

Safe connections to STMS being plotted

By Kathryn Reed

On a good day maybe three dozen of the nearly 800 students at South Tahoe Middle School ride their bike to school. Some walk, even more get a ride either from their parents, friends' parents or via the school bus.

For anyone who has been by the school in the morning or afternoon it's easy to see why parents may not want their child to walk or bike to the campus. The school fronts a state highway and has a four-lane major thoroughfare on one side.

Along Al Tahoe Boulevard the sidewalks are sporadic. It's most dangerous by the school because of the bus barn on the school side and all the driveways to the shopping center on the other side.



Planners want to make it safer to bike and walk to South Tahoe Middle School.

Photo/LTN file

Because this is the only 6-8 school in South Lake Tahoe students are coming from all parts of the district. And the routes to get there are not ideal.

This is why a group in town is looking at how to improve the trail system in the area to make it safer for students.

“At the end of it we will have a full connectivity plan,” Gavin Feiger with the Community Mobility Group told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Consultants will provide alternatives about how to connect to surrounding neighborhoods and the broader community.”

His group is part of the larger Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative. The collaborative was awarded a \$153,625 On Our Way grant from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Experts associated with Safe Routes to Schools are part of the team.

Enough money is in the pot to pay for design and engineering plans. The goal is not to talk about what could be done, but to have a plan ready to build.

This week begins a series of meetings and workshops to gather input from the public about possible improvements to get kids to and from school as well as how to tie the school to the existing trail system.

Safety is a huge concern.

“It is a problem not only in that area but elsewhere in the city,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Anything that can be done to improve bike trails, pedestrian pathways, signage, and increasing the distance from 4,000-pound vehicles and bicycles or walkers is going to help.”

With how trails suddenly stop, people often find themselves in precarious situations, even going against the flow of traffic.

Principal Beth Delacour said the biggest problem she sees is students not using the crosswalk between STMS and Rite-Aid. Delacour is curious to hear what the activists come up with, as she was just brought into the loop in the last two weeks. She will be administering a survey to students to get their

feedback about trail connections in and around the South Lake Tahoe school.

The mobility group earlier this month conducted traffic counts during the week and weekend to see how many people were using trails by STMS and which ones.

Going forward planners see this area of town being more of a hub, especially with the addition of Lakeview Commons, improvements to Harrison Avenue and potential growth at Lake Tahoe Community College. They would like the trails to logically connect to the recreation center, library, ball fields, Bijou Community Park and surrounding businesses.

After this week's meetings there will be a workshop in November where alternatives will be presented. The final plans and projects will be chosen, with appropriate design and engineering work done so construction funding could be applied for in May.

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Notes:

- LTUSD board meeting, Oct. 14 at 6pm at the district office on the corner of Highway 50 and Al Tahoe Boulevard.
- Outreach meeting, Oct. 16, 7-9am at STMS.
- Public workshop, Oct. 16 from 5:30-7:30pm in the STMS multipurpose room.
- Public workshop, Nov. 19 from 5:30-7:30pm in the STMS multipurpose room.