

*We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural
foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history.*



City Manager's Report
September 27, 2022, City Council Meeting
Prepared by: Rebecca Neves, City Engineer
Item #: 15.2

Subject: Receive and file an update on the US 50 Corridor Action Plan – Trip to Green Pilot project (CIP #42209), also known as “Proof of Concept” project for Weekend #2.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to deliver a proof-of-concept and potential temporary alternative to permanent improvements on US 50 to alleviate traffic congestion and improve wildfire protection and disaster preparedness by allowing an extended green phase of the three traffic signals on US 50 in Placerville over three weekends during the fall of 2022.

Strategic Plan Strategy: Health & Public Safety
Strategy 1 – Wildfire Protection, Disaster Preparedness.

Background: Current Highway 50 traffic volumes are approximately 50,000 vehicles per day (or roughly 5 times the population of Placerville) and on peak/holiday weekends, it is even higher than that. Within those traffic volumes, only 7% is comprised of Placerville residents on weekends and 9% on weekdays. The majority of the traffic is generated by visitors to the community and the surrounding areas. Of the 91% to 93% of visitor traffic, more than 50% of the visitor traffic is generated from locations greater than 64 miles away such as the bay area. Agritourism, outdoor recreation and general recreational use of the areas in and around Placerville have evolved to year-round activities, and vacation travel to Lake Tahoe, once considered seasonal-only, has developed into year-round traffic impacts. Local businesses are also finding that travelers are not stopping once they arrive in Placerville because of the extensive travel delays they experience while approaching the 3 signalized intersections. Residents are found avoiding running errands or visiting local businesses for fear of congestion on local roads caused by highway users seeking to avoid delays on US 50. The need to relieve congestion for reasons like public safety and local circulation necessitated the development of the Trip to Green pilot project.

The intent of the Trip to Green pilot project is to explore reasonable and feasible solutions to alleviate traffic congestion in and around Placerville in a way that doesn't negatively affect the community as a whole. It is intended to benefit the residents of Placerville who will be allowed to enjoy their town, run errands, and patronize local businesses and restaurants. Secondary beneficiaries of this pilot project include communities outside of Placerville such as Camino, Pollock Pines, Cameron Park, and communities to the west including Sacramento and Bay Area cities. This pilot project may also support findings that there may be alternatives to a large infrastructure project, such as an elevated freeway.

On July 12, 2022, City Council authorized the bidding and award of the Trip to Green pilot project. Trip to Green takes place over the first weekends of August, September, and October. The

community has now experienced the first 2 weekends of Trip to Green and the next one is scheduled to take place this coming weekend, October 1st and 2nd.

Discussion: Trip to Green recently took place over Labor Day weekend from September 3rd through September 5th. Typically, Labor Day weekend is one commonly fraught with congestion on Highway 50 that then spills onto local roads like Broadway, Main Street, and Pacific Street. This past Labor Day weekend proved to be quite different. Traffic on US 50 and local roads alike flowed freely, emergency response times on US 50 improved. Despite the fact that the weekend saw the year's highest temperatures during a heatwave, there were seldom parking spaces found empty on Main Street or in the downtown parking structure. Broadway and Placerville Drive also benefited from lack of gridlock congestion as well. Throughout the weekend, the project team continued to make minor adjustments to increase efficiency and communication for the public.

The City received a myriad of comments on the project. The approval rating held steady around 72% based on social media feedback. Comments from residents were mostly positive and locals felt well equipped and knowledgeable to get around town to access goods and services.

To better capture data that encompasses vehicle delay reduction, past experiences, local traffic and circulation, safety, and overall experience, the City is analyzing traffic information from Caltrans and preparing a survey that will be released to the community and merchants in Placerville.

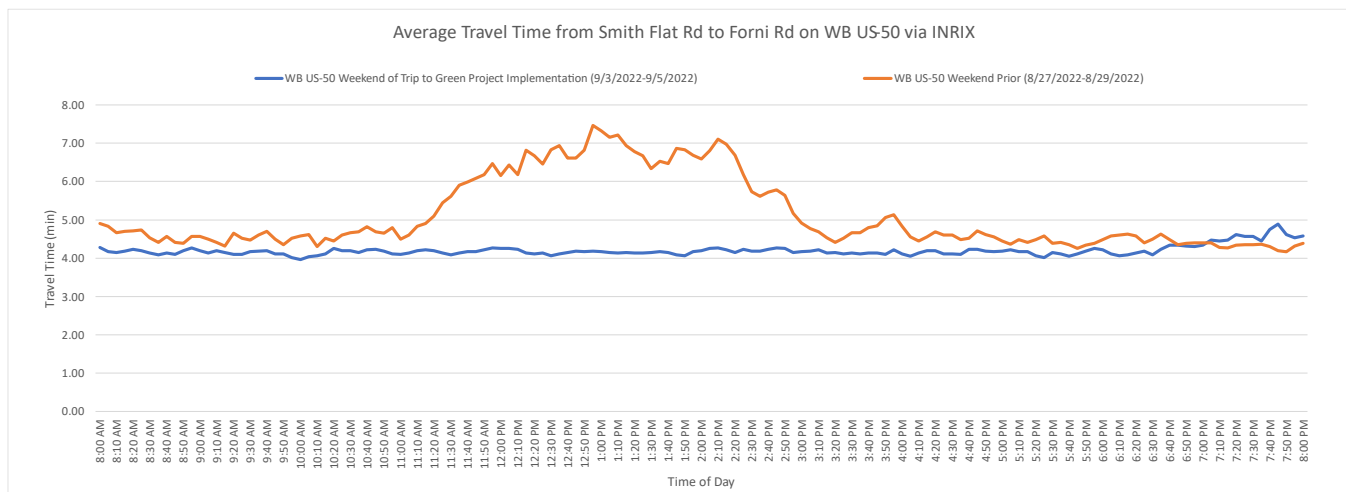
Some initial key observations from this recent Labor Day weekend are:

