

Lake Tahoe Boulevard's future in El Dorado County's hands

By Kathryn Reed

Doing nothing is not an option. That was the message delivered Friday night by El Dorado County officials when it comes to Lake Tahoe Boulevard.

More than 80 people sat or stood through a two-hour meeting about the proposed changes on this stretch of road on the South Shore between Clear View Drive and D Street.



Lake Tahoe Boulevard may not be four-lanes in coming years.

Photo/LTN

Issues are whether the road will be reduced to two lanes from four, what types of bike trails and/or routes would be developed, and if the speed limit would be altered.

While some bemoaned not knowing about the April 29 meeting, others had been giving written input for weeks. *Lake Tahoe News* reported on the meeting April 10 and had posted an item on the Events page prior to that.

More information about the alternatives is online.

What was new is a sixth alternative was announced, which will be online next week. Comments will be taken until May 6.

The meeting was a bit of a free-for-all, with people shouting from the audience, engaging speakers in a bit of a debate, applauding, booing and everyone being passionate about their stance.

It was a much less contentious meeting than fall 2008 when county officials were caught off-guard by the overwhelming backlash to keep the status quo. At that time the emotions from the 2007 Angora Fire were still raw. Lake Tahoe Boulevard is one of the main routes to the burn area.

While some still spoke of the need to keep four lanes for emergency vehicles, that did not dominate the conversation.

The project is billed to reduce sediment flowing into Angora Creek and the Upper Truckee River. Water quality is a major impetus for doing the project. This includes decreasing sediment runoff and storm zone restoration.

Safety is another overriding concern – for motorists and cyclists.

John Runnels said a long ago settlement requires the road to stay four lanes. While county officials disagreed with this after the meeting, they said legal counsel will resolve issues like the one Runnels raised.

Brendan Ferry, project manager for the county, also dispelled the falsehood that this environmental improvement project has anything to do with compensating for the Tahoe Keys debacle of paving over the most sensitive marsh in the basin in the 1960s.

Now it's up to county officials to decide which alternative is preferred. Scales are tipping toward Alternative 4 – which is in detail on Page 18 of the draft that is being discussed. It

would maintain two lanes of striped 4-foot Class II bike lanes from Clear View Drive to Tahoe Mountain Road. From Tahoe Mountain Road to Sawmill Road it would go from four to two lanes with 4-foot Class II bike lanes. It would remove 6 feet of pavement on each side of the road. The forest trail from Lake Tahoe Boulevard at Sawmill Road to D Street would become a paved 8-foot Class I bike path.

The county expects to pick a preferred alternative this summer. Then begins the environmental document phase. During that time the public will have more opportunities to comment. That could be completed by fall 2012. Design would be in 2013. Construction would be that year or in 2014.

It's expected to cost between \$880,000 and \$1.5 million. Although not all the money is in hand, what is secured is from grants. None is from the county's general fund.