



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Major General Anthony L. Jackson, USMC (Ret), Director

Gold Fields District
7806 Folsom Auburn Road
Folsom, CA 95630

April 4, 2013

Ms. Anne Novotny, Senior Planner
El Dorado County Community Development Agency
Transportation Division
2850 Fairlane Court
Placerville, CA 95667

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Dear Ms. Novotny,

The purpose of this letter is to express the interests, concerns and recommendations of the Gold Fields District of California State Parks regarding the Mt. Murphy Road Bridge Project. The Gold Fields District manages Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park which is immediately adjacent to the Bridge on both sides of the South Fork American River. District staff met with County staff, Matt Smeltzer and Adam Bane, in July 2012 to discuss the project. State Parks staff also attended the February 7, 2013 public meeting regarding the project.

State Parks realizes the Bridge project is at the inception of planning and the current goal is to prepare a Project Study Report (PSR) over the next year that will develop and prioritize project alternatives. Following the PSR, an environmental review and documents will be conducted and prepared.

As noted by County staff, the Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park General Plan, approved in 1979, does include goals and objectives for traffic circulation which may be relevant to the Mt. Murphy Road Bridge Replacement Project. The Plan recommends the re-routing of Highway 49 outside the Park and development of a "Coloma bypass road" to facilitate removing vehicle traffic from Main Street within the Park and restore the historic appearance of the Street during the gold rush era. The Plan presented a conceptual vision for addressing traffic impacts within the park unit and recognized that State Parks did not have the jurisdiction to fully implement this vision and would need to work with the County, Caltrans and other agencies to achieve the Plan goals. State Parks acknowledges that the 1979 General Plan is quite dated at this time and that the vision for traffic circulation described in the Plan is very challenging to achieve. State Parks also recognizes that the purpose of the Bridge Project is only to repair or replace the existing bridge.

The concerns and interests behind the traffic circulation vision in the 1979 Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park General Plan are still relevant. These concerns include: the traffic impacts on the historic buildings along Main Street, particularly vibration from heavy trucks and other vehicles; the impacts of traffic on the safety of visitor pedestrian traffic in the park unit, particularly the more than 70,000 school

children that visit the park annually; and enhancing the visitor experience, visual quality and aesthetics of the historic core of the park unit.

To the extent the Mt. Murphy Road Bridge Replacement Project can help address these impacts and achieve the goals and interests in the General Plan while still meeting the project's own objectives, we would hope such options and alternatives are fully explored.

State Parks is currently engaged in finalizing the plans for the relocation and reconstruction of the Sutters Mill. The current Mill reconstruction, built in the 1960's, is in disrepair and in need of replacement. The new reconstruction will relocate the Mill to the west (downstream) much closer to the original Mill location near the gold discovery site. Despite being a reconstruction, the Mill is the most popular and iconic feature of the park unit. State Parks is concerned about any proposal to replace the Mt. Murphy Bridge which might impact or adversely affect the Sutter Mill reconstruction.

Below is a summary of our concerns and interests regarding the Bridge project. Some of these items could be useful criteria in evaluating and prioritizing alternatives studied in the PSR.

- Reducing the impacts of traffic on the historic structures and historic core of the park unit;
- Providing for and improving visitor safety, particularly pedestrians who cross both Highway 49 and the Mt. Murphy Bridge to visit park features and participate in park programs;
- Protecting the visual quality and viewshed of the historic core of the park unit, including along both sides of the River from the North Beach entrance to the Coloma Schoolhouse;
- Ensuring pedestrian/bicycle access across the South Fork American River near the location of the existing Bridge. If possible, retain the existing historic Bridge structure and utilize it for pedestrian and bicycle traffic and emergency access. State Parks is not in a position financially to accept ownership and operate and maintain the Bridge as was suggested at the recent public meeting;
- If a replacement Bridge is constructed, ensuring safe and adequate access for pedestrians and bicycles across the new Bridge;
- If a replacement Bridge is constructed in place of the existing Bridge, design and construct the structure to replicate one of the historic bridges that spanned the river at this location. It would take some research to determine the most appropriate historic bridge design to replicate or reference in a new bridge design;

Given our above interests and concerns, State Parks recommends that the following alternatives are explored and evaluated in the PSR:

- Repair and reconstruct (to the extent necessary) the existing bridge structure to meet required standards for vehicle traffic. Construct a separate replica of one of the earlier (and smaller) historic bridges that spanned the River in this location for pedestrian and bicycle traffic only. A faithful replica of an historic bridge would be less of a visual intrusion whether it was immediately upstream or downstream of the existing Bridge.

- Retain the existing bridge as a pedestrian/bicycle bridge and construct a new bridge for vehicle traffic outside the historic core of the Park. Two suggested locations which would keep the new bridge out of the historic core of the park unit are downstream of the North Beach area or upstream of the existing bridge in approximate alignment with Sacramento Street.
- Retain the existing bridge as a pedestrian/bicycle bridge and evaluate the potential to connect Marshall Grade to Carver Roads to provide a traffic connection from the south side of the River and Highway 49 to Mt. Murphy Road and Bane Road. This option would utilize the existing (and soon to be improved) Highway 49 Bridge across the River and would not require any new bridge.

There may be other alternatives that meet the needs of the project and address State Parks concerns, but these are some initial options that we would like to see explored in the PSR.

We look forward to participating in the Stakeholder Advisory Committee that will help guide the development of the PSR. If you have any questions about this letter please contact Marshall Gold Sector Superintendent Jeremy McReynolds at (530) 622-3027 or Senior Park and Recreation Specialist Jim Micheaels at (916) 988-0513. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Green', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

Matt Green
District Superintendent

CC Ron Briggs, El Dorado County Supervisor, District 4
Dan Bolster, El Dorado County Transportation Commission