

Loop road environmental documents released

By Kathryn Reed

A multi-million dollar transportation project on the South Shore has mushroomed into being a project that could dramatically change the state line area, with repercussions possibly extending beyond the Y.

The loop road would essentially flop how Highway 50 and the southern section of the current loop operate. Even though the same number of lanes would be in use, more land would be paved over. Alternative B includes adding 5.76 acres of asphalt with a roundabout on the eastern end in Nevada or 7.62 acres with a signal at that intersection.

Five alternatives were reviewed in the environmental impact study/environment impact report, with Alternative B the proposed project area. The final document will have the preferred alternative. (One alternative would create eight-lanes of traffic in some areas.)

The EIS/EIR was released Monday night. Tahoe Transportation, the lead agency on the project, hosted an open house April 24 that had many of the same spectators and the same photos and charts from previous gatherings.

The project area extends from a quarter mile southwest of Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe to Lake Parkway in Stateline.



The proposed pedestrian bridge over the realigned Highway 50 near Van Sickle Park. Rendering/Ascent

Alternative B calls for four 11-foot wide travel lanes, 5-foot wide shoulders, and turn pockets at major intersections and driveways. Signals would be added at Heavenly Village Way and what is now the back entrance to Harrah's.

Six- to 18-foot retaining walls would be built near Van Sickle Bi-State Park. The entrance would be reconfigured and there would be a signal there.

The draft EIR/EIS said noise from the highway will not be a nuisance for park users.

The current highway between Park Avenue and Lake Parkway would be one travel lane in each direction, with landscaped medians, left-turn pockets at major intersections and driveways, and new or upgraded bike lanes.

The EIS/EIR included three areas that were studied for affordable housing that together could accommodate 227 units. One of those sites is where Mike McKeen owns property.

"We will never do affordable housing," McKeen told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They offered us incentives to do it, but we don't want

it.”

What he would entertain is condos or a second level of commercial. His land is likely to be the gateway, so to speak, where the new highway would begin on the western edge.

Beyond what was studied in the environmental document, TTD is looking at California Tahoe Conservancy land near the Y for **affordable housing**.

The agency is legally obligated to relocate the residents and businesses that would be bulldozed to accommodate the realigned highway.

TABLE 2: TOTAL RESIDENTIAL AND BUSINESS DISPLACEMENT UNITS BY ALTERNATIVE							
Alternative	Total Number of Displacement Units	Total Residential Displacement Units	Single Family Displacement Units	Multiple Family Displacement Units	Total Business Displacement Units	Motel Business Displacement Units*	Motel Rooms
B	97	92	15	77	5	2	58
C	64	61	7	54	3	3	90
D	64	47	5	42	6	1	16

** Motel parcels are included in total Business Displacees*

The project started as a way to move the highway out of the casino corridor and turn that area into a city-county street. The new highway would travel behind Harrah’s and MontBleu.

While that is still the plan, all the renderings show a complete-street landscape, with wide bike lanes, and decorative vegetation mixed with the new commercial areas. A footbridge would span the new highway to link the casinos with Van Sickle Bi-State Park.

The belief is millions of dollars would be added to the local economy with more people opting to stop to shop-eat-recreate instead of driving through. Adding more transit options – which includes becoming more walkable and bikeable – the goal is to get people to stay longer

TTD had hoped for federal TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) funds to pay for the project. With a new administration in office, it's not known if that will continue to be a funding source. TTD will be pursuing other avenues.

Notes:

- The draft EIR/EIS is available **online**.
 - People have 75 days to comment.
 - The final document is expected to be released in the fall.
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NFL awash in gambling contradictions

By Ken Belson, New York Times

Los Angeles Rams guard Jamon Brown (68) competed against Tampa Bay Buccaneers defensive end Howard Jones in an arm wrestling event at the MGM Hotel and Casino on the Vegas Strip in April. Credit Heidi Fang/Las Vegas Review-Journal

When N.F.L. owners voted overwhelmingly last month to move the Raiders to Las Vegas, some of them went out of their way to say the city was no longer the corrupting influence they believed it once was and now very capable of supporting a franchise.

The Dallas Cowboys' owner, Jerry Jones, a prime backer of the move, said the city most closely associated with gambling "is

not your father's Las Vegas." Even the NFL's commissioner, Roger Goodell, who continues to oppose legalized sports gambling, admitted that Las Vegas was "not the same city it was 10 or 20 years ago."

But the decision to leave Oakland and embrace Las Vegas presents conflicts for a league that has long stood vehemently against gambling.

