

Long-awaited Harrison Ave. upgrades in works in S. Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

While South Lake Tahoe is never likely to have a downtown based on how haphazardly the city was allowed to develop and that the main road is a state highway, another five blocks are about to be removed from the blighted category.

Harrison Avenue between Los Angeles and Lakeview avenues is ranked No. 2 on the city's list of priorities for capital improvement projects.



The dirt area will become diagonal parking, Harrison Avenue (on the right) will be one-way, and sidewalks along Highway 50 are already in (not shown).

Photo/LTN file

No drastic changes are proposed from what has been talked

about for the last 14 years. But the funding to do the complete streets overhaul is still not in place. The price tag in 2006 was at least \$1 million. The total amount today is projected to be \$1,625,844.

The bulk of that money (\$805,770) is likely to come from the certificate of participation bond the council will vote on and likely execute early next year.

Money is starting to trickle in. At the Nov. 1 City Council meeting the five electeds accepted \$275,074 from the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization's Regional Surface Transportation Program to begin the planning and design of Harrison Avenue.

"We think the economy has persuaded business owners to look at things differently now," Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe capital improvement project manager, said.

In the past, the owners on this frontage street paralleling Highway 50 have dragged their feet. Coverage is a big concern, along with parking.

What has been on the books for years are what the city is going with – making Harrison Avenue one-way, diagonal parking, sidewalks and a class 1 bike trail.

Part of the bid package for the project includes looking at forming a business improvement district, much like what the Ski Run area has.

Mayor Hal Cole is concerned if one property owner disagrees with the plans that the whole project will be doomed. With a BID, that is less likely to happen.

A design proposal is expected to be presented to the council at the Nov. 15 meeting.

Marino said business and property owners have been involved in design aspects.

With Caltrans this summer-fall putting in curbs and gutters along this stretch of the highway, the transformation has begun. Plus, the area ties into all the improvements being done at Lakeview Commons.

In waiting this long to actually move forward, the California Tahoe Conservancy has changed its mind about the parcel it owns next to the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* building. It is now willing to swap it for the land the city owns on Glenwood Avenue where the old drive-in was. The city would use the Harrison land for parking.

Marino expects to have Harrison Avenue be a shovel-ready project in 2012, with building starting the following construction season.

In other action:

- A contract with Clean Tahoe Program that ends Sept. 30, 2015, was signed, with the contingency an audit or review of the books is done this year because one has not been done since 2008.
- An agreement was signed with Nichols Consulting Engineers to begin the planning process of putting in sidewalks on Pioneer Trail between Highway 50 and Larch Avenue.
- The city is paying nearly \$35,000 to equip the snow removal fleet with GPS navigation systems. It will cost the city nearly \$6,000 a year to keep the system running. The point of it according the staff report is to provide "greater flexibility in vehicle assignments for the streets superintendent." The public will also be able to view snow removal by neighborhood or street.
- A two-year contract with the Stationary Engineers, Local 39 was approved. Those general and public works employees will pay 4 percent of their PERS contribution this fiscal year and the full 8 percent in 2012-13. No COLAs are part of the deal.

They agreed to changes in the health care plan which would take effect when all other groups sign-off on that aspect of the deal.