

Funding spurs Hwy. 50-Pioneer Trail roundabout



This is what the Pioneer Trail-Highway 50 roundabout in Meyers could look like.

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County is moving forward with plans to construct a roundabout at the intersection of Highway 50 and Pioneer Trail in Meyers.

The county was just awarded a grant for \$2,932,840 from the Federal Highway Administration's Highway Safety Improvement Program. This was less than the requested amount of \$3,450,400.

"Right now we need to find some more money before we really dig in on this project; and we have to find it pretty soon," John Kahling, the county's deputy director of engineering, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The project will not move forward unless we are able to identify approximately \$600,000 in additional funding."

The entire project is estimated to cost \$4 million.

Other possible funding sources include state transportation block grant dollars, federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds, state maintenance funding, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency mitigation funds.

The Board of Supervisors is expected to officially accept the federal grant after the first of the year. That will then start the three-year time clock for the county to have begun construction. If that deadline is not met, the money has to be returned.

While the bulk of the work affects the state highway, the county is taking the responsibility for the project.

“The county is the lead on this project because Caltrans does not currently have any plans for improving the intersection, and the county feels that improvements associated with safety, increased throughput, and pedestrian and bicycle use are appropriate,” Kahling said.

Caltrans, though, will be involved in this project. (The state agency is the lead for the roundabout going in just west of here at the intersection of highways 50 and 89.)

“Local agencies often take the lead in interchange projects, especially when they’re able to obtain funding. Caltrans will be the oversight agency on the project and ensure that the design plans meet our standards. Once construction begins, traffic management plans also will need to be approved by Caltrans,” Steve Nelson, spokesman for Caltrans, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The exact number of lanes for the roundabout remains to be determined.

Today the crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists is dangerous based on where the crosswalks are, how trails connect and the lights. The roundabout will be designed to incorporate non-motorized travelers.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, "Roundabouts have fewer conflict points. A single lane roundabout has 50 percent fewer pedestrian-vehicle conflict points than a comparable stop or signal controlled intersection. Conflicts between bicycles and vehicles are reduced as well."