

**State Route 36**  
**Transportation Concept Report**  
***Executive Summary***

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has prepared this Transportation Concept Report (TCR) for State Route 36 (SR 36) from US 101, near the community of Alton, in Humboldt County to US 395 near, Susanville in Lassen County. The TCR establishes a 20-year consensus-based vision intended to assist Caltrans, Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs), cities, counties, and Tribal Governments to manage the route. The report includes an assessment of both current and future operating conditions, and improvements that will be needed to meet identified operational goals on the route.

This route can be viewed in three broad sections from: **US 101 to SR 99 Junction**, **SR 99 Junction to SR 89 South** and **SR 89 South to US 395**. These areas extend through varied terrain and generally have low traffic volumes in the rural 2-lane sections, and higher volumes with 4-lane sections in three communities: the City of Red Bluff, the community of Chester, and the City of Susanville.

**US 101 to SR 99 Junction**

This section extends from US 101 at Alton through the counties of Humboldt, Trinity, Shasta, and into Tehama where it connects with Interstate 5 in the City of Red Bluff and ends at the north terminus of SR 99 just east of Red Bluff. This western portion of SR 36 between the Pacific Coast and Red Bluff is a 2-lane rural highway that passes through the coastal mountain range and into the northern central valley. Many sections of highway have limited lane and shoulder widths, curvilinear alignment, low design speeds, and pass through remote mountainous terrain with no available services. The route passes through several small communities where it serves as a “main street” and route serves as a critical link to access basic services. In the City of Red Bluff SR 36 also serves as a main street, and the route is designated as a Principal Arterial to SR 99.

**SR 99 Junction to SR 89 South**

This section begins at SR 99 just east of Red Bluff, and continues through eastern Tehama County and into Plumas County where it connects with SR 89 South in the Lake Almanor Basin just west of the community of Chester. This portion of SR 36 is a 2-lane rural highway that climbs from the northern Sacramento River valley floor towards the southern tip of the Cascade Range. SR 36 passes near Lassen Volcanic National Park and over Morgan Summit (the route’s highest elevation at 5753 feet). After the summit, SR 36 descends through forests and mountain meadow areas to its connection with SR 89 South in the Lake Almanor Basin. In general, this section of highway has curvilinear alignment, and passes through remote mountainous terrain with no available services. In the higher elevations, adverse weather is typical and the highway has several areas with narrow shoulders and minimal pullout opportunities.

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## **SR 89 South to US 395**

This section starts at the junction of SR 89 South. Continuing east, SR 36 passes through the community of Chester, which is the retail service center for northern Plumas County. East of Chester, SR 36 passes near the recreational area of the Lake Almanor Peninsula. The route continues east into Lassen County as a rural 2-lane highway. SR 36 climbs over Fredonyer Summit and descends into high desert and the City of Susanville, which is the largest community in Lassen County as well as the county seat. In general, the highway passes through high elevations and steep grades, where extreme winter conditions are common. SR 36 is a designated Principal Arterial between SR 44 and US 395.

## **Future Management Emphasis Areas**

The following will be emphasis areas as SR 36 is managed over the next twenty years:

### **From US 101 to SR 99 Junction**

- Portions of SR 36 between PM 37.6 and 40.5 in Humboldt County have an average width of 20 feet. This narrow section does not meet minimum standards for a 2-lane conventional highway and is the only portion of the route that is not wide enough to allow for centerline striping. Reconstruct this section of highway to two 12-foot lanes with shoulders that meet current standards or obtain a design exception to allow narrower shoulders.
- In Red Bluff, the 4-lane sections of SR 36 will accommodate forecast traffic volumes. However, as traffic volumes increase, some 2-lane sections will require expansion to prevent operations from falling below target Level of Service (LOS).
  - Between Crittenden Street and the junction of SR 99 (PM L 40.87 to 44.0), the 4-lane section will need to be maintained and managed to accommodate traffic movement for sufficient future operations.
  - Between Main Street and Crittenden Street (PM L39.73 to L40.87), improve the 2-lane section as traffic volumes increase by expanding it to 4-lanes with a two-way center turn lane.
  - Add traffic control devices (signals and/or roundabouts) as appropriate to manage traffic.
  - Traffic Signal Synchronization.
  - Consider non-motorized, transit, and complete streets opportunities.
- Between Alton and Red Bluff, the shoulder widths vary considerably. Widen and pave shoulders to improve operations in conjunction with rehabilitation or restoration projects. Target expanding shoulders to applicable standards, when feasible, as projects are designed. Additional pullouts and curve improvements may also be beneficial.
- Install Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) elements at key locations for pre-trip planning, or en route travel decisions. Some elements such as Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) and Roadside Weather Information System (RWIS), would be located near areas prone to inclement weather, for example near South Fork Mountain. Other elements would be placed at key decision points, such as near detour opportunities or before chain control areas, to inform those already driving about road conditions ahead, and would include Highway Advisory Radio (HAR), or Changeable Message Signs (CMS).

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## **From SR 99 Junction to SR 89 South**

- Between Paynes Creek and Morgan Summit, there are limited passing opportunities for vehicles to get around slower traffic. Adding more pullouts will be beneficial for slower vehicle use, when staging for emergencies, for disabled vehicles, and for maintenance operations. Additional curve improvements may also be beneficial.
- Between SR 99 and the end of this section at SR 89 South, the shoulder widths vary considerably. Widen and pave shoulders to improve operations. Target expanding shoulders to applicable standards, when feasible, as projects are designed.
- In the Morgan Summit area, ITS elements at key locations for pre-trip planning and en route travel decisions. ITS elements such as CCTV and RWIS would provide information for pre-trip planning. Other key ITS elements such as HAR and CMS would be placed at key decision points to inform travelers.

## **From SR 89 South to US 395**

- In both the communities of Chester and Susanville, there are 4-lane sections that will accommodate forecast traffic volumes. However, as traffic volumes increase, some 2-lane sections will require expansion to prevent operations from falling below target Level of Service (LOS).

### **In the community of Chester**

- Between PM 8.17 and 8.84, the existing 4-lane section will need to be maintained and managed to accommodate traffic movement for sufficient future operations.
- Between SR 89 South and Collins Road (PM 6.29 to 8.17), expand the 2-lane section to 4-lanes with a two-way center turn lane.
- Between PM 6.29 and 8.84, add traffic control devices (signals and/or roundabouts) as appropriate to manage traffic.
- Consider non-motorized, transit, and complete streets opportunities.

### **In Susanville**

- Between PM 25.40 and R 26.22, the existing 4-lane section will need to be maintained and managed to accommodate traffic movement for sufficient future operations.
- Between PM 26.22 and R 26.34, expand the 2-lane section to 4-lanes with a two-way center turn lane.
- Between R 26.34 and R 29.40, expand the 2-lane section from a 2-lane expressway to a 4-lane expressway as traffic volume increases trigger the need for additional capacity.
- Add traffic control devices (signals and/or roundabouts) as appropriate to manage traffic.
- Consider non-motorized, transit, and complete streets opportunities.
- Between Chester and Susanville, the shoulder widths vary considerably. Widen and pave shoulders to improve operations. Target expanding shoulders to applicable standards, when feasible, as projects are designed.