

8.0 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

This chapter describes existing transportation facilities in the project area and the vicinity. It describes the existing roadway network and transportation facilities, as well as current circulation elements (bikeways, bridges, and parking conditions), and discusses the transportation impacts of the proposed project. There are no transit, light rail, or airport facilities in the project vicinity; therefore, these types of facilities will not be discussed further in this chapter.

8.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

8.1.1 ROADWAYS

Interstate 80 (I-80) is the primary transportation facility in the project vicinity. It runs east-west, and is located northwest of the proposed trail alignment. Other roadways in the project area include Foresthill Road, Old Foresthill Road, Lake Clementine Road, Upper Lake Clementine Road, and Ponderosa Way (Exhibit 3-2). Old Foresthill Road at the North Fork/Middle Fork American River confluence (confluence), Lake Clementine Road, and Upper Lake Clementine Road would serve as access points to the proposed trail.

Foresthill Road lies generally to the south of the proposed trail alignment. It begins near I-80 just outside of Auburn, crosses the North Fork American River via the Foresthill Bridge, and continues eastward along the top of the Foresthill Divide to the town of Foresthill. Foresthill Road is a two-lane rural roadway. This roadway provides the principal link between Auburn and Foresthill and serves as the main route along the divide; it then continues easterly to Soda Springs. A traffic analysis conducted in 2003 for the *Foresthill Community Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report* found that Foresthill Road carries 6,650 average daily trips (ADT) east of the two-lane Foresthill Bridge. These data indicate that Foresthill Road is operating at level of service (LOS) C (kdANDERSON Transportation Engineers 2003). LOS definitions are provided in Section 8.2.1, “Level of Service,” below.

Foresthill Road is used for tourist travel between the Auburn area, the Tahoe National Forest, and the Auburn State Recreation Area (SRA). Approximately 900,000 tourists visit the Foresthill area of the Tahoe National Forest annually. Based on information provided by U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff for recent traffic analysis, and accounting for such factors as carpooling and weekend vs. weekday traffic, tourist traffic accounts for an estimated 570+ weekday trips on Foresthill Road between Auburn and Foresthill (kdANDERSON Transportation Engineers 2003).

Ponderosa Way is a USFS road that extends southeasterly from the town of Weimar into the North Fork of the American River canyon, where it crosses the river at the Ponderosa Bridge. Ponderosa Way just north of Foresthill Road carries 1,495 ADT. This roadway is operating at LOS B (kdANDERSON Transportation Engineers 2003).

8.1.2 BIKEWAYS

Three existing multiple-use trails within the Auburn SRA would link to the proposed trail: the Clementine Loop Trail, the Lake Clementine Access Trail, and the Long Point Fuel Break Trail. The Clementine Loop Trail is approximately 11 miles long and connects five shorter trails, including the Lake Clementine Trail. The Lake Clementine Access Trail begins at Lake Clementine Road just off Foresthill Road, and the Long Point Fuel Break Trail begins at Foresthill Road. Both trails end at the North Fork American River.

8.1.3 BRIDGES

There are two bridges in the project area: the Foresthill Bridge and the Ponderosa Bridge. The Foresthill Bridge, which is the tallest bridge in California, was initially built in 1875 and has been rebuilt several times since its first construction. The latest reconstruction of the bridge was completed in 1973. The Foresthill Bridge lies near the west end of the proposed trail alignment. The Ponderosa Bridge is a one-lane truss-type bridge located at the east end of the proposed trail. This bridge serves as the crossing point for Ponderosa Way over the North Fork American River.

8.1.4 PARKING

There is existing parking for hikers and mountain bikers along Old Foresthill Road and at the Ponderosa Bridge. There is additional parking on Lake Clementine Road, near the intersection of Foresthill Road. No equestrian parking areas currently exist in the project area.

