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To: News Media for Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Lake Counties

Contact:

Laurence Wright
Wine Country IRP Program Manager
Mendocino Council of Governments
367 N. State St., Suite 206, Ukiah, CA 95482

707-463-1859
707-463-2212 fax
LNWright@saber.net

Stakeholder General Assembly Planned

Growth pressures will increase and clogged roads will worsen in Napa and Sonoma Counties and extend to Lake and Mendocino Counties in the next few years, according to a major study to be released by the Wine Country Interregional Partnership (IRP) on March 25 at a conference in Healdsburg, open to all “stakeholders.”

A Leadership Team of environmental, labor, business and government leaders released an earlier study showing that workers in the four counties tolerate long commutes to find housing they can afford. The rising costs of housing and relatively modest increases in worker salaries have contributed to the ever greater separation of locations of affordable housing and locations of employment. Creating jobs near housing in the Wine Country is made difficult because:

- Regulations and other constraints prevent development in many areas;
- Developers are charged up to \$60,000 by city governments for each house built and that fee is passed to the purchaser;
- Thousands of acres have been placed in greenbelts to avoid suburban sprawl.

“It all adds up to added miles and hours of freeway and surface street travel,” says Laurence N. Wright, P.E., Wine Country IRP Program Manager. “People in all four of our Wine Country counties are saying, ‘My children can’t afford to live here,’ and they want something done about it.” Wright says everyone in the four counties has a stake in these issues.

Business, labor, housing, government, and environmental leaders as well as interested residents of the four counties are invited to Villa Chanticleer in Healdsburg on March 25 to share their ideas for solutions to these thorny land use issues. The Stakeholder General Assembly meeting starts at 8:30 a.m. and runs to 5:00 p.m. Advance registration of \$50 is required and includes morning refreshments, lunch, and copies of the presentation.

Reservations may be made by calling the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) offices at (707) 463-1859 or online registration at the MCOG website at www.mendocinocog.org, under the Wine Country IRP subject link. The Wine Country IRP web page is in under construction and will be available for General Assembly registration soon. Directions to the conference and more information will be posted on the web site.

Projections for growth over the next 20 years will be presented by Mr. Stephen Wahlstrom, Managing Principal for Applied Development Economics, who earlier prepared the Existing Conditions Report for the Interregional Partnership. Following this presentation, attendees will hear panels of experts address the key areas of affordable housing, creating jobs with livable wages, and the infrastructure and resource needs for future growth such as water and transportation.

Attendees will have the opportunity to discuss key issues, voice concerns and provide direction to the Leadership Team regarding the future activities and program goals of the Wine Country Interregional Partnership, and to become involved.

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