

INTRODUCTION

2008 Regional Transportation Plan

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) specifies the policies, projects, and programs necessary over a 20+ year period to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation system. The Butte County 2008 RTP covers the 27 year period between 2008 and 2035. The RTP is required to be updated every four years. The RTP includes an Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination, as well as a Program Environmental Impact Report.

The RTP provides a comprehensive long-range view of transportation needs and opportunities for Butte County. It establishes goals and objectives for the future system.

The RTP's scope is **Regional**: The issues transcend the boundaries of local jurisdictions. Local, state, and federal governments work together to achieve an effective system.

The RTP concerns **Transportation**: The movement of people and goods for purposes such as working, shopping, school, or recreation by means of autos, trucks, buses, trains, planes, bicycling, or even walking.

The RTP is a **Plan**: Identifies problems and proposes solutions. It is long-term, looking more than 20 years into the future. It must balance priorities with expected funding. The RTP is a financially constrained document.

2008 RTP Preparation

The RTP is prepared by the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG). BCAG is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the state designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Butte County. BCAG has a 10 member Board of Directors, including each of the five Butte County Supervisors and one council person from each of the five incorporated cities/town; the cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and the Town of Paradise.

BCAG held various RTP public workshops beginning in 2007 and spanning through 2008 in the cities of Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and the Town of Paradise. Development of the 2008 RTP was made in consultation with its member jurisdictions, BCAG's advisory committees, local Tribal Governments, interested state and federal agencies, and the public.

RTP Purpose

The RTP provides a foundation for transportation decisions by local, regional, and state officials. This foundation is based on a vision of an efficient and environmentally sound multi-modal system. The RTP also serves as the foundation for the development of the:

- Federal Transportation Improvement Program
- Regional Transportation Improvement Program
- Interregional Transportation Improvement Program for Butte County

Document Structure

The RTP is divided into three sections with thirteen specific chapters. The three required sections include:

- Policy Element – Outlining the goals, policies, and objectives of the RTP
- Action Element – Identifying each mode of transportation with recommended improvements by short range and long range plans
- Financial Element – Identifying the funding strategy to implement the Action Element, including a set of recommended projects

Planning Process & Consultation

The RTP is the result of a broad planning process. This process involves many government agencies, as well as private interests and the public. Early consultation workshops were held prior to development of the RTP document. BCAG first updated its Public Participation Plan prior to development the RTP. An early consultation outreach effort was made to Caltrans' suggested list of interested agencies, including various state and federal resource agencies, local Tribal Governments, interest groups, and BCAG's advisory committees. All public workshops were noticed in the local newspapers and held at various times during the day in order to give interested people various opportunities to be involved. In addition, the RTP was developed in consultation with its advisory committees, and presentations were made at the Board of Directors meetings which are open to the public. Appendix 3 documents the efforts made to engage the above listed groups.

All components of the Plan were distributed to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC includes representatives from each of the cities, the county, and the state, as well as representatives from the public, the air district, and the Native American communities. Various government-to-government participation attempts to the local Rancherias were initiated by BCAG. Documentation of BCAG's public involvement outreach is included as an appendix. BCAG also sent correspondence to the surrounding counties, including Tehama County, Glenn County, and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG).

An Interagency Consultation Review (ICR) Group is comprised of BCAG, the Butte County Air Quality Management District, Caltrans, FHWA, FTA, EPA, and the California Air Resources Board. The ICR met formally on one occasion to discuss and agree to the emissions analysis and conformity determination requirements applicable to the RTP. However, all pertinent material concerning air quality was reviewed with the ICR group.

Butte County is home to four local Native American Rancherias. These include Berry Creek Rancheria, Chico Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria, and Mooretown Rancheria. Each Rancheria is contacted concerning the development of the RTP. In addition, each Rancheria receives an agenda to the BCAG TAC meetings, which include any RTP development material. BCAG has also extended several invitations to provide government-to-government at site workshops concerning the RTP, as well as any other transportation related workshops. Currently, two Rancheria representatives regularly attend the BCAG Transportation Advisory Committee.

BCAG will continue to attempt to engage the resource agencies in BCAG's metropolitan planning process. BCAG has maintained a positive working relationship with all interested agencies and individuals. BCAG maintains an "email interest" distribution list for any individual, agency or private company wishing to be involved on its various planning, programming and project development activities.

Regulatory Requirements

BCAG, as the RTPA, is required by State law to prepare the RTP and transmit it to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) every four years. The RTP is required to be developed as per State legislation, Government Code Section 65080 et seq. of Chapter 2.5, and Federal legislation, U.S. Code, Title 23, Sections 134 and 135, et seq.

The RTP is required to contain a Policy, Action, and Financial Element, and to reference environmental and air quality documents. The RTP is to be adopted by the BCAG Board of Directors, and then submitted to Caltrans and the CTC. Federal regulations issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) also require the development and adoption of an RTP.

