

# Memorandum

*Serious drought.  
Help save water*

**To:** BRAD METTAM  
Deputy District Director  
Planning and Local Assistance

**Date:** May 09, 2016

**File:** Richardson Grove

**From:**   
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**Subject:** **IMPACTS OF RICHARDSON GROVE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

District 1 Planning has reviewed the Richardson Grove Improvement project for potential impacts on truck volumes and changes in highway character. This analysis focuses on truck volume changes, and with the best available information, distribution of trucks.

## **TRUCK VOLUME CHANGES**

In the report, "*Realigning Highway 101 at Richardson Grove: The Economic Impact on Humboldt and Del Norte Counties*", prepared by Chico State University for Caltrans, Dr. David Gallo states:

"There were a limited number of responses (14) to the question regarding the effect on annual truck traffic of allowing larger trucks on Highway 101 through Richardson Grove. For those answering the question, they estimated a reduction in annual truck trips of 12.3%, reducing annual truck traffic by 758 trips. However, this effect may be offset since the reduced cost of truck transportation is likely to result in increased export sales and other local economic activity, thus increasing truck traffic. The implication is that removing the STAA truck restrictions on Highway 101 at Richardson Grove will have little or no impact on truck traffic in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties."

Dr. Gallo concludes that the efficiency of allowing longer trucks would offset any increases in truck traffic. The report's conclusions are based on a survey of businesses in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties.

The conclusion that truck traffic is not expected to increase is reinforced by research conducted by Humboldt County. A recently completed survey by the Humboldt County Workforce

Development Board<sup>1</sup> indicated that transportation cost is only one of many barriers to economic growth including: qualified workforce, available land for businesses, lack of leadership, remoteness of communities, and slow population growth. These and other barriers to economic development contribute to the market constraints for businesses and limit any potential increase in truck trips.

### **TRUCK TRIP DIVERSION**

Truck trip diversion from Interstate 5 to US 101 for through trips (trips that do not stop on the north coast) is not expected. The reasons against trucks diverting to use US 101 include the following: difference in mileage and travel time, fewer truck services, more curves and grade changes, and higher fuel costs on the north coast. All associated costs are prohibitive compared to using I-5 or other existing routes. While these trips are not expected, the low probability and low consequence of these trips render any effects from them negligible.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Measureable net increases in truck volumes as a result of the Richardson Grove Improvement project are not expected. Market conditions other than transportation barriers constrain business growth in Humboldt County. These market conditions will continue to limit potential growth despite traffic caused by the Richardson Grove Improvement project. The potential for increased truck traffic will be low and difficult to quantify with certainty. In addition, truck diversions from Interstate 5 or truck travel through the north coast for markets further north or south are not expected due to the increased transportation costs of using north coast corridors; however, if such trips were to occur, the low probability and low consequence of these trips render their effect negligible.

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<sup>1</sup> *Humboldt Business Confidence Report* – Humboldt County Workforce Development Board December 2015

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to enhance California’s economy and livability”*