Letter: Environmental analysis lacking for ski resort summer plans

To the community,

The applicant should include the Forest Flyer coaster amenity in the Northstar Mountain Master Plan EIR, and not as a separate mitigated negative declaration.

When individually considered, this amenity will not be subjected to potential cumulative effects as an additional recreational activity along with several new ski lifts, additional residential housing, etc., in the NMMP. The NMMP EIR will examine both project and program level components, identify feasible mitigation measures and will evaluate the project's potential to contribute to cumulative impacts. Why is this any different than erecting a ski lift?

This is a new amenity that does not currently exist in or nearby the Tahoe region and has never been analyzed before or codified by Placer County. Calling this an accessory use and not truly defining how a recreational amenity, which is defined by applicant and county as like a ski tower/lift, is not adequately analyzing the impacts or defining this as an accessory use. If this amenity is not expected to generate more visitors, thus additional revenue, then it would not be built.

The first phase of Vail Resort's Epic Discovery includes approximately $25 million to transform the summer experience at six of its mountain resorts (Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone, Heavenly and Northstar). Plans for each mountain include a selection of ziplines, rope courses, signature climbing walls, Forest Flyers, summer tubing, expanded hiking and mountain biking trails and education

centers. Each of these new activities will capitalize on the existing summer visitation at each resort and leverage existing infrastructure, creating the opportunity for high-impact and high-return projects.

Comments related to the initial study and checklist: previous environmental document, CEQA Section 15168 relating to program EIRs indicates that where subsequent activities involve site-specific operations, the agency would use a written checklist or similar device to document the evaluation of the site and the activity, to determine whether the environmental effects of the operation were covered in the earlier program EIR.

The following documents serve as program-level EIRs from which incorporation by reference will occur: Placer County General Plan EIR and Martis Valley Community Plan EIR. Neither document should be considered as environmental impact analysis for a Forest Flyer, as neither document envisioned or discussed this specific amenity called a Forest Flyer, so the two documents are not applicable and cannot be used as tiered environmental analysis.

In the FAQ section of the Northstar Master Plan, it is stated: “How do the proposed project improvements move Northstar in the direction of more of a destination resort than a day ski area? The proposed project improvements will provide resort guests with a wider, more diverse array of terrain offerings and recreational activities, facilitating an improved and extended vacation experience for the destination and day use guest.”

I attended the NTRAC meetings. The split vote for recommendation did not include a discussion on environmental impacts as stated in the staff report.

At Heavenly, ziplines, Skycycle Canopy Tour, Forest Flyer, Observation Tower, Rope course and more is planned. What’s next for Northstar? The Northstar Master Plan is not ready for

prime time. Sorry – this doesn't lend credence to allow piecemeal planning for mountain amenities.

I'll close with one of my favorite comments from the Breckenridge Peak 6 EIR.

"Our national forest is not an amusement park. The unique features of 'nature' should be preserved and promoted and the 'man-made' impact mitigated. I support many of the proposed resort expansions, but cannot support zipline tours or elevated rail flyers that exist primarily to provide an adrenaline rush (speed, height, etc.) to amuse or entertain visitors. These types of 'rides' are mechanical, commercial, amusement activities and do not further the goals of natural appreciation or environmental sensitivity. Neither are they location-dependent – they can be found anywhere in the U.S. Save our national forests. And promote the 'inherent' beauty and values that exists in nature and the "human-powered" recreational activities that will nurture our next generation earth stewards."

Ellie Waller, Tahoe Vista

Letter: Heavenly steps up to serve community dinner

To the community,

On July 15, Heavenly Mountain Resort sponsored its seventh Bread & Broth Adopt A Day of Nourishment for the year. With the $250 funding provided by the Vail Echo Foundation, B&B cooks prepared food sufficient to feed over 100 guests at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall.

To supplement the dinner, Heavenly's generous volunteer crew members donated blueberries, avocados and lettuce to add a Heavenly green salad and a berry fruit salad to serve with the evening's dinner menu.

Lezlee Cain, administrative assistant, volunteering for the first time at a B&B dinner, found the dinner's guests "to be so moving. So polite, smiling, everyone was so great. We all could learn something from them." Working alongside of Lezlee were Alyson Borawski, marketing/research assistant manager, Nancy McCoy, executive assistant and Frank Papandrea, environmental manager. The Heavenly crew had a great time greeting and serving the dinner guests and helped the B&B volunteers throughout the evening.

Bread & Broth would like to thank Heavenly Mountain Resort for their monetary donation and the Heavenly volunteer crew members for contributing their time and their tasty food donations. B&B is able to continue its mission of feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe thanks to the generosity of local businesses like Heavenly Mountain Resort and their caring employees.

If you would like to support Bread & Broth's program, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Feds strangled the Nevada Fire Safe Council

By Elwood L. Miller

The dangerous fire season 2013 is well under way with dozens of large fires burning across the West driving people from their neighborhoods and reducing their homes to ashes. However, a critical ally in the mission to protect homes and communities throughout Nevada and the Lake Tahoe Basin is noticeably absent. One of this nation's most effective community protection organizations, the Nevada Fire Safe Council, is nowhere to be seen. What happened?

With enthusiastic support of firefighting and emergency personnel, the Nevada Fire Safe Council was created in 1999 to bring citizens into a working partnership to achieve both enhanced community protection and firefighter safety. For well over a decade, the Nevada Fire Safe Council organized over 5,000 volunteers in 135 community chapters to increase defensible space and create thousands of acres of fuel breaks where firefighters could aggressively, but safely fight the flames. In national and international conferences the Nevada Fire Safe Council was repeatedly hailed as the model for unparalleled accomplishment in the arena of community protection.

