

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Calaveras Council of Governments conducted a circulation study for Murphys, California to guide the improvement of transportation facilities in the town, primarily to address deficiencies in the roadway network, to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and to develop a comprehensive plan for parking improvements. The purpose of this study was to document existing conditions of the Murphys transportation network, and to provide recommendations as to how best serve the travel demands while maintaining the high quality of life currently enjoyed by Murphys residents and visitors. Figure 1 presents a project area location map, as well as the roadway network and intersections which are evaluated in this study. The study considered the greater Murphys/Douglas Flat region with regard to roadway and bicycle issues, and also considered parking and pedestrian access issues for the more focused Murphys village core area.

This *Plan* is intended to document existing transportation and land use information, including the following:

- Existing demographics of the study area;
- Existing intersection geometrics and traffic volumes;
- Existing intersection operating conditions;
- Existing parking supply and demand;
- Existing transit service;
- Historical accident information;
- Existing pedestrian and bicycle circulation patterns;
- Evaluation of future conditions using the Calaveras County Transportation Model;
- Review of existing approved developments and roadway projects within Murphys.

Based upon this information and input received from the public, the study team refined and analyzed a series of potential transportation improvements designed to address current and existing shortfalls. Through this process, a transportation plan has been developed for the area that will guide future improvements in the community's transportation system.

