorate, and vehicle delays for specific turning movements at the intersections of SR 3/SR 299, SR 299/Washington Street, and SR 299/Glen Road would continue to

Figure 3.18-9

Figure 3.18-10

Figure 3.18-11

Figure 3.18-12

increase. As indicated in Section 3.18.1 above, the SR 299/Glen Road intersection currently has an overall vehicle accident rate greater than the statewide average for a similar facility, which may be partly attributable to the existing two-way left turn lane along this stretch of SR 299. This location also presents an existing safety hazard for pedestrians crossing between businesses on the west side of SR 299 and the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center on the east side of SR 299. Under the No Project Alternative, there would be no improvement to the safety of this intersection.

#### *Alignment Alternative 1*

Alternative 1 is aligned to the west of the senior center along a portion of the existing Brown's Ranch Road alignment. This would require two "T" intersections with Browns Ranch Road, resulting in possible traffic operational and safety impacts. However, the spacing and sight distance between the two "T" intersections is adequate. The two legs of Brown's Ranch Road would be stop-controlled. This alignment alternative would increase traffic volumes and vehicle speeds on what is now Brown's Ranch Road in front of the Golden Age Senior Center. This presents a potential safety hazard for pedestrians traveling between the senior center and the senior apartments and Two Creeks Mobile Home Park. This is considered a significant impact.

#### *Alignment Alternative 2*

Alternative 2 will require only one intersection with Brown's Ranch Road. Brown's Ranch Road would be stop-controlled at this intersection, and the East Connector would be free-flowing, with a left-turn pocket to access Brown's Ranch Road. The East Connector would pass to the east of the Senior Center on a new alignment. West of the Center, Brown's Ranch Road would remain in its present condition. This alternative would not increase hazards for pedestrians crossing Brown's Ranch Road to access the Senior Center.

#### *Intersection Sub-Alternatives - SR 299/Glen Road*

The Sub-Alternatives are intersection design and access options for the intersection of SR 299 with Glen Road (East Connector). All alternatives at this intersection include a traffic signal with protected left-turn pockets on SR 299. All Sub-Alternatives have the same intersection turning lane configurations at the SR 299/Glen Road (East Connector) intersection except for the following:

- The northbound (Glen Road) approach at the intersection of Glen Road/East Connector with SR 299 was analyzed with two configurations. Sub-Alternatives A and C have a shared northbound left/through lane and a separate right turn pocket. Sub-Alternative B has a separate left turn pocket and a shared through/right configuration.

- Sub-Alternative B is the only alternative that removes the Shoe Store and the only alternative with a shared through/right lane at the northbound Glen Road/East Connector-SR 299 intersection approach.

Sub-Alternative A: SR 299/Glen Road

Glen Road would be slightly realigned at its terminus with SR 299 to line up with the new East Connector. The Nugget Lane frontage road access from Glen Road would be eliminated. The existing driveway between the car wash and Coast Central Credit Union would remain open to two-way in and out traffic. Separate turn pockets would not be provided on Glen Road for this private driveway, but left and right turns would be allowed. A limited number of parking spaces would be provided on the south side of Glen Road, adjacent to the shoe store (see **Figure 3.18-10**).

Sub-Alternative B: SR 299/Glen Road

Glen Road would be realigned further south at its terminus with SR 299 to line up with the new East Connector. This alignment requires the removal of the shoe store building on the south side of Glen Road. A new access to Nugget Lane would be provided from Golf Course Drive, through the area currently occupied by the shoe store building. Like Alternative A, the existing driveway between the car wash and Coast Central Credit Union on the north side of Glen Road would remain open to two-way, in and out, traffic. No turn pockets would be provided on Glen Road for this private driveway, but left and right turns would be allowed (see **Figure 3.18-11**).

Sub-Alternative C: SR 299/Glen Road

With Alternative C (see **Figure 3.18-12**), the East Connector curve at the CHP building would be tightened to minimize the skew of the intersection across SR 299, while allowing the shoe store to remain. As a result, the design speed along this segment of the East Connector would be reduced. An in-only access to Nugget Lane would be provided on both sides of Glen Road. “Keep Clear” striping would be provided across Glen Road at Nugget Lane to prevent eastbound traffic stopped at the signal from blocking entry to south Nugget Lane. Physical barriers would need to be provided to prevent traffic from entering Glen Road from westbound Nugget Lane. Northbound and southbound cars and trucks on SR 299 would be able to turn onto Glen Road and access Nugget Lane, both the north and south of Glen Road. The turn from southbound SR 299 to Glen Road and then to northbound Nugget Lane would be nearly a U-turn, but the turning radius would accommodate WB-50 trucks. However, southbound trucks could also enter at Ben Franklin or use the existing driveway between the car wash and Coast Central Credit Union, which would remain open to two-way in and out traffic. The Glen Road approach to SR 299 for Sub-Alternative C could be modified to provide a shared through/right lane and separate a left turn lane while maintaining LOS C.

**Traffic Impact-1** Alignment Alternative 1 would cause senior citizens traveling to and from the Golden Age Senior Center from the Senior Apartments, Twin Creeks Mobile Home Park or other locations on Brown’s Ranch Road to have to cross a wider, busier street with potentially faster travel speeds than the existing crossing of Brown’s Ranch Road in front of the Senior Center.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated (**Land Use Mitigation-2**).

**Land Use Mitigation-2** If Alternative 1 is selected, the northern intersection of the East Connector with Brown’s Ranch Road would be all-way stop controlled. A pedestrian crossing would be provided at the all-way stop intersection. The pedestrian crossing will be clearly marked with “Pedestrian Crossing” signs and pavement striping.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

**Traffic Impact-2** Access to Nugget Lane at Glen Road would be closed (Alternatives A and B) or restricted to “in only” in both the north and south directions (Alt C).

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated

**Traffic Mitigation-1**

**Sub-alternative A:** Allow on-street parking on the south side of Glen Road adjacent to the existing shoe store .

**Sub-alternatives A, B and C:** Add a new entrance to Nugget Lane from SR 299 approximately half way between Glen Road and Martin Road, across from the existing Burger King driveway.

**Community Mitigation-4:** If Alternative A is selected, the County will vacate their right-of-way on Nugget Lane across the properties that contain the Weaver Valley Market (APN 024-480-3100) and the On Your Feet Shoe Store (APN 024-500-4000). This will provide additional flexibility to the businesses to improve internal circulation and parking. If Alternative B is selected, the County will vacate only Nugget Lane north of Glen Road (APN 024-480-3100). South of Glen Road, Nugget Lane would continue to a new intersection with Golf Course Drive.

~~**Community Mitigation-5:** Under all three intersection alternatives, on street parking would be provided on the west (eastbound) side of SR 299 adjacent to Weaver Valley Market. This would allow eastbound trucks to park on SR~~

~~299 and walk to the Market, without having to perform any tight-radius turns.~~

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### 3.18.4 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS

Under the project alternatives, there would be temporary impacts to access to businesses near the SR 299/Glen Road/East Connector intersection during construction at that intersection. However, alternative entrances to Nugget Lane and the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center will be available at all times. The project is construction of a new roadway, so the work would not generally affect existing transportation routes. The only construction work that may encroach onto presently used roads would be at the intersections on SR 299, SR 3, Brown's Ranch Road and the intersection of Martin Road with the Pioneer Lane extension. This work can be accomplished using lane reductions and controlled traffic, rather than complete closures or detours. Construction will be scheduled to limit interruptions. Residents along Brown's Ranch Road and people accessing businesses near the SR 299/Glen Road/East Connector intersection may experience minor inconveniences and delays during construction at those intersections.

