Opinion: Say no to the loop road

To the community,

Tahoe Transportation District (part of TRPA) is again pushing to construct the Loop Road. The Loop Road dates back to 1970 and attempted revisions in 1982 and 1987. Original goal was to ease congestion in the casino core.

Included in this era was a “people moving system” from Stateline core to Reagan Beach and “Light Rail” from Kingsbury Grade to South Lake Tahoe airport. Long gone is the “Casino Mecca”.

The present day plan is backed by South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts “STAR” renamed from the former “Gaming Alliance”. STAR has funded $50,000 on “South Shore Vision Plan”.

There is a clear difference from “South Shore” to South Lake Tahoe.

Key to the plan is the construction of the Loop Road.

If you are a South Lake Tahoe resident, property owner and/or business owner – please investigate the Vision Plan/Casino Core and potential Loop Road direction. Highlights: at Pioneer Trail and Highway 50 – the Bottle Shop, Naked Fish and Powderhouse turn into an eight-lane intersection. The road goes around the back of the Village Center/Raley’s to a roundabout at Highway 50 and Park Way. The Loop Road/”California Bypass” deposits visitors to the rebuilt Horizon, new Edgewood Lodge, and remodeled Lakeside Inn Casino property.

The front part of the new Horizon is built with extensive retail and restaurant opportunities – the new “Village

Center”.

This plan does not benefit the businesses or the tax revenue of South Lake Tahoe. The South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce opposes the Loop Road plan.

Highway 50 runs six miles from the Y to Stateline and only 1.1 miles through the project area. The majority of South Shore’s existing population lives in South Lake Tahoe – 21,000; Stateline, Nevada, has a population of 2,300. Highway 50 is the “bloodline” economic main street for the South Lake Tahoe community.

The $65 million projected Loop Road cost needs to be redirected to enhance Highway 50 from Stateline to the Y, not just the Casino Core.

Important meeting are coming up:

May 11 – 9:30am Tahoe Transportation District monthly meeting at Embassy Suites.

May 29 – South Lake Tahoe City Council workshop 6-8pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Mike McKeen, South Lake Tahoe businessman

Yacht club will train people to race

Beer Can Races are about to return to Lake Tahoe every Wednesday at 6pm throughout the summer.

Want to learn how to race?

There will be an intro to sailboat racing seminar on May 19 from 2:30-5:30pm out of the Tahoe Keys Marina in South Lake Tahoe.

Sign up by emailing ltwyc2@aol.com.

No need to own a sailboat to be a member of the Lake Tahoe Windjammers Yacht Club.

Learn about wildflowers in the Sierra

Roger Rosenberger, noted local wildflower enthusiast, will share his photos of wildflowers found in Sierra and provide tips for identification while motivating people to enjoy nature’s little jewels.

The free talk is June 20 at 6:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe branch library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

For more information, call (530) 573.3185.

Opinion: Discrimination alive and shameful on Tahoe fields

By Kathryn Reed

Walk onto a tennis court or dive into a swimming pool – it doesn't matter what sex you are. The net is the same height, the lines spaced the same; 50 meters is 50 meters.

Walk onto a boys' baseball field and girls' softball field – the differences are noticeable because of the pitchers' mound and the distance between the bases.



Who cares?

No one, probably, when it comes to just these differences.

Who cares about the balance of opportunities offered the two genders as well as the quality of facilities?

A whole heck of a lot of people.

Title IX makes people care, or at least pay attention to potential and real differences, even when they don't want to. The same goes for California Assembly Bill 2404.

> *No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*

That's what Title IX, the landmark law signed by President Richard Nixon on June 23, 1972, says.

Personal impact

I had just finished first grade when the president signed that law which will be 40-years-old next month. I knew who Nixon was. I was living just outside of Washington, D.C., that year – even went to his inauguration the following January. But I

didn’t know what Title IX was. I don’t know when I first knew about it.



The Babe Ruth field where the STHS boys' varsity team plays comes with an announcers' booth, snack shack and ample seating for spectators. Photos/Kathryn Reed

While Title IX was about making educational opportunities equal for both sexes, its lasting impact when people talk about the law is how it leveled the playing field for boys and girls, men and women.

I’d like to think it didn’t have much impact on my life. I played all the sports I wanted to – still do. Maybe it’s because I had three older sisters and therefore didn’t see any potential discrimination without having a brother.

