

TTD trying to get handle on BlueGo bus system

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – One day the short-range transit plan for the South Shore will be adopted and implemented.

Gordon Shaw of LSC Transportation Consultants gave yet another presentation on the plan that has been talked about for months. This time the Tahoe Transportation District board heard it. The board is expected to take action on it at the December meeting even though some of what is in the plan is already being implemented.



BlueGo buses operate under a fiscal cloud of uncertainty. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“We have stopped the bleeding,” Shaw told the TTD board this month. “We have more money coming in than going out – not much.”

He spoke about what to do in 2011 -- which is in the plan STATA adopted and is being used now.

Shaw also gave two scenarios for what transit on the South Shore might look like in 2015. One was essentially the status quo if there is no economic recovery and the other considers financial improvements in the region.

The latter plan has a goal of bus service on Highway 50 every 10 minutes.

“This is what you see when you go to Park City,” Shaw said. “Then the ridership increases.”

He’d like to see trolley service on the East and West shores.

Shaw pointed out some stops don’t have benches and several don’t have shelters. He also suggested the participation agreements with the private entities be reviewed and made consistent. He’d like information provided in Spanish. He wants the fares to stay as they are, but do away with tokens and make the payment system simpler.

Carl Hasty, TTD executive director, added that opportunities his group has that bankrupt South Tahoe Area Transportation Authority didn’t have is by the time 2015 roles around waterborne transit could be integrated into the land transit as a connector.

He also said Caltrans has a signal plan for Highway 50, but about \$3.5 million is needed. “That’s something the district could help with,” Hasty said.

According Hasty, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency hired Shaw to come up with the plan that was presented. But during presentations to the now defunct STATA board that distinction was not made clear. It appeared STATA had hired Shaw to do the transportation plan.

TRPA would be involved because it is the parent of the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization. The TMP0, as it is called, is the transportation division of TRPA, according to

its website.

It is through the TMP0 that federal and state transportation dollars come. TRPA in turn hands it out to the appropriate entity.

One reason a private company could not run the entire bus operation is the feds and states want to give dollars to another government agency – which the TRPA is.

TTD can also be a conduit for money. This agency has been around since the 1980s, though not always active.

In other transportation news:

- TRC Consultants, the firm hired by STATA to run the buses after MV Transportation was fired by the now-bankrupt STATA board, is using the name BlueGo Transit Management Inc. for its South Shore operation. The company is based in Florida.

The agreement for the company to operate BlueGo was ratified at the TTD meeting earlier this month. This was a formality now that the bankruptcy judge terminated the agreement TRC had with STATA. The TRC agreement is good through June 30, 2011.

Although the firm will be paid \$23,460 per month, the source of TTD's income to make this happen has not been solidified.

South Lake Tahoe and Ridge Resorts have signed agreements.

Douglas County commissioners will discuss the matter at their Dec. 2 meeting.

Heavenly Mountain Resort and Lakeside Casino are close to signing, according to Hasty.

Negotiations are under way with Harveys, Harrah's and El Dorado County. The MontBleu contract is under review.

- All individual members of the former STATA board have been served papers in the lawsuit naming them as defendants in

papers MV has filed. Nick Haven, a non-voting member representing TRPA, was not sued. His employer, though, was.

MV is going after the several million dollars it believes is owed to it from STATA. With STATA having few, if any, assets other than the more than \$600,000 in a court ordered frozen bank account, MV believed its only recourse was to sue the individuals.