

# Path through forest to be cleared for Hwy. 89

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – By fall 2017, getting through Tahoe City at the Y is predicted to be a lot easier.

This is because the nearly \$30 million Fanny Bridge project received unanimous approval Wednesday by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board.

Doing something with this congested intersection has been talked about for near a quarter century. A sense of urgency developed when it was revealed the 87-year-old bridge that crosses the Truckee River has structural issues. However, last summer a Caltrans assessment showed the bridge was not in as dire condition as people had been led to believe. But by this time the environmental documents were being worked on and plans were being drawn.

For those who have spoken out against the project, most agree with proponents that something needs to be done to the bridge. What they disagree about is the rerouting of Highway 89 through the 64 acres near the Tahoe City transit center. The bypass will start just south of the transit center. It will not affect any designated trails.

“When you take something that is in need of help and create something new, that is not revitalization. That is damaging to the entire area,” Tahoe City resident Christina Anderson told the board.

Of the 17 people who spoke at the May 27 meeting at the North Tahoe Events Center about half were for the preferred alternative and the other half in favor of just fixing the bridge. And most of those who wanted the reroute represented

an agency of some sort, with only one resident voicing his support.

Another two-lane bridge similar in size to the current Fanny Bridge will be built. This then becomes a city street that Placer County will be tasked with maintaining. The theory is with less vehicle traffic it will make for a better biking and walking experience. Creating a complete street is the goal.

The reroute will add 4 acres of coverage to what is now a forest. There will be a roundabout at the Y and then one at both ends of the realignment.

Fire and other emergency personnel believe having two routes connecting the West and North shores will provide an increased level of safety for residents and businesses in an emergency. Several people commented on how public safety vehicles have been stuck in traffic as have the buses.

Opponents, though, fear realignment will take people away from Tahoe City at a time when the North Shore city is still on economically unsound footing.

Carl Hasty, executive director of the Tahoe Transportation District, said the public would be able to have more input this summer as final designs are drawn. The project is about 30 percent done in terms of design.

In October 2013, Tahoe Transportation District – the lead agency on the project – received \$25.5 million from the Federal Lands Access Program for this project as well as Meeks Bay Bike Path and Dollar Creek Shared Use Path.