

# Data: Visitors clogging Lake Tahoe roads

By Kathryn Reed

The time it takes to get from point A to point B all depends on the time year. Construction and snow are variables, but the real impact is tourists.

There are two main reasons they are staying in their vehicles. One, there isn't reliable transit for them to use once they are in Tahoe; two, most are coming just for the day.

July and February are the two busiest months of the summer and winter seasons. During those respective months 42 percent of visitors to the Lake Tahoe Basin are here just for one day. About 20 percent stay for two days, less than 15 percent stay for three days, and less than 10 percent stay for four days. The percentages are about equal for July and February.

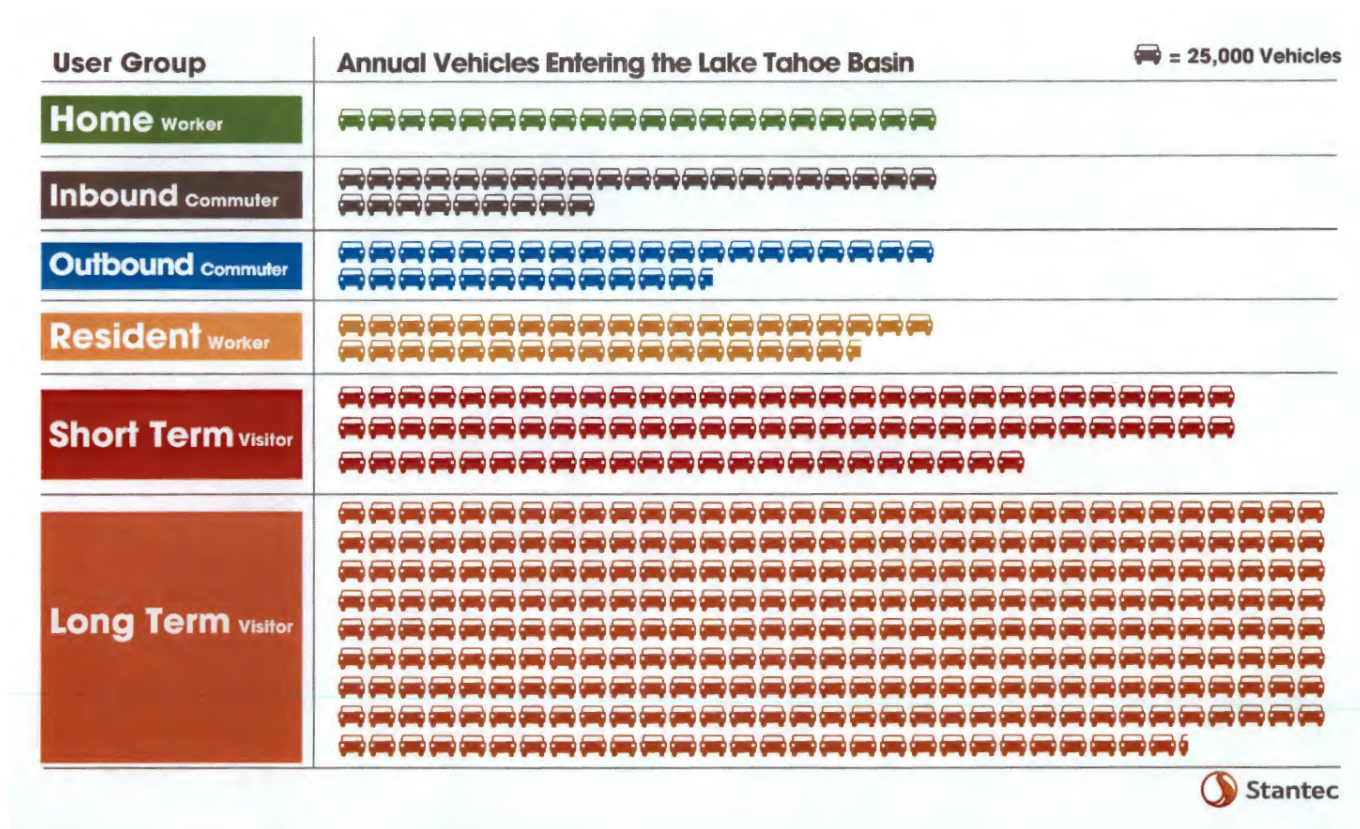
This data was presented to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on June 20 by Carl Hasty, leader of the Tahoe Transportation District.

Most of these people are coming from Northern California and Northern Nevada.

TTD a couple years ago paid a company for data that is collected from cell phone users. Through various apps people have on their phones companies are able to track where the person entered the basin, how long they stayed and which portal they left from.

The data also shows cell phones that were at a particular airport and then in the basin on the same day. Reno is by far the preferred airport with more than 58 percent using that airport in February, 50 percent in July. Other airports:

Sacramento (13 percent both months), San Francisco (11 percent February, 22 percent July), Oakland (9 percent February, 6 percent July) and San Jose (9 percent both months).



The above graphic shows the annualized vehicle trips by different groups in 2014. Visitors are making up more than twice the number of local trips. The South Shore is the No. 1 place they are traveling to.

“Visitors are pushing us over the edge when it comes to traffic,” Hasty said.

Of the 80 million person trips a year, only 1.4 percent use transit.

Hasty attributes that low number to the fact that the focus of transit is on locals or commuters, and not tourists. The exception is during the winter with the ski resort shuttles.

At the TTD meeting last week the board agreed to an aggressive plan to make transit a higher priority. This includes a high-speed cross lake ferry and more boat taxis on each end of the

lake.

The goal is to get those tourists off the roads and into reliable public transit. With 20 percent of visitors using transit, that would mean more than 7 million vehicle trips removed.