

Opinion: Don't let your voice be bypassed

To the community,

Written public comment on the draft EIR and the seven proposed alternatives will be accepted until the close of business on Feb. 17. The public should be aware that the current heavy traffic volume which travels east to west through the commercial core of Tahoe City is outside the scope of the proposed project.

With concerns on the already struggling economy in Tahoe City and the potentially significant scenic impacts on recreation user views as noted in the draft EIR, some community members are concerned that the proposed Highway 89-Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project is unjustified. Articles published to date which only show a picture of the existing Fanny Bridge may have misled your understanding and need for the proposed project. If alternatives 1-3 are selected, the west entrance to Tahoe City could see the first elevated roundabout and bridge structure in the Tahoe basin. Alternatives 1-3 will require the existing roadway near the Caltrans yard to be elevated nearly 10 feet to allow the proposed roundabout and multi-lane bridge over the Truckee River to be raised over the existing bike trail. The tops of the PVC poles in the photo, below, are approximately at the elevation of the new road surface and bottom of the proposed multi-lane bridge.



The Caltrans Bridge Inspection Report dated June 9, 2014, notes that the girders and columns on Fanny Bridge are structurally sound. The bridge improvement cost is noted at \$400,000. Caltrans has confirmed that once the minor maintenance work is completed the “structurally deficient” rating on Fanny Bridge will be removed. All of the proposed alternatives except for the “no build” alternative include reconstruction or replacement of Fanny Bridge.

With a projected income loss of 60 percent for businesses within the bypass area, the draft Economic Analysis states, “That because these businesses are established and are popular regional attractions, they are not likely to receive negative impacts from a decline in roadway traffic volumes”.

While two emergency exits are desired in emergency egress situations from the West Shore, the highway section along the West Shore will remain a two-lane highway from the proposed roundabout south of Bank of the West under all Alternatives for 25 miles to the South Shore. Additional roundabouts proposed under Alternatives 1-3 will require increased law enforcement for traffic control during emergency egress. CalFire has indicated that each alternative would either increase or maintain existing emergency response times, and means of egress, in the event of a fire or other natural disaster.

Information from Caltrans and the North American Highway Standards indicate that additional development of roadways

discourages the use of alternative methods of transportation; thus leading to encouraged use of personnel vehicles and increased traffic.

The Bureau of Reclamation is willing to work with the project design team on lane alignments on Fanny Bridge to not impact structures in the area by cantilevering off the existing bridge deck.

Since the 2002 Project Study Report, which is one of the base studies for the proposed project, the traffic has decreased from a 10-year period, peak-monthly daily volume growth rate of 2.5 percent annually to a slight increase of 0.1 percent at six study intersections between 2009-10 and 2013. The current information published by the Tahoe Transportation District indicates that, "It should be noted that some or all concepts developed may not improve levels of service to levels normally considered acceptable to one or more of the agencies' criteria."

With a 2010 report attributing the loss of lake clarity to increased fine sediment run-off with the transportation system as a primary source, the TRPA established an urban boundary to cap the roadway capacity of the basin and reduce the reliance on the private automobile. Members of the community and environmental agencies are awaiting the vote by the TRPA board on the proposed alternative selected.

Members of the community and environmental agencies are encouraging the TRPA to support their responsibility to protect the scenic resources, minimize greenhouse gases by discouraging use of the personnel automobile, minimizing the amount of paved surfaces and associated road sand to improve lake clarity.

The public is invited to a forum scheduled for 6pm Feb. 11 at Dockside 700 in Tahoe City to review the proposed alternatives and provide your comments to the proposed draft EIR.

The Tahoe Transportation District and TRPA board of director's will be voting on the proposed project. Of the approximately 26 voting members, only two members live between Tahoe Vista and Tahoe City. Your voice as a member of our local community is imperative to represent a project that meets the needs of our community.

Comments on the proposed draft and proposed alternatives may be sent to bjudge@trpa.org by Feb. 17.

Jim Sajdak, Tahoe City