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## Placerville Drive connector to open Friday

By Wendy Schultz | Democrat staff writer



The Bridge over Hangtown Creek that connects Placerville Drive to Main Street is all striped and ready to open Friday.  
Democrat photo by Pat Dollins

Friday, June 6, will not only be remembered as D-Day, the day Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy. It might also go down in Placerville history as The Day the day that Forni Road reopened and the new Placerville Drive connector opened for business.

After 4 p.m. on Friday, both directions of Forni Road between Main Street and Ray Lawyer Drive will reopen to through traffic and the new Placerville Drive connector will be open from Placerville Drive eastbound to Main Street. The westbound direction from Main to Placerville Drive will not be open until early fall.

For those with long memories, it may remembered that Forni Road once came all the way down to join Lower Main Street near the Alternative Healing Alliance and an offramp from Highway 50 ran between a gas station and the KFC/Bagelworks building. Not anymore.

Now, a smooth wide road continues lower Main Street up to Fulmer's Auto Body where it splits into a left-hand turn onto Forni Road or continues west onto Placerville Drive. No freeway.

"This will have a real and significant impact on the congestion on Highway 50," said City Engineer Rick Tippet. "Opening Forni and the Placerville Drive connector allows local traffic to bypass the congestion that builds up on Highway 50 at Canal."

The end of Forni is newly paved and straightened and there is a stop sign for eastbound travelers, a left turn lane for those going west on Forni to Ray Lawyer.

After 4 p.m. on Friday, if you are on Placerville Drive and want to come into downtown Placerville, you'll be able to test that smooth wide road for yourself, but if you're in town and want to go onto Placerville Drive, you'll need to use the freeway until early fall after final construction Highway 50 overpass at Placerville Drive is complete.

"We considered not opening the connection until all the bridgework was done, but with the price of gas, it was a better idea to open the road in at least one direction in order to reduce congestion and keep people from having to sit in a long line just to get into town," said Rich Tippet, Placerville city engineer.

At 4 p.m. there will be a brief ribbon cutting ceremony attended by Mayor Carl Hagen, City Council members and other city and county officials. Shortly after the ceremony the roads will be open for the Friday evening commute.

"It's a milestone for the Highway 50 Operational Improvements Project and we want to celebrate it," said Tippet. "It brings us close to the end of this phase of the project and now we can start seeing results."

Wendy Schultz can be reached at (530)344-5063 or [wschultz@mtdemocrat.net](mailto:weschultz@mtdemocrat.net)