

City to erect signs to deter walkers near convention center site

By Kathryn Reed

Trying to prevent a lawsuit and provide public safety, the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday agreed to increase the signage at the bankrupt convention center site so people will know not to walk on the north side of Highway 50.

Tiny signs are at either end of the dormant construction site saying to not walk there and to cross the street. But they don't always work based on the number of people seen walking there.



Cyclists don't have much leeway on Highway 50 by the convention center project.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Caltrans approved an encroachment permit Dec. 3, 2008, which expired Aug. 1, 2009. Nichols Engineering had designed a plan to make the area better for pedestrians, but Lake Tahoe

Development Company nixed that idea, according to city staff.

LTDC filed for bankruptcy in October 2009 on the 11-acre parcel and is awaiting the judge's December decision to know the future. At this time, according to city staff, LTDC won't put any money into making the area better for walkers/cyclists.

When the fencing first went up around the concrete and rebar, signs on the wooden fence facing the highway had pictures of what the end project would look like. Those have long since been removed.

Insiders say the \$410 million project the city and Randy Lane's Lake Tahoe Development Company agreed to will not resemble what will eventually go on this prime piece of real estate near Stateline. Most people close to the project tell *Lake Tahoe News* a convention center is not likely to be built. High-end lodging is expected to be a component.

Before anything gets built, the city has agreed to put up more signs so people don't walk by the area. A narrow strip of asphalt barely wide enough for a cyclist separates traffic from the K-rail – those concrete barriers.

"I would recommend both signage and a boardwalk if funding is available," city engineer Stan Hill told the council Nov. 2.

The council was presented with three plans Tuesday – leave the area as it is, implement the K-rail plan prepared by Nichols Engineering at a cost of about \$30,000, or establish a pedestrian access path with Caltrans for about \$150,000.



No sidewalk here to get to the other side.

Councilman Hal Cole came up with the fourth idea, which the council agreed to, that is to put more signs up deterring people from walking on the north side of the street. At what cost this will be is unknown.

The money for any work at the site would come from the \$365,000 that is collected in tax increment revenue each year from the site. The Teeter Law allows the county to pay the city property taxes from the site despite the property owner not actually paying a dime for year. But that income source will dry up in about 18 months per state law.