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Notice to CALTRANS and Plumas County Officials: CALTRANS is being used to carry out a senseless and dangerous "grant money" project dictated by a few naïve residents. See Pictures pages 5-6.

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I am an engineer with a little common sense. I have been called upon on many occasions by state and federal agencies to solve major state and national problems as described in the website www.wattenburg.us The problem described in this report needs your attention. I can not believe that the top **CALTRANS** engineers with whom I have worked over the years would approve the senseless destruction of a small mountain town as described herein.

A Senseless and Dangerous CALTRANS Project:

CALTRANS is carrying out a dangerous and destructive project by needlessly lowering the main Highway 89 intersection in the small town of Greenville, Plumas County. Apparently, this is being done simply because an inexperienced citizen committee of retired residents, years ago, wanted to spend some “free” grant money to “beautify the town.” Most working residents were stunned when they learned recently what CALTRANS now plans to do to the center of town. Evidently, CALTRANS is dutifully carrying out this ill-conceived project to spend “free” grant money while County officials stand aside because it was “the decision of local committee meetings” of a few retired residents. This project must be delayed so that it can be reviewed by top level CALTRANS and County officials to answer the question: WHY IN THE WORLD IS THIS BEING DONE? There is time to do this.

Let's Lower L Street in Sacramento

This senseless project is exactly the equivalent of, and equally stupid as lowering L Street by 18 inches alongside the State Capitol. This would wipe out two lanes of traffic to install multiple 20 ft long concrete handicap ramps because there will be 2-ft high curbs on both sides -- all because some far-removed pipe dreamers imagined that this would slow down speedy tourists to spend more money at local businesses.

If this senseless and expensive Greenville street lowering project proceeds, the most prominent – and expensive -- structures in Greenville will be four zig-zag concrete and steel handicap ramps at the intersection. This will make the main intersection in Greenville (and the main image of the town to tourists) look like a congested New York City intersection with dull subway entrances on all corners.

CALTRANS CREATES A DANGEROUS HIGHWAY CROSSING

As shown in Pictures 1, 2, and 3 below, this totally unnecessary and disruptive project will create a dangerous Highway 89 crossing and permanently damage the town. It will create monumental traffic jams on Highway 89 this summer. At a minimum, this project violates the usual Highway safety standards that are routinely applied to all new

construction that alters a crossing of a state or federal highway. Trucks and long vehicles will be forced—forever-- to enter the oncoming lanes of Highway 89 in order to turn onto Highway 89 from Main Street. Such intersection traffic danger is normally a real “No-No” for access to a state or federal highway. Why are these requirements being ignored here by a CALTRANS engineer/designer?

No Official will say why the streets must be lowered

I asked local CALTRANS and county officials the basic question: **“Why is the street level being lowered in the middle of town.”** None of them had a sensible or engineering answer.” I next asked: **“Do you realize the traffic congestion and danger you are approving and the long-term consequences for the town?”** No answer.

Precedent: Grant Money Destroys the Environment

There is a precedent for this kind of “citizen committee grant money project” in Plumas County. CALTRANS and all government officials should look at a previous, unbelievable grant money destruction of the environment in Plumas County. It is shown at the end of this report under the title of “Precedent: Grant Money Destroys the Environment.”

PICTURE 1 Picturesque Greenville Today

PICTURE 1 below shows the present wide, properly graded Main Street and Highway 89 that this CALTRANS project will destroy by lowering the streets. That will then require ugly traffic islands and long concrete handicap ramps on all corners that are only necessary because they **needlessly lower the street and Highway 89 (Picture 2 and 3).** *This totally unnecessary rip up of a quiet town will cost the County and the State big money for maintenance and damages in the future.*



At present, Main Street has ample parking on both sides in this quiet and picturesque town that is only about one block long in all directions. This intersection is most of the town.

