

Fate of historic bridge in Tahoe City, choked up highway intersection coming down to wire



The future of Tahoe City's Fanny Bridge is still being decided. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Unclogging the congestion at Tahoe City's Y, dealing with a seismically unfit bridge and providing more access points to the West Shore are the reasons the Tahoe Transportation District and others want to realign Highway 89.

Three public hearings this month, the last one on Jan. 28 before the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board, were opportunities for the public to give input. It also gave those who will ultimately make the decision on the final

project to get a preview of the alternatives.

Alfred Knotts with TTD said at this time there is no preferred alternative.

The four ideas TTD brought forward call for realigning the highway so it goes through the 64-acre parcel owned by the U.S. Forest Service near the transit center. The differences between them have to do with if there is a roundabout, if from where the bypass starts to the intersection of highways 89 and 28 becomes a city street, if that section would be pedestrian-bikes only, or if a cul-de-sac would be put in south of the bridge.

Now under consideration are two other alternatives that have come about from public input. They call for rehabbing, replacing or widening Fanny Bridge, and reconfiguring the intersection of highway 89 and 28 or putting in a roundabout at the Y.

The bridge is nearly 90 years old and no longer meets Caltrans' roadway standards. The dam also needs improvements, but that is not part of this project.

Twelve people spoke at Wednesday's meeting; many who are less than thrilled with the prospect of creating another road – mostly for environmental reasons. They don't want businesses displaced or have cars no longer drive in front of their property, and some wondered why more of TRPA's thresholds are not being addressed.

Representatives from the Chevron and Shell stations were in lockstep in opposition to the bypass, saying their businesses would suffer dramatically if people coming to and from the area no longer had to drive by their fuel tanks. They said it would mean less tax revenue for the area and employees would have to be let go. And they said the economic impact study that was done never looked at the businesses in what is called the "kill zone" – those located on Highway 89 that would be

bypassed with a highway realignment.

Nancy McDermid, Douglas County commissioner and TRPA board member, said this bypass would not allow for development along the route, so there would not be competing businesses.

“If they need service, they still need to go into your area of Tahoe City,” McDermid said.

Two other board members foresee more people in the Tahoe City area using an improved intersection to get to the South Shore because it will speed up the drive. But they question where the traffic studies have taken into account how locals may change their habits.

Doing something with this intersection has been talked about since 1986. Safety is a large component of why people want to make improvements.

John Pang, retired Meeks Bay fire chief, said, “From a public safety standpoint we need multiple entry points. During the Washoe Fire (in 2007) we had access problems. Multiple escape routes are vital to community safety.”

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Notes:

- Comments on the environmental documents are being taken until Feb. 17. They may be sent to Brian Judge, TRPA, P.O. Box 5310, Stateline, NV 89449; faxed to 775.588.4527; or emailed to bjudge@trpa.org.
- The environmental documents are available online.
- The final document with the preferred alternative is expected to be before the TRPA Governing Board in March.