

Report: South Shore transit reliable, financially stable

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Buses are in better shape, they run on time more often, the yard is cleaned up, and the whole system is operating in the black. Those are the changes to BlueGo since the Tahoe Transportation District took over in November 2010.

And today, not a dime of the budget is coming from the casinos.

Curtis Garner, who is charge of the transit system on the South Shore, updated the TTD board March 22 about what has happened in the two plus years since the change in operator.

“The baseline is improving. We project to have the highest level of ridership since the 2009-10 season,” Garner said. Projections are for the non-skier rides to top 500,000 this fiscal year.



This is what the fare cards will look like.

Weather plays a large role in BlueGo’s numbers because many of those on board are headed to Heavenly Mountain Resort. The ridership was up significantly in 2010-11 on the ski shuttles because that was the winter that would never end.

When BlueGo offered free rides on its main Highway 50 route during the Christmas-New Year's span the ridership spiked.

Angela Swanson, who is South Lake Tahoe's rep to the TTD board, said she would like staff to show what it would take to offer free ridership year-round.

Because a free bus system isn't likely to happen any time soon, BlueGo staff is going forward with creating six magnetic passes that will be used by riders in lieu of cash. As soon as the devices are installed on the entire fleet, the cards will be sold to riders.

Garner said the big thing Tahoe needs to do is create a regional transit system. He added, that until it does so, bringing in events like the X Games or the Olympics would not be possible.

TTD board chairman Steve Teshera said funding is the big stumbling block when it comes to that regionwide system.

The next goals, Garner said, are to conduct a travel impact study of people going from the Bay Area to the Lake Tahoe Basin, a regional facilities alternatives analysis and long-range transit plan, and define a preferred local alternative for a passenger ferry.