Read the whole story

Record snowpack makes for wild whitewater rafting

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

The Meat Grinder rapid on the South Fork of the American River looks like a cauldron of bubbling soup, its contents rising and falling, splashing and swirling along its one-third of a mile stretch.

For intrepid whitewater enthusiasts, the rapids on the American's South Fork should bring plenty of fun this summer. For the uninitiated, this season's high-river flows could bring great risk.

River use has increased in wetter years on the South Fork of the American River. In 2011, a relatively wet year that preceded five dry years, almost 80,000 people used the South Fork, according to statistics collected by El Dorado County.

Read the whole story

Buyers' market for timeshares on South Shore



Barbara Cooper's interest in a timeshare was to have access to indoor tennis. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

Barbara Cooper batted around the idea of buying into a timeshare unit at the Ridge Tahoe in 2002. She did so for one big reason – to play tennis at the indoor courts, the only place in the Lake Tahoe Basin to play inside.

“It's something my business partner and I got into specifically for playing tennis,” she said. “I entered into this the cheapest way.”

She paid \$2,583 for the resale unit – not counting fees. Her portion amounts to \$577 every other year.

Cooper got what she wanted out of the experience, which included an agreement with the exchange company Interval International. She went on ski vacations in Vail. Her friend used the exchange for golf excursions.

But now she's discovered it's just as easy to drive down to the Carson Valley to play tennis when the weather is nice. In the drought years, there wasn't an issue to get court time at the Ridge.

"But lately reserving a court can be tricky," Cooper said.



The Ridge Tahoe has some of the less expensive timeshares on the South Shore. Photo/LTN

Now she's ready to sell and has placed her unit through the Ridge Tahoe's resale program, in which they release for purchase one unit at a time. She expects to gain \$339 in capital appreciation when the rotation has her selling in 2019. And that's OK to her.

"It's worth it to sell to have someone assume the responsibility of the fees," Cooper told *Lake Tahoe News*. They've gone up 11.3 percent in the last 15 years.

Cooper is not alone in trying to unload her asset or liability – depending on how one looks at it.

Many timeshare units in the region are on the market, prompted by a bit of a glut in availability like other resort towns.

The list of timeshare options on the South Shore is staggering. Beyond the Ridge, there's the Wyndham, Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort, Beachcomber, Tahoe Beach & Ski Club as well as the two Marriott properties at Heavenly Village – the Grand Residence and Timber Lodge. Some operate under the points-based system, while others use fractions of time. All timeshare units are subject to annual fees and homeowners' association dues.

"Business is good," George DeLaurentis of Century 21 said. The broker is busy with a high demand of people coming and going into units. "There's more inventory now."



The Marriott Timber Lodge has been open in South Lake Tahoe since 2002. Photo/LTN file

For some people, the option of having a timeshare works wonders if you're using it in a certain way.

"If you can work the system, it's fantastic," DeLaurentis told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The opportunity appears to work well for those who consistently take trips; and these vacations mean having more spending money while on vacation because the lodging is already paid. Plus, there's not a bill stacked with fees staring travelers in the face when they leave the properties

like some hotel stays.

More than 57 million weeks are available at the 9,000-plus timeshares around the globe. Most complexes average about 125 units each.

Sales revenue by timeshare developers and operators rose 32 percent – equating to \$8.6 billion a year – in the five years ending in 2015, according to the most recent estimate by the American Resort Development Association.

But secondary market sales by private owners show a different story.

“Branded resorts are doing very well,” Bob Schmidt, an analyst for Sharket.com., told *Lake Tahoe News*.

So essentially, people are eager to get in and to get out of timeshares – for reasons as varied as stages in their lives.

Those who watch the industry point to simple life changes like the children of baby boomers growing up and leaving to raise families of their own and might not to be skiing with mom and dad anymore.

“Vacation habits change,” Schmidt said.

The system works great for those wanting to take a nice vacation every year.

But once the status of the family or lifestyle changes, reselling the unit may seem to be easier than it is if you’re seeking a windfall of a return. It’s the opposite of the housing market in which the inventory is low, so buyers and interested parties are willing to shell out more. In the timeshare market, there’s an abundance to pick and choose from if you’re interested in the lifestyle.

Between the top 20 Lake Tahoe timeshare properties (including David Walley’s Resort in Genoa), the average number of units

available for resale in 2014 and 2015 was 551, according to Sharket.com.

For example, the two Marriott properties alone have had 90 resales listed for the two-year period. The typical price goes for \$5,600 at Timber Cove and \$34,000 at the Grand Residence. The properties rate higher than most on the sale-ability score. Whereas, the typical price for a unit at the Ridge comes in at about \$500, and it rates in ranking much lower on the score.