**Traffic Impact-3** Project construction may result in minor delays and inconveniences to traffic along Brown's Ranch Road and at the SR 299/Glen Road/East Connector intersection.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

### 3.18.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The cumulative scenario analyzes two possible points on the proposed East Connector Roadway that would access a proposed new airport to the east of the East Connector project. Only one airport access road would be constructed. The Lance Gulch access would connect to Brown's Ranch Road near the East Connector and the Golden Age Senior Center. The Martin Road access would connect to the East Connector just north of Martin Road and would parallel Pioneer Lane. Any road connected to the East Connector would be stop controlled at the intersection. Left turn pockets would be provided on the East Connector, and traffic on the East Connector would not be stopped at the intersection.

#### *CUMULATIVE TRAFFIC VOLUMES WITH NEW AIRPORT ACCESS*

Airport traffic volumes were obtained from the working *Draft Weaverville Airport EIR Traffic Impact Analysis*. P.M. peak hour traffic volumes on SR 299 were manually increased to provide balanced intersection and driveway volumes between Glen Road and Martin Road. The proposed new airport is estimated to generate approximately 215 trips during the PM peak hour and nearly 1,200 ADT. The PM

peak-hour airport volumes were added to the Year 2020 With-Project scenario to formulate the cumulative traffic volumes shown in **Figures 3.18-13** and **3.18-14**.

*CUMULATIVE LOS WITH NEW AIRPORT ACCESS*

The cumulative scenario was analyzed for average delay and LOS. Traffic from the airport would contribute to the delay at study intersections and would increase the need for better circulation in Weaverville. LOS results are shown on **Tables 3.18-8** and **3.18-9**.

*Lance Gulch Airport Access Road*

- The intersection of SR 3 with Five Cent Gulch drops from LOS A to B when adding airport traffic.
- The SR 299/SR 3 intersection drops from LOS B to C.
- All other intersections have no overall LOS change.

*Martin Road Airport Access Road*

- The SR 299/SR 3 intersection drops from LOS B to C.
- The SR 299/Washington Street intersection drops from LOS A to B.
- All other intersections have no overall LOS change.

<b>Table 3.18-8 - Cumulative P.M. Peak Hour Intersection LOS (Lance Gulch Access)</b>			
Location	Control	Delay (seconds)	LOS
1. SR 3 (N/S)/Five Cent Gulch (E/W)	Unsignalized.	9.3 <sup>1</sup>	B <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		21.0	D
Westbound Left/Through		67.6	F
Westbound Right		7.5	B
Northbound Left		3.0	A
Southbound Left		4.9	A
2. SR 3 (N/S)/Washington Street (E/W)	Unsignalized	1.0 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		8.3	B
Westbound Left/Through		12.4	C
Westbound Right		4.2	A
Northbound Left		3.5	A
Southbound Left		3.4	A
3. SR 299 (E/W)/SR 3 (N/S)	Unsignalized	13.5 <sup>1</sup>	C <sup>1</sup>
Southbound Left / Southbound Right		164	F
Southbound Right		8.2	B
Eastbound Left		6.2	B
4. SR 299 (E/W)/Washington Street (N/S)	Unsignalized	4.6 <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		14.0	C
Southbound Left/Through/Right		49.0	F
Eastbound Left		5.0	A
Westbound Left		4.7	A
5. SR 299 (E/W)/Glen Road (N/S) -- Sub-Alt A & C (Sub-Alt B)	Unsig./Sig.	52.4 <sup>1</sup> / 26.5 <sup>1</sup> (24.4 <sup>1</sup> )	F <sup>1</sup> / C <sup>1</sup> (C <sup>1</sup> )
Northbound Left/Through – Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Left - Sub-Alt B)		250 / 42.6 (33.9)	F / D (C)
Northbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Through/Right – Sub-Alt B)		26.6 / 29.3 (32.3)	D / C (C)
Southbound Left/Through - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Left/Through - Alt B)		311 / 52.8 (49.8)	F / D (D)
Southbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Right – Sub-Alt B)		5.7 / 20.1 (19.2)	B / C (B)
Eastbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Eastbound Left - Alt B)		6.0 / 32.1 (30.7)	B / C (C)
Westbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Westbound Left – Sub-Alt B)		3.8 / 30.2 (29.2)	A / C (C)
1. Average intersection delay (all other LOS and delay values are for critical movements).			
Source: 1994 Highway Capacity Manual (unsignalized intersections) and 2000 HCM (signalized intersections).			

*Figure 3.18-13*

*Figure 3.18-14*

Location	Control	Delay (seconds)	LOS
<b>1. SR 3 (N/S)/Five Cent Gulch (E/W)</b>	<b>Unsignalized.</b>	<b>4.7<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>A<sup>1</sup></b>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		19.9	C
Westbound Left/Through		27.7	D
Westbound Right		7.2	B
Northbound Left		3.0	A
Southbound Left		4.6	A
<b>2. SR 3 (N/S)/Washington Street (E/W)</b>	<b>Unsignalized</b>	<b>1.0<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>A<sup>1</sup></b>
Eastbound Left/Through/Right		6.9	B
Westbound Left/Through		10.1	C
Westbound Right		4.0	A
Northbound Left		3.1	A
Southbound Left		3.2	A
<b>3. SR 299 (E/W)/SR 3 (N/S)</b>	<b>Unsignalized</b>	<b>11.7<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>C<sup>1</sup></b>
Southbound Left		158	F
Southbound Right		8.1	B
Eastbound Left		6.6	B
<b>4. SR 299 (E/W)/Washington Street (N/S)</b>	<b>Unsignalized</b>	<b>5.9<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>B<sup>1</sup></b>
Northbound Left/Through/Right		16.0	C
Southbound Left/Through/Right		74.9	F
Eastbound Left		5.6	B
Westbound Left		4.8	A
<b>5. SR 299 (E/W)/Glen Road (N/S) -- Sub-Alt A &amp; C (Sub-Alt B)</b>	<b>Unsig./Sig.</b>	<b>69.7<sup>1</sup> / 27.0<sup>1</sup>(30.4<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>F<sup>1</sup> / C<sup>1</sup> (C<sup>1</sup>)</b>
Northbound Left/Through – Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Left - Sub-Alt B)		456 / 43.0 (36.7)	F / D (D)
Northbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Northbound Through/Right – Sub-Alt B)		30.3 / 29.5 (34.7)	E / C (C)
Southbound Left/Through - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Left/Through - Alt B)		386 / 53.7 (54.1)	F / D (D)
Southbound Right - Sub-Alt A & C (Southbound Right – Sub-Alt B)		6.5 / 21.0 (23.3)	B / C (C)
Eastbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Eastbound Left - Alt B)		6.3 / 33.7 (35.5)	B / C (D)
Westbound Left - Sub-Alt A & C (Westbound Left – Sub-Alt B)		3.8 / 30.6 (24.0)	A / C (C)
1. Average intersection delay (all other LOS and delay values are for critical movements).			
Source: 1994 Highway Capacity Manual (unsignalized intersections) and 2000 HCM (signalized intersections).			

### *INTERSECTION QUEUING*

The queuing of vehicles at the SR 299/Glen Road (East Connector) intersection was estimated for the “cumulative with project” conditions. **Table 3.18-10** displays the queuing results from Synchro-5 software that was also used to estimate delay and LOS.

**Figure 3.18-15** displays the recommended turning pocket lengths at the SR 299/Glen Road, SR 299/Burger King Driveway, and SR 299/Martin Road intersections based on 95th percentile queue, cumulative vehicle counts, and deceleration lane requirements.

