Parents upset BlueGo won't stop at WHS



The nearest BlueGo stop to Whittell High is on Highway 50 by the senior center. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – For the last five years BlueGo bus drivers have dropped off Whittell High School students at the school. That ended recently and the parents of these students are not happy.

"Complaints from commuters prompted staff to review the stop. It was determined the stop only generated ridership four days a week, less than 10 months a year, and that the ridership was often nonexistent," Carl Hasty, Tahoe Transportation District executive director, wrote in the Nov. 13 staff report.

The four days a week and 10 months reflect how often WHS is in session.

Three parents showed up to the Friday board meeting at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village asking for the district to

keep trying to find a solution. They believe moving the stop to the senior center along Highway 50 is too dangerous. Plus, they don't understand what the big deal is to take the students less than one mile to school, especially when the BlueGo bus is already crossing the highway to stop at the senior center.

TTD is not allowed to do specialized school bus transportation. An express route only services this section of Douglas County and the route is Highway 50 – not any offshoots.

The fact that WHS has been serviced in the past was a mistake, according to Hasty.

It is students who live in the Carson Valley who are using BlueGo as a means to get to school. The parents estimated about 11 students make the commute, though not all desire to ride BlueGo.

The parents don't believe the senior center stop is safe. The bus sign is extremely close to the highway and had snow near it days after the storm last week. When people stand under the breezeway of the senior center bus drivers don't see them.

"We would pay a monthly fee whether our children ride the bus or not," parent Tara Burke told the board.

A school bus won't transport the kids from the senior center to the school because it is Douglas County School District policy for those less than 1.5 miles away to have to walk.

DCSD does not charge any of its students to ride the bus.

What hasn't been looked at is if the valley students could be dropped off by BlueGo at a designated school bus stop and ride from there – for free or a fee.

"I'm not opposed to working something out," DCSD Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*. But at the

same she said, “I’m not hearing from the school that it is an issue.”

Principal Crespin Esquivel has communicated with TTD, saying the senior center stop is not safe and asking for students to be brought to and from the Zephyr Cove school.

Parents also brought up that these students should be treated like any other member of the public and that there is no difference if they commute for school while other riders commute for work.

The fact that students are going between DCSD, Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Lake Tahoe Community College was also broached, pointing to the need to perhaps look at how all students are getting to and from and between the educational facilities.

The TTD board, staff and parents agreed to keep talking.