It's all in what people are seeking.

The timeshare concept was born out of the 1960s, allowing multiple owners to share one property and gain access to resorts around the world by cashing in points or selecting allotted times.

Will Nevada's pot tax really benefit education?

By Amelia Pak-Harvey, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A few years after Colorado legalized recreational marijuana in 2012, Denver Public Schools produced a public service video with a straightforward message: The education system wasn't getting that much money from pot tax revenue.

It was a misconception that the district was trying to clear up. The first \$40 million in excise taxes on the retail drug went to a school construction fund for the entire state; the rest landed in the state's public school fund. Retail and medical sales taxes have also funded a few grants.

Will Colorado serve as a cautionary tale for Nevada as it grapples with how to tax recreational marijuana? Will that revenue even make a dent on education funding?

Read the whole story

The Crossing changes complexion of SLT's Y

By Kathryn Reed

A destination – that is what The Crossing wants to be.

What was the Factory Stores at the Y in South Lake Tahoe has been revamped with the hope it helps revitalize this end of town.

Sacramento-based Sutter Capital Group infused more than \$1 million into the property. Besides a façade that makes the center look modern and inviting, the remodel has included an open space where the two commercial strips once met.

The 4,000-square-foot plaza can be rented for events and parties. There is an elevated stage, seating and fire pits. This is where bike-pedestrian paths connect to the center.

The brewery has large doors that open directly onto the plaza.

Based on the number of cars in the parking lot it is evident the center is more popular than it had been in recent years.



A brewery spills out onto the common area at The Crossing in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Sutter Capital bought the property in December 2014. For several years Wells Fargo Bank had owned the center because former owners Shannon Casteel and Nancy Irmer defaulted in 2012. At that time the sisters owed more than \$8 million. In 2004, they bought the center from their brother, Gary Casteel. He still runs Heavenly Village.

New tenants that have moved in or will soon include Elevate Wellness, Omni Tahoe, Verde Mexican Rotisserie, Lake Tahoe Aleworx Taproom and Pizzeria, Sierra-at-Tahoe and T-Mobile.

Holdover tenants include Big 5, Bank of America and Styles for Less. Big 5 was closed earlier this year because the roof leaked and damaged the store. The interior has been fixed, and the roof will be replaced this spring.

“There are a number of vacant suites remaining, although we are in various stages of discussions with prospective tenants on the majority of them,” Burke Fathy, general manager of the

ownership group, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Sierra Salsa Showdown hot enough to melt snow

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – Bottle it. It was that good.

Jerry Lee Marsh took home top honors April 22 at Sierra-at-Tahoe's Salsa Showdown. For his winning efforts he earned a 2017-18 season pass to the ski resort.

Jerry's Verde, as he called it, was one of 11 traditional salsas. Two fruit salsas were judged separately.

The six judges – all with a connection to Sierra except for this reporter – agreed Jerry's Verde was outstanding. It was thicker than a lot of green salsas. The heat was perfect – starts out mild, then has a strong finish, but not overpowering.

One judge suggested chopped avocado would enhance it, but not all were in agreement.

Now in its 10th year, this contest brings out locals and people throughout Northern California.



Tomatillos beat out tomatoes April 22 at the Sierra Salsa Showdown. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Jerry's Verde had close competition from Salsa Romo. It had great flavor without having to be hot. Some judges thought it might have had pickled veggies in it.

Doug Abbott of South Lake Tahoe came up with Smoky Bacon Salsa. He said the creation was an accident that he liked. It was the only one with meat in it. Abbott is a veteran of this contest, having won it a few years ago.

Allen Evangelista of San Francisco has been entering his salsas every year, even winning it a couple years back.

"It's an awesome tradition," Evangelista told *Lake Tahoe News* of the event. "This year I put honey in it." His Rainbow and Sunshine was near the top of the pack.

Teresa Elena Petersen of Meadow Vista was a first-time entrant with her Neña's Pico de Gallo.

"The secret to a good salsa my aunt Mercy told me is to chop everything finely, use salt and don't make it the last day," Petersen told *Lake Tahoe News*. "You need to let the juices of

fresh tomatoes sit.”

Winning the fruit salsa contest was Arica Davis, who now lives in South Lake Tahoe, after moving out from Louisiana.

Both fruit salsas were mango dominated, but Davis’ edged out her competitor’s because her flavors were more balanced and overall it tasted more like a true salsa. She also won a season pass.

It was all things Mexican-themed Sunday afternoon at the Golden Bear Terrace – with taco eating contests, a piñata for kids, and plenty of margaritas being mixed for the adults.

