

Strong opposition to NDOT Hwy. 50 lane reduction

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Safety, according to transportation officials, is the primary reason they are looking at reducing the number of lanes on Highway 50 between Stateline and the intersection at Highway 28.

For many of the nearly 250 who attended a meeting Wednesday night about the proposals, the idea of one lane in each direction seemed counterintuitive to increasing safety. Twenty-five people spoke at the May 31 meeting.



Bill Killebrew, center, on May 31 echoes the sentiment of most at the meeting – don't reduce the lanes on Highway 50. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Comments included:

- Needing a light at Warrior Way. (None of the diagrams showed this as a potential reality.)
- Wanting the data by NDOT to be more detailed; as in where did the accidents occur, what were the conditions and

more.

- Work with the U.S. Forest Service to build bike trails out of the vehicle travel lane.
- Pilot options before they are permanent.
- Praise and criticism for roundabouts.
- Make the highway function like Skyland with turn lanes and frontage street.
- Being worried about future bottlenecks with projects like Edgewood Lodge, Zalanta, Tahoe Beach Club and Sierra Colina coming on board.
- Concern about emergency vehicles getting through on smaller roads and through roundabouts.
- Belief the crash numbers are low because many don't report accidents, especially solo spinouts.
- The need for chain enforcement.
- Remembering when the second tunnel at Cave Rock was built because there was a need for more roadway even in 1957.
- Believing a reduction in lanes will increase congestion.
- There are areas where the highway should be widened.
- Addressing parking in the beach areas will alleviate problems on the highway in summer.
- Left turn lanes are needed without sacrificing other lanes.
- Build a pedestrian overpass.
- This is a cycling destination, but the current highway is unfriendly to those on two wheels because of non-existent

bike lanes and drains in area where cyclists ride, thus forcing them into the vehicle lane.

- Frustration with no options presented keeping the four lanes, and none without a bike lane component.
- Public transit is needed.
- Add concrete medians.

What wasn't brought up is the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail that will go from the South Shore to Crystal Bay. Right now it ends at Round Hill Pines. It is and will continue to be a multi-use path set away from the road.

Nine poster boards scattered about the multipurpose room at Zephyr Cove Elementary School showed different stretches of this roadway and what they could look like in the future. All received more no votes, but, still, plenty of people supported the concepts.

NDOT's ideas range from a roundabout at highways 50 and 28, and one at Zephyr Cove Resort; to one lane through the tunnel that would include a bike lane; to revamping access at Cave Rock.



Possible lane reconfiguration on the highway at Warrior Way.
Photo/LTN

Plans call for acceleration and deceleration lanes to get motorists onto and off of the highway in a safer manner, especially for residents with streets and driveways along the highway. Designated parking would be constructed. Left turn lanes would be added. Right hand storage lanes are proposed; this would allow traffic to flow around the bottlenecks, which are primarily at beaches.

NDOT doesn't have one plan. It's possible components of the various proposals will be used, along with the public's ideas.

According to Nevada Department of Transportation officials, on this section of Highway 50 in the last seven years there have been:

- 682 crashes
- 404 involved property damage

- 382 involved injuries
- 12 were fatalities.

“This is why we are here tonight – the crash data,” Kent Steele, senior designer with NDOT, told the packed room. “If we implement some of the components, we can potentially decrease crashes by 40 percent in some areas.”



Traffic on Highway 50 on May 30 in mid-afternoon.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Notes:

- Send comments before June 16 to ksteele@dot.nv.gov.
- This scoping period could last nine months.
- NDOT will have another public meeting, probably in the first quarter of 2018, to share ideas based on public feedback.
- The design phase will take one to three years, with construction another one to three years.
- Repaving of Highway 50 will occur in the next three to five years, and NDOT wants some of the news ideas implemented at the same time.