

Loop road design elements being sought

By Kathryn Reed

Better flow and access to the Stateline area for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists are major components of the proposed loop road. But with any endeavor there are consequences.

“We walk and bike a lot. The (new) highway would separate where we go,” Caroline Fallu told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She and her husband, Matt Asher, bought their home on Cellador Drive in South Lake Tahoe nearly three years ago. The real estate agent mentioned the loop road, but not to the extent it could impact their lives.

To get to the commercial area near the state line – be it California or Nevada – they will have to cross Highway 50 if the loop road is built. Today they have two easy routes to get to points past the casinos. In the future it will be one by vehicle.

There is no crosswalk planned to easily get them across the highway. Instead, they said, it will be a long walk or ride to do so to be legal. They suspect they’ll opt to risk crossing the busy highway in what could be an illegal manner.



TTD officials say the intersection of today's Highway 50 and Heavenly Village Way needs help. Photos/Kahtryn Reed

Theirs is just one story of what could happen to residents if the highway were to be reconfigured.

Tahoe Transportation District is the lead agency behind wanting to take the current Highway 50 and reroute it behind Harrah's Lake Tahoe and MontBleu, then turning the current highway in both states into a city/county street.

The hope is that it would make the casino corridor more pedestrian friendly. Plus, it would be more visually appealing. An added bonus is the affordable housing component that was added during the planning process.

The proposal is still in the environmental process, with comments on the draft environmental impact statement being addressed. The final EIS is expected to be released by the end of the year. That document would still need to be approved by the TDD and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency boards.

"I'm eager to get past the decision and get to design," Carl

Hasty, TTD leader, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

On Oct. 5, several dozen people attended an open house hosted by the TTD at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel. The purpose was to begin discussing design components of the plan. While a definitive route has not been selected because it's under environmental review, the assumption is the preferred alternative will be selected. It is that route that people on Thursday night were asked to comment on.

The various stations delved into specific components of the realignment. People were asked to comment about how they walk/bike in the area now and what they'd like to see in the future; where they park and where they'd like to see future parking as well as signage for it; where they access transit and where they'd like to see future routes/stops; and where they live in the area and where they'd like future housing.

For those who could not attend Thursday's gathering, comments will be taken **online** starting Monday about the design components.

While the sites for future housing are not definitive, but instead place holders on a map, the district has pledged that the road work will not begin until affordable housing is built for the displaced residents. This will come when funding is secured.

Hasty said his agency is going after grants now to assist with acquisition of properties, which is expected to be the most expensive part of the project. Replacement housing would be the next step.

One attendee who was a bit verbally combative was certain those who would lose their homes or businesses would not be fairly compensated as was the case in some instances across the street at the Chateau site. A TTD rep was quick to point that was a private developer and the highway project is a public endeavor. This means fair market value will have to be

paid to people. Renters will also be compensated. There are federal laws that protect people and govern agencies in these types of interactions.