8.2 REGULATORY SETTING

8.2.1 LEVEL OF SERVICE

LOS describes the operating conditions of a roadway based on such factors as speed, travel time, maneuverability, delay, and safety. The LOS for a given facility is designated with a letter, between A and F, with A representing the best operating conditions and F representing the worst. These letter designations are described in more detail in Table 8-1.

8.2.2 FEDERAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to transportation and circulation are applicable to the proposed project.

LOS	Description
A	Free Flow: Almost no platoons of three or more cars. Driver delayed no more than 30% by slow-moving vehicles.
B	Free Flow: Some platoons form. Driver delayed no more than 45% by slow-moving vehicles.
C	Stable Flow: Noticeable increase in platoon formation and size. Drivers delayed no more than 60% by slow-moving vehicles.
D	Approaching Unstable Flow: Heavy platooning. Passing becomes more difficult. Drivers delayed no more than 75% by slow-moving vehicles.
E	Unstable Flow: Intense platooning. Passing is virtually impossible. Drivers delayed more than 75% by slow-moving vehicles.
F	Forced Flow: Queues form behind breakdown points.

Source: Transportation Research Board 2000

8.2.3 STATE PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining all state-owned roadways in Placer County.

8.2.4 LOCAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND ORDINANCES

PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

The following are the relevant policies identified by the *Placer County General Plan* (Placer County 1994) for transportation and circulation.

- ▶ **Policy 3.A.7.** [Placer] County shall develop and manage its roadway system to maintain the following minimum levels of service (LOS).
 - LOS “C” on rural roadways, except within one-half mile of state highways where the standard shall be LOS “D.”
 - LOS “C” on urban/suburban roadways except within one-half mile of state highways where the standard shall be LOS “D.”
- ▶ **Policy 3.A.10.** The County shall strive to meet the level of service standards through a balanced transportation system that provides alternatives to the automobile.
- ▶ **Policy 3.D.1.** The County shall promote the development of a comprehensive and safe system of recreational and commuter bicycle routes that provides connections between the County’s major employment and housing areas and between its existing and planned bikeways.
- ▶ **Policy 3.D.2.** The County shall work with neighboring jurisdictions to coordinate planning and development of the County’s bikeways and multi-purpose trails with those of neighboring jurisdictions.
- ▶ **Policy 3.D.3.** The County shall pursue all available sources of funding for the development and improvement of trails for non-motorized transportation (bikeways, pedestrian, and equestrian).
- ▶ **Policy 3.D.4.** The County shall promote non-motorized travel (bikeways, pedestrian, and equestrian) through appropriate facilities, programs, and information.
- ▶ **Policy 3.D.6.** The County shall support the development of parking areas near access to hiking and equestrian trails.

WEIMAR-APPLEGATE-CLIPPER GAP GENERAL PLAN

The *Weimar-Applegate-Clipper Gap General Plan* contains the following policy relevant to transportation and circulation in the project area.

- ▶ Existing roads should be maintained at a level that ensures that the network is safe, economical, and efficient.

FORESTHILL DIVIDE COMMUNITY PLAN

The *Foresthill Divide Community Plan* (Community Plan), which is currently in draft form, includes the project area. The Community Plan contains the following goals and policies relevant to transportation and circulation in the project area.

- ▶ **GOAL 5.1:** Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods on the primary roadway serving the Foresthill Divide, i.e., Foresthill Road.
- ▶ **Policy 5.1-1.** Establish and maintain a Level of Service (LOS) of “C” or better on Foresthill Road between Auburn and the Idle Wheels Mobile Home Park and “D” or better between the Idle Wheels Mobile Home Park and east of the Foresthill Elementary School.
- ▶ **GOAL 5.2:** Provide for safe emergency access and alternative routes onto the Foresthill Divide and to provide river and canyon access for recreational purposes.
- ▶ **GOAL 5.7:** Provide emergency and public access to public lands.

8.3 IMPACTS

8.3.1 ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Impacts on transportation and circulation that would result from the proposed project were identified by comparing existing service capacity and facilities against anticipated future demand associated with implementation of the proposed project.

