Cooperation key to improving Placer County

By Kathryn Reed

Partnerships and collaboration are making a difference in Placer County.

The California Tahoe Conservancy has been a huge player in getting water quality projects, bike trails and other improvements established. In all, the CTC has poured about $62 million into the lake portion Placer County.

At the state agency's board meeting last week in South Lake Tahoe reps from the CTC, Placer County, North Tahoe Public Utility District, Tahoe City Public Utility District, California State Parks and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association talked about what has been accomplished and the work that is left to do. Many projects overlap jurisdictions, with funding coming from multiple sources, with benefits to all.

"We are looking at it from a watershed scale," Kansas McGahan with Placer County said of projects. It means looking at water quality, stream environmental zone, air quality, and economics among other criteria together. This approach gives more depth to projects.

Sixteen multi-benefit watershed projects have been completed since 2001. That was the year the county established the Tahoe Engineering Division. A key purpose to doing so was to work specifically on environmental improvement projects as they relate to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan.

Placer would like to see transportation projects be considered under the EIP umbrella.



Lakeside Trail in Tahoe City is decorative, has interpretive signs, seating and endless views of the lake. Photo/LTN file

McGahan said the county's current focus is the Griff Creek corridor, which includes putting in a roundabout at highways 267 and 28, and cleaning up the corner and making the creek more viable. Fanny Bridge replacement is also high on the list, as are completing the Dollar Creek trail and the North Tahoe bike trail.

For Kim Boyd with the Tahoe City PUD she called completion of the Lakeside Trail the "missing link." Funding is a stumbling block, though the exact route has also not been finalized.

The public utility districts on the North Shore have recreation as one of their main objectives, in addition to water and sewer obligations. TCPUD operates the only public boat ramp on the North Shore at Lake Forest.

Reps talked about Pomin Park in Tahoe City, in TCPUD's jurisdiction, being ripe for water quality projects. While people are talking about possibilities to move the field out of what is essentially a wetland, just wiping out the recreation facilities and not replacing them is not a viable option.

TCPUD and NTPUD officials are worried about having proper firefighting capacity. It’s one thing to have enough water and pressure to fight a house fire, it’s another to go into the wildland urban interface to douse flames.

Duane Whitelaw, general manager of NTPUD, is a former fire chief in the basin. He’d like some of the firefighting issues to fall under the EIP program.

Regulatory agencies like TRPA and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board track EIP projects and then reward/penalize jurisdictions based on accomplishments.

The next big project in the Tahoe basin for State Parks will be work in Kings Beach, most notably the pier replacement. The draft environmental documents are expected to be released for public comment just after the first of the year.

The North Lake Tahoe Resort Association is a big player because it is the recommending body for Placer County for how 2 percent of the hotel tax collected in the Tahoe area is then invested back into the community.

NLTRA is looking at how to raise more money. Increasing the transient occupancy tax, which is at 10 percent, and hiking the 7¼ percent sales tax are under serious consideration.

Snowboarder dies at Sierra-at-Tahoe

By KCRA-TV

A 23-year-old man died Thursday after crashing on an intermediate trail at Sierra-At-Tahoe, resort officials said.

David Karlin’s parents said he was a Sacramento State University student.

The crash happened about 1:15pm Dec. 7 when ski officials said Karlin lost control on the hill, slid off the trail and hit a snow fence. Karlin was not wearing a helmet at the time of the crash, witnesses said.

Karlin’s friend, Tony Gonzalez, was with him during the accident.

Read the whole story

Calif. looks at dumping gas tax for per-mile fee

By Tony Bizjaz, Sacramento Bee

Weeks into a new gas tax hike, California transportation officials said Thursday they are studying ways to charge drivers based on how many miles they drove since their last fill-up rather than the amount of fuel they use.

The problem? California drivers are choosing such fuel-efficient cars that the state fears it will be deprived of enough road construction revenues in the long run.

The Caltrans study – the California Road Charge Pilot Program report – is billed as a way for the state to move from its longstanding but outmoded pump tax to a system where drivers pay based on their odometer readings.

Read the whole story

Douglas County replacing voting machines

Douglas County's voting machines, which showed their age in the last election, are going to be replaced.

After 13 years, the machines need to go, according to Clerk-Treasurer Kathy Lewis.

The county has allocated $500,000 for the machines. The Legislature has set aside $1.8 million to help all the counties purchase voting machines; Douglas will receive $249,527.

Commissioners last week agreed to buy 139 electronic machines from Dominion Voting Systems. They will be in place for the 2018 elections.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Greenway Bike Trail to be expanded in 2021

By Kathryn Reed

The next phase of the Greenway Bike Trail in South Lake Tahoe is about to go forward.

Trustees of Lake Tahoe Community College on Tuesday are

expected to approve three items related to the project. The college, city of South Lake Tahoe and California Tahoe Conservancy are involved in a three-way land swap and cash transaction to build more sections of the path.

There was a hiccup in the process when two global easements were uncovered. They go back decades; one involving the Globin family and the other the Hartoonians.

To overcome these easements Placer Title got involved to provide an insurance policy of sorts.

“After much discussion, the district and the CTC worked with the title company to request a title assurance for site 3. This assurance would insure over two easements, allowing the district to construct on the property based on a proposed development area map and survey provided by the district,” the LTCC staff report for Dec. 12 reads.

Site 3 is west of South Tahoe Public Utility District and south of LTCC.

