

# S. Lake Tahoe picks airport plans with flexibility

By Joann Eisenbrandt

The South Lake Tahoe City Council last week took the next step in the Airport Master Plan process by selecting the preferred airfield and land side alternatives which will determine the future configuration of the airport. This update of the 1992 Master Plan looks out 20 years and determines not only the types of aircraft using the airport, but also potential non-aeronautical uses of airport property.

Michael Hotaling of C&S Companies, the Airport Master Plan consultants, went over the steps in the process for the council during the Oct. 20 presentation.

Hotaling reviewed their analysis to date, noting that there would be relatively modest growth for Lake Tahoe Airport in the next 20 years and that due to a shift in the aircraft industry the return of commercial service to Tahoe in the near term was unlikely. In August 2014, the council decided to release the airport's Part 139 certificate for commercial service and **embrace the general aviation** alternative as the airport's best future use.

He termed this meeting the "decision-making" step where the City Council chooses the preferred airport configuration, which will then go through an environmental review under CEQA.

There were seven airfield alternatives and four land side alternatives that were studied. They ranged from no-action through middle ground alternatives that combined retaining flexibility for future airfield uses with releasing some of the land for non-aeronautical uses to bring in needed revenue, to the most expensive alternatives releasing little land and requiring major airfield and taxiway changes to accommodate

larger planes and possible commercial service in the future.

After reviewing choices made by the public at an earlier public meeting where residents chose preferred alternatives by placing dots on maps, as well as a more technical analysis of the alternatives using the EOS (Economic Vitality, Operational Efficiency, Natural Resource Conservation and Social Responsibility) scoring scale the consultants recommended Alternative 2C.

The council expressed concern that some of the land designated for release to non-aeronautical uses would not work for that purpose because of terrain and steep slopes. They reviewed the alternatives and came up with a blended alternative 2B/C allowing for the most potential non-aeronautical uses such as warehousing, a fly-in campground, or a training center for the Forest Service, which could bring in added airport revenue while retaining airfield flexibility. The release of land for non-aeronautical uses will require review and approval by the FAA.

The consultants will now complete the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and publish a draft final report. A CEQA analysis is then performed. This is a separate process for which the city will put out a request for proposal. City Manager Nancy Kerry said either C&S Companies or a new consultant could be chosen to undertake this analysis. The ALP is then adopted by the City Council and goes to the FAA for approval. Hotaling estimated this process will take about a year. Once the ALP is approved by the FAA the airport becomes eligible to receive federal grant funding.