This is closing weekend for Sierra, with Monday being Customer Appreciation Day. Proceeds from the \$35 lift tickets will benefit youth recreation and education in South Lake Tahoe. All guests are invited to join General Manager John Rice and the rest of Sierra’s team for the official “last run of the season” from the top of Grandview Express beginning at 2pm. Last call at the Sierra Pub will be 2:45pm, in time for the ending of all winter operations at 3pm.

Status of forests is ‘dire’ as world marks Earth Day

By Ann M. Simmons, Los Angeles Times

They cover a third of the world’s landmass, help to regulate the atmosphere, and offer shelter, sustenance and survival to millions of people, plants and animals.

But despite some progress, the planet’s woodlands continue to

disappear on a dramatic scale.

Since 1990 the world has lost the equivalent of 1,000 football fields of forests every hour, according to World Bank development indicators from last year. That's 1.3 million square kilometers of forest, an area larger than South Africa, according to the international financial institution.

Read the whole story

SLT seniors on losing end of city, county squabble



Seniors, foreground, on April 20 tell city and county officials that things need to change. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

While there are plenty of senior citizens on the South Lake Tahoe City Council and El Dorado County Board of Supervisors,

leadership seems to be lacking – at least when it comes to how to manage a senior center.

Members of the two elected bodies, along with staff from both agencies met this week with seniors from the South Lake Tahoe facility. The seniors are tired of the squabbling between the two entities. They just want to be able get answers to some basic questions and know that they have a place to congregate for the indefinite future.

The conundrum is the county owns the building and the city has the lease to operate it. That lease expires in 2023. The lease says the city is supposed to handle routine maintenance. Defining “routine” is a stumbling block.

“Regarding the roof, we haven’t settled on who is responsible for it,” Supervisor Sue Novasel said. “We aren’t sure. We haven’t gotten to where we both agree.”

They’ve been talking for a year.



Ceiling panels are damaged from the leaky roof at the senior center. Photo/LTN

This winter was horrendous. Buckets were needed to catch the dripping water inside the building – which was still happening earlier this week. Ceiling tiles are damaged, so is the floor.

The city has said it will pay for the roof because it's the right thing to do. The county – they haven't offered to come forward with a dime for the structure; they just collect rent.

State law mandates the county provide certain programs. That's their major contribution, even though each year when budget talks roll around there is the threat to dismantle Meals on Wheels.

Seniors mostly said they'd like the city to be in charge – even own the building. They know those people, have a relationship with them. This was obvious by the dialogue.

A bigger issue is what is to be done with the entire 56-acre parcel. It's county owned, city run. This includes Campground by the Lake, Lakeview Commons, and where the library is.

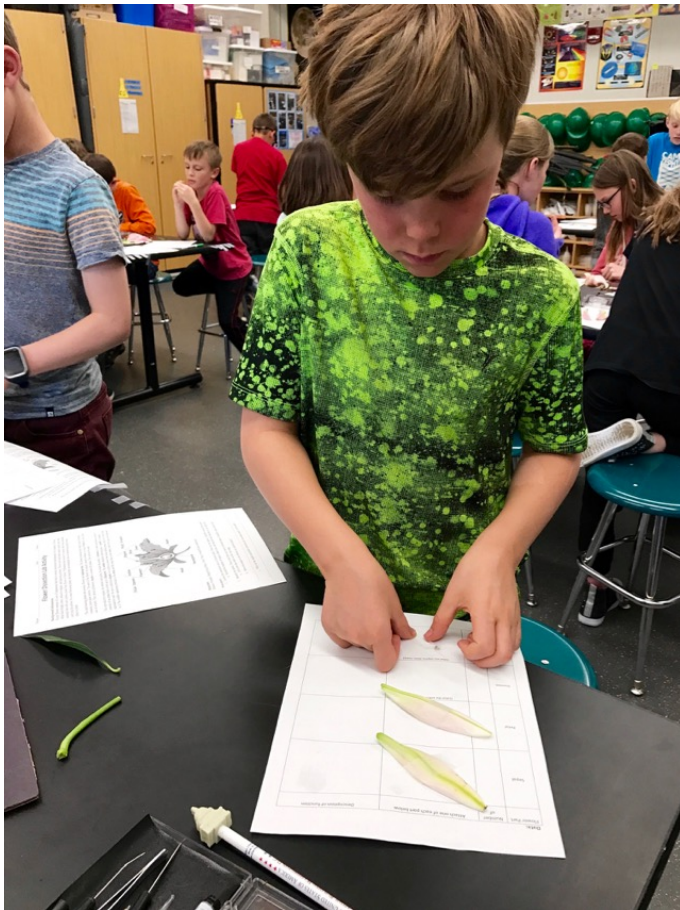
The two government bodies this month entered into a \$60,000 agreement to have a feasibility study done to determine the value of the land, assets, and money making capabilities. (The county didn't want to rely on the city's figures.) The two entities are sharing the costs, though city taxpayers get to pony up more of the money since they are also county taxpayers. The study is expected to be completed in 90 days.

