



RESOLUTION No. _____

OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF NEVADA

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE SCENIC AND HISTORIC VALUES OF STATE ROUTE 174 AND REQUESTING THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO RE-EVALUATE THE STATE HIGHWAY 174 REALIGNMENT PROJECT (FEDERAL-AID PROJECT NO. 0314000152, CALTRANS PROJECT NO. 03-4F370) BY ACTIVELY ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OTHER EFFECTIVE DESIGN COUNTERMEASURES INCLUDING THE PROJECT'S CLASS OF ACTION DETERMINATION, USE OF NEGATIVE DECLARATION, USE OF 3-YEAR TRAFFIC COLLISION DATA FOR THE PROJECT JUSTIFICATION, CONSIDER USE OF OTHER FHWA SAFETY COUNTERMEASURES, AND USE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES SUCH AS ROAD SAFETY AUDITS

WHEREAS, State Route (SR) 174, otherwise known as the Colfax Highway, is recognized as one of the most scenic and historically rich highways in the Sierra Nevada Foothills; and

WHEREAS, the Nevada County General Plan, per Policy 18.8A, designates SR 174 as a scenic corridor worthy of protection and recommends it be placed within a SC "Scenic Corridor" Combining District; and

WHEREAS, SR 174 from the Bear River to the Grass Valley city limits is listed in the State Scenic Highway System as being eligible for official designation as a State Scenic Highway; and

WHEREAS State Scenic Highway nomination evaluation criteria include that existing visual intrusions do not significantly impact the scenic corridor; and

WHEREAS, the California Department of Transportation, or Caltrans, adopted a Project Study Report (Federal-Aid Project No. 0314000152, Caltrans Project No. 03-4F370) in June 2014 which proposed and adopted to realign, widen and level State Highway 174, as part of a safety improvement project known as the "State Highway 174 Realignment Project", which largely consisted of grading, clearing and paving a larger right-of-way for this 2-lane roadway without considering any alternatives; and

WHEREAS, the design proposed by Caltrans in the 2014 Project Report, which largely has remained unchanged to October 2017, could drastically alter a rural, Scenic Highway by increasing the current average width of 22' to 28' to a 64' to 80' or greater which may impact SR 174's eligibility for designation as a State Scenic Highway; and

WHEREAS, the impacts of this highway improvement project prompted local citizens, residents and landowners to create a local organization, “Save Highway 174”, who support reasonable safety improvements, but are concerned with the excessive widening and clearing per the proposal, and have adopted goals in opposition to the current project design; and

WHEREAS, various citizens, residents, landowners and members of the Save Highway 174 organization remain concerned that the Right of Way width (estimated at 120’ – 150’) would set a precedent for its application to other sections of Highway 174 and/or State Highways within Nevada County; and

WHEREAS, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, on July 11, 2017, by unanimous vote, directed a letter to Caltrans, District Director 3, expressing concerns with the design of the project and requesting, “*Caltrans re-assess this project and its scope of work*”; and

WHEREAS, the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC), on September 20, 2017, by unanimous vote, directed a letter to Caltrans, District Director 3, requesting Caltrans to “*reassess and revise the preferred alternative for the project by actively engaging in the local community*”; and

WHEREAS, on October 24, 2017 Save Highway 174 and community members expressed concerns that the project scope is beyond the Type III class of action determination and should instead be classified as a Type I class of action requiring an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and Noise Study be conducted; and

WHEREAS, Save Highway 174 and community members expressed concerns that the data used to justify the project was inflated by a limited data set between years 2010-2013; and

WHEREAS, Save Highway 174 and community members expressed concerns that only one FHWA safety countermeasure was being used within the project; and

WHEREAS, Save Highway 174 and community members expressed a desire for increased transparency and a more inclusive process for public input, including a Road Safety Audit.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada supports the implementation of reasonable safety improvements to State Highway 174, but believes the proposed design of the Highway 174 Realignment Project (Federal-Aid Project No. 0314000152, Caltrans Project No. 03-4F370) may be more extensive than its class of action determination scope and may threaten its eligibility to be officially designated as a State Scenic Highway and requests the California Department of Transportation re-evaluate the State Highway 174 Realignment Project including the Project’s class of action determination, use of Negative Declaration, use of 3 years of data for the Project’s justification, consider use of other FHWA safety countermeasures including use of community engagement strategies such as road safety audits.