The shared northbound left/through in Sub-Alternatives A and C shows the 95th percentile queue to be 45 meters. This configuration may partially block the driveway on the north side of Glen Road at the Weaver Valley Market. The partial blocking of the driveway would only occasionally occur during p.m. peak hour and is considered insignificant.

**Traffic Impact-4** Traffic generated by the Weaverville Airport Project will contribute to congestion and intersection delays in Weaverville. The effects of the East Connector reduce the impact from the Airport Project, and therefore offset, rather than contribute to, this effect. Resulting LOS remains acceptable at the study intersections.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

**Traffic Impact-5** Cumulative traffic generated by the Weaverville Airport Project will add to delays and queue lengths at the signalized intersection of Glen Road and SR 299. This may cause the Weaver Valley Market driveway to Glen Road to be partially blocked for short periods during the p.m. peak hour. Intersection LOS remains acceptable, with the proposed traffic signal.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required).

Figure 3.18-15

<b>Table 3.18-10 – Intersection P.M. Peak Hour Queuing at SR 299 / Glen Road (East Connector)</b>			
<b>Intersection Approach</b>	<b>Critical Movement*</b>	<b>95<sup>th</sup> Percentile Queue (meters)</b>	
		<b>Sub-Alt. A &amp; C</b>	<b>Sub-Alt. B</b>
<b>SR 299/Glen Road (East Connector) With Lance Gulch Airport Access</b>			
<i>Northbound</i>	Left/Through	45m	N/A
	Right	7m	N/A
<i>Northbound (Sub-Alt b only)</i>	Left	N/A	31m
	Through/Right	N/A	23m
<i>Southbound</i>	Left/Through	54m	54m
	Right	12m	12m
<i>Eastbound</i>	Left	52m	52m
	Right	20m	20m
<i>Westbound</i>	Left	15m	15m
<b>SR 299/Glen Road (East Connector) With Martin Road Airport Access</b>			
<i>Northbound</i>	Left/Through	45m	N/A
	Right	7m	N/A
<i>Northbound (Sub-Alt b only)</i>	Left	N/A	31m
	Through/Right	N/A	23m
<i>Southbound</i>	Left/Through	54m	54m
	Right	14m	8m
<i>Eastbound</i>	Left	65m	64m
	Right	9m	22m
<i>Westbound</i>	Left	14m	13m
*Movements were only included if a separate turning pocket was required and queue's were greater than zero. Source: 95 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Queue from <i>Highway Capacity Manual 2000</i> .			

## 3.19 VISUAL RESOURCES/AESTHETICS

### 3.19.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section describes the existing visual resources known to occur in the project area. Viewpoints along the proposed new roadway alignment are described and rated and the impact of the proposed road on these views is analyzed.

#### *VISUAL CHARACTER OF TRINITY COUNTY*

Trinity County offers a pleasing variety of steep slopes blanketed with rich forests and crisscrossed with swift cold streams draining to the west. A large percentage of the County is preserved as scenic land or recreation land by various public agencies (e.g., USFS, BLM, and state and county agencies). Over 70 percent of the County is controlled by the federal and state government. “Scenic land” is defined in Section 65561 of the Government Code of California as “open space land which possesses outstanding scenic qualities worthy of preservation.” “Recreation land” is “any area of land or water designated on the state, or any regional or local open space plan, as open space land and which is actively used for recreation purposes and open to the public for such purposes with or without charge” (Trinity County, 1973).

Trinity County’s natural beauty is often cited as a contributing factor to the high quality of life experienced by residents of the County, recreationists visiting the County, and small businesses seeking to relocate to the County. It is therefore important that the County develop in a manner that retains these characteristics (Trinity County, 2001). The importance of scenic lands to the County has been manifested by efforts to guard them through zoning, using the open space, scenic conservation district or recreational district zoning, or through conservation easements. A prime objective of the *Open Space Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan* is to “protect the scenic natural resources of Trinity County and preserve areas which are important as commercial natural resources for future generations.” Another related prime objective is “to conserve, preserve, and maintain the scenic lands of Trinity County which include those precious mountains, trees, and water” (Trinity County, 1973).

A significant percentage of residents and non-residents alike experience some, if not most, of their scenic views of the Trinity County from the roads and highways. SR 299 is the primary east-west highway in Trinity County. It carries a variety of traffic including local (intra-regional), commuter, and commercial traffic, and it is an important inter-regional route (for both auto and truck traffic) between the Sacramento Valley and the North Coast of California. SR 299 is also heavily used by recreational traffic for access to and from the Trinity River, Trinity Alps Wilderness, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and Six Rivers National Forest. SR 3 is the primary north-south link in the County and carries local (intra-county)

traffic, as well as recreational and commercial (primarily natural resource) traffic (Trinity County, 2001). Not only are these highways in themselves beautiful, but they traverse some of the most spectacularly scenic areas in the world. Much of the corridor through which these highways pass is guarded by zoning regulations, such as the Scenic Conservation District and the Recreation District. These districts regulate the placement of structures bordering on public and private roads so that the beauty and rural character will not be permanently destroyed and so that areas of unusual scenic beauty in Trinity County will be preserved (Trinity County, 1973).

The 1973 Open Space and Conservation Elements of the Trinity County General Plan recommended that the entire length of SR 299 in Trinity County and SR 3 from Weaverville north to the Siskiyou County line be considered eligible for official scenic highway designation (Trinity County, 1973). In 1974, the County adopted a Scenic Highways Element of the Trinity County General Plan and recommended that no highways be considered for Scenic Highway status. In 1986, the Scenic Highways Element was incorporated into the Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan and County Scenic Roadways were proposed that were less restrictive than official Scenic Highway status. A 50-foot-wide Scenic-Conservation (SC) overlay zone is assigned to designated County Scenic Roadways. To date, only four roads have been so designated: Trinity Dam Boulevard (Road 105), Rush Creek Road (Road 204), Canyon Creek Road (Road 401), and Dredger Camp Road (Road 412). None of these roads are within the project area viewshed. The Circulation Element of the General Plan and Regional Transportation Plan contain additional objectives and policies regarding the Scenic Roadway program (see *Planning Document Goals, Objectives, and Policies* below) and identify 10 additional County roads that are eligible for designation as County Scenic Roads, none of which is in the project viewshed, and all of which are outside Weaverville.

In 1990, the U.S. Forest Service adopted a National Scenic Byway system. In 1992, the California State Legislature passed AB 126, renaming SR 299 from Redding to Arcata (formerly the “Trinity Highway”) the “Trinity Scenic Byway.” SR 3 from Weaverville to the north has also been designated as a Trinity Heritage Scenic Byway. One other Forest Service road and four county roads have received the same designation to date (Trinity County, 2001):

- Rainer Road (USFS Road 35N23Y)
- Rush Creek Road (County Road 204)
- Trinity Dam Blvd (County Road 106)
- Wildwood Road (County Road 302)
- Guy Covington Dr (County Road 160)

#### *VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE PROJECT AREA*

Weaverville lies nestled at the base of the Trinity Alps, in the northeast-central portion of Trinity County, approximately 42 miles west of Redding, California. The Weaverville area can be characterized as

mountainous with the prevailing landscape consisting of moderate to steep hillsides and ridges vegetated with a variable mosaic of coniferous forest, oak woodlands and brush. To the north of Weaverville, Glenison Gap, Rocky Point, Weaver Bally, Monument Peak, and the forested slopes below these peaks are significant focal points. To the south and west, Timber Ridge and Oregon Mountain dominate the view. Views to the east are framed by Musser Ridge, with the higher Brown's Mountain in the background. Vegetation cover varies throughout the area, based on exposure, elevation, steepness of slopes, and soils. Musser Hill in the east rises to 3,121 feet above mean sea level (msl), Oregon Mountain to the west reaches 2,888 feet above sea level, and Monument Peak further to the north reaches 7,771 feet above msl. Other peaks in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest and Trinity Alps Wilderness to the north and northwest may be seen from Weaverville on a clear day.

