

Security of SLT cops, vehicles a concern

By Kathryn Reed

Nothing separates the South Lake Tahoe Police Department fleet from the public. No fence. Only a sign telling people they can't park in that area.

Earlier this summer when the City Council was discussing capital improvement projects, No. 18 on the list was a perimeter security fence for the department. But it was never brought up for discussion at the meeting.

On the Aug. 5 council agenda is the five-year capital investment plan. It's possible the council will approve it Tuesday. There is no specific mention of the fence.

While Police Chief Brian Uhler does not expect the security fence to be part of the 2014-15 budget, he hopes it will become a reality sooner rather than later.

"It's on the list of things to be done. It is competing with many other projects," Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It will be an item I will continually press forward."



South Lake Tahoe police vehicles are not kept in a secure area. Photo/LTN

When he was hired a few years ago he couldn't believe one did not exist. He said previous chiefs have lobbied for a fence, but it has never risen to the top of the priority list.

"It's normal and customary for police to have secure parking for employees and the fleet," Uhler said.

Uhler said known suspects have videotaped officers; this includes filming the officers' personal vehicles. Officers' vehicles have also been vandalized.

While there are video cameras in the parking lot, that doesn't prevent someone from tampering with vehicles or filming officers. The cameras can only help identify the people. But it is not illegal to film officers.

"It would provide an extra layer of security when doing prison transports, drop offs and coming to the jail facility," Uhler said of the fence.

He proposes a 6-foot fence with a mesh lining to prevent clear visibility of the vehicles. It would have a security gate that would need to handle opening and closing multiples times a day. Plus, if there is power outage, there needs to be a backup to make sure vehicles can get in and out.

While there is no official estimate on the cost, Uhler said the fence and gate are likely to be in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range.