

Brooktrails Second Access Project

Public Scoping

Mendocino County Department of Transportation

August 18, 2026



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Why We are Here Tonight

- Scoping is the first formal step in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process.
- Its purpose is to identify environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be studied.
- The County is seeking input from residents, agencies, tribes, and other interested parties.
- The project alternatives are still under evaluation, and the environmental analysis is not complete.
- No final decision has been made regarding project approval or selection of an alternative.

Project Background and Need

- The Brooktrails Second Access has been studied for more than 30 years with extensive public, agency, and community involvement.
- The need for a secondary access route gained urgency following major wildfire events and concerns about emergency evacuation.
- Multiple planning, feasibility, traffic, environmental, and engineering studies evaluated potential routes and narrowed the project to two primary alignments.
- 10% Design was completed in 2013.
- The project was placed on hold in 2013 because funding was not available to continue environmental review and design.
- In 2023, MCDOT received state climate-resilience funding to restart environmental review and advance final design.
- County now has funding for CEQA and Final Design.

Purpose and Need (2013)

- Provide a reliable collector road into the Brooktrails Township that meets current roadway design standards in order to correct the current accident rates in the first quarter mile, to improve emergency response times, provide a detour around incidents on lower Sherwood Road and serve as a primary evacuation route in case of natural or manmade disasters.
- Improve the access road system to Brooktrails Township, as recognized in the Circulation Element of the Mendocino County General Plan, consistent with the Brooktrails Township Specific Plan Goals and Policies, particularly with regard to a direct connection from Brooktrails to either the Highway 101 Bypass or State Route 20.

Project Objectives

- Provide a reliable second access route for Brooktrails Township, Sherwood Valley Rancheria, and surrounding communities.
- Improve emergency evacuation capacity during wildfires and other natural disasters.
- Improve access and response times for fire, medical, law-enforcement, and other emergency services.
- Improve bike/pedestrian access with standard roadway shoulders.
- Reduce reliance on Sherwood Road as the community's primary access route and improve overall roadway-system redundancy.
- Improve local and regional circulation while developing an environmentally responsible, technically feasible, and fundable project.

Proposed Project – Alternative 2 (Modified FirCo)

- Factors going into Alternative 2 being the alternative being carried forward:
 - Meets the project's fundamental purpose.
 - Makes use of an existing disturbed transportation corridor.
 - FirCo is already recognized as an emergency-access.
 - Better emergency egress for residents in North Brooktrails and residents north of Brooktrails.
 - Preliminary geometry is more feasible.
 - Potentially favorable construction cost and risk.
 - Potential reduction in aquatic-resource impacts.
 - Avoids the Upp Creek Bridge required by Alternative 1.

This is a different project than the FirCo Fire Road Improvements.

Additional Project Alternatives

- Alternative 1 – (Modified I-H)
 - More direct connection to North Main Street and Central Willits.
 - Greater usefulness for daily travel and traffic diversion from Sherwood Road.
 - Potentially more intuitive evacuation and emergency-response route.
 - Higher environmental and right-of-way impacts.
 - Preliminary geometry is less feasible (steep terrain).
 - Requires a new bridge over Upp Creek.
 - Construction cost and risk are much higher.
- No Project Alternative
 - Does not meet the Purpose and Need

Current Project Status

- 30% preliminary design and cost estimates completed for Alternatives 1 and 2.
- Roadway alignments and bridge and retaining wall planning studies developed.
- Environmental fieldwork completed for biological, aquatic, wetland, and cultural resources.
- Preliminary topographic surveys and right-of-way boundaries completed.
- Preliminary traffic and geotechnical studies completed.
- Next step: Complete environmental review and obtain project clearance.

Environmental Review Process

- Mendocino County is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project.
- The EIR will evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed project.
- The analysis will identify measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate significant impacts.
- The EIR will also evaluate the No Project Alternative and other reasonable alternatives.
- No project approval decision will be made until the environmental review is complete.

Environmental Review Process

- Scoping: Identify environmental issues, alternatives, and concerns that should be studied.
- Draft EIR: The County prepares and releases the environmental analysis for public review.
- Public Review: Agencies, tribes, organizations, and community members may submit comments.
- Final EIR: The County responds to comments and revises the analysis as appropriate.
- County Decision: The Board of Supervisors considers the EIR and whether to approve a project alternative.

Environmental Studies

- Biological Assessment (Northern Spotted Owl and Northwestern Pond Turtle)
- Aquatic Resources Delineation
- Natural Environment Study Report
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Noise Study Report
- Air Quality Report
- Traffic Study
- Community Impact Assessment Report
- Water Quality Technical Memorandum
- Area of Potential Effects
- Cultural Phase I – Field Survey
- Archaeological Survey Report
- Historic Properties Survey Report

Comments

- Scoping comments will help the County identify the environmental issues and concerns that require detailed analysis.
- Comments may identify mitigation measures, local conditions, or technical information for consideration.
- Relevant comments will be shared with the environmental and engineering teams and incorporated into the scope of the Draft EIR where appropriate.
- Comments received on the Draft EIR will be reviewed, and the County will prepare written responses to substantive environmental comments.
- The comments, responses, and any resulting revisions will be included in the Final EIR for consideration before a project decision is made.

How to Comment

- Submit comments tonight using a comment card or during the formal comment period.
- Comments may also be provided by email or mail to Mendocino County DOT.
- Comment on scope and content of the EIR, including environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be evaluated.
- Submit written comments by September 4, 2026 and include “Brooktrails Second Access Project” in the subject line.

Next Steps

- Review and consider comments received during the public scoping period.
- Refine the scope of the environmental technical studies and EIR analysis.
- Complete the remaining environmental, engineering, traffic, and geotechnical studies.
- Prepare and circulate the Draft EIR for public and agency review.
- Respond to substantive comments and prepare the Final EIR.
- Present the Final EIR and project to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

Anticipated Schedule

- Notice of Preparation Public Review Period – August 5, 2026 to September 4, 2026
- Draft EIR – January/February 2027
- Public Review – February 2027
- Respond to Public & Agency Comments- March/April 2027
- Final EIR – April 2027
- Public Hearing/County Decision – April/May 2027
- Final Design – July 2028
- Right-of-Way – Pending Funding
- Construction – Pending Funding

Right-of-Way and Construction are not yet funded.

Thank You

Your input is important to the environmental review process.

- Please visit the information stations and speak with the project team.
- Submit comments by September 4, 2026
- Project information:

<https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/departments/transportation/current-projects/brooktrails-second-access>

- Email: lindermanj@mendocinocounty.gov

Questions and Public Comments