

# Bleak budget news for LTUSD; busing upsets parents

By Kathryn Reed

Saying no to the governor's tax plan on the November ballot will mean a \$1.6 million hit to Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

Because of union contracts layoffs at that point aren't an option even if the school board wanted to entertain that idea.

What Gov. Jerry Brown has told districts is in addition to cutting the school year by the already allowed five days, 15 more for a total of 20 are allowed to be wiped off the calendar.



Fewer Lake Tahoe Unified school buses will be on the roads in the 2012-13 school year. Photo/LTN file

To make ends meet in the worst case scenario, LTUSD would need to cut the 2012-13 school year by 12 days to absorb the cash flow gap from the state.

"They haven't give us any other choice," Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News* during a break at the May 22

board meeting.

If necessary, that decision would come after the Nov. 6 election when classes are under way.

CFO Deb Yates presented the board and a room full of people the district's budget update based on what the governor proposed in his May revise last week.

"I'm absolutely flabbergasted people keep holding their positions when they keep missing the numbers," Yates said of state employees.

The state budget deficit is \$15.7 billion, up from \$9.2 billion.

She was in Sacramento on Monday with colleagues getting briefed on what the governor and Legislature intend to do when it comes to funding K-12.

"There is a lot of confusion in how the numbers are rolled out. They are not funding us," Yates said.

Now on the table is the "weighted student formula" which creates four categories of funding based on grade level instead of the current scenario where districts are given the same amount of money for each student.

"I don't know how they think it costs less to educate K-6 than others," Yates said.

The categories are K-3 (\$5,466 per average daily attendance), 4-6 (\$4,934), 7-8 (\$5,081), and 9-12 (\$5,887).

She said based on that formula, LTUSD would lose an additional \$200,000.

What brought the masses out Tuesday night was the threat to transportation. Nine people – parents, students, drivers – spoke about the need to ensure students are safe and that the

environment is a consideration if more cars were put on the streets.

Parent Alice Jones said with not having all of the Plan C transportation documents on the district's website, it created a lack of transparency. The deleted bus stop document was not available until the morning of the meeting, thus not giving people ample time to review it. She asked for the board to table the vote until the public had time to go over the ideas.

The board didn't seem to care about transparency based on the fact not one of them made reference to when the plan was available to the public.

At the end of public comment, board President Wendy David said, "We have no intention of not getting your child to school safely on a bus, but we have a fiduciary responsibility to keep the schools open."

Plan C (A and B were presented at the May 1 meeting) calls for eliminating 39 bus stops compared to 86 in other scenarios. Two buses instead of one would be used to get Bijou students home. Gone would be the potential for a 75-minute ride, and instead it would be closer to 50 minutes.

The long walks to bus stops are mostly eliminated. Stops in the Tahoe Keys, Al Tahoe and Sierra Tract neighborhoods have been restored.

It is likely to be more crowded on buses because routes have been eliminated.

The district now runs 12 full-size buses that can seat 84 and four smaller buses with a capacity of 20. The smaller buses are used for special education students. Starting in the fall there will be 10 full size buses and two smaller ones.

The board requested the transportation department give another presentation after the first month of school to report on how

the changes are working.

**In other action:**

- Board member Sue Novasel asked for a future agenda be targeted to discussing school district owned ball fields and how Title IX may be related to them.