8.3.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on the Placer County California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Checklist and the State CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project would result in a potentially significant impact on traffic or circulation if it would result in:

- ▶ increased vehicle trips or traffic congestion, hazards to safety from design features (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections), or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment);
- ▶ inadequate emergency access or access to nearby uses;
- ▶ insufficient parking capacity on-site or off-site;
- ▶ hazards or barriers for pedestrians or bicyclists;
- ▶ conflicts with adopted policies supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks); or
- ▶ rail, waterborne, or air traffic impacts.

As mentioned above, there are no transit, light rail, or airport facilities in the project vicinity; therefore, the proposed trail would not have an impact on any of these facilities. The proposed trail would not conflict with any policies supporting alternative transportation. Because the proposed project would have no impact on these thresholds, they are not discussed further in this chapter.

8.3.3 IMPACT ANALYSIS

IMPACT 8-1 **Transportation and Circulation – Temporary Increase in Traffic during Construction.** *During construction of the proposed trail, local roadways would experience an increase in traffic from daily commutes by construction workers. However, this increase in traffic would be temporary and is not expected to be substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity.*

Significance *Less Than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less Than Significant*

During trail construction, there would be a temporary increase in construction-related traffic from equipment and construction workers traveling to and from the project area. Based on the assumption that a 12-person crew (see Chapter 3.0, “Project Description”) would be required for trail construction, it is expected that the maximum number of vehicle trips generated in any one day would be 12 round trips (10 construction worker commute trips and two material delivery trips). Carpooling among construction workers would be encouraged by the County, further reducing this number. The increase in traffic would be spread out over approximately 3 years. Because Foresthill Road is currently operating at LOS C with approximately 6,650 ADT, this increase in traffic would constitute a very small increase in traffic and would not be substantial in relation to existing traffic load and capacity of Foresthill Road. In addition, this increase in traffic would be only temporary. Therefore, this impact is considered less than significant.

IMPACT 8-2 **Transportation and Circulation – Increase in Traffic with Use of the North Fork Trail.** *The proposed trail would not be sufficiently different from other multiple-use trails in the Auburn SRA to create its own demand. However, the proposed trail may redirect trail users from other trails in the area to the immediate project area. Visitors traveling to the Auburn SRA would use the surrounding roadways regardless of which recreational facility they will be using.*

Significance *Less Than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less Than Significant*

The proposed trail would be constructed to accommodate the existing demand for recreational facilities caused by population increases in the project vicinity. Other multiple-use trails exist in the project area, and the proposed trail would not be sufficiently different to create its own demand. The proposed trail may redirect trail users from other trails in the area to the immediate project area, which would result in some additional traffic in the immediate project area. The roadways in the immediate vicinity of the proposed trail alignment are currently operating at a LOS C or better, and visitors traveling to the Auburn SRA would use these roadways regardless of which recreational facility they will be using. Because the proposed trail would not create its own demand and would not significantly increase traffic in the project area, this impact is considered less than significant.

IMPACT 8-3 **Transportation and Circulation – Increase in Traffic Hazards Associated with Construction Vehicles.** *Construction vehicles entering the road could cause an increase in traffic hazards in the project area. Site plans would include measures for safety that would reduce these hazards.*

Significance *Less Than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less Than Significant*

Slow-moving construction vehicles entering the roadways could increase traffic hazards in the project area by turning into and out of the staging termini. Site plans for the staging termini would include ingress and egress specifications for safety and driver awareness. Cones would also be placed at the entrance points, and appropriate signage would be placed in construction areas to warn drivers of construction activities. Because these measures would be taken to ensure the safety of truck drivers and passing vehicles, this impact is considered less than significant.

