

1. INTRODUCTION

Our region's transportation infrastructure impacts every person who lives here, every visitor who travels here, and all the goods and services that make their way to us. It connects us all. In terms of dollars, the transportation system is our community's biggest infrastructure investment.

HCAOG's Regional Transportation Plan charts a course to provide *Variety in Rural Options of Mobility* ("VROOM" for short). Mobility means the ability to access everyday destinations in a manner that is convenient, affordable, and safe. The RTP update, *VROOM 2022-2042*, is a long-range planning document covering a 20-year planning horizon.

VROOM 2022-2042 begins to address transportation's interconnected challenges of climate change, land use, safety, and equity in a way that is both tailored to Humboldt County and consistent with the bold targets set at the state and federal levels. The transportation vision in *VROOM 2022-2042* was crafted in partnership with the community and includes plans to reduce vehicle pollution, to promote the development of housing and jobs in walkable neighborhoods near transit, and to build out a complete network of bike and pedestrian paths to safely engage in a healthy lifestyle.

CLIMATE CHANGE



VROOM brings to the fore strategies for meaningfully reducing the transportation sectors' levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Achieving a substantial mode shift to more walking, biking and transit trips is a pillar for climate action in Humboldt County. HCAOG also supports the shift to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). *VROOM* contains policies to support ZEV fueling infrastructure and to encourage the shift to zero-emission transit vehicles, school buses, and municipal fleets.

HOUSING & VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS



Strategies to reduce vehicle miles travelled (VMT) are a key component of a sustainable transportation system. One of the most powerful ways to shift how people move around is to focus on where they live in relation to everyday destinations. In concert with the complete streets policies that encourage walking, biking, and transit, HCAOG supports effective land use policies to create places with a mix of uses and pleasant, vibrant streetscapes.

SAFETY & HEALTH



Every day, 10 people die on California's transportation system. At least two of those fatalities involve our most vulnerable roadway users—pedestrians or bicyclists (Caltrans 2020). In Humboldt, there have been 71 deaths reported from car collisions in just the last four years. HCAOG therefore adopts "Vision Zero," an initiative to reduce roadway fatalities to zero, with a focus on the crisis of pedestrians and bicyclists hit by cars. We also know that active transportation leads to better health outcomes for people, including less stress, less risk for chronic disease, and less obesity.

EQUITY



Transportation equity means all people benefit equally from transportation investments and that no group is disproportionately impacted negatively by the transportation system. HCAOG is committed to pursuing the actions, training, funding, and partnerships needed to ensure that equity efforts are not peripheral but embedded in our work and decisions.

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

RTP Overall Goal: HCAOG's goal is for Humboldt County to have a carbon-neutral, multi-modal transportation system that is comprehensive, safe, sustainable, and equitable so that people in the region can travel and move goods by the modes that best suit the individual or business/industry, and society at large.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ Active Transportation Mode Share/Complete Streets – Increase multi-modal mobility, balanced mode shares, and/or access.
- ❖ Economic Vitality – Support the local or regional economy by improving goods movement and transportation access, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness;
- ❖ Efficient & Viable Transportation System – Make the transportation system operate more efficiently
- ❖ Environmental Stewardship & Climate Protection – Enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- ❖ Equitable & Sustainable Use of Resources – Advocate for costs and benefits (financial, environmental, health, and social) to be shared fairly.
- ❖ Safety and Health – Increase safety for all roadway users.

HCAOG is a joint powers authority (JPA) comprising the County of Humboldt and the seven incorporated cities, each with a seat on the HCAOG Board of Directors. HCAOG's aim is to facilitate and further develop convenient transportation options, including connectivity to complete streets, trails, transit, transit-oriented development, bicycling, walking, on-demand services such as ride-sharing and bike-sharing, as well as freight transport and emergency transportation.

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION TARGETS

In late 2020, community members urged HCAOG to identify more meaningful and proactive actions to address climate change. The HCAOG Board responded by forming an ad-hoc Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Greenhouse Gas Targets Committee to draft emissions-reduction targets to incorporate into *VROOM*. The committee, along with public stakeholders who participated actively, drafted targets and performance measures. The Board approved the committee's recommendations, which are now *VROOM*'s Safe and Sustainable Transportation (SST) Targets. (The full table of targets is in Chapter 2, *Renewing Our Communities*.) HCAOG will apply the SST Targets to measure the progress that *VROOM*'s projects and programs make towards regional goals to:

- reduce regional VMT,
- increase transit ridership,
- transition to zero-emission fleets,
- improve accessibility through better land use,
- achieve zero pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities, and
- increase active transportation education.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