College President Jeff DeFranco told *Lake Tahoe News* the easements are so old they lack clarity of what the original owners intended.

While the college is still providing $700,000 to the bike project, the money is being redefined.

“What is proposed now is the district contributing $650,000 to hard costs of construction, then $50,000 for these soft costs,” DeFranco said. The soft costs being surveys, legal expenses and the like.

CTC, which is the lead on this trail project, completed the first phase in 2015. Construction of the next two phases have been pushed back a year to 2021.

Chris Mertens with CTC at that agency’s board meeting last week called these phases the most important because of their

“recreation and community resources.” The trail will cross Trout Creek and Bijou Meadows, connecting Lake Tahoe Community College, Bijou Community Park, El Dorado County offices and South Tahoe Middle School.

Of concern, though, is the cost of the project is increasing by $600,000 to $1.3 million based on bids coming in higher. The booming economy and natural disasters are contributing to construction costs escalating. Still, the CTC believes it can get the money together to keep building.

State money coming to EDC for road work

Two El Dorado County projects have been awarded from Caltrans.

The planning grants are funded through the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (SB1) to support efforts to plan more sustainable communities, reduce transportation-related greenhouse gases and adapt for the effects of climate change.

Nearly $32 million in grants were awarded.

Among projects awarded funding are:

- El Dorado County Transportation Commission El Dorado County and city of Placerville Active Transportation Plans, $100,003;
- El Dorado County Transportation Commission Coloma Sustainable Community Mobility Plan, $130,000.

Additionally, $7 million in Adaptation Planning grants were awarded to 21 projects throughout California. These grants will help local and regional agencies conduct adaptation

planning in a way to ensure transportation assets are resilient in the face of climate change and extreme weather events. SB1 will provide a total of $20 million over three years for this grant program. Among projects awarded funding are:

· California Tahoe Conservancy Climate Adaptation Strategy for the Lake Tahoe Basin, $359,756.

Trademark lawsuit over name ‘Apple Hill’

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Apple Hill has been an autumn destination for decades for Northern California families in search of fresh fruits, Halloween pumpkins, Christmas trees and wine tasting.

Now, it is at the center of a legal fight over who can use the name “Apple Hill” to hawk their farm goods.

The dispute is between the Apple Hill Growers Association, which adopted the name “Apple Hill” in 1964, and the family that runs Boa Vista Orchards, one of the largest farm stand operations in the area just east of Placerville along Highway 50.

Read the whole story

Suspected DUI driver causes 3-car Hwy. 50 crash



Wreckage of one vehicle in the middle of Highway 50 between Harrah’s and Harveys on Dec. 9. Photo/Bill Kingman

Updated 9pm:

Cars were scattered about the Stateline casino corridor Saturday afternoon in what ended up being a three-car accident.



Ryan Land’s vehicle ended up near McP’s in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/SLTFD

Several people were injured, but none with life-threatening injuries.

Ryan Land, 33, of Fallbrook was arrested on felony driving under the influence charges.

He was reportedly going 60 mph in the 25 mph zone. He started in Gardnerville and ended his day in South Lake Tahoe. Land’s vehicle swerved into on coming traffic in front of the casinos, striking two vehicles, before he crashed into the traffic light near McP’s.

South Lake Tahoe police did not provide names and home towns of others involved.

Wrecked cars were on both sides of the state line. Traffic was diverted for a few hours on Dec. 9 for the mess to be cleaned up.

It gave those in the area something to look at as people were

lined up in front of the casinos gaping at the wreckage.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Safety of Incline area VHRs called into question

By Kim Burrows, KRNV-TV

Lake Tahoe is a popular place to rent a house on a short-term basis to hit the ski slopes in the winter and play on the beach in the summer.

But the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District is worried about the safety in some houses. The danger has already cost a teen his life.

People can choose from thousands of rental homes around the lake. Online websites advertise that the homes can sleep 16, 18 and 20 people. But fire officials say it’s not always safe.

Read the whole story

Survey: Rural lifestyle critical to EDC residents

Maintaining a rural lifestyle is the most important thing to El Dorado County residents who took a recent survey.

The county was seeking input on needs and priorities for economic development.

In one question people had to pick the following as being most important: rural lifestyle (320 votes), high level county services (306), keeping sales tax low (87) or not sure (36).

Other questions/answers:

Which three of the following aspects of economic development are most important to you, if any?

· Good schools – 444

· Recreational options – 396

· Job opportunities – 340

· Affordable housing – 307

· Restaurant options – 206

· Retail shopping options – 149

· Easy parking – 82

· Other: – 77

· Tourist attractions – 54.

Which of the following things, if any, do you think are strengths of El Dorado County?

· Recreational options – 565

· Good schools – 358

· Tourist attractions – 345

· Restaurant options – 146

· Easy parking – 122

· Affordable housing – 75

· Other: – 62

· Retail shopping options – 59

· Job opportunities – 34.

Keeping in mind that about 24 percent of every property tax dollar goes to the county, what best describes your view on having additional housing development in El Dorado County to support improvements in the areas we just asked about? Do you strongly disapprove, disapprove, neutral, approve, strongly approve?

· Approve –23.3 percent

· Strongly disapprove – 20.6 percent

· Neutral – 19.7 percent

· Disapprove – 19.5 percent

· Strongly approve – 12.4 percent

· Not sure – 4.4 percent.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report