

BlueGo routes to change; MV files multiple lawsuits

By Kathryn Reed



Bus routes through the South Shore are expected to change July 14, the day after the South Lake Tahoe City Council votes on the proposal. What happens if the council votes no is not known.

The major changes would be eliminating the Meyers route and the Stateline-Zephyr Cove route, as well as making service along Highway 50 available every 30 minutes.

People without a bus stop would be able to pay the \$4 fee for on-demand service to take them to the nearest transit center. They would be given a free transfer to be able to continue to their final destination.

The one-way fee for a trip on BlueGo is \$2, so this change will cost people more money.

The difference with this route reconfiguration compared to ones brought forward by the former transit operator is these are designed to save money, according to STATA member Kathay Lovell.

Gordon Shaw of LSC Transportation Consultants was at the June 4 STATA meeting to present a plan of action to the board. Besides a few tweaks, much of what was said at that meeting was reiterated June 25. The board chose not to look beyond September. It intends to revisit routes and monetary issues on

a monthly basis.

In a long, somewhat disjointed meeting Friday, the South Tahoe Area Transportation Authority board approved these route changes, a \$4.6 million budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, and to table where the interim operator will work.

The 10am meeting started in the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office with Lovell questioning paying \$2,200 a month to lease a building on Elks Point Road. She favors having everyone at the bus garage in the city.

Banter went back and forth about how much space TRC, the consultant/operator needs, plus how secure the bus garage is for STATA's accountant. It will be brought back at a future meeting.

STATA has been paying TRPA \$80,000/year to use office space and for staff time. The reason to move is to save money.

TRC would write that \$2,200 check to the landlord, but the money comes via STATA as a pass through. That figure is part of the total fee STATA pays TRC. The contract between STATA and TRC is for the latter to receive \$460,000 a year, according to STATA spokeswoman Stacy Dingman.

"When we get to a long term, three- to five-year contract, the cost structure will be completely different," Dingman said after the meeting.

Forty minutes into the meeting the board went into closed session for about 2.5 hours. There they discussed litigation, the budget and the operating plan.

MV Transportation, the company that had been operating BlueGo and other components of the transit system since last summer, ceased doing so as of June 20. MV has filed a lawsuit in El Dorado County Superior Court against STATA and all member agencies in an attempt to be paid nearly \$2 million for

services rendered.

MV has also filed a suit in Solano County Superior Court, where it's based, against TRC for intentionally interfering in its contract with STATA.

MV has also filed a writ in Douglas County District Court to freeze STATA's assets. The agency's main bank account is tied to this action. For now, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office has control of it.

Dingman said bills are getting paid and that the action is not hampering operations.