- **County Population** – The population will grow by approximately 1% and the median age of the population will continue to increase as the population grows older. Slow growth has been consistent in Humboldt County for decades. However, within the 20-year timeframe of this RTP, there may be several factors that drive population growth beyond the typical 1%. This includes Humboldt State University’s proposed designation as a polytechnic university, the potential influx of climate refugees as other areas of the state and nation become inhospitably hotter and dryer, the possibility of an influx of remote workers, and the potential development of an off-shore wind energy industry spurring development on Humboldt Bay. The impacts of these combined factors are difficult to quantify at this time and will be reevaluated with every four-year RTP update.
- **Travel Mode** – Car trips will stubbornly remain the predominant mode of transportation for the majority of residents. Bicycle travel will increase in areas with dedicated bike facilities. The number of actual bicycle, pedestrian, and transit trips will continue to be below latent demand. People will continue to request more transit services and multi-modal trails. Demand will increase persistently for mobility-on-demand and shared-use mobility options (e.g. bike share, scooter share, ride hailing).
- **Planning Requirements** – State and federal legislation, rules, or executive orders will continue to pressure municipalities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the transportation sector.
- **Energy & Fuel Sources** – The use of fossil fuels for electricity and gas will decline. Investments in local renewable power and zero-emission charging infrastructure will spur the adoption of ZEVs.
- **Goods Movement:** Trucking will remain the primary mode of shipping goods in and out of Humboldt County, and fleets will progressively transition to near-ZEVs (NZEVs) and ZEVs. Automated trucking and drones will be utilized to move goods within the timeframe of this plan. Humboldt Bay port will concentrate on bulk and break bulk products. Rail service is not planned (north/south or east/west) within the RTP’s 20-year timeframe.
- **Technology:** Internet-based apps and Big Data will become more widely used among more mode options and operations. People with mobile devices will enjoy greater transportation options and conveniences than people without mobile devices unless equity factors are included. , More bike/ped data (modeling, GIS), and transit technologies (route planning, integrated payment systems) will be employed.
- **Extreme Weather** – The region will see increased frequency and severity of weather events. Impacts from high temperatures, fire, drought, flood, sea-level rise, high winds, and 100-year rain events will strain infrastructure and increase needs for both maintenance and emergency repairs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE THE 2017 VROOM

HCAOG engaged in many projects since the last RTP update in 2017. Beyond HCAOG’s standard duties, a short list of highlights by category includes:

- **Active Transportation** – As an active member of the Bike Month Humboldt Coalition: planned Bike Month Humboldt annually, created the Bike-Friendly Business program, and co-created the Humboldt Bike Challenge; updated the Humboldt Bay Bicycle Map, Regional Bicycle Plan (2018), and Safe Routes to School Prioritization Tool (2020); created a web-based Bicycle Map; participated in the Humboldt Trails Summit; supported the Great Redwood Trail; and joined the Mayor of Eureka’s Task Force on Traffic Safety.

- **Transit** – Implemented “Transit Takes Off” which funded later service on Saturdays, free rides on Saturday evenings, and free bus passes for a limited time; completed the Eureka Line Study (2018), the Mobility-on-Demand Strategic Development Plan (2020), and the McKinleyville Transit Study (2021).
- **Regional Planning** – Supported studies on sea-level rise; collaborated with jurisdictions on Climate Action Plans; completed the sixth cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA); and partnered with Caltrans and Eureka to complete the Broadway Multimodal Corridor Plan.
- **COVID-19 pandemic response** – The impact of the pandemic contributed to a dramatic reduction in transit ridership, changed commuting patterns in ways still unquantified, and led to volatility in construction costs and uncertainty in local sales tax revenues. HCAOG assisted in distributing millions of dollars in Federal coronavirus stimulus aid to transit agencies, jurisdictions and tribes.

Table *Intro-1* lists the transportation projects in *VROOM* 2017’s Action Plans that HCAOG member jurisdictions have since completed.

Table *Intro-1*. **Regional Transportation Plan Projects Completed Since 2017**

Jurisdiction	Projects Completed
City of Eureka	Waterfront Drive: Phase 2 Connection from G Street to J Street (Complete Streets Action Plan)
City of Blue Lake	Annie and Mary Trail: Class I rail-trail with sidewalks, bridge and traffic calming; included education to promote active transportation (Commuter Trails Action Plan)
City of Fortuna	Complete Streets Action Plan projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redwood Way: Pedestrian and bike lane improvements from Fortuna Blvd to Rohnerville Road • Newburg Road: New sidewalk, bike lanes and school entry improvements along Lawndale Drive, Summer Street, 2nd Ave, and Orchard Lane
City of Rio Dell	Davis Street, Wildwood Ave: Safe Routes to School traffic calming, including curb extensions, crosswalks and sidewalks, Class II/III bike striping and signage; and lighted pedestrian crossing (Complete Streets Action Plan)
County of Humboldt	Aviation Action Plan projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garberville Airport runway resurfaced; • Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting building constructed at Redwood Coast Airport; • <i>Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP)</i> updated and adopted (4/13/21).