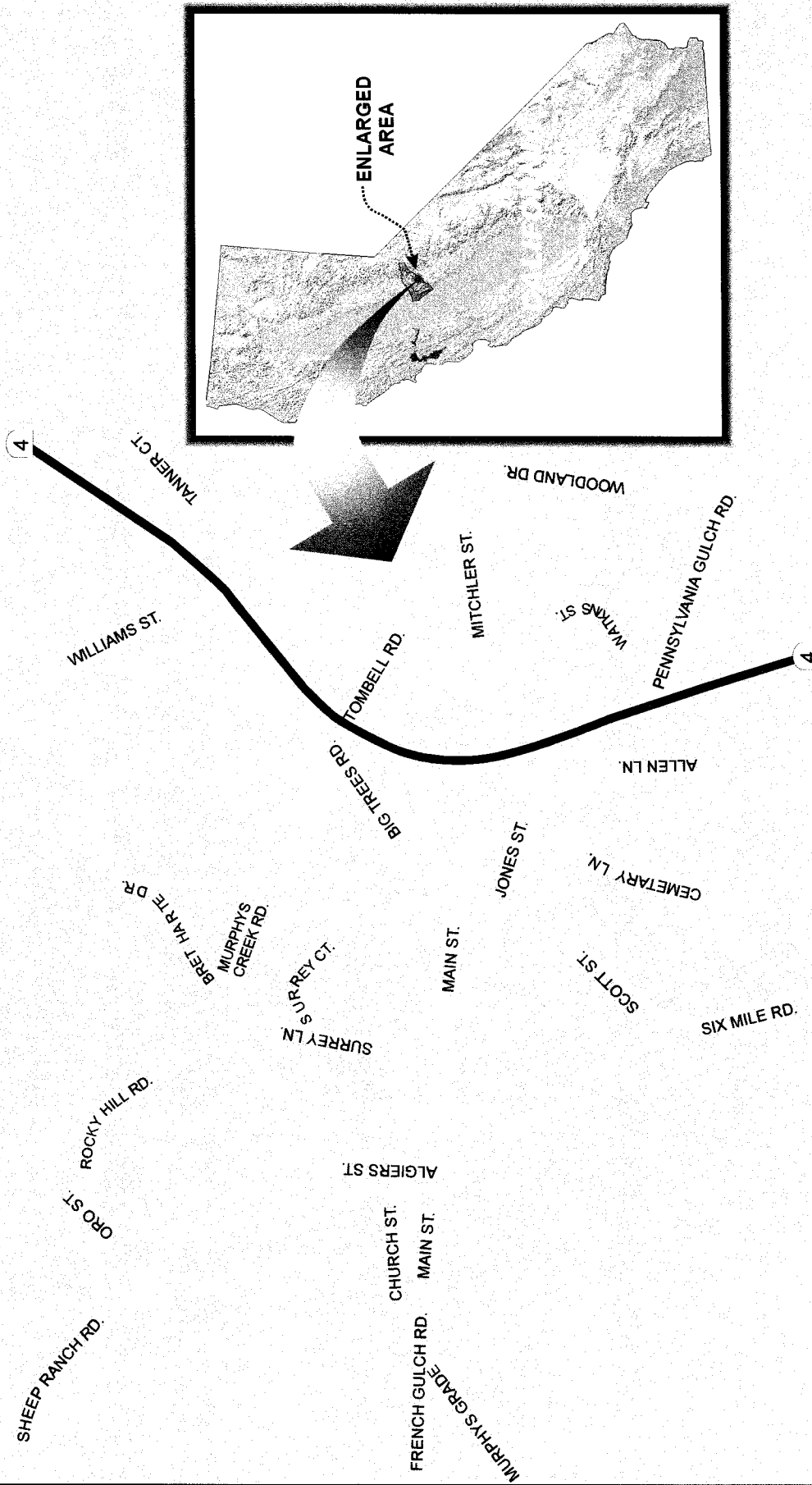
BACKGROUND

Murphys is located in Calaveras County, California, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains approximately 133 miles east of San Francisco and 85 miles southeast of Sacramento. Nine miles east of Angels Camp along State Route (SR) 4, the picturesque village of Murphys is known today for its many natural attractions, including caverns for public viewing, a charming Main Street with unique shops, attractive wineries, art galleries, gold panning, cultural activities, and world class golf. At approximately 2,200 feet in elevation, the area provides an enjoyable year-round climate.

Murphys is an important economic and recreational hub in Calaveras County. Since its days as a center of mining activity, the community has evolved into a vibrant tourism center, incorporating historic, recreational, and artistic attractions, wineries, and a variety of retail and lodging

F I G U R E 1

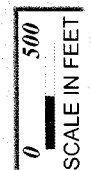
MURPHYS SITE/LOCATION MAP



LEGEND

STREETS

HIGHWAYS



opportunities. With its increasing economic success in the modern world, however, has come a parallel increase in traffic activity, parking needs, and walking/bicycling travel. As a result, busy seasons result in traffic congestion and parking problems, which frustrate residents and visitors alike. The community's attractiveness to pedestrian and bicycle travel is also compromised. Tourist travel is also increased by the area's location in the heart of the Mother Lode, along the direct route connecting Angels Camp and SR 49 to the west with Arnold, Big Trees State Park, and Bear Valley to the east.

The community's transportation system also reflects its initial function as a mining district commercial center, with relatively limited-capacity roadways radiating from the center commercial core area. The local roadway pattern tends to concentrate traffic in the commercial core areas along SR 4 and Main Street, as there are very few options for travelers to avoid these congested areas. As there have been few facilities constructed for pedestrian and bicycle travel, persons wishing to walk or bicycle must often contend with traffic levels that degrade their experience while increasing the risk of accidents.

In general, transportation issues – including traffic congestion, parking availability, pedestrian linkages, and bicycle facilities – are key factors in determining the livability of a smaller community as well as its attractiveness for visitors. This comprehensive transportation study provides an opportunity to consider these issues in an broad manner, ensuring that the various transportation improvement elements work together to best meet the needs of the community as a whole. This study considers past alternatives which have been identified, but also considers viable new alternatives which have emerged through this planning process. Finally, this study prioritizes improvements into an achievable and implementable program of improvements.

Land Use and Population Characteristics

LAND USE

The land use structure of Murphys, in broad terms, can be considered in the following elements:

- ❑ The major visitor retail area consists of the historic village core along Main Street. In addition to small-scale retail establishments, the area includes restaurants, lodging facilities, churches, and community facilities.
- ❑ The other substantial commercial area is located along SR 4 and Big Trees Road. This area consists of highway-oriented retail, the Post Office, several lodging facilities, professional offices, and other community services.
- ❑ A substantial portion of the north-center section of the community (along Bret Harte Drive) was originally a state institution and California Department of Forestry training campus, before its transfer into private hands. This area now encompasses a variety of neighborhoods containing multi-family and single-family homes, as well as newer commercial and institutional land uses. Portions of this parcel are also under active development.
- ❑ Residential areas of the community include neighborhoods to the north (along Bret Harte Drive, Williams Street, and Sheep Ranch Road), to the east (along Pennsylvania Gulch Road), and to the South (along Main Street in Douglas Flat).
- ❑ There are also a number of important activity centers in outlying portions of the Murphys area:
 - The **Kautz Ironstone Winery** is located on Six Mile Road approximately 1 mile to the south of the village center. It consists of a seven-story facility that features an art gallery, aging cavern, landscaped gardens, conference space, and an outdoor amphitheater, which has a capacity of 3,500 people. The President of Kautz Winery, Stephen Kautz, estimates 250 to 300 persons visit per day on a peak weekday from the hours of 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. On a weekend day, however, 500 to 800 visitors can be expected per day from the hours of 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. An estimate six to eight trucks visit the site during the week, mostly during the weekdays. During the peak of the harvest time (September through November), however, this number can double to up to 16 trucks per week. Plans for future development of this property are currently being finalized, and have not to date been subject to the County review and approval process.
 - To the north, roughly six miles from the village center on Sheep Ranch Road, the **Stevenot Winery** consists of a 27-acre estate which produces 40,000 cases of wine per year. The winery includes a tasting room and gardens. While smaller than Kautz Ironstone, this winery does generate visitor/employee auto traffic, as well as truck traffic. Stevenot Winery staff indicates they have approximately 20 vehicles visiting per day on a weekday and 50 visiting on a weekend day. During the harvest, roughly one truck