

Lake Tahoe Airport solidifies its future



In the future planes will get fuel at a self-serve station at Lake Tahoe Airport. Photo/Kathryn

By Kathryn Reed

The tower will be demolished, electric vehicle charging stations installed, commercial hangars built, and pavement removed from Lake Tahoe Airport.

These are all included in the master plan for the South Lake Tahoe facility. This is a designed to be a 20-year blueprint.

The final component of the plan was approved by the City Council on June 6. The electeds unanimously OK'd the mitigated negative declaration. No written comments were submitted regarding the document.

Environmental Science Associates prepared the initial study. It identified biological resources, cultural resources,

hazards and hazardous materials, and noise as items that would need to be mitigated.

One hazardous item on the 348 acres that will be removed is the tower. Since the facility was abandoned by the FAA in 2004 water has seeped in. The end result is toxic mold.

"It's not suitable for human habitation," Mark Gibbs, airport director, told the council Tuesday.

An 80-foot communications tower will be built before the control tower is deconstructed.

It is up to the FAA to dismantle the old tower because that agency owns it. That could occur this year.

Nothing in the master plan expands the airport, but that doesn't mean there won't be improvements.

A self-serve gas station will be installed. This will eliminate the need for trucks to transport the fuel to each aircraft. The projected date for this is in 2027.

A partial list of future improvements includes reconstructing the aircraft parking apron, drainage ditch improvements, relocating taxiway H, removing excess pavement, getting rid of the bypass taxiway, installing a new automated weather observation station, improving the fixed base operations facility, and building a commercial hangar.

The Federal Aviation Administration pays for the bulk of improvements at this airport.

Another piece of the master plan is the release of 45 acres on the western edge of the airport for future non-aeronautical use. A couple years ago this undeveloped land had been talked about being converted into an outdoor concert venue. Since then it has been determined to be an inadequate site.