

LTUSD, LTCC brace for their share of \$1 bil. in midyear cuts

By Kathryn Reed

Money for teachers, textbooks and lights for the classrooms remain – for the most part – but there may be no students sitting at the desks. That's because school bus funding has been cut throughout California.

Gov. Jerry Brown on Tuesday pulled the trigger to slice millions of dollars from K-14 education.

When the state budget was passed last summer a number of assumptions came with it – like how much revenue would flow to Sacramento. Those predictions are so far off – \$4 billion short – they forced the governor to implement midyear cuts.



State budget cuts could force LTUSD buses to sit idle in the garage.

Photo/LTN file

For Lake Tahoe Unified School District it means losing \$382,000 in transportation dollars.

"Our fear is what do the cuts look like next year," Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News* after the Dec. 13 school board meeting adjourned at 10:30pm. "We have to bus people."

The state isn't saying if these are one-time cuts or ongoing for 2012-13.

And that bus money is just what is used to get students to and from school. Athletic and special education busing expenses are separate categories.

Students can't drive their friends to school until they've had a driver's license for at least a year. The price of a gallon of gasoline is also filling up bus seats instead of the student parking lot. LTUSD buses 1,800 students, while about another 2,000 get to school some other way.

CF0 Deb Yates was slated to give her first interim budget report to the board Tuesday night before it was known Brown would be dropping the hammer on education.

Throughout the state K-12 is about to lose \$79.6 million in general funding, plus another \$248 million in transportation. Community colleges will lose \$102 million.

"It could have been worse," Yates said.

Education officials knew when the state budget was passed that midyear cuts could occur. K-12 could have been hit with a \$1.5 billion loss.

In addition to the bus dollars being whacked, the governor is taking about \$14 per pupil, or roughly \$56,000 from LTUSD.

To bridge the gap, reserves will be used. This was anticipated when the board approved its budget. But it will bring the reserves below the desired 3 percent minimum.

If the cuts are ongoing, this will drastically affect future

budgets. As it stands, LTUSD is forecasting a shortfall of more than \$416,000 for 2012-13.

But there is enough in reserves to survive the next two years with the known cuts.

Earlier Tuesday night the Lake Tahoe Community College board met.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo anticipates the college will face a \$50,000 loss for this academic year. More than four times that amount was set aside for anticipated midyear cuts.

The big change will be the increase statewide of semester units going from \$36 to \$46 (which would be adjusted for LTCC's quarter system). This fall semester fees went from \$26 to \$36.

All told, the governor came up with \$1 billion in cuts. But that barely touches the projected 2012-13 deficit of \$13 billion.

Other entities taking a hit include:

- \$100 million each to the UC and CSU systems. (They each were cut by \$650 million in the state's current budget.)
- \$100 million to In-Home Supportive Services.
- \$15.9 million to county libraries.
- \$100 million to services for people with developmental disabilities.
- \$102 million to public safety services, including prisons.
- \$8.6 million to Medi-Cal.

Most of the reductions announced Tuesday will be implemented Jan. 1, with more cuts likely to be declared by Brown after the first of the year.

One way to generate revenue is raising \$6.8 billion through increasing the sales tax and raising rates on wealthier Californians. The governor wants voters to approve those taxes next November.

In other action:

- Molly Blann is president of the LTCC board and Karen Borges the clerk.
- At LTUSD, Wendy David will serve as president of the board another year, with Sue Novasel the clerk.