



Here's What's Next

A detailed environmental impact analysis will be conducted for each alternative and design option that is not eliminated from further consideration. The results of resource surveys, and on-going public, agency, and tribal consultation will be used as input for our detailed impact and alternatives analysis. The results of this analysis will be documented in the Environmental Assessment of the project. The Environmental Assessment will be made available for public review including a public hearing.

Please contact us with any questions or comments. We value your input! Contact Teresa Engles, Environmental Protection Specialist at the address below or at the following:

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Buchanan and Fish Hatchery Roads Project Update

California Forest Highways 191 and 190.
Tuolumne County
Stanislaus National Forest

June 2007

We're sending this newsletter to provide an update on the planning efforts that we (Federal Highway Administration, Stanislaus National Forest, and Tuolumne County) have conducted for the Buchanan Road and Fish Hatchery Road Project. We also hope to gather your comments regarding some of the decisions that are being considered regarding alternatives that are under study for this project. Although we had anticipated holding a public meeting this spring, we felt that this newsletter and request for comments would provide a more efficient forum for updating you on the project status and for requesting your input.

We anticipate completing an Environmental Assessment for public review toward the end of next year (2008). The Environmental Assessment will provide an analysis of impacts associated with alternatives that are carried forward for more detailed design and analysis. Your comments to the information provided in this newsletter will be an important component in deciding which alternatives are carried forward for this detailed analysis. A public hearing will be held soon after the distribution of the Environmental Assessment to allow for additional public comments.

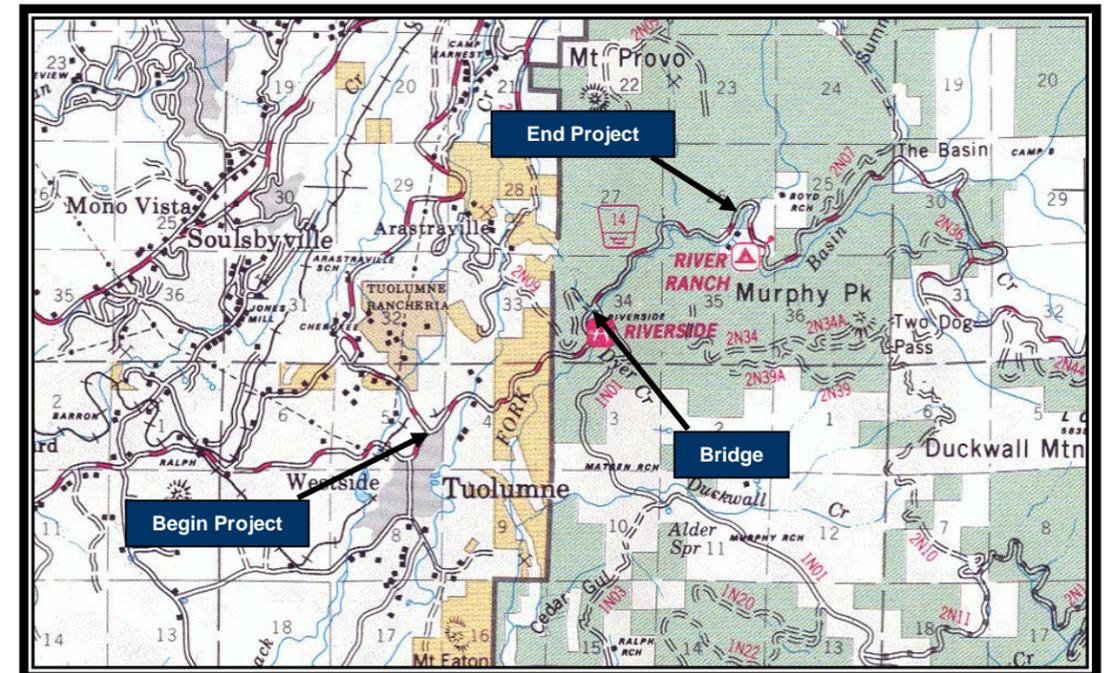


Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map

Status of Preliminary Alternatives

No Build Alternative

We would like to emphasize that a No Build alternative is being considered for this project. As with all Build alternatives, the impacts of the No Build alternative will be evaluated in detail.

New Design Options for the Bridge over the North Fork Tuolumne River

In association with the alternative to reconstruct a new bridge over the North Fork Tuolumne Bridge, two new design options are being considered. These options are to 1) leave the existing bridge in place and allow for pedestrian use only, or 2) remove the existing bridge. For liability and maintenance reasons, it is desirable to remove the bridge. On the other hand, because of the bridge's cultural and historic value, it is desirable to keep it in place.

Preliminary Alternatives that have been Eliminated

The alternative to reconstruct Buchanan Road at a design speed of 30 miles per hour (as opposed to 25 mph) in the residential portion and canyon portion of Buchanan Road has been eliminated. It was clear from public comments that a higher speed limit through town and widening of the road to accommodate that speed were not desirable. Additionally, this alternative would have required large amounts of excavation with embankment and walls through the canyon portion of Buchanan Road which would be costly and would cause excessive environmental impacts.