IMPACT 8-4 **Transportation and Circulation – Increase in Traffic Hazards Associated with Use of Staging Termini.** *Trucks and trailers entering and exiting Foresthill Road and Ponderosa Way from the proposed staging termini could cause an increase in traffic hazards in the project area. The staging termini would be designed to include measures for safe ingress and egress of trucks and trailers.*

Significance *Less Than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less Than Significant*

Trucks and trailers entering Foresthill Road and Ponderosa Way from the respective staging termini could increase hazards in the project area for the same reasons as described above for Impact 8-3. However, the staging termini would be designed for safe ingress and egress of these vehicles. In addition, the proposed staging terminus would provide additional off-street parking which could reduce traffic hazards along Foresthill Road. State Route 49 and Foresthill Road are suitable for horse trailers; however, construction of the Foresthill Bridge Staging Terminus may require shortening of an existing passing lane on Foresthill Road to provide room for a left-turn lane. The Foresthill Bridge Staging Terminus would be enclosed with a 6-foot cyclone fence, and a new gate would be installed to prevent horses from running into traffic. The County would coordinate with Caltrans to ensure that all roadway standards are met and that the proposed project would not adversely affect the safety of vehicles traveling on Foresthill Road.

Ponderosa Way, at the east end of the proposed trail alignment, is a dirt road with little traffic. The staging area would be designed for safe ingress and egress of vehicles. Therefore, traffic entering and exiting the roadway would not pose a significant hazard. The California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) grades the road each spring; however, by early summer it is in poor condition (Fisher, pers. comm., 2004). The condition of Ponderosa Way could pose a hazard to horse trailers and other vehicles using the Ponderosa Way Staging Terminus; however, State Parks would increase maintenance of Ponderosa Way to ensure the safety of vehicles using the roadway.

Because the staging termini would be designed to include measures for safe ingress and egress of trucks and trailers and would provide additional off-street parking, this impact is considered less than significant.

IMPACT 8-5 **Transportation and Circulation – Adequacy of Parking for Trail Users.** *Although there would be increased demand for parking at trail access points, adequate parking would be provided to accommodate this increase in demand.*

Significance *Less Than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less Than Significant*

Adequate parking would be provided at the existing confluence parking lot for visitors who are hiking or biking, and at the proposed Foresthill Bridge Staging Terminus for horse trailers. Approximately seven parking spaces for trucks and horse trailers and approximately 21 parking spaces for cars would be created at the Foresthill Bridge Staging Terminus. Approximately 18 spaces would be created for trucks and trailers at the Ponderosa Way Staging Terminus. There is also existing parking at the Upper Lake Clementine parking lot. It is expected that peak trail use, and corresponding peak parking demand, would occur during the spring and fall when parking demands from other recreational activities (e.g., whitewater rafting) are lower (Fisher, pers. comm. 2006). Therefore, the proposed project is not expected to cause an increase in demand for parking during the peak season for other recreational activities in the area. Because existing parking and additional parking spaces created by the proposed project are expected to be adequate for trail users, this impact is considered less than significant.

IMPACT 8-6 **Transportation and Circulation – Potential Interference with Emergency Response Routes.** *The proposed trail would have several access points that would provide adequate access for emergency response vehicles and personnel.*

Significance *Less Than Significant*

Mitigation Proposed *None Warranted*

Residual Significance *Less Than Significant*

Four existing trails—the Clementine Loop Trail, Lake Clementine Access Trail, Foresthill Divide Loop, and the Long Point Fuel Break Trail—would provide emergency access points to the proposed trail. Three existing roads could provide emergency access to the proposed trail: Old Foresthill Road at the confluence, Lake Clementine Road, and Upper Lake Clementine Road (Placer County 2003a). In addition, three multiple-use trails within the Auburn SRA would link to the proposed trail: the Clementine Loop Trail, the Lake Clementine Access Trail, and the Long Point Fuel Break Trail. The trail section below the Foresthill Bridge may also be widened to 10 feet to allow emergency vehicles to have better access to the Clark’s Hole recreation area as well as the proposed trail. Because these six access points are expected to provide adequate emergency access, and widening of the westernmost portion of the trail would improve emergency access to the area, this impact is considered less than significant.

8.4 MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are necessary.