

Residents map transit plans for Tahoe basin



South Tahoe High School students talk about how to improve transportation on the South Shore. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Traffic isn't a problem on the South Shore – at least not compared to what it was like years ago.

Tim Fajen has been a valet since 1972, working most of the Stateline casinos in the last 40-plus years. In the 1970s there could be 700 cars a day to park at what was the Sahara. On Tuesday there were about 30 at the Hard Rock, he said.

The South Lake Tahoe resident was one of several dozen to attend a transportation meeting May 24 hosted by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Tahoe Transportation District at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel. The agencies had a similar open house

on the North Shore last week.

When he saw the placard stating there will be a 20 percent increase in visitors in the next 20 years, he shook his head, questioning where this number came from and why its validity should be believed.

TTD used the numbers supplied by Airsage Analytics and modeling done by TRPA.

Fajen has only seen the number of visitors drop since 1990, so he wonders what in the next 20 years will make more people come to Lake Tahoe. That question was not part of the discussion Tuesday night.

The goal that night was to obtain input from residents about what they want transit and transportation to look like in the basin going forward. TRPA is updating its 20-year Regional Transportation Plan, which it does every four years to keep the document current and relevant. It should be done by the end of the year.

TTD was seeking input about its plans for the various corridors around the lake:

- Highways 89 and 28 in California
- Highway 28 in Nevada
- Highway 50 on the East Shore
- Highway 50 on the South Shore
- Meyers/Y in South Lake Tahoe
- Recreation along Highway 89.

A handful of South Tahoe High School students took the time to attend and give their input. (Plus, it meant extra credit for their environmental science class.) With a map of the lake on the table, they wrote ideas on sticky notes and filled out a

survey.

Maia Smith, a junior, wants someone to deal with the congestion at Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Viking Way at the base of STHS.

“The four-way stop is really useless,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*. She said there have been a lot of car crashes and that inexperienced drivers don’t understand how a four-way stop works.

For senior Kylee Lyons she would like planners to address the backup in Camp Richardson along Highway 89.

“My idea is to put a skywalk in to cross above the traffic,” she said.

The problem, she and her classmates said, is that people jaywalk everywhere, thus bringing traffic to a standstill.

Karen Fink, TRPA transportation expert, told *Lake Tahoe News* an idea for Camp Rich is to have a bus lane to get tourists in particular to their destination faster. This would mean holding cars back to make this happen.

She said a bigger picture topic is looking at how visitors get to Tahoe and whether transit would be an option for them. She admitted this is only viable if there is a functioning transit system once they get to Tahoe, meaning it would be easier for them to not get in their personal vehicle.

On the North Shore officials are looking at increasing transit frequency, potentially having free bus service by 2020, completing the bike trail network and being a hub for waterborne transit.

The survey people were given in South Lake Tahoe asked:

1. If it were your responsibility to decide how to invest in our transportation system over the next 20 years, in what

order would you prioritize these tools?

- Bike, pedestrian paths
- Transit (more frequent and free)
- Parking (to encourage transit)
- Ferry (fast North to South shore)
- Seasonal water taxi (connecting lake communities)

2. Of the strategies listed below by corridor, which are the top 10 that you would like to see happen on the South Shore?

The answers late in evening revealed the following top 5 responses:

- Expand bike trails
- Cross lake ferry
- Loop road
- BlueGo enhancements
- Transit oriented development at the Y.