The Weaverville Basin is divided by a number of creeks. Weaverville straddles East Weaver Creek, which flows out of the mountains northwest of Weaverville and joins West Weaver Creek as it flows into Weaver Creek less than one mile south of SR 299/SR 3. East Weaver Creek and the Trinity River Lumber Company property east of the creek create a physical and visual barrier between the east and west sides of Weaverville. Weaver Creek runs roughly south along SR 299/SR 3 to Douglas City, where the highways split and Weaver Creek joins the Trinity River. East and West Weaver Creeks are sources for domestic water and, with their riparian vegetation, are an important natural scenic resource in the community.

East Weaver Creek from 100 feet upstream of Brown's Ranch Road to 100 feet downstream of the SR 299 bridge is designated as a local flood protection project, constructed by ACOE in 1963. The flood control facility consists of a graded trapezoidal channel with levees on both banks. Trinity County is responsible for maintaining the channel, including keeping it "clear of debris, weeds, and wild growth" (ACOE, 1966). The County uses hand crews to trim and cut riparian vegetation in 100-foot sections on alternating banks each fall (October-December) in the section of East Weaver Creek between the Brown's Ranch Road bridge and the SR 299 bridge. The *Weaverville Community Plan* notes that further culverting or channelizing East Weaver Creek would radically alter the viewsheds of individual neighborhoods and the overall community and proposes that the creek and its riparian areas be preserved. The *Community Plan* also notes the recreational, aesthetic, and historical value of the community's network of old mining and other trails and proposes to recognize and protect these trails (Trinity County, 1990).

The Weaverville Basin is accessed via SR 299 or SR 3 and the views along these access routes are important since travelers into the area get their first visual impressions along these corridors. As noted above, both highways are designated Scenic Byways and are heavily used for recreational travel (Trinity County, 2001). Weaverville's commercial districts are also centered along SR 299 and SR 3. Businesses along the highway routes include a mix of retail stores, restaurants, light industry, and public services.

The Trinity River Lumber Mill is visible on the north side of SR 299 within the central portion of Weaverville and dominates much of Weaverville's developed landscape. The Trinity Plaza Shopping Center, also on the north side of SR 299 in Weaverville's southeast quadrant is another visually prominent feature in the community.

The historic downtown district, along SR 299 in Weaverville's northwest quadrant, is distinctive and gives substantial charm to the community. The downtown district is the visual hub of Weaverville and offers a number of attractions to visitors. The historic Joss House, the Jake Jackson Historical Park and Museum, and the Highland Art Center are all located within a very short walking distance and comprise a distinctive Community Cultural Center (Trinity County, 1990). Residences are clustered around the SR 299/SR 3 junction in Weaverville and creep into the hills on all sides of the community. Weaverville has a rural, small-town atmosphere with goals to preserve this feeling (Trinity County, 1990).

In general, human activities have successfully blended with the "natural" landscape of the project area. Maintaining the scenic quality of the area is economically and aesthetically desirable. As noted in the *Weaverville Community Plan*, road building, logging, and other activities on resources lands hidden from view can take place with minimal noticeable visual impacts. Even on slopes visible from the community, vegetation retention, obstacles (such as spur ridges), and topography can be used to minimize the visibility of such activities. Within these "shadowed" areas, management goals do not have to conflict with visual objectives (Trinity County, 1990).

#### *VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE PROPOSED EAST CONNECTOR ROADWAY ALIGNMENT*

Most of the proposed alignment is through undeveloped and forested areas, with approximately 60 percent in ponderosa pine or foothill pine forest and 5 percent comprising stream habitat and riparian forest. Developed areas of the project comprise the remaining 35 percent of the project site, as well as most of the surrounding areas. These biological communities are described in detail in the *Natural Environmental Study (NES)* report for the East Connector Roadway project (J & S 2002b) available for review at the TCDOT.

Commercial development, including a shopping center, other retail and office buildings, marks both ends of the proposed roadway alignment where it intersects SR 299 and SR 3. Most of the alignment traverses through an unused portion of the Trinity River Lumber Mill Property. The mill operates adjacent to the west side of the East Connector, from behind the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center to Brown's Ranch Road. This portion of the alignment is bordered to the east by residential development situated on top of a bluff that varies between 15 to 35 feet above the East Connector alignment. Lance Gulch flows along the base of the bluff through the northern half of this portion of the alignment.

North of Brown's Ranch Road, the East Connector alignment passes in close proximity to the Golden Age Senior Center. Alternative 1 passes in front of the center on the existing Brown's Ranch Road alignment. Alternative 2 passes behind the center, through Ponderosa Pine forest between the center and an ephemeral drainage channel at the base of the bluff, but is largely screened from view by forest, topography, and center outbuildings. The Alternative 1 alignment is partially visible from the Weaver Creek Senior Apartments and Two Creeks Mobile Home Park on Brown's Ranch Road. The alignment is largely screened from view from residences located further to the east on Brown's Ranch Road and from residences on Martin Road by large pine and fir trees, and by topography.

The project is not located in a Wild and Scenic River corridor and there are no unique or visually outstanding natural or manmade features within the project area. Scenic resources around Weaverville have not been formally classified; however, the project area landscape would generally be described as "common." That is, both its natural and manmade elements are prevalent and relatively uniform in the analysis area.

As noted above, SR 299 and SR 3 from Weaverville north are designated Scenic Byways. The proposed roadway project would be partially visible from portions of both highways. Although there are no special development requirements or restrictions associated with the Scenic Byway designation, aesthetic impacts of the project to SR 299 and SR 3 should be considered. The proposed vehicle bridge is largely screened from view from SR 3 by large pine and fir trees that will be retained south of the intersection of the East Connector Roadway and SR 3. Views of much of the alignment from SR 299 and SR 3 are largely obscured by the surrounding forested landscape and by land uses between the highways and the proposed alignment, such as the mill.

Both options for the proposed bicycle path and bridge are located within the flood control section of East Weaver Creek, described above. Maintenance requirements of the flood protection project reduce the aesthetic values of this particular segment of the creek. Although East Weaver Creek is neither unique as a visual resource nor preserved in its natural state, it remains an important visual resource to the local community. East Weaver Creek and the two optional bicycle bridge locations are visible from SR 299.

Views of the East Connector Roadway alignment from various viewpoints, roughly north to south, along the alignment, as well as views of the two proposed options for a pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing of East Weaver Creek, are described below and are shown in the photographs provided in **Appendix G**. Viewpoint locations and the line of sight are indicated on the map in **Figure 3.19-1**. Numbers on the map correspond to the numbered photographs in **Appendix G**.