My guess, though, is plenty of things weren’t fair. I played softball as a third-grader. We were called the Fireflies. I swam competitively for years in AAU, having competed in the Far Western Nationals. I played a year of JV softball. I lettered in tennis all four years in high school. I even played a year of college tennis.

Title IX opened doors that were previously dead-bolted shut to girls. Last year, according to the Women’s Sports Foundation,

3,173,549 girls played a sport in high school. Forty years ago that number was 294,015. Other reports show 1 in 27 girls played a sport pre-Title IX and now 2 in 5 participate. The number of female college athletes has increased by 500 percent in the last 40 years, another report says.

I've played softball on some of the fields in Tahoe. A co-ed team practiced at Sierra House Elementary. I'm so glad none of my employees twisted or broke an ankle. It was and still is a scary place to run. And the way the ball skips – well, that would be comical if it weren't scary as well.

We played our games at the softball field by the middle school.



The softball field under construction at STHS.

I also played on a women's team at Zephyr Cove. Much better facilities in Nevada.

As for tennis on the South Shore – well, the treatment of non-revenue generating sports is worth another column, as is a private operator making money off the high school courts.

But then again, private entities making money off taxpayer built facilities is the norm around here – whether it's the city or school district allowing it.

Reality check

With numbers like those presented above the easy conclusion is

Title IX has done its job.

Not so fast.

AB2404’s passage in 2005 would not have been necessary if all were fair on the playing fields in the Golden State. The law came into being after a group in Los Angeles fought to have city recreation facilities for each gender be the same quality.



The snack cart the girls get to use.

The inequality of playing fields in South Lake Tahoe has long been a contentious issue. Ask anyone who has played softball or whose child has and they shake their head. They are dismayed about the substantial inequities in the fields in town and embarrassed when playing off the hill and seeing what other towns have.

“Most communities have convertible fields. That is how they are doing it in modern times, but South Lake Tahoe is not in modern times,” Marilyn Breisacher told Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe when she spoke to the group May 9.

Breisacher was there to talk about Title IX and AB2404 as someone who has been involved with softball for the past 10 years. But she is also on the Fields Advisory Committee for the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority. The committee was formed to make recommendations to

the three-member JPA board about how to spend the $500,000 it has that came from turning Measure S into Measure R.

The other members of the committee are:

• Chuck Leonard: committee chair, also chair of the Community Athletic Coordinating Council.

• John Dalton: experience includes soccer coach and Little League.

• Brian Hogan: experience includes Little League, soccer, softball.

• Steve Noll: experience includes Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, softball, baseball, soccer, fields design.

• Ken Riegal: experience includes CAAC board member, soccer.

• Steve Weiss: former South Lake Tahoe recreation director.

At the April 30 meeting of this committee the agenda item titled “Equity of facilities issue: Review and discuss city attorney’s office opinion on requirements of AB2404 and Title IX as it applies to Measure R funds” was tabled. Presumably it will be discussed at the May 21 4-6pm meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Issues to be resolved include, but are not limited to:

• Whether the half million dollars allocated via Measure R for ball field improvements can go to baseball fields and not softball fields.

• Whether girls’ playing fields would all need to be brought up to the same standard as the boys’ fields before boys’ facilities get a dime.

• Is AB2404 relevant when it comes to spending this money?

• Who has jurisdiction when the fields mostly belong to Lake

Tahoe Unified School District, are maintained by the city of South Lake Tahoe, but private money has been used to put in infrastructure like the snack shack at the Babe Ruth fields on Lyons Avenue? With federal money being involved with the district, Title IX becomes an issue. With the city having teams play on the fields and doing the upkeep, it becomes an AB2404 issue. With boys' baseball dads raising the money and doing the work on upgrades, it becomes a turf war in multiple definitions of that phrase.

Discrimination on the diamond

Have someone who knows the fields take you on a tour. To the uneducated, it's hard to see the true differences.

Go to the fields on Lyons Avenue by South Tahoe Middle School. To the left is where the boys play. It has a grass infield – just like Big League parks have. Plenty of seating is available for spectators. A large announcers' booth and snack shack are there.

Look to the right. That's the softball field. It has a dirt infield. Seating? Keep looking. Announcers' booth? No. Ability to share the snack shack? On rare occasions, during tournaments, if a fee is paid to Babe Ruth.

A field is being built at South Tahoe High School for softball. Remember, this is 40 years after Title IX was signed by the president of the United States (clearly not united genders) of America.

The dugouts are in, as is the announcers' booth. But school district officials are scrambling to make the field not be an embarrassment. Steve Morales, facilities director for the district, at the April 30 fields committee meeting said bleachers would be put in in front of the announcers' booth.