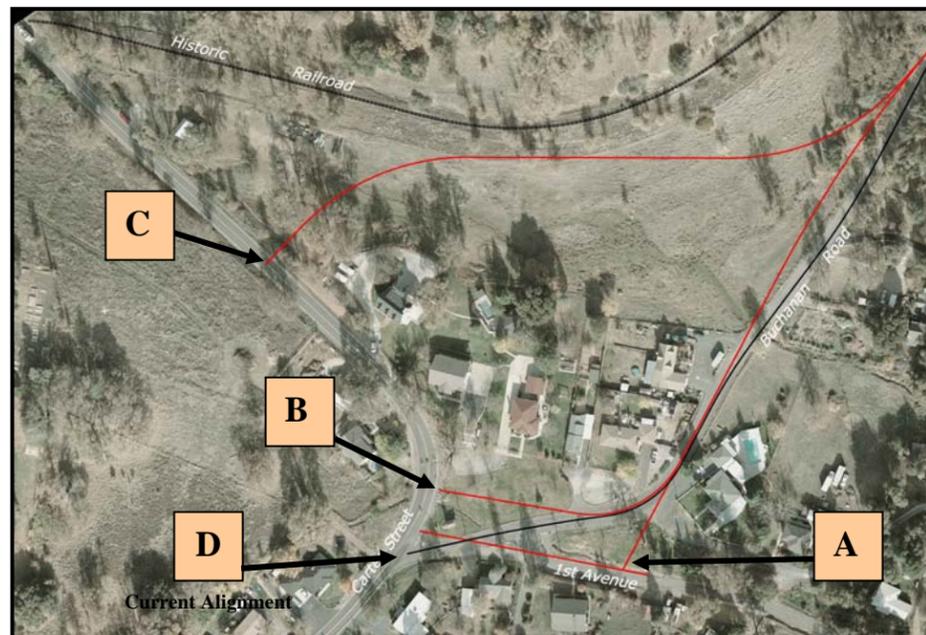


Figure 2. Preliminary alignment alternatives in the residential portion of the project area.. Alignment alternative "A" has been eliminated from further analysis. The current alignment "D" will be carried forward for detailed analysis. Alignment alternatives "B" and "C" may be eliminated from further analysis.

The alignment alternative "A" as shown in Figure 2, has been eliminated from detailed impact analysis because it was designed to accommodate a 30 mph design speed. This alignment alternative proposed realigning Buchanan Road to intersect with 1st Avenue, where traffic could then continue along 1st Avenue to intersect with Carter Street. The other reason for eliminating this alignment alternative from detailed impact analysis is that it requires placement of a stop sign at the intersection with 1st Avenue – only 250 feet from

the intersection of Carter Street. This could cause traffic to backup on Carter Street and would require southbound traffic to stop twice within a 250-foot distance.

Preliminary Alignment Alternatives that May be Eliminated

Two of the preliminary alignment alternatives are currently being considered for elimination. These alternatives are shown as alignments "B" and "C" in Figure 2. Below is the reasoning for their possible elimination. Please note that no decision is final at this time, and your comments are still an important component of the decision-making process. Please let us know your thoughts.

Realign Buchanan Road through the park to its intersection with Carter Street – "B".

This alignment alternative may be eliminated from detailed impact analysis because the park is a historic site of local significance, and because several public comments indicated that this is not a desirable alternative. Additionally, an underground electric system would need to be relocated and would increase construction costs considerably.

Realign Buchanan Road along the railroad grade to intersect with Carter Street – "C".

This alignment alternative may be eliminated from detailed impact analysis for the following reasons:

- The existing portion of Buchanan Road that provides access to residences would remain in place. By adding a new alignment, maintenance requirements would not be made more efficient – a key component of the purpose and need for the project.
- The new alignment would likely exceed Tuolumne County's financial ability to purchase new right-of-way. (All new right-of-way purchases are the sole responsibility of the County.)
- The new alignment would require additional coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and increased mitigation costs due to wetland impacts.

Public opinion on this alternative has been split with roughly half of the public comments expressing that they would favor this alignment over the existing alignment, and the other half opposed.

Your Comments Count

Your comments regarding these considerations for eliminating the above alternatives are encouraged. We will weigh all factors, including public comments, engineering, results of resource surveys, and agency and partner comments, to determine which alternatives and design options are carried forward for detailed analysis. Currently, the following alternatives are being considered for detailed impact analysis in the Environmental Assessment:

No Build Alternative

Build Alternatives

- **Use the existing alignment through town** (Alignment D on Figure 2)
 - Design option 1 – Rehabilitate (repave) the existing alignment through town
 - Design option 2 – Reconstruct the existing alignment through town
- **Reconstruct the canyon portion of Buchanan Road** (from the intersection of Sunset Street to the North Fork Tuolumne River Bridge) at a design speed of 25 miles per hour.
- **Rehabilitate (Repave) Fish Hatchery Road** from the North Fork Tuolumne River bridge to the point at which county maintenance ends (approximately 1.9 miles)
- **Construct a new bridge over the North Fork Tuolumne River** to the south of the existing bridge
 - Design option 1 – keep the existing bridge in-place for pedestrian use only
 - Design option 2 – remove the existing bridge