

North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

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NTCAA Newsletter – September 2011

TRPA Issues Notice of Preparation (NOP) for an EIR/EIS For Proposed Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

This is how TRPA staff is “testing the waters” on their new vision as this is the first EIR/EIS that will have to address the contradictions inherent in increasing the density of redevelopment while reducing roadway capacity.

The TRPA is only one hat that the Board of Governors wears, the other is the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO). The TMPO is federally designated as the transportation planning entity authorized to receive and disburse federal transportation funding.

This NOP is scoping the EIR/EIS that is being done for the updated Regional Transportation Plan and how the Plan will meet the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) under California’s SB375. All Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO’s) are supposed to integrate transportation, housing and land use to show how they will reduce greenhouse gases (GHG). The TRPA staff has embraced the “new urbanism” concept of compact, mixed use, high density, Transit Oriented Development (TOD). This is the redevelopment concept that is preferred under the Regional Plan Update for the entire Lake Tahoe Basin.

These words sound “politically correct” and the obvious “right” thing to do. The theory says we have to redevelop vertically (with increased height and densities) instead of continuing urban sprawl. Then these compact, high density projects, with a mix of commercial outlets, the proximity to mass transit, and availability of bike lanes and sidewalks offers “mobility options” will reduce dependency on the auto. In essence, this theory of rebuilding all of Lake Tahoe will reduce traffic, or so they say.



This vision is not new. South Shore used the ideas, but removed more old motel units than they replaced. TRPA used the same concepts to “demonstrate” the CEP Projects. What did we get? Boulder Bay (redeveloping 360 units plus new commercial space that replaces only 120 units) and Homewood Mountain Resort (developing 325 units where none exist today) are both supposed to reduce traffic from current conditions today. Huh?

The problem is that Lake Tahoe has evolved a special version of “new urbanism” that deviates far from the theory. Lake Tahoe developments boasting “new urbanism” are for tourist accom-

modations/second homeowners, not for year round residents. The mixed use portion of the projects is tourist oriented shops, not the kind of commercial year round residents need to displace auto use. We have tough winter conditions that limit the year round practicality of “mobility choices.” And finally, any physical expansion of capacity produces a paradox of intensification. The paradox of intensification is explained well on this video link.

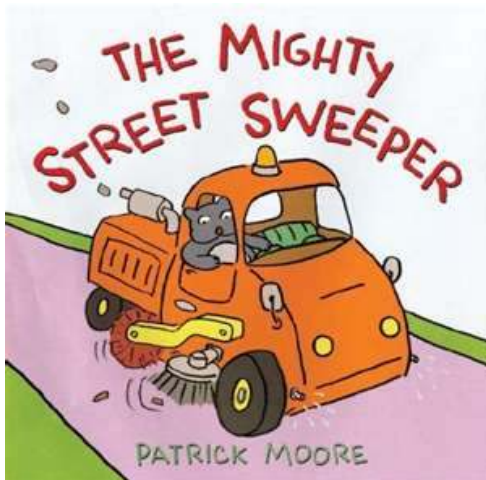
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOHnjCY1E9M>

In the perfect implementation of the concepts (not Tahoe’s version) there is some reduction of auto use but the effect is “weak” or minor compared to the increase in vehicle use due to the increase in physical capacity or total population. TRPA staff seems unwilling to acknowledge this science. Research on Portland, Oregon from after 10 years of implementing “new urbanism” measured increases in transit use, and contrary to what TRPA staff is trying to prove, increases in vehicle trips. Will the Board of Governors also close their eyes to physical reality?

If the Fine Sediments are the Problem of Declining Lake Clarity, What’s the Solution? What is the Best Bang for the Buck?

The science is in. In the latest analysis (TMDL) of what contributes most to the loss of clarity in Lake Tahoe, the key findings are, “fine sediment particles are the primary pollutant of concern impacting lake clarity, and storm water runoff originating in urban areas is estimated to contribute 72% of the annual fine sediment particle pollutant load to Lake Tahoe.”

The TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) reductions are proposed to require all Tahoe Basin jurisdictions to reduce fine particle loads by 34% by 2026. Already the Army Corps of Engineers is assisting local jurisdictions in shifting priorities to actually meet the TMDL requirements. In July 2011 the Army Corps released a Study, “Placer County Storm Water TMDL Strategy” to aid in assessing the science and economics to pinpoint the most cost effective ways of reducing pollutant loads into Lake Tahoe.



