

I-580, Hwy. 50 connector to be done in 2017

By Anne Knowles

CARSON CITY— The Carson City Freeway project to connect Interstate 580 to Highway 50, creating a nearly seamless drive from Reno-Tahoe International Airport to the South Shore, is entering its final phase this summer.

The Nevada Department of Transportation is expected to award the contract to Road and Highway Builders, the Spark-based company that submitted the low bid of \$42 million, at NDOT's May 11 board meeting.

"We have the federal funds now so you can expect to see the award in two to three weeks and then see equipment here in two to three months," said Reid Kaiser, NDOT's assistant director of operations, at an April 9 event here dubbed Stand Up 4 Transportation.

It was designed to draw attention to the need for long-term federal financing of transportation. Current federal transportation funding ends next month.

The freeway project will pave the final four or so miles between Fairview Drive in Carson City, where I-580 currently ends, to Highway 50 where it intersects with Highway 395 at Spooner junction.

The project is scheduled to be completed in 2017.



The project will connect Interstate 580, which currently ends at Fairview Drive in Carson City, and Highway 50 at Spooner junction. Photo/Anne Knowles

“Accessibility is an important aspect to our tourist economy,” Carl Hasty, district manager of Tahoe Transportation District, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “South Shore accessibility is important.”

Hasty said he didn’t have data on how the extension would reduce travel time between the Reno airport and South Lake Tahoe. “But (580) saves me 10 to 15 minutes now and I anticipate the same savings,” with the new Highway 50 connection, Hasty said.

Hasty also didn’t know if the convenience would encourage more visitors to travel to the South Shore rather than up Mt. Rose Highway or Interstate 80 to the North Shore of Lake Tahoe.

“I think it’s up to South Tahoe to redevelop itself or keep losing to the north, with what’s being done in Alpine Meadows,

Squaw, Northstar, Truckee," to attract travelers, Hasty said.

The Carson City Freeway was initially planned to be an interchange with a bridge that would allow drivers to connect to Highway 50 by driving over Highway 395 without stopping. But that was deemed too costly and the connection now is an at-grade intersection and the traffic light there will be turned into a four-way light.

NDOT, however, says the project is engineered so that a bridge elevating the traffic can be added later if funding becomes available. At the transportation event Thursday, officials from NDOT, TTD, Carson City Regional Transportation Commission and Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County said the region was facing a serious drop in transportation funding if Congress doesn't act to pass long-term legislation.

The Nevada counties' portion of the Lake Tahoe area, according to NDOT, has an estimated need of \$708 million in transportation funding through 2035. Current revenue to fund that is estimated to be \$116 million, leaving a possible shortfall of \$592 million. The projects within that budget include the Stateline to Stateline bikeway, Highway 50 South Shore community revitalization and the cross-lake ferry.