Picture 1 above shows Main Street in Greenville going east to west as it crosses Highway 89 at its high point going through town. **Highway 89 at this intersection was deliberately raised or “crowned” above Main Street decades ago. This has provided good runoff of storm water and snow melt to the west and south such that there has never been standing water or flooded streets. Why in the world would CALTRANS lower the intersection at enormous cost today to create a fish pond channel in the highway during stormy weather?**

CALTRANS IS AMPUTATING A GOOD LEG

This project is something like **hospital clerks ordering the amputation of a perfectly healthy leg from an unsuspecting patient simply because his insurance will pay for the operation and the hospital needs the money. If the hospital administrators look the other way, only a good surgeon can halt the tragedy. In this case, that means CALTRANS and the Plumas County Supervisors -- and the Superior Court if necessary.**

Dangerous entrance onto Highway 89

Pictures 2 and 3 show the most obvious and dangerous aspect of this ill-conceived project. It will create constant traffic congestion on Highway 89 and a traffic danger where Main Street crosses Highway 89. Trucks and even long pickups will be forced to enter the oncoming lanes of Highway 89 in order to turn right onto Highway 89 from Main Street. (The corner traffic barriers are already marked and fenced off so it was easy to do the experiment.) Such intersection traffic danger is normally a real “No-No” for access to a state or federal highway. CALTRANS normally demands the construction of an additional traffic lane to and from an intersection to avoid any turning into existing traffic lanes. Why are these requirements being ignored here by a local CALTRANS representative who recently bragged that “I designed this project?”

PICTURE 2



HIGHWAY 89 AT THE INTERSECTION WITH MAIN STREET, THE CENTER OF GREENVILLE. WHY WOULD ANYONE LOWER THIS HIGHWAY 18 INCHES TO CREATE ENORMOUS PROBLEMS? THE CORNER TRAFFIC BARRIERS THAT WILL EXTEND INTO HIGHWAY 89 ARE MARKED IN THIS PICTURE. THESE BARRIERS WILL FORCE LARGE VEHICLES AND TRUCKS MAKING A RIGHT TURN ONTO HIGHWAY 89 TO TURN INTO ONCOMING TRAFFIC LANES ON HIGHWAY 89.

FORMER PARKING AREAS IN THE WIDE SHOULDERS ON BOTH SIDES OF HIGHWAY 89 ARE NOW BLOCKED OFF AS MARKED. THESE WERE THE PARKING AREAS MOST OFTEN USED BY TOURISTS WHO DECIDED TO STOP AND SHOP IN TOWN. MANY TOURISTS PASS BY THE ONLY INTERSECTION BEFORE THEY DECIDE TO STOP. AFTER THE STREET AND HIGHWAY ARE LOWERED, THERE WILL BE NO HIGHWAY PARKING UNTIL AFTER THE TOURISTS HAVE PASSED THROUGH TOWN.

Tourist Parking:

On both sides of this intersection, highway 89 now has wide shoulder areas that allow tourists to park after they have missed the only entry to the town at the intersection. If this narrowing of Highway 89 is done (**Picture 2**) tourists will be forced to travel on though the town as soon as they pass the intersection because there will be no parking nearby. **Merchants who think the street lowering will bring in more business will be sadly disappointed. But it will be too late.**

PICTURE 3



THIS IS A CLOSEUP VIEW OF THE MAIN STREET SPACE TO BE TAKEN UP BY THE TRAFFIC BARRIER/ISLANDS AT ALL FOUR CORNERS OF THE INTERSECTION. THEY PROTRUDE OUT INTO HIGHWAY 89 AS WELL AS MAIN STREET. IF THE INTERSECTION STREETS ARE LOWERED BY 18 INCHES, THE ENTRANCES TO THE BUSINESSES WILL BE 2 FT' HIGHER THAN STREET LEVEL. THEN THESE TRAFFIC ISLANDS WILL BE NECESSARY TO INSTALL ELABORATE

CONCRETE ZIG-ZAG HANDICAP RAMPS TO REACH THE HIGH CURBS. AT PRESENT, THERE IS HANDCAP ACCESS AT STREET LEVEL.

