Overhaul of look, functionality of SLT's Sierra Blvd.



Sierra Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe is soon to be completely renovated. Rendering/Provided

By Susan Wood

One of South Lake Tahoe's main crosstown arteries is getting a face lift.

Once the design process is wrapped up, the city expects to begin construction on Sierra Boulevard's complete street plan – which should be next year.

The extensive transportation project driven primarily by human power is now in the environmental review phase. It heads to the city Planning Commission upon completion.

The plan would essentially represent a complete overhaul of

the thoroughfare running from Highway 50 to Barbara Avenue. At the end is where the trucks dump their snow loads.

South Lake Tahoe Public Works – joined by Tahoe Transportation District and NCE design representatives – on Thursday provided about 30 people a glimpse of the design. The meeting at the recreation center was the last scheduled community input meeting.

Many in the audience seemed heavily invested in the approximately $6 million plan that spun out of Phase 4 of the Sierra Tract Erosion Control Project. The “boulevard” plan, which has been in the works for years and stalled in 2008, is a little more than halfway in the process.



More than two dozen people listen Nov. 2 to plans for Sierra Boulevard. Photo/Susan Wood

It calls for curbs and gutters with storm water drains to channel the runoff that collects in mini lakes and ponds on the side of the street. Landscaping and lighting are set to illuminate a Class II bike lane, Class I 10-foot shared use path, as well as a 5-foot sidewalk for pedestrians. A crosswalk is slated to go in near Sierra Community Church, a quasi-anchor of the street.

Money is coming mostly from an Active Transportation Project grant.

And beyond the strip, a crucial component to the bicycle-friendly improvements is the connection between an improved Highway 50 and the Greenway bike project.

The city sought to cover all bases with this project – from air quality and water quality to active transport and safety. The latter led to the city's intention to install road features called "bulb outs." These bulbous sidewalk extensions are used to reduce the pedestrian crossing distance and to slow down traffic.

On most days, motorists drive down the road "like a drag strip," NCE senior engineer Christian Heinbaugh told attendees Nov. 2. The thought is the extensive width of the street gives the driver a fast, open-road feel.

But these road-narrowing features brought up questions from the group whether they would pose a hindrance to snowplowing operations – which dominated the discussion.

"Why so narrow?" a community member asked.

To that, Heinbaugh reminded those in attendance that the features were added because of public concerns expressed over the safety of the boulevard. The "bulb outs" in the street prompt motorists to slow down as they approach encroaching road features.

"It's going to feel like a 35mph road," he said of the current speed limit. New to the transportation planners' vernacular is the term "traffic calming," as if motorists need to take a chill pill.

Some attendees couldn't quite grasp where the snow would go if the boulevard and multi-use path are due to be cleared of the white stuff in winter. They treated the quizzical type of

features set to go in as something abnormally excessive, except they represent what one would find in any progressive, bike-friendly town. That conversation resulted in a more far-reaching chat about what constitutes a right-of-way and what is deemed an easement in respect to tossing the snow.

Transportation planners and engineers have learned a lot over the years about how to make these street features durable, the crowd was assured. For one thing, the separation between sidewalk features and roads are curvy in nature to where it's easier for trucks to roll over them without destroying them.

Probably the most biting part of the question-and-answer segment came up when resident Mark Cutright asked who was going to pay for the maintenance. The accusation of missing funds from recreation-oriented Measures S and R prompted Bicycle Advisory Committee member and advocate Peter Fink to insist that at least now funding is thoroughly watched and scrutinized.

Cycling advocates have long waited for improvements to make South Shore roads friendly, safe and inviting to negotiate.

Motorists have long wanted to keep their oil pans on their vehicles as they take the boulevard, which is substantially beat up by truck traffic.

Residents have long wanted relief from flooding roads in big winters like last year.

When asked by *Lake Tahoe News* if NCE has witnessed whether these types of improvements in other communities prompt street-side property owners to make upgrades of their own, Heinbaugh was undecided but called it "logical."

If anything, the city is going for a more pleasing look.

"It'll definitely spruce up the neighborhood," city engineer Stan Hill told *LTN* before the meeting.

Legendary climber Beckey dies at age 94



Fred Beckey

By Phuong Le, Associated Press

Legendary mountain climber Fred Beckey, who wrote dozens of books and is credited with notching more first ascents than any other American mountaineer, has died. He was 94.

Megan Bond, a close friend who managed his affairs, told the *Associated Press* that Beckey died of natural causes in her Seattle home Monday.

“He was an extraordinary mountaineer. He also had a personality and humor that almost dwarfed the mountains around him,” Bond said. “He was a brilliant writer. He was a scholar. He lived based on what was important to him, and he was not going to sell out.”

Beckey gave a talk in South Lake Tahoe in 2009.

Read the whole story

Fallen firefighter from Zephyr Cove honored

A section of Highway 140 on Thursday was dedicated in memory of two fallen U.S. Bureau of Land Management firefighters who lost their lives in a 2016 traffic crash, one of whom was from Zephyr Cove.

On July 10, 2016, BLM wildland firefighters Jacob O'Malley, 27, and Will Hawkins, 22, of Reno died in a single-vehicle rollover crash on Highway 140 while on routine patrol for lightning-sparked fires. Highway 140 extends northwest from U.S. 93 north of Winnemucca to the Oregon state line.

On Nov. 2, Gov. Brian Sandoval, Nevada Department of Transportation representatives and the firefighters' families and friends gathered at a ceremony to dedicate 12 miles of the state route in the firefighters' names. The segment between the Highway 95/Higway 140 junction and 12 miles northwest of the junction was dedicated, with one 4 by 6 foot sign installed in each direction to read "Highway Segment Dedicated to BLM Firefighters Will Hawkins and Jacob O'Malley."

