

Kings Beach face-lift set to begin in summer

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

Construction on a long-awaited project to revitalize a popular north Lake Tahoe community's downtown and make it safer for pedestrians is expected to begin this summer.

The Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project, estimated to cost \$48 million, is aimed at improving pedestrian access, water quality and aesthetics for residents and visitors.

Last week, Placer County supervisors approved a financing and construction plan for the project's first phase, which will begin the reconfiguration of Highway 28 through the downtown core.



Improvements to Kings Beach are set to begin in May.

It also will address traffic management in neighborhoods north of the highway. Other downtown improvements will be detailed in a second, final phase.

A Feb. 19 open house from 5:30-8pm at the North Tahoe Event Center has been scheduled to answer questions from the public, said county spokesman Robert Miller.

In the planning stages for decades, the project will reconfigure 1.1 miles of Highway 28 into three lanes with two roundabouts. It currently is a four-lane highway with a traffic signal at Coon Street.

The wide road is flanked by very few sidewalks, making pedestrian access to shops, restaurants and beaches difficult and sometimes dangerous.

Sidewalks, bike lanes, bus shelters, water-quality improvements and landscaping in the downtown area are included in the project.

The stretch of highway through Kings Beach is one of the last remaining four-lane sections of road on Lake Tahoe's North Shore, said Dan LaPlante, a county associate engineer and the project's manager.

Because concerns have been expressed that some drivers may cut through neighborhoods once the highway is narrowed, sidewalks and traffic-calming devices, including 29 speed humps, will be installed in neighborhoods north of downtown.

Eight humps already have been installed. Speed-radar signs and neighborhood entrance features will also be used to slow traffic.

County supervisors in January approved the formation of a benefit assessment district to maintain the improvements, saying the district was favored by a majority of ballots from affected property owners.

The \$166,000 annual assessment will be divided among 296 property owners whose property is fronted by the planned improvements, based on the amount of frontage, lot size, square footage and zoning, LaPlante said.

Most of the assessment will be used for the removal, hauling and storage of snow. The remainder will go toward the repair,

replacement and power washing of sidewalks, emptying trash receptacles and maintaining landscaping.

LaPlante said the project's \$48 million cost will come from a combination of federal, state and local funding. Still needed is about \$10 million, he said.

The first phase of the two-phase project is expected to take up to three construction seasons, Miller said, noting that "in the Tahoe basin, construction can take place only between May and October."

No estimate is available for completion of the second, final phase.

"It's funding-dependent," LaPlante said. "We don't know where the remaining \$10 million will come from, but we're committed to doing the entire project and are working on finding funding sources every day."