

Parking problems plague Stateline area



Congestion getting into and out of the Heavenly Village parking garage on Dec. 28. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Parking is a growing problem on the South Shore.

Those in the tourism industry want more people here. Those in the regulatory business want people out of their individual cars so they limit the number of parking spots that can be built. Private businesses only want people parking there who are frequenting their business.

The problem is exacerbated during peak holiday periods like the Christmas-New Year's weeks.

Anyone who has been in the Stateline area in the last week is likely to have a story about congestion and parking.

Here is one of those stories:

"With company in town for Christmas we went down to Basecamp Pizza; it was the Saturday before Christmas in the early afternoon. I discovered the parking garage is way too small in many areas," one South Lake Tahoe resident told Lake Tahoe News. "We had to wait on the street to get into the garage. There was a handwritten sign taped over the rates sign that said due to holiday rates would be double. So instead of \$7.50/hour fee, it would be \$15/hour. Once inside the garage it was near impossible to negotiate around due to so many vehicles inside. If a car is coming toward you, there isn't enough room for both cars. One car has to wait. After about 15 minutes trying to go up to find a parking spot my husband told me to get out and go save us a table. He continued up into the garage to find a spot. Turns out the garage was full. It would seem the garage should have an attendant or two, especially on holidays, and their system should know when the space limits have been met to not allow additional vehicles in. Ultimately, he made it out of the maze and went over to Harrah's and parked easily, which is what he wanted to do in the first place. I won't be using the garage in the future. It's unfortunate when it was built someone didn't think through the amount of people congested into the Heavenly Village area with the gondola, restaurants, entertainment, etc."

Several years ago the South Lake Tahoe City Council set a rate schedule for the parking garage at Heavenly Village that increases the fee during holiday times. This year rates are doubled from Dec. 22-Jan. 1. The July 4 week is another time rates spike.

Even the \$5 after 5pm rate is now \$10.

"By having higher prices we hope people carpool in and there are less vehicles in the area," Police Chief Brian Uhler told Lake Tahoe News.

Uhler admits the design of the garage is flawed in that it does not accommodate large SUVs well, and the exit lane on the

left makes it near impossible for cars to keep going up the structure.

“That’s partly why we staff it during holidays. If it stacks up and causes difficulties, we have a person there who can get people through more quickly,” Uhler said.

With Heavenly Village now being a destination for locals and visitors, the parking garage is being used more. This is a good thing for the city, which has about seven more years until the debt on the garage is paid off. Once those bonds are paid, it will mean more money for the city’s General Fund.

Adding to the chaos is **Harrah’s Lake Tahoe** no longer lets skiers park in its lot. This change took effect earlier this month. This was to provide more parking for casino patrons.

“What I can tell you is that our guests have access to free parking at our Cal base lodge, Stage Coach, and Boulder base facilities. We additionally offer a free offsite parking option for our guests at the Hard Rock Lake Tahoe,” Kevin Cooper with Heavenly Mountain Resort told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Once our guests have parked at their hotel or rental property, they have access to five free shuttle routes accessing all four of our base areas.”

Driving around the area in the late afternoon on Dec. 28 it was a mess. Delivery trucks on Bellamy Court added to the congestion. Vehicles were parked on Montreal Avenue despite the no parking signs. People seemed to be going in circles in search of spot.

The city has parking meters on Bellamy and Transit Way. The old Crescent V Center is just for their customers. With Van Sickle Bi-State Park parking off-limits this time of year, people wanting to play there are also searching for parking.

Parking – paid or free – is definitely in short supply, and public transit is not a viable option here. For now, it means

patience or stay away from the Stateline area.