

BlueGo routes changing, audit still not done

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Riders of BlueGo, the South Shore’s bus service that is bankrupt, can expect more route changes as of Oct. 3.

The South Tahoe Area Transit Authority board unanimously agreed to the changes at the Sept. 10 meeting. The South Lake Tahoe City Council will vote on the changes Sept. 14.

Gordon Shaw with LSC consultants once again gave a PowerPoint presentation to the board. The route changes and budget were the focus of his talk.



BlueGo routes are being cut to save money.

Gone is Route 22 – Stateline/Zephyr Cove and Route 40 – Meyers.

Also eliminated are routes 52, 54 and 55. The expansion of routes 50 and 53 are supposed to help lessen the impact on riders who use those three eliminated routes.

“We know we can get to the college at least once an hour,” Shaw told the board.

A survey is going on now to assess what people going to Lake

Tahoe Community College would like and to then tweak the route as necessary to accommodate them.

The budget shows \$159,893 in surplus for the fiscal year 2010-11. But it also includes \$275,000 from El Dorado County even though the county is no longer part of STATA.

Kathay Lovell, mayor of South Lake Tahoe and STATA board member, raised a concern about keeping that money in the budget. Carl Hasty, leader of Tahoe Transportation District which now runs the day-to-day operations for STATA, said he spoke with the county's counsel Sept. 9 and is confident El Dorado will be a member again.

El Dorado County pulled out in July because of liability issues and lack of confidence regarding financial issues.

STATA still does not have its 2009 audit complete. Even though it was on the agenda Sept. 10, it was not approved. The board gave Dan Garrison, who works for Ridge Tahoe and is treasurer of the board, direction to approve the audit. The board never intends to vote on accepting or rejecting it. Nor does it have to by law.

But a copy of the draft is not being given to anyone. This is not sitting well with at least El Dorado County.

Lake Tahoe News obtained an email between county Auditor-Controller Joe Harn and Russ Nygaard, the county's deputy director of engineering and facilities, which was cc'd to a number of people, including the whole Board of Supervisors. It's in response to Hasty telling Nygaard the audit won't be released until the STATA board gets it.

Harn writes, "Carl Hasty's position is ridiculous. For a funding agency, like the County of El Dorado not to be able to obtain a copy of STATA's June 2009 audit is ridiculous. The County and DOT [Department of Transportation] need to consider fully the problems of contracting with agencies located in

Nevada. There seems to be great delays in providing the County with basic public records. With the litigation going on with MV Transportation, TTD's failure to provide us with basic public records is not helpful."

STATA is a Nevada entity. If it were in California, the draft would be a public document.

Hasty said after the Sept. 10 meeting he expects the final audit to be done next week.

The audit was pulled from an earlier agenda because the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency said it had issues with language in the document. TRPA doesn't have a voting member on the STATA board.

It was TRPA that brought in John Andoh as the transit administrator. And it was TRPA's financial ledgers that were used by STATA for a number of years. Without seeing the audit and subsequent revisions, it's anyone's guess as to what the numbers show and what changes were made.

The reason this is a big deal is that for the most part this is public money.

The Stateline casinos, Heavenly Mountain Resort, Grace Academy, Ridge Tahoe and Big George Ventures are the private partners.

STATA has filed for bankruptcy. It is also facing a number of lawsuits from MV Transportation, the former operator of BlueGo.

STATA was able to resolve one legal matter at this month's meeting. In closed session the board voted to accept the settlement with ATM and Andrew Morris, the transit operator before MV took over.

"We were suing them. It mostly had to do with the status of the fleet," STATA chairwoman Nancy McDermid said after the

meeting. She deferred details to STATA attorney Mike McLaughlin. He was not available late Friday.