- Westbound direction seems to have benefited more than the Eastbound direction. Most of time the savings were between 11:00AM and 3:30 PM.
- Westbound direction saved an average of 55 seconds
- Westbound average speed was 56 mph
- Eastbound direction saved an average of 8 seconds
- Eastbound direction average speed was 52 mph

	Time (m:ss)	Speed (mph)
WB Before	5:07	47
EB Before	2:59	49
WB During	4:12	56
EB During	2:51	52

As a reminder, the posted speed limit on US 50 is 40 miles per hour. Over the Labor Day weekend, the Placerville Police Department managed traffic enforcement and issued 17 citations for speeding. Traffic on Tuesday after the Trip to Green weekend was found to be traveling at or close to the posted speed as well. Enforcement continues to be the most effective way to manage speed and maintain safety on a highway.

On the following page is a graph to compare the average travel time in the westbound direction on US 50 from Smith Flat Road to Forni Road on the 2nd Trip to Green Weekend over Labor Day (blue) compared to the previous non-holiday weekend from 8/27/22 to 8/29/22 (shown in orange). As you can see on the graph, at the peak of traffic on a non-holiday weekend (that carried a lower traffic volume), around 1:00 pm, traveling on US 50 took approximately 7:30. On the 2nd weekend of Trip to Green, travel time was reduced to just over 4:00.



The project team is now looking ahead to our 3rd and final Trip to Green weekend. Below is the approximate schedule for set up and take down of the traffic control systems. Set up and take down of the 220 cones, 20 type III barricades, 8 roll up signs, 6 flaggers take approximately 45 to 50 minutes. The lights are flipped green at 8 am sharp. This means that set up starts around 7:15 am each day. The traffic signals on US 50 are flipped back to normal function around 7:00 pm at the latest to allow for time to reopen side streets and close down detours.

Project Delivery and Schedule

- October 1, 2022 (Saturday): Traffic management setup starting around 6:00 am, signals tripped to green by 8 am sharp on Saturday morning. Removal of traffic management around 6:00 pm, with signals returning to normal function by 8 pm Saturday evening.
- October 2, 2022 (Sunday): Traffic management setup starting around 6:00 am, signals tripped to green by 8 am sharp on Sunday morning. Removal of traffic management around 6:00 pm, with signals returning to normal function by 8 pm Sunday evening.

A summary of the traffic management plan is provided below:

- Canal Street: No Access, full closure on the north and south side with barriers.
- Spring Street: Right-in from US 50 eastbound (EB), Right-out onto US 50 EB, Right-in/right-out from westbound (WB) 50, emergency cross traffic only.
- Center Street: Right-in from US 50 EB, Right-out onto US 50 EB (no change from current allowable use).
- Bedford Avenue: Right-in from US 50 EB, Right-out onto US 50 EB, Right-in from US 50 WB – this is the main medic access for Marshall Hospital, emergency cross traffic only. Emergency access includes a left-out to westbound 50 to accommodate medic units leaving the hospital responding westbound. The right-in from westbound 50 would not be needed as units coming WB from the eastern portions of the County would use the Mosquito off-ramp to Turner St.
- Emergency access occurs at all open locations. The CHP and the Police Department will be available to assist with Emergency Vehicle Traffic Control as needed. Direct Emergency Access to north county via Spring Street/Highway 49 to and from WB US 50, Across US 50 to and from Spring Street.

- Eastbound Access to Main Street will be via Spring Street, Center Street, and Bedford Avenue.
- Westbound Access to Main Street will be via Mosquito Road and Placerville Drive.

Options: This is a receive and file item.

Environmental: The project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(c) – Class 1 *Existing Facilities*, consisting of the operation, maintenance, etc., of existing public facilities with no expansion of the use; including existing highways and streets.

Cost: The traffic management contract to implement the Trip to Green project was awarded in accordance with Public Contract Code 22034(c) to Doug Veerkamp General Engineering, Inc. on July 26, 2022, in a not to exceed amount of 170,125.

Budget Impact: There is no budget action with this item.

Recommendation: Receive and file an update on the US 50 Corridor Action Plan – Trip to Green Pilot project (CIP #42209), also known as “Proof of Concept” project for Weekend #2.



M. Cleve Morris, City Manager



Rebecca Neves, City Engineer