Turn Greenville into a congested New York City intersection

If the streets are lowered, unsightly zig-zag concrete handicap ramps will have to be installed on all four corners of the intersection in the spaces shown in Picture 3 above. **This will make the main intersection in Greenville (and the main image of the town) look like a bland and congested New York City intersection with subway entrances on all corners.** Lowering of the intersection creates millions of dollars of unnecessary expense. Of course, this spends the "free" grant money and pays the salaries of the grant money overseers until the extended project is completed. No one seems to care about the long-term consequences for the working citizens and businesses and the taxpayers of Plumas County.

THERE MUST BE TOP LEVEL ENGINEERING REVIEW

This project must be delayed a month or two to allow top level engineering review by CALTRANS traffic and safety engineers and County officials. **They must provide good engineering justification why this project is necessary and beneficial today -- and not just a follow up of naïve committee pipedreams from years ago.** They must evaluate the permanent traffic dangers and damage to the town that will occur if the streets are lowered.

If CALTRANS refuses to delay this project for review, Plumas County officials and Greenville residents should petition the Superior Court to halt this project until it is reviewed. **There is no evidence that an Environment Impact Report considered the traffic dangers and community disruption described herein. Independent and highly competent engineers can testify as to why they planned and guided the traffic and utilities infrastructure of the town as it exists today. I believe there are university professors of engineering who will question the wisdom of this street lowering project.**

A project like this that paralyzes the town in the middle of summer would never be allowed in Quincy or Chester. The County Supervisors will be reminded forever if they do not demand proof of necessity for this expensive street lowering project.

Previous Highway Improvements Will be Wiped Out

The ultimate absurdity is that this ill-conceived highway lowering project, to my recollection, wipes out the previous CALTRANS work years ago to raise the highway level through town to improve storm water runoff, traffic flow, and parking. The present level of highway 89 and Main Street has provided good storm water runoff. The wide shoulders have provided tourist parking that has been of great benefit to the town and highway maintenance crews for over sixty years. Picture 2 shows the narrowing of Highway 89 that will occur if this project proceeds. This will create traffic jams during peak summer months and anytime in the winter when snow must be removed. There is no adequate detour around this intersection for Highway 89 traffic.

Superior Court Review

I believe that a Superior Court that is presented with the state and federal highway crossing safety standards and the other dire consequences of this so-called "beautification" project will order a delay for independent engineering and common-sense review.

The project can be delayed to allow review

CALTRANS and Plumas County officials must delay this project until there is a review by top CALTRANS and Plumas County engineering and safety officials. This project can be delayed a month to allow review no matter what contracts have been issued. The contractor can be paid his expected profit on this portion of the project if good engineering judgement says that the street lowering should be stopped. CALTRANS is doing good work elsewhere along Highway 89 at the south end of town with this grant money. They do not need to start the street lowering portion of the project until the south end work is completed.

The present Level of Main Street and Highway 89 is Ideal

Why in the world would anyone with any common sense want to destroy the present town environment. Handicap cutouts in the sidewalks at the present street level are easily installed. **The street lowering project will leave the entrance doors to the few businesses about two feet above street level. This then requires high curbs about two feet high. This then requires elaborate zig-zag handicap ramps on all four corners. But, of course, this spends millions of dollars of free grant money.**

THEY COULD RE-PAVED MAIN STREET TO IMPROVE IT INSTEAD OF LOWERING THE STREET TO DESTROY IT

If anything, the grant money should be spent to re-pave Main Street and raise the street level a few inches at the corners of the intersection to allow better street-level handicap access. The re-paving would level out the bumps in the pavement and be a real improvement to the looks of the town. Why create millions of dollars of expense for traffic islands and exotic handicap ramps by needlessly lowering Highway 89 and Main Street?

Public Works Responsibility

The wisdom of public works projects must rely on the judgement of public officials with the engineering experience to make such decisions and take responsibility thereafter. It appears that both Plumas County and CALTRANS public works officials in charge of the Greenville project have been “deer in the headlights” as far as rendering any engineering judgment about the “citizen plans” from long-ago for lowering the streets just to spend grant money. I recently asked them what is the reason for lowering the main intersection in town and do they know the long term consequences? The Plumas County Public Works Director responded: “There were a lot of public meetings by citizens who wanted to do this.” I asked him if he realized the traffic danger it will create and the extra expense forever to clear snow from the county owned Main

Street because of the traffic barriers that will be installed at each corner. He told me that he will take a look at it.

