

Introduction



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Purpose/Introduction

A goal of the Western Nevada Transportation Study is to inventory existing transportation and socio-economic trends, and to forecast these trends over 20 years. It is the intent of the Western Nevada Transportation Study to address future transportation and demographic trends for the study area, which encompasses Storey, Lyon, Churchill, Carson City, and Douglas counties. Washoe County will be reviewed for the purpose of showing the social-economic and transportation impacts of the county.



The Western Nevada Region is in a state of change in terms of population, congestion and economics. The once vast rural area is being transformed into an area akin to suburbia. Communities are becoming increasingly dependent on one another, with urban areas encroaching upon rural areas at a tremendous rate. Based on the counties' inter-dependence it is apparent that a regional approach must be taken when planning for future transportation needs in the six-county western Nevada region. Randall Arendt stated: "Effective regional planning will be especially important in those parts of the country where municipal planning is strong and county planning is weak or absent altogether." Once growth occurs in one area there is usually a spillover effect, which causes other areas linked by transportation to become interconnected. Arendt continues, "Even formally isolated rural regions now face metropolitan development pressures, and the lines between metropolitan and rural places is becoming increasingly blurred."

The western Nevada area is distinctively localized; each city, town and county relies upon the other. The only full-service airport in the region is the Reno-Tahoe International airport. The only Interstate Highway, I-80, runs through Reno. In addition, the area is bounded by the Sierra Nevada mountain range to the west. Many local residents enjoy the natural splendor of the Tahoe Basin, for swimming during the summer months and snow skiing during the winter. The area is bound by economic ties as well. The majority of retail shopping facilities are concentrated in Carson, Douglas, and Washoe counties.



NDOT is charged with the responsibility to coordinate local plans for balanced transportation facilities and services that may include; highways, pathways, special lanes for bicycles, railways, urban public transportation, and aviation facilities.

Institutional Requirements

The Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapter 408 charges the Planning Division of the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) with the development and coordination of a balanced transportation policy that is consistent with the social, economic, and environmental goals of the State. The mission statement for the Department reads as follows:

The Nevada Department of Transportation's mission is to; "efficiently plan, design, construct and maintain a safe and effective transportation system for Nevada's economic environmental, social and intermodal needs".





The Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21) establishes requirements for a statewide planning process and a statewide transportation plan. TEA-21 requires that transportation plans and programs be developed for all areas of the state. These plans and programs are to provide for development of transportation facilities (including pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities), which will function as an intermodal state transportation system.

As a planning tool, the purpose of this report is as follows:

- To provide a reference of existing travel conditions in Carson City County, Douglas County, Lyon County, Storey County, Churchill County, and Washoe County;
- To provide a reference of future regional travel characteristics based on land-use, population, and employment levels;
- To provide a reference of regional traffic conditions and roadway service levels on major corridors within the study area;
- To analyze future land use plans and projected population and employment levels that will influence travel characteristics;
- To identify transportation improvement projects and programs to maintain and improve inter-regional transportation within western Nevada;
- Identify potential multi-modal funding programs for future improvements.





Center Street

To a significant degree, the mining interests in Virginia City drove the early development of the six-county region. In 1861, the construction of Geiger Grade greatly influenced travel to and from the mines in the Comstock Mining Area. By 1873, the population in Virginia City had reached its historical peak of 35,000. During this time, the Virginia and Truckee (V & T) Railroad was fundamental in transporting lumber and supplies from Lake Tahoe to the mines in Virginia City. In 1906, the V&T was extended 15 miles from Carson City to Minden. After the extension, the railroad quickly became a major point of origin for beef and dairy freight.

Regional History

The purpose of providing a regional history is two fold, first it is necessary to look at the past, present and future of a study area and secondly is to show how unique each county is. Western Nevada has a rich and well-documented history. The first white settlement in Nevada was established by Mormon settlers in 1851, as a trading post in Genoa. Genoa was a major merchandising outlet in the region, located on both Pony Express and Overland Stage routes. Several major exploration trails crossed the six counties during this early era, including the John C. Fre'mont/Joseph R. Walker Trail, the California Trail, and the Great Sheep Trails.



Ophir Creek



Early development of roadways in the area include U.S 40 (Victory Highway), U.S. 50 (Lincoln Highway) and U.S. 395. These roadways allowed the region to grow into the center of commerce, government, and agricultural activity in Nevada.