### *VIEWS OF THE EAST CONNECTOR ROADWAY ALIGNMENT FROM SR 3*

#### ***From Five Cent Gulch Street***

The view from Five Cent Gulch Street, across SR 3 is of the land parcel formerly owned by the BLM, and now owned by Trinity County (See **Appendix G**, Photo 1). Topography and the forest vegetation obscure the project site beyond the edge of SR 3. The County has plans to use the recently acquired parcel to expand the existing county maintenance station located directly to the north on SR 3. These plans include extensive grading and tree removal within the project corridor, exposing the north end of the East Connector to greater visibility from SR 3. These plans are unrelated to and independent of the proposed East Connector project. Proposed construction staging areas for the East Connector project would be located on either side of the roadway alignment and would also be visible from SR 3. South of the County's newly acquired parcel is a small medical center and beyond that is a small shopping strip ("Tops Mini Mart"; not shown in photo). South of the intersection of the East Connector and SR 3, the proposed road alignment and vehicle bridge is largely screened from SR 3 by commercial development and by the large pine and fir trees that will be retained in this area.

#### ***North of Five Cent Gulch Street***

Approaching Weaverville from the north along SR 3, forest vegetation and topography shield the East Connector alignment from view (See **Appendix G**, Photo 2). The road alignment and two construction staging areas will become more visible once the County has executed its plans for grading and tree removal in this area.

### *VIEWS OF THE PROPOSED VEHICLE BRIDGE OVER EAST WEAVER CREEK*

#### ***From the Medical Center on SR 3***

From the Medical Center, the view to the east towards the proposed vehicle bridge location is through a level area of partially cleared pine and fir forest, and beyond, the denser riparian vegetation marking the path of East Weaver Creek (See **Appendix G**, Photo 3). Buildings and equipment at the Pruett Logging Company yard on the opposite side of the creek are barely visible in the background. In the foreground is the location of one of the proposed project construction staging areas.

#### ***From Pruett Logging Company Yard***

Looking west towards the location of the proposed vehicle bridge from the east side of the creek, the view is through moderately dense riparian vegetation lining the creek channel (See **Appendix G**, Photo 4). The roadway and bridge locations are partially screened by this vegetation, but remain visible in the background.

Figure 3.19-1



### *VIEWS OF THE EAST CONNECTOR ROADWAY ALIGNMENT FROM BROWN'S RANCH ROAD*

#### *From the Weaver Creek Senior Apartments*

From the Weaver Creek Senior Apartments, the foreground view is of East Weaver Creek and the existing Brown's Ranch Road bridge over the creek. To the north, moderately dense riparian vegetation lining the creek screens the East Connector Roadway alignment from view (See **Appendix G**, Photo 5). The view is clear from the apartment complex and the Two Creeks Mobile Home Park across East Weaver Creek to the Golden Age Senior Center and Brown's Ranch Road (view not shown in photos). The Alternative 1 alignment is visible from this vantage point. The Alternative 2 alignment is not visible behind the senior center.

#### *Facing North from Brown's Ranch Road*

Facing north from Brown's Ranch Road towards the Golden Age Senior Center, the two proposed alternative alignments for the East Connector Roadway are at least partially visible (See **Appendix G**, Photo 6). The Alternative 2 alignment is partially screened by the dense pine forest east of the senior center. The peaks of Shasta-Trinity National Forest and the Trinity Alps Wilderness, north of Weaverville, form the background of this view.

#### *Facing South from the Senior Center*

The road alignment would be visible as it continues south onto Trinity River Lumber property and crosses a large cleared area adjacent to large composting mounds of wood waste (See **Appendix G**, Photo 7). Beyond the cleared area, forest vegetation at least partially obscures the roadway alignment. The Oregon Mountain ridge appears in the background.

#### *Facing East from the Senior Center*

The eastern edge of the Golden Age Senior Center is bordered by pine forest with a dense understory (See **Appendix G**, Photo 8). From here, the land slopes steeply to the east and visibility beyond the immediate line of trees is not possible. Although Alternative 2 of the East Connector Roadway would pass less than 50 feet east of the center, forest vegetation, topography, and outbuildings behind the center largely block the view of the road alignment.

#### *From Brown's Ranch Road East of the Senior Center*

From a roadside turnout uphill from the senior center (See **Appendix G**, Photo 9), the ground slopes steeply downwards and topography and forest vegetation obscure views beyond the edge of the slope. Oregon Mountain is visible in the background. Residential landowners along Brown's Ranch Road did not grant access to their properties for this study, but the view from this location is representative of views from adjacent residential properties along Brown's Ranch Road.

*VIEWS OF THE EAST CONNECTOR ROADWAY ALIGNMENT FROM MARTIN ROAD*

***From the North End of Martin Road***

Just beyond the north end of Martin Road, the foreground view is of a recently logged area that has begun to regenerate with scrub vegetation (See **Appendix G**, Photo 10). In the middleground is a sparse line of remnant ponderosa and foothill pines. The ground slopes steeply to the west toward the road alignment, which is largely screened from this viewpoint by the vegetation and topography. In the background is the Trinity River Lumber mill and, beyond that, Timber Ridge.

***From Pioneer Lane/Martin Road Intersection***

As shown from this viewpoint, which is representative of the view from many of the residences along Martin Road and Pioneer Lane, steep topography and pine/fir forest obscure views of the East Connector Roadway alignment (See **Appendix G**, Photo 11). Views from the western edge of residences along Martin Road could not be accessed; however, it appears that the topography and vegetation would largely block views of the roadway from these properties.

***From Northwest of Pioneer Lane/Martin Road Intersection***

The view is of the proposed East Connector Roadway alignment and one of the proposed construction staging areas (See **Appendix G**, Photos 12 and 13). The proposed roadway would cut straight across the middleground view here. In the background are the Trinity River Lumber mill and, beyond that, Timber Ridge.

*VIEWS OF THE EAST CONNECTOR ROADWAY ALIGNMENT FROM SR 299*

The proposed East Connector Roadway alignment would be visible as one enters into the southwest quadrant of Weaverville on SR 299. Views of the project site from SR 299, at the south end of the proposed project alignment, are dominated by commercial development and forested areas, with some industrial and residential uses (See **Appendix G**, Photos 14 and 15). Musser Hill ridge is in the background. The offices of the CHP and the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center straddle the proposed southern end of the alignment (See **Appendix G**, Photo 14). The view from the road alignment, across SR 299, is of retail and eating establishments along Nugget Lane. North of the CHP offices and shopping center, a moderately dense forest obscures the project alignment from view as it continues north along the east side of the lumber mill property (See **Appendix G**, Photo 15).

*VIEWS OF BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE CROSSINGS FROM LEVEE ROAD*

***Option A Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge***

This view shows the approximate location of the Option A pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing (See **Appendix G**, Photo 16). In the foreground is East Weaver Creek with its constructed levees. In the middleground are a single-family residence and the fenced community gardens. In the background is the adjacent Lowden Park, with the Trinity Alps just visible beyond the park. On the west side of the creek, the proposed bicycle trail would continue along the north edge of the private property shown in the photo. There are several mature pines along the edge of the community garden fence, adjacent to the proposed pathway.

***Option B Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge***

This southward-facing view has Levee Road and East Weaver Creek in the foreground, with the Trinity River Lumber mill and Weaverville CSD yard in the middleground on the east and west sides of the creek, respectively. In the background is the Oregon Mountain ridgeline. The Option B pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing is located at the bend in the creek, directly opposite the CSD property (See **Appendix G**, Photo 17).

*PLANNING DOCUMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES*

*Trinity County General Plan*

The *Open Space and Conservation Elements* of the *Trinity County General Plan* (Trinity County, 1973) address the treatment of scenic lands in the County and contain the following objectives and recommendations relevant to visual resources and the project:

- **Objective:** To conserve, preserve and maintain the scenic beauty of Trinity County.
- **Recommendations:**
  7. Adopt stringent regulations requiring the landscaping and maintenance of vegetation on cut and fill slopes as required by the appropriate agency.
  8. Control encroachment of cut and fill slopes into scenic easement areas or corridors along scenic highways, whether state or county.

