

Lake Tahoe water transit plan inching toward reality

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – A shred of optimism still exists that water transit will be operational on the North Shore in summer 2011. The reality is it is probably not going to be fully functional, if at all, until 2012.

The Tahoe Transportation District board this month agreed to have Executive Director Carl Hasty find a person to spearhead the project. This person would be tasked with obtaining agreements with pier owners, finding a boat and developing a plan.

TTD has no money for the project for the coming season, but the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association has said it can probably come up with \$10,000 to help the cause. The NTLRA board still needs to vote on allocating the dollars.

The idea is to have water transit for locals and tourists at locations in Placer County – the North Shore – as a pilot program. The plan is to start small and grow – both in number of boats used and stops.

In this month's staff report it says, "Several key questions remain unanswered at this time and they are the support of the Federal Transit Administration to use capital grant funds for boat acquisition, the identification of matching funds should FTA support exit, and the identification of start-up funds to get operations under way."

Mechele Duhamel, who ran a waterborne transit operation briefly in 2010, spoke at the meeting this month in favor of going forward with the concept.

“There is tons of funding out there. There are waterborne associations. They’ve all done this before,” Duhamel said. “A nonprofit in our eyes is a perfect way to solicit more money.”

Bill Bohn, who operates Bohn Consulting Design & Engineering in Incline Village, submitted a three-page letter to the board outlining how to go forward with water transit. He is advocating his firm be the one to create a feasibility study.

In part he wrote, “ ... none of the studies have comprehensively addressed the entire Waterborne Transit system from initial design, systems integration, funding and ongoing operational requirements. Before this board votes to approve the LSC study as presented it needs to consider the entire waterborne system from design, funding, construction and implementation to on-going operations.”