

Loop road proponents looking at community impacts

By Kathryn Reed

Federal law dictates what happens to people who might be displaced if the Tahoe Transportation District ever reroutes Highway 50 on the South Shore. But fair market value today is another story.

One man at Thursday's TTD meeting brought up the fact that he would have to fully disclose to a potential buyer that the loop road could one day take out his property. He said he would not be able to get fair market value today because of this fact.



Alfred Knotts with Tahoe Transportation District looks over one of the loop road maps with Angie Watson who owns apartments in the project area. Photo/Kathryn Reed

A real estate broker in the audience confirmed that everyone with property that could be affected by the project now has to tell a buyer about the loop road. This scenario is the same thing that for years left those in the path of the convention

center project not wanting to improve their properties for fear of not getting a return on investment and unable to sell based on the threat of the parcel being consumed for what became a hole.

Officials are trying to bring transparency to the loop road by talking relocation and acquisition, but some in the audience said notices that have gone out seem more like scare tactics.

This project, though, would not become a hole because it cannot start until all the funding is in place.

There are four alternatives being studied, along with a do-nothing option. The one the TTD prefers would start on the west side in South Lake Tahoe at the vacant lots the city owns before the junction with Pioneer Trail and then go behind Harrah's and MontBleu, coming out at Lake Parkway where a roundabout would be put in. Another starts at the Pioneer Trail intersection. One calls for Highway 50 to be one way and the loop on the mountain side to go in the opposite direction. Then there is the skyway option to move pedestrians around, but would not address the traffic concerns proponents want to improve.

Goals of a loop road include making what is now Highway 50 in the tourist core a city-county street that would be more pedestrian-bike-transit centric, have wide-inviting sidewalks, and feel more like a downtown.

About 30 people turned out for the July 25 meeting – about half of what officials had hoped for.

Mike Lahodny with Bender Rosenthal, a commercial valuation and right-of-way services company, went over the laws that dictate what can happen to property owners, business owners and tenants.

No appraisals or acquisitions can occur until the TTD board certifies the environmental document. But part of the

environmental document is the Community Impact Study (CIS), with the Relocation Impact Study (RIS) being a component of that.

The RIS is expected to be completed by the end of August and the CIS in the fall.

Lahodny said even though the information being collected today will be outdated three to four years from now when appraisals may actually occur, the data is designed to let planners project out what could happen.

The draft environmental documents could be released in spring 2015, with the final document out in fall 2015. It is on the draft enviro docs that the public will be able to make the most comments, though officials are always taking comments.

South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County electeds will have to sign-off on the environmental documents, along with the TTD board. The one place the city and county could derail the project would be to not approve the permits to do the work within their jurisdictions.

The information Lahodny discussed is expected to be on the TTD website today, along with more detailed maps of the parcels that could be affected.