

Loop road environmental documents released

By Kathryn Reed

A multi-million dollar transportation project on the South Shore has mushroomed into being a project that could dramatically change the state line area, with repercussions possibly extending beyond the Y.

The loop road would essentially flop how Highway 50 and the southern section of the current loop operate. Even though the same number of lanes would be in use, more land would be paved over. Alternative B includes adding 5.76 acres of asphalt with a roundabout on the eastern end in Nevada or 7.62 acres with a signal at that intersection.

Five alternatives were reviewed in the environmental impact study/environment impact report, with Alternative B the proposed project area. The final document will have the preferred alternative. (One alternative would create eight-lanes of traffic in some areas.)

The EIS/EIR was released Monday night. Tahoe Transportation, the lead agency on the project, hosted an open house April 24 that had many of the same spectators and the same photos and charts from previous gatherings.

The project area extends from a quarter mile southwest of Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe to Lake Parkway in Stateline.



The proposed pedestrian bridge over the realigned Highway 50 near Van Sickle Park. Rendering/Ascent

Alternative B calls for four 11-foot wide travel lanes, 5-foot wide shoulders, and turn pockets at major intersections and driveways. Signals would be added at Heavenly Village Way and what is now the back entrance to Harrah's.

Six- to 18-foot retaining walls would be built near Van Sickle Bi-State Park. The entrance would be reconfigured and there would be a signal there.

The draft EIR/EIS said noise from the highway will not be a nuisance for park users.

The current highway between Park Avenue and Lake Parkway would be one travel lane in each direction, with landscaped medians, left-turn pockets at major intersections and driveways, and new or upgraded bike lanes.

The EIS/EIR included three areas that were studied for affordable housing that together could accommodate 227 units. One of those sites is where Mike McKeen owns property.

"We will never do affordable housing," McKeen told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They offered us incentives to do it, but we don't want

it.”

What he would entertain is condos or a second level of commercial. His land is likely to be the gateway, so to speak, where the new highway would begin on the western edge.

Beyond what was studied in the environmental document, TTD is looking at California Tahoe Conservancy land near the Y for **affordable housing**.

The agency is legally obligated to relocate the residents and businesses that would be bulldozed to accommodate the realigned highway.

Alternative	Total Number of Displacement Units	Total Residential Displacement Units	Single Family Displacement Units	Multiple Family Displacement Units	Total Business Displacement Units	Motel Business Displacement Units*	Motel Rooms
B	97	92	15	77	5	2	58
C	64	61	7	54	3	3	90
D	64	47	5	42	6	1	16

** Motel parcels are included in total Business Displacees*

The project started as a way to move the highway out of the casino corridor and turn that area into a city-county street. The new highway would travel behind Harrah’s and MontBleu.

While that is still the plan, all the renderings show a complete-street landscape, with wide bike lanes, and decorative vegetation mixed with the new commercial areas. A footbridge would span the new highway to link the casinos with Van Sickle Bi-State Park.

The belief is millions of dollars would be added to the local economy with more people opting to stop to shop-eat-recreate instead of driving through. Adding more transit options – which includes becoming more walkable and bikeable – the goal is to get people to stay longer

TTD had hoped for federal TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) funds to pay for the project. With a new administration in office, it's not known if that will continue to be a funding source. TTD will be pursuing other avenues.

—

Notes:

- The draft EIR/EIS is available **online**.
- People have 75 days to comment.
- The final document is expected to be released in the fall.