WHAT IS THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN?

VROOM 2022-2042 is based on the unique needs and characteristics of the region and it helps shape the region’s economy, environment, and social future. An important policy document, the RTP serves both to communicate the regional vision and transportation priorities to state and federal government, and to allow the federal and state governments to track progress toward federal and state goals. A critical component of the planning process is to engage a broad spectrum of the community, including people with transportation disadvantages. Documentation of the public outreach process, including a list of stakeholders and findings from our bi-lingual survey, can be found in Chapter 2 and Appendix A.

VROOM should not be considered in isolation for HCAOG’s long-term planning goals and efforts. Other HCAOG plans are also relevant for fostering HCAOG’s vision of a comprehensive, coordinated, sustainable, and balanced multi-modal transportation system. HCAOG’s adopted plans that are related to *VROOM* and incorporated by reference include (but are not limited to):

Recent plans:

- Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Plan (2021)
- Mobility-on-Demand Strategic Development Plan (2020)
- Humboldt County Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan (2019)
- Humboldt Regional Bike Plan (2018)
- Transit Development Plan (2018)
- Regional Transit Marketing and Unified Branding Plan (2018)

Older plans:

- Countywide Bicycle Parking Guidelines and Bike Parking Sourcebook (2015)
- imagine humboldt! (2013)
- Humboldt County Regional Trails Master Plan (2010)
- Humboldt County Regional Pedestrian Plan (2008)

PLAN PURPOSE

Under its authority as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Humboldt County, HCAOG is required to adopt and submit an updated Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and Caltrans every four years. HCAOG has updated the RTP in conformance with the CTC’s adopted RTP Guidelines, and pursuant to state legislation (Government Code §65080 et seq.), and federal legislation (U.S. Code, Title 23, §134 and §135 et seq.).

VROOM is intended to fulfill the following purpose of an RTP: “encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation and development of a regional intermodal transportation system that, when linked with appropriate land use planning, will serve the mobility needs of goods and people.” (RTP Guidelines 2017). In addition, *VROOM* serves to:

- Assess the current modes of transportation and the potential of new travel and goods movement options within the region;
- Identify and document specific actions necessary to address the region’s needs for mobility, accessibility, and goods movement for the next 20 years;
- Identify beneficial health outcomes resulting from increased active transportation;
- Identify objective criteria for measuring the performance of the transportation system;
- Identify equity priority communities and establish a prioritization tool for use by local jurisdictions when considering where transportation projects are funded; and
- Promote consistency between the California Transportation Plan, the regional transportation plan and other transportation and/or land use plans developed by cities, counties, districts, private organizations, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies.

Projects must be consistent with adopted RTPs in order to qualify for funding in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and be included in a Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) or the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP).

RELATED PLANS

The RTP is consistent with the following plans.

CALTRANS DISTRICT 1 CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND PILOT STUDY (2014)

The Final Report (December 2014) presents the results of the Caltrans District 1 Climate Change Pilot Study (D1CCPS). Through the study, Caltrans created a process for evaluating the vulnerability of state-owned transportation assets in District 1 due to various climate change factors; the report documents a tool to assess adaptation strategies for vulnerable assets. The project was part of the FHWA Climate Resilience Pilot.

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2050 (2020)

The CTP 2050 provides a statewide, long-range policy framework to meet our future mobility needs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The CTP 2050 envisions a safe, sustainable, and globally competitive transportation system, providing reliable and efficient mobility and accessibility for people, goods, and services while meeting greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and preserving community character.



The CTP 2050 unites the State's individual modal plans:

1. Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan
2. California Freight Mobility Plan
3. California State Rail Plan
4. California Aviation System Plan
5. Statewide Transit Strategic Plan
6. Toward an Active California-State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

CALIFORNIA CLIMATE ACTION PLAN FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE (CAPTI) (2021)



The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) plan details how the State recommends investing billions of discretionary transportation dollars annually to , to reach the State's ambitious climate goals while supporting public

health, safety, and equity. CAPTI builds on executive orders signed by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2019 and 2020 targeted at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in transportation, which account for more than 40 percent of all emissions. CAPTI aims to align the State's climate goals with transportation spending by: strategically directing discretionary transportation investments in support of housing production near available jobs; encouraging people to shift from cars to other modes of transportation; funding active transportation options such as walking, transit, and biking; and mitigating increases in transportation costs for Californians with limited income.