The *Circulation Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan*, (Trinity County, 2002a) and the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* (Trinity County, 2001) both describe the East Connector in detail under their descriptions of the existing transportation system as an anticipated project currently in the planning phase. In addition, the *Circulation Element* contains the following findings and goals that are relevant to the proposed project and aesthetics:

- **Finding 1:** Increasing seasonal traffic congestion in Weaverville creates potential safety issues and adverse impacts to the community.
  - **Goal 1:** Provide for the long-range development of the county's roadway system that is consistent with adopted land use patterns, ensures the safe and efficient movement of the people and goods, minimizes impacts on the attractiveness of the community, meets environmental and circulation objectives and implements funding strategies for construction, improvement, and maintenance of existing and new roadways.

The *Circulation Element* of the *Trinity County General Plan* (Trinity County, 2002a) proposes the following objectives and policies relevant to visual resources and the proposed project:

- **Objective 1.13:** As feasible under financial constraints, expand the transportation system to accommodate and attract new businesses and visitors.
- **Policy 1.13.B:** Assess each project's contribution to the aesthetics of the area in which it is implemented and support those projects that enhance the visitor's experience in the region.
- **Objective 1.4:** Develop road systems which are compatible with the areas they serve.
- **Objective 1.5:** Utilize environmental protection/mitigation measures that consider environmental, social, and economic factors when designing, constructing and operating transportation facilities.
  - **Policy 1.5.E:** Ensure that social and economic issues are considered along with the natural and man made environments when environmental review is conducted for proposed projects.

The *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan* (Trinity County, 2001) also contains the following goal relevant to visual resources and the proposed project:

- **Goal #5.2:** Preserve high quality viewsheds along State highways and County roads in an effort to improve visitor experience and economic enhancements.

In addition, the *Circulation Element* and *Regional Transportation Plan* both contain the following objectives and policies with respect to scenic roads:

- Achieve scenic roadway designation for appropriate State and County highways/roads (Objective 5.2.1 of the 2001 RTP, and Objective 1.15 of the 2002 Circulation Element)

- The County Scenic Roadways program will consist of specific right-of-way zoning per the County Scenic Conservation Overlay Zoning District. At the time that Community Plans or the General Plan Land Use Element are developed or updated, identify appropriate roads (or road segments) to be designated as County Scenic Roadways. Factors to consider include current viewshed condition, resource utilization needs and the need for shaded fuel breaks (Policy 5.2.1.A of the Circ Element and Policy 1.15.A of the RTP).

The policies list 10 additional County roads that are eligible for designation as County Scenic Roads, none of which is in the project viewshed. All 10 eligible County roads are outside Weaverville.

#### *Weaverville Community Plan*

The *Transportation* section of the *Weaverville Community Plan*, (Trinity County, 1990) contains the following goals relevant to the proposed project and aesthetic resources:

- **Goal #1:** To provide a streets and highways system which effectively, efficiently and safely serves the variety of transportation needs of the community.
  - **Objective 1.2:** Plan for improved capacity and level of service of State Highway 299, which will not impact the historic nature of the downtown area. The Plan specifically rejects the implementation of four traffic lanes through this area.
- **Goal #5:** To preserve the historic nature and rural atmosphere of the County.

In addition, the *Land Use and Community Design Element* of the *Weaverville Community Plan* (Trinity County, 1990) contains the following goals and objectives regarding visual resources relevant to the proposed project:

- **Goal #3:** To incorporate special provisions to protect and enhance the appearance of the community along State Highways 299 and 3.
  - **Objective 3.1:** Encourage the undergrounding of overhead utilities, especially when such undergrounding can be accomplished in conjunction with road construction projects or other improvements.
  - **Objective 3.2:** Encourage the planting of deciduous trees with bright fall foliage along highway frontages, similar to those trees in the “downtown” area, both to visually enhance these areas as well as to compensate for removal of on-site trees during development.

### 3.19.2 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Visual impacts consist of negative changes from existing to post-project landscape character. These changes are the result of introducing foreign elements of line, form, color and texture to the existing landscape. New sources of light and glare are also considered aesthetic impacts. The magnitude of the impact is usually related to the relative scale of the change, to the sensitivity of the viewing population, and to exposure time. The distinctiveness of an existing landscape contributes to sensitivity and impact significance.

Visual impacts must be evaluated from community perspectives. For instance, nighttime light or glare created by development set in an urban or suburban environment might not generate the same impact it would in a rural community. Impacts to viewsheds can differ significantly from urban and suburban environments to rural areas where vistas may be mostly undisturbed.

Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the CEQA Environmental Checklist, poses the following questions to be considered in determining whether the project would cause significant visual impacts:

Would the project:

- Cause a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- Substantially damage scenic resources (such as trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway)?
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views of the area?

Evaluation of the East Connector Roadway project with respect to these CEQA criteria leads to the conclusion that the project would not have a significant visual impact. Nevertheless, measures such as the planting of trees to screen the roadway and the use of colors and textures that blend rather than contrast with the natural environment in constructing the vehicle and bike/pedestrian bridges, would serve to further minimize the visual impact of the project. Undergrounding of overhead utilities as part of this project will enhance views at the south end of the road corridor.

### 3.19.3 PERMANENT IMPACTS

#### VISUAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The assessment of the potential visual effects associated with the East Connector Roadway project was based on review of the following information: aerial and ground-level photographs of the project area, project drawings and design information, and field observations of the project site and surroundings. The method of assessment utilized for this project and all highway impact projects is standardized by measuring the area for its existing scenic quality by the following suitability ratings:

- Vividness: the extent to which the landscape is memorable. A vivid landscape makes an immediate and lasting impression on the viewer.
- Intactness: the integrity of visual order in the landscape and the extent to which the natural landscape is free from visual intrusions.
- Unity: the extent to which development is sensitive to and in visual harmony with the natural landscape.

Intactness is measured by the degree of visual intrusion within the natural landscape as follows:

- Minor intrusions: those that are either complementary to the landscape or are of recognized cultural or historical significance.
- Moderate intrusions: those that are integrated into the landscape and do not obstruct the views or destroy the natural landscape.
- Major intrusions: those that dominate the landscape by blocking out their features.

The Visual Quality Assessment was prepared for views of the proposed roadway from SR 3, Brown's Ranch Road, Martin Road, and SR 299. Views of the proposed pedestrian/bicycle bridge over East Weaver Creek were also assessed. **Table 3.19-1** identifies the existing and future (with project) quality of area views.

**TABLE 3.19-1**  
 VISUAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

Views	Photos	Vividness	Intactness	Unity	Ave.	Vividness	Intactness	Unity	Ave.
		Existing Visual Quality				Visual Quality with Project			
SR 3 (at Five Cent Gulch Road)	1,2	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair
Brown's Ranch Road (near Senior Center)	5,6,7,8	good	good	good	good	good	fair/good	fair/good	fair/good
Martin Road - north end	10	fair/good	fair/good	fair/good	fair/good	fair/good	fair/good	fair/good	fair/good

Views	Photos	Vividness	Intactness	Unity	Ave.	Vividness	Intactness	Unity	Ave.
Martin Road/Pioneer Lane intersection	11	good	good	good	good	good	good	good	good
West of Martin Road/Pioneer Lane intersection	12,13	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor
SR 299(at Glen Road)	14,15	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor	fair/poor
Pedestrian/bicycle bridge (Option A)	16	good	good	good	good	good	good	good	good
Pedestrian/bicycle bridge (Option B)	17	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair	fair

<sup>1</sup> Ratings: poor; fair; good; excellent

*IMPACTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES*

The project would not create a scale or degree of change that appears as a substantial, obvious, and disharmonious modification of the overall scene within the project area. The project would not alter the quality of views along SR 299 and SR 3, both of which are designated State Scenic Byways.

