

Bike Coalition angry with Measure R spending

By Kathryn Reed

Money for bike trails or their maintenance was reduced by \$10,000 on Friday by the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority board.

The money is going to the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District. Two of the three JPA board members are also on the TPRID board – El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago and Judy Clot. South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner is the third JPA member.

At the annual financial meeting of the JPA board on July 25 there was an agenda item to up the TPRID allotment to \$60,000 this year, a \$10,000 increase. At the January board meeting TPRID will be tasked with bringing a proposal as to why it should receive even more money from Measure R funds beyond the stipulated \$50,000 and this additional \$10,000.

Voters in 2011 approved Measure R to replace Measure S, which was passed in 2000. South Shore residents on the California side pay \$18 per year in property taxes for the measure. It sunsets in 2030.



Measure R allows old bike trails to be overhauled,

like this one in South Lake
Tahoe. Photo/Provided

Measure R loosened how money could be spent.

The key changes from S to R included giving ball fields \$500,000 upfront. This is because the number of fields that Measure S was to build was never going to happen. The new wording allowed improvement to existing fields. It also allowed existing bike trails to be rehabbed. Bike trails would get more money after the fields got theirs, including any excess that would arrive via increased property taxes and/or bond refinancing. It was a gamble the bike community was willing to take – that there would be sufficient money.

The resolution says, “If funds remain after all of the above authorized and necessary funding has been provided for renovation of separated bicycle trails as provided in Facilities paragraph #5 and all of the above authorized and necessary funding has been provided for maintenance of bicycle trails as provided in Services paragraphs #3 and #4, such funds may be used, with the concurrence of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, for other bicycle related facilities, services, and/or programs within the CFD that promote and/or enhance bicycling within the CFD.”

Here is a copy of the resolution.

It does not say Tahoe Paradise or any other entity can tap into the funds.

Chuck Nelson, president of Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, read a letter to the JPA board last week admonishing it for taking money from the bike community, especially without consulting the Bicycle Advisory Committee. The committee makes recommendations to the JPA board about how Measure R bike money should be spent.

John Upton, the lone staff member for the JPA, agreed the

committee should have been consulted and said it would be going forward.

However, he and the three board members – especially Santiago and Conner – got into a debate with Nelson about what Measure R really says. Santiago and Conner were adamant that they could spend “extra” money however they want.

“Why does there need to be constant argument that the bike community is being cheated?” Conner said in a heated voice. “I really wish we could look at the bigger picture. I’d like to see an attitude of cooperation rather than argumentative.”

Upton, Santiago and Nelson were on Santiago’s one-time KTHO-AM 590 radio show prior to the 2011 vote. During the more than 20-minute show the three discussed where “extra” money goes. Bikes was the answer – at least at that time.

Despite the tiff over where money should be going, there are several bike projects in the works.

Shay Navarro, who is on the Bicycle Advisory Committee of the JPA, gave an overview of the work being done throughout South Lake Tahoe. This includes work behind McDonald’s at the Y, the trail behind Motel 6-Meeks, and near Harrison Avenue. Replacing the Trout Creek and Upper Truckee River bridges are also part of these projects.

All of the work should be done by the end of August.

If the work comes in under budget, the JPA board voted to spend \$10,000 on a pilot snow removal program the bike committee wants to embark on. The committee plans to ask South Lake Tahoe for matching funds, of which Conner said should not be a problem to secure.

Santiago said the county is finalizing a contract to have snow removed on the Pat Lowe bike trail in Meyers.

She added that county staff is looking at a way to connect the

Pat Lowe trail to the corner of Pioneer Trail and Highway 50. There is about a 200-foot gap that needs to be filled. This would be across California Tahoe Conservancy land, which Santiago said would not be a problem. (She sits on that board.)

“Caltrans is saying (they) don’t want you to do it because then (they) would have to put in a crosswalk,” Santiago said. “I say screw them. We have a connectivity issue.”

Caltrans this summer is slated to put in a crosswalk that goes north-south across Highway 50 at that intersection. Extending the bike trail would require one going east-west on Pioneer.

Santiago said the Sawmill Road bike trail and Lake Tahoe Boulevard enhancement projects should be done by the end of the grading season.

—

Notes:

The JPA board will continue its July 25 meeting to Aug. 1 at 9am in the downstairs conference room at Lake Tahoe Airport to discuss the annual audit.