Air Quality Requirements

Transportation conformity is required under Clean Air Act section 176(c) (42 U.S.C. 7506 (c)) to ensure that federally supported highway and transit project activities are consistent with ("conform to") the purpose of the State Implementation Plan (SIP). This ensures that transportation activities will not cause new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). Conformity currently applies under EPA's rules to areas that are designated non-attainment, and those redesignated to attainment after 1990 ("maintenance areas").

The purpose of this Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination is to ensure that BCAG's plans and programs "conform" to all applicable federal air quality requirements. The last conformity determination was adopted by the BCAG Board of Directors on July 24, 2008 as part of the adoption of the 2009 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP).

This transportation air quality conformity determination shows that transportation projects programmed in the 2009 Butte County Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) and 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) are consistent with the applicable SIP.

Butte County's Air Quality Status - Ozone

Butte County is currently designated "basic subpart 1 non-attainment" for ozone under EPA's 8-hour ozone rule. Because of this designation, transportation projects occurring within Butte County are subject to an air quality conformity determination for the ozone precursors Reactive Organic Gases (ROG) and Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx).

In order to make a conformity determination under the federal 8-hour standard, future emissions of ROG and NOx must be no greater than 2002 emissions levels, or the build/no-build test must be passed.

Butte County's Air Quality Status – Carbon Monoxide

As a result of a 1998 SIP revision approved by EPA, Butte County (Chico Urbanized area) was redesignated from non-attainment to attainment with a Maintenance SIP for carbon monoxide (CO). In 2007, the 1998 Maintenance SIP was updated by ARB and approved by EPA for the second decade of the maintenance period. Conformity applies for CO through 2018. The current emission budget is for the second Maintenance SIP. With the new maintenance status, BCAG is still required to continue showing conformity to the federal CO standard.

In order to show conformity for CO, BCAG must show that future emissions will be less than the CO emissions budget assigned to Butte County (budget test). Butte County's emissions budget of 80-tons per day is specified in the *2004 Revision to the California State Implementation Plan for Carbon Monoxide*. EPA published a direct final rulemaking approving the plan on November 20, 2005, effective January 30, 2006. Based on the designated maintenance status, Butte County needs to demonstrate that vehicular emissions forecasts will not exceed 80 tons/day and are consistent with the applicable State Implementation Plan (SIP).

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

BCAG has determined that a program-level environmental impact report (EIR) is required for the 2008 RTP pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental

Quality Act. A program EIR is described as an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) geographically, (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, (3) in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar ways. A program-level analysis EIR has been prepared in accordance with the Public Resources Code sections relevant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. The EIR informs the decision-makers, agencies, and the public of the broad environmental effects of the proposed 2008 RTP project and will be used to evaluate subsequent projects and activities under the 2008 RTP.

Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set a standard that authoritatively outlawed discrimination in the conduct of all federal activities. It reads as follows: “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Although considerable progress has been made during the 1990’s, individuals both inside and outside government are troubled by the high and adverse environmental impacts of private or governmental actions that fall disproportionately on populations protected by laws such as the civil rights act. The term “environmental justice” was created by people concerned that everyone within the United States deserves equal protection under the county’s laws. Executive Order 12898 issued in 1994, responded to this concern by organizing and explaining in detail the federal government’s commitment to promote environmental justice. Each Federal agency was directed to review its procedures and to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

FHWA and FTA guidance on Environmental Justice (EJ) requires that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) ensure that traditionally underrepresented groups are engaged in the regional transportation planning process and demonstrate how their influence and feedback impacted development of the Regional Transportation Plan. Further, the guidance also requires an evaluation of the adopted plan to ensure that there is no disparate negative impact borne by low-income or minority communities. FHWA and FTA have embraced the principles of environmental justice as a means toward improving the transportation decision-making process. There are three fundamental principles at the core of EJ:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Environmental Justice is applicable at the project level when project sponsors are proposing to build a new project in a local community and federal funds are involved. Unfortunately, neither Title VI nor Executive Order 12898 prescribes the specific methods and process for ensuring environmental justice in transportation planning.