The proposed project is consistent with existing plans and policies regarding visual resources and aesthetics, including the *Trinity County General Plan*, the *Trinity County Regional Transportation Plan*, and the *Weaverville Community Plan*. The project would contribute significantly to meeting the local government’s goals of reducing the traffic congestion on Main Street (SR 299) and in the downtown area. This would help reach the goal of making the downtown area more visually attractive for retail business, professional offices, and service business. In addition, undergrounding of utilities is included in the East Connector project description (see Section 1.4.3), consistent with local plans and policies. The reduction in overhead utilities would slightly improve the views from SR 299 at the southern end of the proposed road alignment.

Since no street lighting is proposed along the East Connector, the project would not create additional nighttime lighting, except for the proposed new traffic signal light at the intersection of SR 299, Glen Road and the East Connector, which will be located in an area that is already lit by streetlights and exterior lighting and illuminated signs at the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center. Headlights of night time traffic along the East Connector would bring a new source of light to the area along the project alignment. However, most residences are 15 to 35 feet above the elevation of the road, so headlights will not shine directly into windows. The only residences that are at the same elevation as the East Connector Roadway are separated from the alignment by East Weaver Creek and intervening vegetation.

As shown in **Table 3.19-1**, the proposed new roadway and increase in traffic would cause visual quality along Brown’s Ranch Road, near the Golden Age Senior Center and Weaver Creek Apartments, to deteriorate from an overall rating of “good” to an overall rating of “fair/good.” Elsewhere along the

project route, the changes in visual quality would be slight, and the area would experience little visual disruption as a result of the project. Changes in visual quality along the project route are described in additional detail below.

The existing quality of views from SR 3, a State Scenic Byway, are considered “fair” and visual quality ratings along SR 3 would not be altered by the proposed project. Although views of the mountains in the distance are attractive and memorable, the near landscape may be described as common, with commercial development dominating the roadside entering Weaverville. The East Connector Roadway would not be inconsistent with the existing landscape and would not be visually intrusive. Trees already provide screening along SR 3. Use of appropriate tree screening along the East Connector would essentially preserve the existing views along SR 3. The location of the proposed vehicle bridge over East Weaver Creek, at the north end of the East Connector alignment, is barely visible from SR 3 with existing trees and commercial development blocking views, and would not be visible if additional trees and shrubs were planted along the proposed roadway.

The views from SR 299 near the southern end of the project are of commercial and industrial development. Although SR 299 is listed a State Scenic Byway, the foreground view from SR 299 at this location is not distinctive or memorable, has little visual integrity, and contains development that is not particularly in harmony with the natural landscape, which is comprised of mixed conifer forest in the middleground and mountains in the background. Overall, the view has been rated “fair” to “poor.” The East Connector, including the proposed traffic signal, would be consistent with the existing view and would not cause deterioration of visual quality here.

The existing quality of project area views from residences along Martin Road and Pioneer Lane range from “good” to “fair/poor.” Views to the west from most of the residences along Martin Road and Pioneer Lane are of mixed conifer forest with Timber Ridge and Oregon Mountain in the background. Topography and vegetation shield most of these properties from views of the lumber mill and commercial areas further to the west. Although the view from this area is not particularly distinctive, it has good integrity, and the low-density residential development appears to be in harmony with the natural environment. The quality of views from residences in the area along Martin Road and Pioneer Lane would not be significantly impacted since in most cases, these views are screened by existing forest vegetation, or overlook the alignment location some 30 feet below them.

Several properties along Martin Road extend further to the west and downhill. For those properties, existing views are of the lumber mill and commercial areas along SR 299 and are already rated as “fair” to “poor” (see Section 3.19.1). The East Connector project would not cause deterioration in the visual quality of this already developed landscape. The planting of a tree/shrub screen between the East Connector and Trinity River Lumber mill would enhance the views in this area.

As noted in the Project Description (Section 1.4.3), a 2-acre parcel, APN 24-210-1000, at the end of Martin Road, owned by Trinity River Lumber, would be rezoned from industrial to residential (R-1A 1/2-acre minimum) as part of the project. The property is located in this area of “fair” to “poor” rated views of the mill and commercial developments, and is currently vacant. Therefore, the project could have the indirect effect of causing up to four residences to be built in the existing residential area of Martin Road, overlooking the mill and East Connector. The development of four residences would be consistent with surrounding land uses, and would probably be more desirable, from an aesthetic point of view, than development of the industrial use for which it is currently zoned.

The existing quality of project area views from Brown’s Ranch Road are good, dominated by East Weaver Creek and conifer and riparian forests. Although the views in this wooded area are not particularly distinctive for the area, they are attractive, free from major visual intrusions and fairly representative of the natural landscape. The East Connector project would cause deterioration in the visual quality in this area from “good” to “fair/good”. Additional truck and other vehicle traffic that would result from either road alignment alternative would also have a visual impact on this area.

The quality of views from the Golden Age Senior Center, Weaver Creek Senior Apartments, and Two Creeks Mobile Home Park along Brown’s Ranch Road may be negatively impacted by the project to varying degrees, depending upon the alternative selected. However, this impact is considered less than significant for all alternatives.

#### *ALTERNATIVE 1*

Alternative 1 uses the existing Brown’s Ranch Road alignment, so the visual impact at this location would be minor, from the existing, narrow two-lane road to a slightly wider two-lane road with fresh pavement and striping. The impact on the senior apartments and mobile park is further reduced by existing trees along East Weaver Creek, outside of the levees and the project cut and fill limits, which will not be disturbed.

#### *ALTERNATIVE 2*

Alternative 2 would result in a greater visual change, by converting ponderosa pine forest into a new road behind the senior center, while leaving the existing Brown’s Ranch Road in front of the center. This alignment would not be visible from the senior apartments or mobile park. It would be closer to residences to the east on Brown’s Ranch Road, but would not be prominent in their viewshed, because these residences are on a bluff, approximately 35 feet above the alignment, which would be close to the base of the bluff. The most significant change resulting from Alternative 2 would be to the back of the senior center. Most activities at the center are indoors. The views from the rear windows of the center

are blocked by outbuildings in the center's back yard. The Alternative 2 alignment is also partially screened from the center by topography and pine, fir and deciduous trees. Existing trees that are not within the cut and fill limits would remain.

#### *BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE*

The views from Levee Road at the two options for a pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing of East Weaver Creek (Options A and B) are rated from "good" to "fair." The views along Levee Road of the creek and surrounding riparian forest and views across to Lowden Park are attractive and memorable. Areas along the creek that have recently been cut and cleared for required flood control maintenance are less attractive. The visual integrity and unity is good at the north end of Levee Road (near Option A), but deteriorates toward the south end of Levee Road (approaching Option B) as the lumber mill, Weaverville CSD yard, automotive storage, and residential areas dominate views from East Weaver Creek. A pedestrian/bicycle bridge would not negatively impact the quality of views along Levee Road and would be consistent with the existing setting. The prefabricated bridge for the pedestrian crossing is available in a variety of appealing designs. Two of these designs were priced and evaluated in the PSR and can be seen in **Appendix G**.