The city and county have squabbled for decades, and this acreage is just part of the pettiness. While in the past the city has said it would like ownership and full control, that drum isn't being beat so loudly anymore.

In the meantime, the seniors have a to-do list they'd like someone to approve. They have their own money, but the city can't just say yes, the county wants to approve changes to its building – as most landlords would want. But government moves slowly – even more slowly than the average senior, and that is what has those using the facility so exasperated. This building is like a home to many of them. It's where they meet friends, share what's going on. It might be their only human contact on any given day. They want the powers that be to

start treating this like the sanctuary they revere and not just some building.

Youngsters embrace the spirit of Earth Day



Fourth-grader Luke Davis carefully records his data.
Photo/Frany Thorne

One day wasn't enough to celebrate the Earth. At the magnet school in Meyers the students embraced a week of activities.

The theme last week was Plant Your Seed.

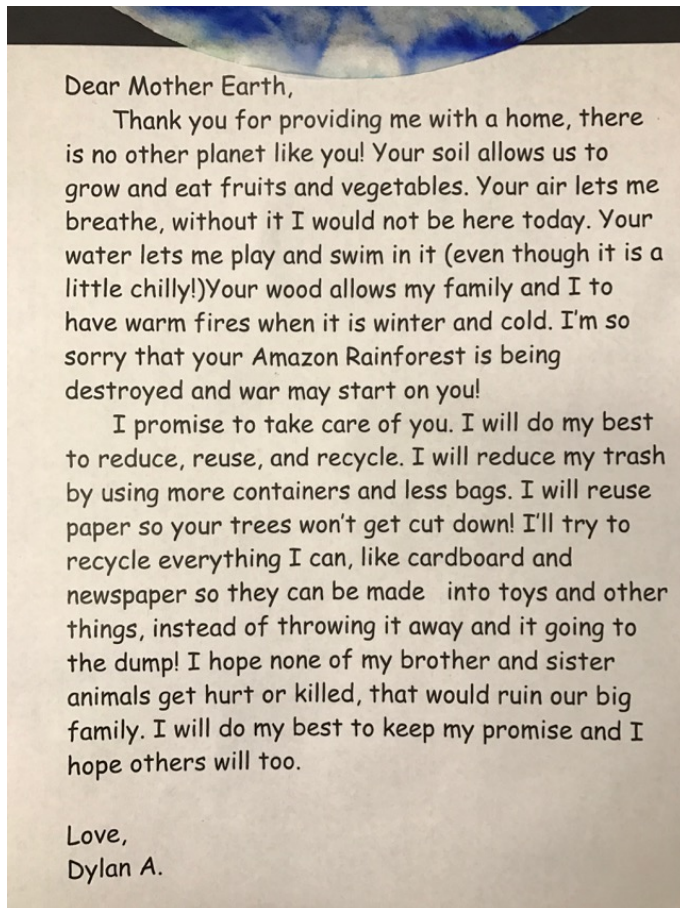
Earth Day has been celebrated on April 22 since 1970. It started in the United States; now more than 190 countries recognize this as an opportunity to take stock in what is going on environmentally with the world or in individual locations throughout the world.

Each day something different took place at the magnet school:

Monday: Students took an Earth Day pledge and each class participated in a school yard clean up.



Second-grader Briley Zlendick dissects a Lima bean. Photo/Frany Thorne



A letter to Mother Earth by second-grader Dylan Anton, who is in Frany Thorne's magnet school class.

Tuesday: Book swap – students in each grade brought books to trade with others in a school-wide book swap.

Wednesday: Waste free lunch – This was a school-wide effort to reduce waste; students were encouraged to pack their lunches using reusable containers and fewer wrapped items.

Thursday: Lights out day – This was a school-wide effort to conserve electricity. Classrooms and hallways were filled with natural light from the windows, lessons took place outside, and each teacher made an effort to use less.

Friday: Labs – Each class participated in a hands-on science lab. Labs were carefully designed to follow the Next Generation Science Standards while also sticking to the Plant Your Seed theme.

“The goal of the week was to reinforce the importance of conserving our Earth. We had a very successful week and hope to foster the ‘Every day is Earth Day’ slogan in our actions,” second-grade teacher Frany Thorne told *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*