CALTRANS ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR DISTRICT 1 (2021)

The Caltrans Active Transportation Plan for District 1 (CAT Plan) is part of a comprehensive effort to identify locations with bicycle and pedestrian needs in each Caltrans district across California. Caltrans staff will use the data and analysis in the plan to address active transportation needs along and across the State highway system (SHS) in future construction or maintenance projects. The CAT Plan identifies challenges people face in walking, bicycling, and reaching transit on the SHS, which provides critical transportation routes in towns and cities across California. The CAT Plan identifies gaps and barriers on the SHS and recommends priorities where needs exist. A companion online Story Map has interactive maps that highlight the pedestrian and bicycling issues, needs, and opportunities described in the CAT Plan.



CALIFORNIA STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN (2015)



Each State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), mandated by Congress, must examine the health of wildlife and prescribe actions both to conserve wildlife before they become rarer, and to conserve vital habitat before it becomes costlier to protect. The California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) prepares the SWAP, identifying “species of greatest conservation need” and actions to protect them. The SWAP 2015 update includes companion plans for nine sectors that could have significant influences on sensitive natural ecosystems, including the transportation sector. The SWAP’s *Transportation Planning Companion Plan* suggests

“opportunities for the transportation planning sector to collaborate and incorporate natural and wildlife resource conservation in project planning:

- engaging in natural community conservation planning (NCCP);
- implementing low-impact development projects that limit impacts on large habitat areas and species;
- developing and implementing best management practices (BMPs) for water quality and roadways;
- replacing culverts and retrofitting bridges to allow fish passage and wildlife movement;
- describing transportation development stressors on wildlife and habitats (e.g., species composition changes and incidental losses [road kills]);
- prioritizing large habitat preservation and locating future construction along existing transportation corridors;
- avoiding habitat/population fragmentation and invasive species expansion;
- supporting compact infill and redevelopment in existing underutilized urban areas so communities have no need to sprawl into greenfield or agriculture lands;
- analyzing completed transportation projects that have reduced wildlife resource impacts for lessons learned (California Department of Fish and Game, 2005)” (CDFW 2016).

The VROOM’s “Environmental Stewardship” objective is consistent with the California SWAP, and HCAOG supports transportation planning and projects that follow these resource conservation objectives. The RTP’s Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) identifies species of greatest conservation need and their habitat,

as well as historic sites and cultural resources, that could potentially be vulnerable to impacts from proposed transportation projects in Humboldt County. The mitigation measures in VROOM's Program EIR include actions suggested in the *Transportation Planning Companion Plan*. Local jurisdictions will conduct subsequent project-level environmental assessments, per CEQA and/or NEPA.

CALTRANS' SMART MOBILITY 2010: A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE NEW DECADE

Smart Mobility 2010 was one of DOT's early actions/plans to focus on sustainability for transportation planning and investment: "It is about changing the way the transportation system performs so that negative environmental and social impacts are reduced, and options for people and businesses are increased." The Smart Mobility transportation strategy focuses on moving people and freight while enhancing California's economic, environmental, and human resources. The means to do this are to emphasize convenient and safe multimodal travel, speed suitability, accessibility, management of the circulation network, and efficient use of land. The Smart Mobility Framework identifies best practices and a replicable process that Caltrans and partner agencies can use to incorporate smart mobility into their work. The final report of the *Smart Mobility Framework Implementation Pilot Study* (March 2015) presents lessons learned.



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

HCAOG prepared a new Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the 2014 RTP update. For the 2017 update, HCAOG certified an addendum to the Program EIR. For the current update, VROOM 2022-2042, HCAOG assessed whether the proposed changes to the RTP would have potentially significant environmental impacts and determined that the updates did not change the nature or scope from the 2017 version, and therefore concluded that an Addendum to the EIR was again appropriate.

Note to Board: This section will be updated to reflect the environmental review process once completed. (Planned for review at the November Board meeting.)

REFERENCES

CITATIONS

Caltrans 2020 "2020 Caltrans Annual Accomplishments Report"
(<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/risk-strategic-management/documents/ct-2020-annual-report-a11y.pdf>, accessed August 23, 2021.)

CDFW 2016 (California Department of Fish & Wildlife) *Transportation Planning Companion Plan*. Prepared for CDFW by Blue Earth Consultants. (December 2016)