I put the same questions to the local CALTRANS engineer. He informed me that “I am the one who designed this project.” I asked him about the danger of trucks and even long pickups being forced to enter the oncoming lanes of Highway 89 in order to right turn onto Highway 89 for Main Street. (The corner traffic barriers are already marked fenced off so it was easy to do the experiment.) Such intersection traffic danger is normally a real “No-No” for access to a state highway. CALTRANS demands the construction of an additional traffic lane to and from an intersection to avoid any turning into existing traffic lanes.

The local CALTRANS representative told me that “he needed the traffic barrier islands to have space for handicap ramps up to the higher curbs.” I pointed out that there will be higher curbs because he is lowering the street level. I asked him again: “Why are you lowering the street level?” No answer.

I believe that the Greenville Street Lowering Project is an example of a monumental mistake that resulted from the desire to spend “free” grant money supposedly intended to “beautify the town.” Reportedly, years ago a few local citizens came up with the idea of lowering the intersection of Main Street and highway 89 for reasons that no one seems to understand today. I believe that this project was conceived for no other apparent reason than it was a way to spend grant money and justify the salaries of the grant money administrators.

***I am a scientist/engineer who grew up in Greenville. I have maintained a residence there since 1953. I worked with CALTRANS many times over the years. I was involved in highway projects such as the reconstruction of Highway 70 through the Feather River Canyon after the floods in 1986 and 1995. I designed a temporary freeway bridge for the former CALTRANS Chief Engineer James Roberts. This bridge opened the I -5 Freeway near Colinga to full traffic in four days after a flood in 1995 (Science, v268, pp. 261-262, 279-281, 14 April 1995).**

Precedent:

Grant Money Destroys the Environment in Plumas County. Government officials looked the other way.

The disgusting pictures below show the results of a former “free” grant money project carried out by a Plumas County non-profit group that managed the government grant money and decided how to spend it while they collected handsome salaries as “grant administrators.” They spent the money on what they imagined as “streambed improvement.” They paid contractors to carry out an idiot idea they called **“Plug and Pond.”** They evidently had no awareness of what mother nature has been doing for millions of years to form stable streambeds that could handle high water levels. Mother nature soon showed them the stupidity of their seemingly smart idea to spend the taxpayers’ money - and pay their own salaries of course.

2012

THE MILE LONG MEADOW AND RED CLOVER CREEK IN PLUMAS COUNTY BEFORE THE “PLUG AND POND” PROJECT WITH GOVERNMENT GRANT MONEY TO DO “STREAMBED IMPROVEMENT “ AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.” THIS CREEK CHANNEL HAD SURVIVED MANY MASSIVE STORMS THAT HIT THE SIERRA IN THE PRVIOUS CENTURY.



THE MEADOW ABOVE AFTER THE NEXT SPRING RUNOFF WASHED OUT THE "PLUGS AND PONDS."
THE HIGH WATER DIVERTED AWAY FROM THE NATURAL STREAMBED AND DESTROYED THE MEADOW
ON BOTH SIDES. EVIDENTLY, THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND THE CALIFORNIA DEPT OF FISH
AND WILDLIFE STOOD BY AND DID NOTHING TO PREVENT THIS DISASTEROUS PROJECT.



THIS IS WHAT RED CLOVER CREEK AND THE ONCE BEAUTIFUL MEADOW LOOK LIKE TODAY, THANKS TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF GOVERNMENT GRANT MONEY SPENT BY SELF-STYLED "STEAMBED IMPROVEMENT" EXPERTS.

OF COURSE THE NON- PROFIT STAFF MEMBERS PAID THEMSELVES HANDSOME SALARIES TO ARRANGE AND MANAGE THIS PROJECT WITH THE GOVERNMENT GRANT MONEY THEY OBTAINED.