The conclusions compared cost and reduction of the fines for each of three concepts: the current area wide Environmental Improvement Program (EIP), street sweeping and abrasive control, and current BMP practices on individual parcels.

Current EIP’s may reduce loads of Fine sediment particles (FSP) between 18% and 26% at a cost of \$70-\$88 per lb/year .

Frequent sweeping plus abrasive controls will reduce FSP between 27% and 38% at a cost of \$3.50 to \$4.25 per lb/year.

Parcel BMP’s will reduce FSP between 20% and 23% at a cost of \$26 to \$41 per lb/year.

Is there any question about the relative cost/benefit? To remove fines from the roadways (by street sweeping and abrasive control) is by far the most economic method to reduce fines. NTCAA is very encouraged by this, as we have been following the work done in Washoe County as well.

One of the key reasons TRPA staff is promoting “new urbanism” is that it will reduce the auto dependency and result in “environmental gain” for Lake Tahoe. Now the question is what are we really getting at what cost, and are there even better alternatives?

SQUAW VALLEY AND ALPINE MEADOWS ANNOUNCE THEIR COMBINATION

September 27, 2011—[Squaw Valley](#) and [Alpine Meadows Ski Resort](#) announced today that the two North Lake Tahoe ski resorts have agreed to combine operations under common ownership and offer season passes and lift tickets that will allow guests to enjoy skiing and riding on both mountains. The transaction is expected to close prior to the commencement of the 2011-12 winter season. Read the entire press release at <http://www.squaw.com/press-release/alpine-meadows-and-squaw-valley-join-forces>



Homewood Mountain Resort Master Plan

According to the EIR/EIS prepared by Hauge Brueck Associates, the proposed alternative is not expected to result in substantial new population growth for the North Lake Tahoe Basin. Using the population of the Placer County portion of the population (2007 figures) this would amount to less than 2%. Certainly a true statement with “less than a significant impact” as claimed in the EIS/EIR, and easily mitigated. However if only Homewood is used as the baseline, its population would increase by 52%, a 2600% increase over the effect when not based on the entire Placer North Lake Basin. Are we now being asked to evaluate a project’s effect not based on the community in which it is proposed to be built but the entire Lake Tahoe Basin?

League Announces Transition in Leadership

League to Save Lake Tahoe Executive Director Rochelle Nason will depart in October after nearly 20 years of working to protect and restore Lake Tahoe. League Program Director Carl Young will serve as interim executive director until a new executive director has been selected.

Placer County Town Hall Meeting

Placer County is beginning the process of updating its Community/General Plans within the Tahoe Basin. A town hall meeting will be held on October 25, 2011 at 6:00 pm at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach to discuss its update process and to solicit public participation.

Upcoming Events/Key Dates

Agendas for TRPA Governing Board and APC, and also Placer County BOS are not available until a few days before the meeting. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a meaningful emphasis to the meetings. Other meetings/events not shown here, or changes, will be announced by email.

October 5, Wednesday	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
October 11, Tuesday	NTPUD Board Meeting	9 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
October 12, Wednesday	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
October 13, Thursday	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
October 19, Wednesday	NTPFD Board Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
October 21, Friday	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
October 25, Tuesday	Community Plan Town Hall	6 pm, NTEC, Kings Beach
October 26, Wednesday	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office

TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
NLTRA – North Lake Tahoe Resort Association
TCPUD – Tahoe City Public Utility District
NTEC – North Tahoe Event Center
BOS – Placer County Board of Supervisors

APC – Advisory Planning Commission
NTPUD – North Tahoe Public Utility District
NTPFD – North Tahoe Fire Protection District
NTRAC- North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council

“Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he then be trusted with the government of others?”*Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, March 1801*

Contributors to this newsletter: Dave McClure, Susan Gearhart and Jerry Wotel

The North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance (NTCAA) seeks to provide an ongoing voice for ordinary citizens. Planning the future of our communities and providing for communication and education on key issues affecting our communities is of prime importance. We serve the North Lake Tahoe area from Kings Beach to Tahoma. NTCAA is a tax-exempt California Public Benefit Nonprofit Corporation formed in May 2007, staffed by community volunteers. Membership is limited to those who subscribe to the NTCAA Goals and Objectives and are willing to participate in the organization's activities.