

Funds from Measure R allocated for South Shore bicycle trail, ball field improvement

By Joann Eisenbrandt

The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Joint Powers Authority met Jan. 25 in the City Council chambers to decide how to allocate the estimated \$450,000 in previously unspent Measure R money.

Shay Navarro, chairperson of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, presented her committee's funding requests. That committee in conjunction with the city, California Tahoe Conservancy, El Dorado County and Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition identified trail building and maintenance needs within the JPA's jurisdiction, to, as Navarro put it, "work alongside the city's efforts to make this a world class, year-round bicycle destination."

The committee requested the following allocations of Measure R funds:

- \$100,000 to South Lake Tahoe to match the grant of \$475,452 received from Caltrans through the Bicycle Transportation Authority, which is contingent upon the release of these JPA funds. Funds would be spent in the five bicycle trail rehabilitation zones as outlined in a detailed memo to the JPA from Jim Marino and John Upton.
- \$88,000 for TRES (or similar) decking for the bicycle trail bridges over the Truckee River and Trout Creek. (In July, \$30,000 was allocated for this, but the improvements were not made.) Additional research concluded that an additional \$58,000 would be needed.

- Up to \$45,000 for a bridge to raise the portion of trail behind McDonald's that seasonally floods.
- An endorsement by the JPA of the Bicycle Advisory Committee letter to South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County requesting creation of a collaborative agreement for a regularly-scheduled bicycle trail maintenance program (striping, sweeping and snow removal) among the city, El Dorado County, Caltrans and the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition. This does not include any funding request.



The South Shore can expect more bike trail improvements like this one at Sawmill and Highway 50. Photo/LTN file

Following Navarro's presentation, bike committee member Chuck Nelson expressed concerns that the BAC's recommendations on funding priorities as well as specifics on the creation of a collaborative bike trail maintenance program may not be carried out as envisioned.

"The Bicycle Advisory Committee has a very important role under Measure R in providing recommendations to the JPA," he insisted. "We want to make sure it's done right."

He asked that the motion approving the allocation of the \$100,000 to the city require acceptance of the BAC's

recommendations.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago responded that she supported the allocation of the \$100,000 but could not support imposing such requirements on a jurisdiction, adding that everything she'd heard from the BAC indicated there had been and would continue to be an openness on the city's part and that if any recommendations needed changing, the BAC would be involved in that process.

City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner, the South Lake Tahoe's JPA representative, told Nelson, "You sound accusatory. It's unfair to categorize the city as uncooperative. There's nobody on the City Council who doesn't believe in this ... I suggest you work from a position of trust with the city. We're committed to getting this process done."

After additional discussion, the JPA unanimously approved all four of the Bicycle Advisory Committee's requests.

Fields Advisory Committee member Ken Riegel then presented a PowerPoint outlining his committee's requests for Measure R funding. They were:

- \$134,000 to the Lake Tahoe Unified School District to rehabilitate the field at Sierra House Elementary School, which he described as "a dangerous, uneven field."
- \$90,000 to LTUSD for varsity softball field No. 2 at South Tahoe High School. He noted the school district has already done substantial work there and these funds would be used to complete that work.
- \$20,000 to LTUSD for planning only at this time for the construction of an added multi-used softball field at the Al Tahoe fields site. Additional funding for the projects themselves would come and be used in 2014 and 2015. These fields, he noted, are the most highly used with over 300,000 children using them annually for softball, baseball and

soccer. Because so many families are involved, he indicated that, "many volunteers and professionals are also available to rally on completing these projects."

- Designate future JPA funds in the following amounts for additional fields projects: \$134,000 for constructing an added field at Al Tahoe; \$29,150 for relocation of the T-Ball field at Al Tahoe; and \$92,600 for upgrading the existing fields at Al Tahoe.

Riegel also listed additional "unfunded projects" identified by the FAC at the magnet school in Meyers, Tahoe Valley Elementary, Bijou Community School and South Tahoe Middle School. The magnet school was identified as their top priority.

FAC member Marilyn Breisacher spoke to the importance of the "gender-neutral" improvements that have been made to fields in the community, specifically referencing the amenities to the fields at South Tahoe High School for girls. Her daughter, she explained, had to play in the past on a field with "no restrooms, concession stand or adequate seating," adding that the improvements won't just help local players but will also help bring in more girls softball tournaments.

The JPA approved all four FAC requests as presented. The next Recreation JPA meeting will be in July. The Bicycle and Field Advisory Committees will be meeting later this quarter and will bring updates to the July JPA meeting.

The three-member JPA consists of Santiago, Conner, and Tahoe Paradise Park Improvement District Board Member Judy Clot. The latter two are new to the board, with Friday being each of their first meeting.

Measure R was passed in November 2011 with the intention of changing and expanding the locations and services that could

be funded by the Community Facilities District originally established by Measure S when it passed in September 2000. Measure S provided for a \$5.8 million bond to construct an ice rink, four ball fields adjacent to Lake Tahoe Community College, improving Tahoe Paradise Park and opening it to the public, and maintaining 25 miles of new bike trails. Measure S also provided for yearly maintenance funding for the new athletic fields by LTCC, Tahoe Paradise Park and the newly constructed bicycle trails. Under Measure S, each single-family home in the district is assessed \$18/year. Measure S/R will sunset in 2030.

In reality, only about eight to 10 miles of bike trails were built. The unused remainder of the annual Measure S allocation of \$125,000 continued accumulating, but was unspendable. Measure R unlocked those funds by adding to the authorized improvements and services funded by Measure S to include the renovation and maintenance of Class 1 bicycle trails existing prior to Sep. 19, 2000, and the renovation of youth ball fields within the Community Facilities District. It created a Bicycle Advisory Committee and a Fields Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the JPA as to costs and priorities of future improvements and maintenance for sports fields as well as bicycle paths in the district.