

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT TITLE: "Roadblocks to Safer Evacuation in Marin"

REPORT DATE: December 14, 2020

RESPONSE BY: County of Marin Board of Supervisors

- We agree with the finding numbered: **F1, F5**
- We disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: **F2-F4**

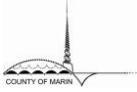
GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation numbered **R1** has been implemented.
- Recommendation numbered **R2** requires further analysis.
- Recommendation numbered **R3** has not yet been implemented but will be by December 2022.

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Dennis Rodoni, President
Marin County Board of Supervisors



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RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS

F1. No single agency or jurisdiction is taking responsibility and authority for building infrastructure for safe evacuation routes across jurisdictions in Marin County.

Agree.

The responsibility for evacuation route infrastructure is shared because many factors contribute to evacuation readiness and safety. It's not yet clear that infrastructure in Marin is a material impediment to safe evacuation. In addition, slow evacuation is not necessarily unsafe. Residents sheltering in vehicles on paved surfaces, even in traffic, are in many cases safer.

The Marin County Department of Public Works (DPW) and Fire Department are regularly engaged in hazard reduction along roadways. Vegetation fuel reduction along roadways is ongoing and increasing with new funding available since July 2020 through the Marin Wildfire Protection Authority (MWPA). Vegetation along the public right-of-way is the adjacent landowner's responsibility, not a public agency's in most cases. If vegetation and near-roadway combustibles (on private property primarily) were managed appropriately, hazard would be nearly eliminated on residential evacuation routes. Private property hazards are being addressed as part of the increased defensible space inspection program.

F2. There is confusion in the county as to who has ultimate responsibility and authority for ensuring that Marin has safe evacuation routes.

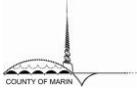
Disagree partially.

While there are many factors that contribute to safety and efficiency of evacuations, and responsibility for these factors may lie with multiple public agencies and/or private entities or landowners, the order to evacuate (and therefore responsibility) lies with the event law enforcement jurisdiction. We agree there is not a single agency or authority responsible for evacuation infrastructure. The new MWPA is assessing evacuation route planning and what improvements may be necessary, however public works departments, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and private road owners will be responsible for implementing such improvements.

Since the early 2000's, fire agencies and law enforcement have worked together to create pre-determined evacuation zones, regularly provided multi-jurisdictional exercises, and integrated common terminology. Most recently, MWPA purchased Zonehaven to assist, law, fire and residents in executing safer, more timely evacuations.

F3. Marin County Board of Supervisors and town and city councils have the responsibility for safe evacuation routing, and they have not sufficiently considered evacuation as a criterion when approving improvements to roads and traffic infrastructure in their jurisdictions.

Disagree partially.



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Road and traffic infrastructure has not been identified as the major factor in evacuation safety. The MWPA has launched an evacuation study with a fact-based approach to evaluate potential hazards and impediments.

Importantly, there are many non-traffic related improvements that may have even greater impacts on evacuation safety in many areas, including: home hardening, near-home defensible space, roadside vegetation, roadside combustible structures (including fences, homes, other structures that might affect the roadway with flames and/or heat).

Traffic-related improvements with the greatest impact are likely to be intersection related, including the ability to manage intersections more effectively during power outages – including PSPS events – or when public works department or law enforcement availability is reduced (battery/generator backup for intersections, remote intersection control, real-time traffic monitoring, etc.).

In short, evacuation routes may have garnered less attention prior to 2017. Since then, however, regular coordination of fire agencies and public works departments has been more extensive. For example, Fire Safe Marin and fire agencies have engaged regarding the center median project on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. through the Ross Valley.

F4. County and municipal administrators, public works, and traffic engineers have not adequately considered mass evacuation as a criterion for planning and funding traffic infrastructure improvements.

Disagree partially.

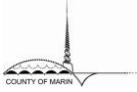
Prior to 2017, fire evacuation was not in the forefront of consideration as it is today after several years of devastating wildfires in California. Funding of traffic infrastructure improvements was highly focused on improving traffic flow (often benefiting evacuation), pedestrian safety and quality of life.

Today, traffic planners and engineers regularly consult with fire professionals and consider evacuation in concert with daily traffic impacts, pedestrian safety and a host of other traffic related considerations to best inform projects and spending priorities.

F5. Most Marin jurisdictions have not yet included urgently needed evacuation plans in their general plans as required by state law and as recommended by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research.

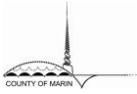
Agree.

The County is including updates to the general plan’s (Countywide Plan) Safety Element to address fire risk, evacuation routes, etc. as required by State Law. This work will be coordinated with the MWPA and the cities and towns.



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The MWPA, for which the County of Marin is one of 17 member agencies, will be conducting an extensive analysis of evacuation routes including hazards and risks in collaboration with Fire districts, Office of Emergency Services, Transportation Agency of Marin, California Highway Patrol, Caltrans, and Public Works and planning agencies throughout the county. When complete (projected completion during 2021), this study will include ratings of roads and contributing factors to evacuation impediments. It will provide the guidance necessary to inform the MWPA’s annual workplan as well as local hazard mitigation plans, public works agencies, traffic engineers and others making infrastructure improvements. This guidance will also be incorporated into the Countywide Plan’s Safety Element.



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RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Marin County Civil Grand Jury recommends the following:

R1. Within 180 days of the date of this report, the governing boards of the County of Marin and its cities and towns should direct their respective planning and public works departments to include evacuation needs among their criteria for evaluating and recommending public works projects.

This recommendation has been implemented.

While we can only respond on behalf of the County of Marin, as previously noted traffic planners and engineers today regularly consult with fire professionals and consider evacuation in concert with daily traffic impacts, pedestrian safety and a host of other traffic related considerations to best inform projects and spending priorities.

The Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA), for which the County of Marin is one of 17 member agencies, will be conducting an extensive analysis of evacuation routes, including hazards and risks. When complete later in 2021, this study will include ratings of roads and contributing factors to evacuation impediments. It will provide the data and information necessary to further inform public works projects, priorities and policy.

R2. Within 180 days of the date of this report, the governing boards of the County of Marin and its cities and towns should adopt resolutions calling on the Transportation Authority of Marin to include evacuation needs among the criteria it considers when planning and funding public works projects.

This recommendation requires further analysis.

While we can only respond on behalf of the County of Marin, as previously noted traffic planners and engineers today regularly consult with fire professionals and consider evacuation in concert with daily traffic impacts, pedestrian safety and a host of other traffic related considerations to best inform projects and spending priorities.

The MWPA will be conducting an extensive analysis of evacuation routes, including hazards and risks. When complete later in 2021, this study will include ratings of roads and contributing factors to evacuation impediments. It will provide the data and information necessary to further inform public works projects, priorities and policy. It is not clear absent the results of this study that R2 is warranted.

R3. In calendar year 2021, the County of Marin and its cities and towns should update the safety elements of their general plans to include evacuation planning.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be by December 2022.

The County is including an update to the Countywide Plan's Safety Element. This work will be coordinated with the MWPA. The MWPA will be conducting an extensive analysis of evacuation routes, including hazards and risks. When complete later in 2021, this study will include ratings of roads and contributing factors to evacuation impediments. It will provide the data and information necessary to further inform public works projects, priorities and policy.