This will allow fans to see action down the first and third baselines. No one sitting to the right of home plate behind

the fence and parallel to the dugouts will be able to know if the runner is safe or out at first.

But when the bleachers behind home are in, how will the announcer be able to relay what is going on or the scorekeeper to rule on a play? Another quandary in the world of ball fields in South Lake Tahoe.

JV boys are allowed to play on girls' fields, but girls may not play on boys' fields – at least in South Lake Tahoe.

Boys' fields come with batting cages – even bathrooms. The girls, well, they don't have equal amenities.

Bigger picture missing

In having attended part of the last fields committee meeting before going to another assignment, I witnessed democracy and open meeting decorum close to the worst I've seen.

Leonard, the chair of the committee, clearly has no sense of how to run a meeting. Committee members were allowed to speak at the same time – therefore over each other. How John Upton, the lone paid staff member of the JPA board, could take notes is beyond me. I couldn't follow the multiple conversations.

These meetings are supposed to follow the Brown Act – California's open meeting law. Upton, a former elected official to multiple boards, could have kept the gang in check.

It was clearly the men against the woman. I don't know how many times I heard the guys tell the gal – go raise money and you can have a better field. Neanderthals is the word that came to mind while listening in disbelief to their diatribe.

Do they have a wife, a daughter, a sister, a mother who would want to play on the same quality field as the males in the family?

Each of the committee members seems to have his or her own turf to protect, with little consideration given to what's best for the greater good of the community. It would have seemed better for the JPA board to appoint people who didn't have a horse in the race.

A true assessment of the fields and the inventory needs to be done – not Weiss walking around the grounds and reporting back. The committee needs to know what it costs to upkeep each field and what it would cost to improve it. The committee needs to know what kind of money is generated from as well as what the potential income from the fields is.

Why is there no discussion of leveraging the half million dollars into bigger bucks either through going after grants, seeking partnerships or even getting corporate naming rights to a field?

Why isn't there discussion of how best to spend the people's money so the people get the biggest bang for their buck?

The $500,000 is taxpayer money.

Measure S dollars were audited once by the county auditor-controller. They can be again.

Must schools throwout leftovers?

By Mark Robison, Reno Gazette-Journal

The claim

Federal law requires school districts to throw out food that could feed the hungry.

The background

Silvia Fascio of Gerlach wrote in a recent letter to the editor, “Media reports that one in six Americans are hungry. Meanwhile, each and every public school across this land, including Level One schools (four feeds per day), throw away unconscionable amounts of food, daily. Not scraps, but ‘hermetically’ sealed individual portioned bags of unopened foods …

“Can’t we give this unopened food to soup kitchens, senior citizen centers, tent cities or sell to the local pig farmer; it must by law go to the landfill to feed the rats!”

Fascio blames the “grandly inefficient federal government” for usurping states’ rights on this issue.

Kathy Kubly of Reno was upset at the “lunacy” Fascio described, writing in her own letter to the editor:

“Unopened food that sat on a meal tray for less than an hour can neither be used or donated and is required, by law, to be

opened and thrown away? Please, someone, tell me this isn't true. And this is happening across the country in all of our public and private schools?"

She too blames politicians and says, "Do we just accept or (do we) take action?"

She urges everyone to contact lawmakers about this outrage.

As it turns out, not only doesn't the federal government outlaw schools from donating food, it actively encourages the distribution of leftover food.

Read the whole story

Help is available for people thinking about suicide

If you know someone who has committed suicide, or you've contemplated suicide, you're not alone. The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 1 million people die each year from suicide. Millions more are affected by suicide.

As part of mental health awareness month, Placer County's Campaign for Community Wellness is working to educate people about suicide warnings signs, risk factors and where to go for help.

Major suicide warning signs include talking about harming or killing oneself; talking or writing about death and dying and seeking items that could be used in a suicide attempt like guns and drugs. Feeling hopeless is a more subtle warning sign, though it is equally as dangerous. People who are acting hopeless say they have nothing to look forward to; they may

talk about unbearable feelings. They simply feel and share with others that they have nothing to look forward to.

After someone commits suicide, often friends and family are left asking, “What more could I have done? Were there resources that I failed to seek and use? Were there warning signs that I missed?” They feel like they could have or should have done more. These feelings and questions are normal. One of the best things for people to do is to become familiar with as many warning signs as possible.

