

Disjointed efforts by Tahoe transit officials

By Kathryn Reed

The future of transportation is not going to be a smooth ride in Lake Tahoe.

While four speakers last week focused on technology and transportation, they all sounded like they are working in silos and not together.

What the public wanted based on questions was information about what is being done to lessen the tourist traffic, especially in residential areas on get-away day, and public transit in general.

None of the four speakers could deliver much in the way of satisfactory answers. They did acknowledge that without a functional transit system, people are going to stay in their individual vehicles. And without that local system, there is no reason to engage people in the Bay Area or Sacramento regions about taking some form of transit to get here or working on developing what the transit might be.

George Fink with Tahoe Transportation District, which runs the South Shore BlueGo bus system, admitted that Uber can do a better job than his agency. This is because BlueGo barely goes into residential areas.

As far as neighborhoods being overrun by tourists looking for a shortcut, the panel said that is a law enforcement issue and not something they will be dealing with. The only suggestion was to change the Caltrans owned reader boards.

Joe Marzocco with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency talked about all the data that is collected from people's cell

phones. A lot of this is done via Google maps and other apps people are using.

“A lot of third parties are collecting data, mostly from cell phones to track and forecast travel across the region,” Marzocco said.

TRPA will use the data as it updates its transportation plan.

Tahoe Transportation District collects data through an app called Swiftly. TTD collects data from riders who have the app – where they get on, off and how long the ride took.

TTD’s seven cameras on nearly every bus help collect data too. They aren’t just a safety tool. They register bumps and can tell when drivers take a corner too narrowly.

Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition’s technology is a bit more static. Through its website there is a bike map with different tools that allow users to find out where various types of trails are, if bike parking is available and other relevant information. Users may also add information.

Sherry Hao with the bike group said a new version of the map may come out this year.

Danielle Hughes, a land planning expert, spoke about the Connect Tahoe concept. It’s an idea she is trying to get people interested in that involves putting sensors in the ground and people then using an app to find open parking spaces. She talked about how much time is wasted finding a parking space and the emissions associated with that endeavor.

None of the four talked about the Living Lab at UNR that is being created in Reno, Sparks and Carson City. UNR researchers are using advanced-autonomous systems, computer sciences, synchronized mobility, robotics and civil engineering. Public transportation is the primary focus.

The initial research will explore how vehicles sense their

environment and communicate with other vehicles, infrastructure such as traffic signals and systems, and individual people through their mobile devices. Researchers are working toward safe, synchronized, zero-emission mobility systems.

The other technology that is new is being offered by Uber. The ride share company in mid-February plans to launch a website called Movement which will use Uber's data about routes and travel time from various cities.