Vegetation clearing along Levee Road that would be required to construct the proposed path would cause a temporary negative impact. In the long term, the proposed bridge and trail is most likely to enhance the aesthetic effect of the creek and levee road, creating a park-like setting.

**Visual Impact-1** Although most of the alignment is at least partially screened from views from SR 299 and SR 3 by existing vegetation, topography and development, the project would result in a minor loss of visual quality at locations adjacent to the new roadway.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required). Although no mitigation is required for this impact, the County proposes mitigation (**Visual Mitigation-1**) to further reduce the visual impacts of the project.

**Visual Mitigation-1** Following project construction, the County will plant a screen of fast-growing evergreen trees and shrubs such as cypress, cedar and ceanothus between the East Connector and the Trinity River Lumber Company mill, and at other locations to screen or break up views of the roadway from adjacent land uses. Trees will only be planted outside the creek levees where space and solar exposure permit. Species that are fast growing and low maintenance and that have dense lower branches and foliage will be selected to establish a good screen as quickly as possible.

The trees will not necessarily block all views of the roadway, which is not inconsistent with existing

views along much of the road corridor and will not cause significant visual impacts at adjacent residences. Rather, the County will aim to use trees to improve the visual corridor along the new road. Tree plantings would also help break up views of the roadway and the lumber mill from viewpoints east and west of the mill, such as Martin Road, East Weaver Creek, and SR 299.

**Visual Impact-2** The proposed bridge crossings of East Weaver Creek could impact visual resources in the area, such as East Weaver Creek.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated (**Visual Mitigation-2**)

**Visual Mitigation-2** The proposed roadway and bicycle/pedestrian bridges will be designed and built using colors and textures that blend, rather than contrast, with the surrounding natural environment.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

The prefabricated bridge for the pedestrian crossing is available in a variety of appealing designs. Two of these designs were priced and evaluated in the PSR and can be seen in **Appendix G**.

**Visual Impact-3** The project would result in indirect visual/aesthetic effects if a parcel rezoning, as proposed in conjunction with this project, leads to development of the parcel for residential uses. However, the rezoning from industrial to residential would result in potential for less aesthetically damaging residential uses, rather than industrial uses.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required)

### 3.19.4 TEMPORARY (CONSTRUCTION PHASE) IMPACTS

Some temporary visual impacts to land uses near the roadway, bridge, and bike path would result from tree and riparian vegetation removal prior to project construction. During site preparation, all shrubs and trees within the cut and fill limits will be cleared. This will result in a strip of 100 to 175 feet wide that is temporarily devoid of vegetation. Due to its short duration, this impact is considered less than significant.

**Visual Impact-4** Removal of existing trees and riparian vegetation in the project corridor prior to project construction would have a temporary visual effect on nearby land uses.

**Significance:** Less than significant (no mitigation required). Although no mitigation is required for this impact, the County proposes mitigation (**Visual Mitigation-1**) to minimize the visual impacts of the project.

**Visual Mitigation-1** Plant a screen of fast-growing evergreen trees and shrubs such as cypress, cedar and ceanothus between the East Connector and the Trinity River Lumber Company mill, and wherever needed at locations outside the creek levees where space and solar exposure permit (see discussion of **Visual Mitigation-1** above).

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

### 3.19.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Grading and tree and vegetation clearing may have significant impacts on visual resources in the viewsheds of the proposed West Connector Roadway and new Weaverville Airport. In particular, the Draft EIR for the new Weaverville Airport acknowledges that significant and unavoidable visual impacts will result. The new airport would be at the top of Musser Ridge, between SR 299 and Brown's Mountain. It would be visible from several points along SR 299, from approximately East Weaver Creek through the Trinity Plaza Shopping Center (Trinity County and Federal Aviation Administration, 2002).

The East Connector would share this viewshed with the new airport. However, the East Connector would be at approximately the same elevation as the viewpoints along SR 299. The lumber mill, shopping center, and existing trees along East Weaver Creek screen the East Connector from view at most of these locations. The proposed landscaping between the East Connector and the mill (Visual Mitigation-1, above) would further screen views of the East Connector from these viewpoints. Therefore, the East Connector would not contribute significantly to the visual impacts of the airport project.

The replacement of non-roaded areas with roadways, such as the East and West Connectors, may have an overall impact on the scenic qualities of portions of the Weaverville community. However, the viewshed of the West Connector does not overlap with the viewsheds of the East Connector and airport projects. Therefore, the visual impacts of the two roadway projects will not be cumulative.

Temporary cumulative visual/aesthetic effects could result from the removal of existing trees along the proposed bike path and riparian vegetation for the bike bridge, in combination with ongoing removal of riparian vegetation along the flood control segment of the East Weaver Creek and at the SR 299 bridge over East Weaver Creek in conjunction with Caltrans' bridge widening project. This would result in removal of vegetation on both sides of Levee Road, and additional vegetation at the proposed bike bridge and existing SR 299 bridge. However, existing vegetation along the proposed bike path/bridge and SR 299 bridge is very sparse due to vegetation removal for flood control. In addition, vegetation along the bike path has been disturbed by industrial activities at the adjacent Yingling Construction yard and Trinity River Lumber mill. Mitigation to minimize the potentially significant visual impact from cumulative removal of riparian vegetation from these three projects along East Weaver Creek, proposed in Section 3.8, *Vegetation, Invasive Species and Wildlife*, is repeated below.

**Visual Impact 5** Temporary cumulative visual/aesthetic effects would result from the removal of existing trees and riparian vegetation along the proposed bike path and bike bridge, combined with removal of riparian vegetation within the adjacent flood control maintenance segment of East Weaver Creek.

**Significance:** Significant, but mitigated

**Habitat Mitigation-6** The cumulative effects of vegetation removal will be minimized by timing vegetation removal for the proposed East Connector project to coincide with vegetation removal for flood control maintenance along East Weaver Creek. This will minimize the amount of vegetation that is removed and the duration of the disturbance and will help avoid tree removal during the nesting season. In the year the bicycle/pedestrian bridge is constructed, the vegetation removal for flood control will be adjusted to compensate for loss of vegetation from both sides of the creek for bridge construction, by leaving vegetation on both sides of the creek in the 100-foot sections upstream and downstream of the bicycle/pedestrian bridge.

**Post-mitigation Significance:** Less than significant

The future expansion of the DOT maintenance yard may have a cumulative visual effect. Habitat Mitigation 3 commits TCDOT to replacing all woody riparian vegetation (trees and shrubs) removed for project construction at a 2:1 ratio along East Weaver Creek behind the County Maintenance yard. This mitigation restores an area of East Weaver Creek that has some gaps in the riparian vegetation, and provides a buffer between the road maintenance yard (both the existing and proposed expansion) and East Weaver Creek. This will provide improved visual and noise screening for residences located across East Weaver Creek from the existing and expanded maintenance yard. The residences in closest proximity to the expansion would be on Five Cent Gulch Street. They would see some additional cleared areas across SR 3, north of the new intersection with the East Connector. However, TCDOT plans to leave some of the existing trees along SR 3 and between the expanded yard and the Trinity Medical Center, to screen views from SR 3 and Five Cent Gulch. The expansion will be used primarily for storage of parts and materials, such as culvert pipes and precast concrete structural elements. Maintenance of heavy equipment will remain in the existing maintenance shop. Activities in the expansion area will therefore not involve large, visually obtrusive structures or pieces of equipment. The cumulative visual effect from the TCDOT Maintenance Yard expansion is therefore not considered significant.

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