Other warning signs to look for in someone to see if he/she might be suicidal include dramatic mood swings or sudden personality changes. A suicidal person may also lose interest in day-to-day activities, neglect his or her appearance, and show big changes in eating or sleeping habits. All these warning signs are even more dangerous if a person has a mood disorder such as depression, bipolar disorder, suffers from alcohol dependence, has previously attempted suicide or has a family history of suicide.

Local resources that provide general assistance for suicide risk can be found at the Placer County Network of Care. For a national resource that offers advice, information and a crisis hotline go online.

For immediate help, the following suicide hotline numbers and website are available:

Auburn: (530) 885.2300

Roseville: (916) 773.3111

Lincoln: (916) 645.8866

National: 800.273.8255.

Gaming industry gross revenue up 3% nationwide

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

The gaming industry is getting healthier nationwide with gross gaming revenue and tax revenue up from the 492 commercial casinos and 517 card rooms operating in the United States, the American Gaming Association says.

The Washington-based organization issued its annual “State of the States: The AGA Survey of Casino Entertainment” report on commercial casino operations on Wednesday.



Casino industry in U.S. improving. Photo/LTN

It’s the 14th AGA report comparing key casino data from the 15 states that have commercial casinos, 13 with so-called “racinos” at horse and dog tracks, 29 states with tribal casinos and five states allowing card rooms.

This year’s edition also includes a survey of elected officials and civic leaders in gaming jurisdictions on the

overall impact of casinos on their communities.

This year's report says gross gaming revenue was up 3 percent over 2010 to $35.6 billion in 2011. In the previous year, revenue increased by less than 1 percent.

Tax revenue climbed 4.5 percent to $7.93 billion in 2011 and the industry directly employed 339,000 people who earned $12.9 billion in wages, tips and benefits. While the industry touts the number of jobs in provides, the total number of jobs in 2011 was down 0.4 percent from a year ago.

The report provides a comparative snapshot of commercial casinos and indicates that the Las Vegas Strip remains the top U.S. casino market with $6.07 billion in gross gaming revenue. Three of the top 20 markets are in Nevada with Las Vegas' Boulder Strip the No. 10 market ($778.9 million in revenue) and Reno-Sparks at No. 14 ($663.3 million).

Read the whole story

Measure R committees set summer meeting schedule

The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority Bicycle and Fields Advisory Committees, required by Measure R, have established their meeting schedules for May, June, and July.

These meetings are being conducted in preparation for making recommendations to the JPA at its regular meeting in July.

The meetings are open to the public.

The Fields Advisory Committee will meet as follows:

May 21, 4–6pm, City Council Chambers, Lake Tahoe Airport.

June 25, 4–6pm, Downstairs Conference Room, Lake Tahoe Airport.

July 16, 4–6pm, City Council Chambers, Lake Tahoe Airport.

The Bicycle Advisory Committee will meet as follows:

June 8, 9–11am, Downstairs Conference Room, Lake Tahoe Airport. (Note that this meeting was earlier scheduled for June 1, and has been changed.)

July 12, 9– 1am, Downstairs Conference Room, Lake Tahoe Airport.

For further information, John Upton at (530) 541.0525 or rkupton@aol.com.

Proposals in the works to keep California parks open

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

Democratic Sens. Joe Simitian and Noreen Evans have rolled out a proposal aimed at keeping gates open at more than 50 California state parks set to close this summer.

The proposal, which will be heard by a Senate budget subcommittee this afternoon, includes shifting as much as $40 million from existing accounts for road maintenance, septic

system repairs and trails and off-highway vehicle funds to cover parks’ costs.

Other recommendations include facilitating operating agreements with nonprofits, improving entry fee collection and exploring other funding.

State parks officials announced last year that 70 of the state’s 278 parks would be closed, projected to save about $22 million. The department has been able to form partnerships with nonprofits and local governments to keep 16 of those parks open. Richard Stapler, spokesman for Natural Resources Secretary John Laird, said officials are involved in talks involving about a dozen more parks.

Read the whole story

Chamber mixer

The community is invited to a Mothers’ Day Makeover BAHM on May 10 from 5:30-7:30pm at the Tallac Historic Site. There will be live music, a fashion show by Sidestreet Boutique, appetizers from Harrah’s & Harveys Catering, wine tasting provided by Crystal Basin Cellars & BellaGrace Vineyards, and a cash bar set up by Raising the Bar Beverage Catering.

Cost is $10 for Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce members, and $20 for non-members.