Calif. planning for raging fires, extreme heat

By Christopher Cadelago, Sacramento Bee

As massive fires that would kill more than 40 people ravaged his state last month, Gov. Jerry Brown met with state emergency officials, jabbing at culprits of the latest disaster.

“That’s the way it is with a warming climate, dry weather and reducing moisture,” Brown warned. “These kinds of catastrophes have happened, they’ll continue to happen, and we have to be prepared to do everything we can to mitigate.”

California efforts to prepare for climate change already have begun.

In the Sierra Nevada, scientists and forestry management experts burn and thin acres of forest to cut back on fuel for intensifying wildfires. Down south in San Diego County, they replenish beaches, repair sand dunes and plant thousands more shade trees.

Read the whole story

West Shore roads to benefit from state gas hike

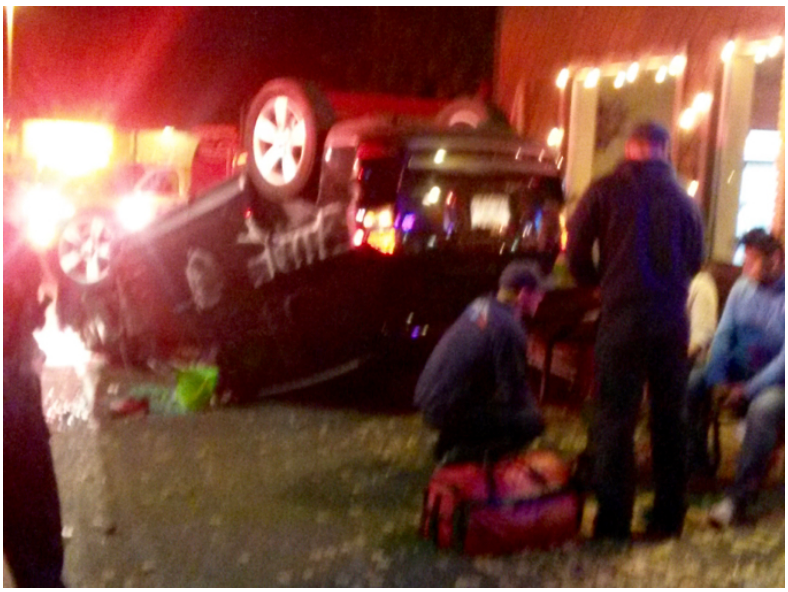
Placer County already knows how it is going to spend its share of California’s new gasoline tax revenues – on the weather-beaten West Shore roads.

An increase in gas taxes tat took effect Nov. 1 are expected to generate $3 million in revenues for the county, and an estimated $7 million to $10 million a year after that.

Statewide the bill is predicted to generate $5 billion a year for road repair and maintenance, with approximately $1.5

billion of that to go to cities and counties for local road work.

Rollover accident in SLT ends with 1 arrest



A driver nearly crashed through the Fremont Mall entrance in South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 2. Photo/Barbara Cooper

A 31-year-old South Lake Tahoe woman lost control of her vehicle Thursday night and ended up landing on the roof.

Maria Vivas Sandoval was arrested on two counts of driving under the influence.

The Nov. 2 accident occurred in front of the commercial area of Highway 50 near Freshies restaurant.

Officers did not provide any further information.

It is not known if Sandoval was injured. She has posted the $10,000 bail.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Analyst: Reno's economic surge could last 10-20 years

By Ray Hagar, Nevada Newsmakers

The city of Reno is poised for a long-term economic upswing, according to an analyst from Union Gaming Research of Las Vegas.

"We've seen housing prices really firm up," said Union Gaming analyst John DeCree on "Nevada Newsmakers" Monday. "That is always a great economic indicator for the casino and entertainment industry."

Construction jobs and residential development spur more sustainable economic activity. "As large companies come and create construction jobs, they bring population and migration to the city, which then requires housing development, then expansion of schools and other social services," DeCree said.

Read the whole story

Nev. lawmaker wants to ban sanctuary cities

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY — A group associated with state Sen. Michael Roberson filed paperwork Monday for an amendment to prevent sanctuary cities in Nevada to be added to the 2018 ballot.

The filing with the Nevada secretary of state was submitted by Prevent Sanctuary Cities political action committee. Nevada has no official sanctuary cities — jurisdictions where local law enforcement limits its cooperation with federal immigration authorities — but state legislation was proposed this year to create sanctuary cities.

Roberson, R-Henderson, said the constitutional amendment is needed to prevent laws that would make Nevada a sanctuary state.

Read the whole story

Wildfires can attack houses from the inside

By Lauren Sommer, KQED

It’s not just residents in the northern Bay Area who are at risk from wildfire. Millions of other Californians live in fire-prone areas and many homes were built before modern fire codes.

Buildings don’t have to lie directly in the path of the flames to be at risk. The larger concern comes from something much smaller.

“During a wildfire, the major source of ignition is the wind-blown ember that lands on or near the house,” says Steve Quarles of the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety.

Read the whole story

Housing development proposed near Alpine Meadows

The Alpine Sierra subdivision project calls for 47 single-family residential units and five secondary dwelling units in Alpine Meadows on about 47 acres.

Public comments on the draft environmental impact report close Nov. 3.

Lot sizes would range from 0.41 to 1.0 acres, averaging 0.70 acres.

Up to five of these lots would be allowed to include separate guest facilities. The 20 lots in the western portion of the project site are proposed to include 14 halfplex sites and six custom cabin home sites.

The proposed subdivision site is located within Bear Creek Valley on the east side of Alpine Meadows Road, approximately 0.25 miles north of the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort and 2.7 miles west of Highway 89.

To comment, email afisch@placer.ca.gov.