

Anti-Sass campaign rooted in Loop road

By Kathryn Reed

Rare is the time when a campaign is visibly launched against a candidate. Welcome to South Lake Tahoe.

Signs began cropping up this week against Austin Sass who is running for the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

The man behind the signs is Mike McKeen, an ardent voice in the anti-loop road campaign. He has formally and legally created the committee called Opposition to Loop Road – 2012. This allows the group to post the political signs.

McKeen owns the Powder House property near Stateline that would be taken out under some loop road proposals. The signs are in this area as well on timeshare properties owned by big backers of Councilman Bruce Grego, who is up for re-election.

McKeen did not respond to an email inquiry from *Lake Tahoe News*.

However, he has posted comments on *LTN*. On Oct. 18 he wrote the following unedited comment, “Only funded Bruce Grego AFTER his vote and clarity with the loop road.. Do NOT need members with with strong financial backing from Nevada interests Park Cattle Co., South Shore Vision (former Gaming Alliance, etc.. We already have Claire and Angela, Sass would make the majority. Council members need to represent South Lake Tahoe residents first – we pay the taxes! Our community is not named “Tahoe South”.”

This is what Sass wrote about the loop road in his candidate Q&A for *Lake Tahoe News*: “If someone came to you and said they wanted to buy your house or business and had no money or

financing prospects, how much time would you spend with them? For most of us, the answer would be none. That's how I currently think about the loop road. There is no money and there are no funding sources to build now. We can all dream, but it's time to focus on what's real.

"There is no doubt that the TTD (Tahoe Transportation District) threw a bomb into our community without thinking about how people's emotions would flare up and how they would answer everyone's questions. Plain and simple, they messed up. On the other hand, there are a small number of people in our community who are politicizing the issue for their own political and future financial gain. They are just as much at fault in polarizing our community as the TTD was. We also need to remember that this project has been part of the plans in our community for many years and the city knew it was in the works.

"I am open to any ideas that would revitalize any part of the South Shore. I hope investment comes soon because that should improve the economy, the environment, and our transportation, which is key to achieving connectivity."

In regards to McKeen's signs, Sass told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It's a free country. He can put whatever he wants on a sign within the guidelines of his committee. I will thank him for the free advertising later."