PHYSICAL SETTING

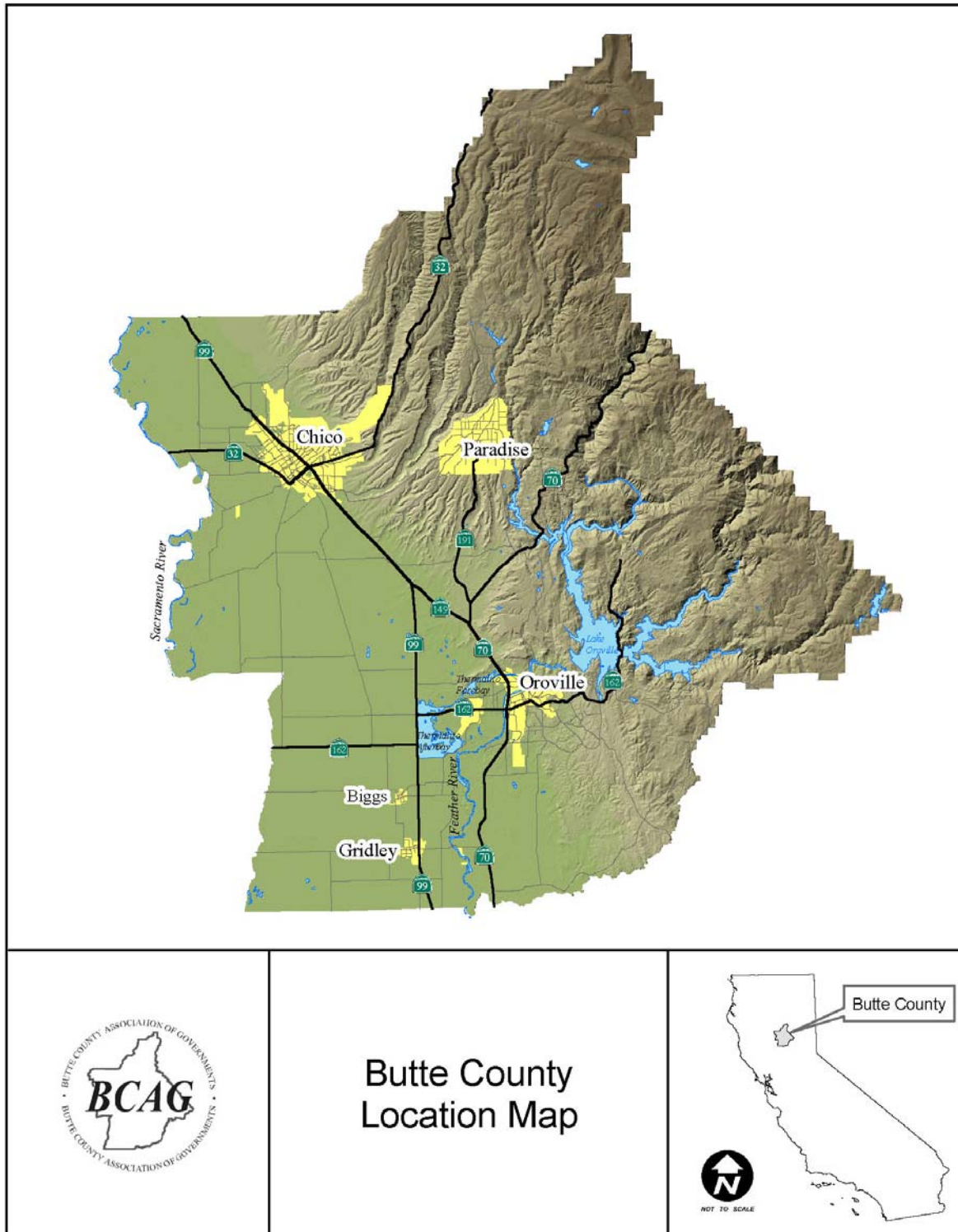
Butte County encompasses approximately 1,665 square miles in north central California (Figure 1-1). The western part of the county is located in the northern Sacramento Valley, while the eastern portion extends into the foothills of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountain Ranges. Elevations range from 50 feet above sea level at Butte Sink along the Sacramento River at the southwest portion of the county, to 7,087 feet above sea level at Humboldt Summit near the county's northeastern border.

Butte County has five incorporated cities which range from small farming communities to regional urban centers. The Cities of Biggs and Gridley are located about five miles apart in the valley area in the southwest portion of the county, while the City of Chico is located further north in the western valley area. The City of Oroville, the County seat, is located along the Feather River in the southern portion of the county, and the Town of Paradise is on a ridge in the foothills near the center of the county (Figure 1-2).

Numerous unincorporated communities also dot Butte County. Feather Falls, Berry Creek, and Brush Creek are in the foothills in the southeastern portion of the county, while Paradise Pines, Magalia, Stirling City, Forest Ranch, Cohasset, and Butte Meadows are in the foothills in the northeastern area. The western portion of the valley includes the communities of Dayton, Durham, Nelson, and Richvale, with Palermo, Honcut, Cherokee and Forbestown further to the east (Figure 1-2).

Butte County is home to four local Native American Rancherias. These include Berry Creek Rancheria, Chico Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria, and Mooretown Rancheria. The location of these Rancherias is also included as part of Figure 1-2.

**Figure 1-1
Butte County Location Map**



**Butte County
Location Map**



**Figure 1-2
Butte County Rancherias
Incorporated Cities & Unincorporated Communities**