In the summer 2011 a federal investigation into a fallacious complaint inadvertently revealed missteps in the council's management of grant funds. Upon notification, the council's volunteer board of directors took immediate action to address the financial tracking and control deficiencies. Follow-up investigations by no less than 15 federal agents relentlessly rifled through every financial document and file never finding anything other than a lack of adherence to the complexity of federal rules and procedures. No money was found to be missing. During these repetitious inquiries the council's citizen volunteers responded to every question and fulfilled every demand for information. Every dollar received by the council was spent to advance the mission of community protection. However, final reports did reveal inadequate oversight and a lack of proper control on the part of the

federal agencies that actually facilitated the errors and made the agencies complicit in the failings of the council.

Both the Nevada State office of the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service office at Lake Tahoe reacted to the investigations by refusing to release approved funds resulting in financial starvation and a filing for bankruptcy as the coup-de-grace for the Fire Safe Council. Refusal to release funds also stranded 51 contractors with $3.4 million in unpaid, legitimate invoices. Many of these contractors represent small companies that in turn, were forced into bankruptcy. Unpaid invoices causing continuing hardship were also held by fire districts forcing a reduction firefighting capacity.

Both the BLM and the US Forest Service failed to honor their commitments to preserve the Council and its network of community leaders and dedicated citizen volunteers. Reasonable people freed from bureaucratic fetters with a common mission to protect communities could have reached a workable solution. Bankruptcy proceedings are now stalled after incessant delays. Nevada’s congressional delegation tried to help but to no avail. It is very sad that the Gordian knot consisting of finger pointing and a tortuous web of rules and regulations took precedent over community safety. Nevada has lost its highly acclaimed and singularly successful grass roots preemptive firefighting entity. Evidently the Nevada Fire Safe Council’s extraordinary record of success was not deemed worthy of an effort to untie the knot.

Elwood L. Miller was the executive director of the Nevada Fire Safe Council from January 2002 until April 2005.

Opinion: Fiscal good news from Sierra Nevada College

By Lynn Gillette

Since Sierra Nevada College's 2013 fiscal year just ended on June 30, I wanted to share some of the highlights of what we have accomplished during the past year.

At a time of significant change in higher education, I am proud to lead a nonprofit institution committed to academic excellence and student achievement. We have benefited enormously from a dedicated board of trustees composed of 30 community-based individuals, who have worked diligently under the leadership of our board Chair Wayne Prim and our Vice-Chair Atam Lalchandani.

Academic Excellence – A key strategic priority is to continue to increase academic rigor.

We received exceptional reports from our accreditor, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and were granted permission to expand our academic offerings, including a master of fine arts in creative writing.

The cutting-edge Holman Arts & Media Center is on track to open in fall 2013 and will transform how we teach critical thinking and analysis to our students, shape the future of the arts at SNC, and connect with the community.

We successfully launched our low-residency MFA in creative writing; this brings renowned authors such as Kelle Groom, Téa Obreht, Brian Turner, Patricia Smith, and Colum McCann to our campus and our community.

We launched a master of education with a Ron Clark Academy specialization. This program educates teachers in the approach

and techniques utilized by the Ron Clark Academy, which has received national and international accolades for its impressive results in teaching middle school students in Atlanta.

We redesigned our Core 101 class to introduce all incoming students to active learning and our culture of learning in order to ensure that they are fully prepared for a rigorous learning environment based on complete student engagement and advance preparation.

Capstone courses have been implemented in every major; a capstone course is a senior-level requirement that integrates and pulls together all prior coursework.

Fifteen student research projects were given at four research fairs and competitions across the country, including the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, which promotes undergraduate student research and creative activity undertaken in partnership with faculty and other mentors.

We have re-engineered our curriculum to require demonstrated proficiency in four critical skills viewed as essential for success: written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, and visual literacy. These initiatives cut across and are common to every discipline and major at SNC.

Our women and men’s alpine ski teams once again won the U.S. Collegiate Ski and Snowboard Association team national championships, bringing the women’s championships to 18 over the past 24 years and the men’s to 17 over the past 24 years. The men’s snowboard team has won all seven national championships since they were formed in 2006. The cumulative grade point average for all members of the ski and snowboard teams is 3.6 and this year, the highest overall GPA was held by the men’s alpine ski team with an average of 3.9. English Chair June Saraceno received the Nevada Humanities Outstanding Teaching of the Humanities Award; Business Department Chair

Kendra Wong was selected Nevada's Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology 2013 Faculty Adviser of the Year.

We continue to place our graduates in top graduate schools. For example: Logan Lape at Parsons The New School For Design; Lauren Upton at University College London; Jason Paladino at UC Berkeley School of Journalism; and 2012 Valedictorian, Zaira Perez at the Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University.

One of SNC's 2012 valedictorian candidates, Andrew Gauthier, was recognized as the Valedictorian for his graduating class in the postgraduate diploma in hospitality management program at the Glion Institute of Higher Learning. Located in Switzerland, Glion Institute is ranked No. 2 among schools for international hospitality management in the world.

An SNC student team, Pure Ski Experience, placed second in the undergraduate division of the Donald W. Reynolds Tri-State Business Plan competition, beating teams from Nevada, Arkansas and Oklahoma, and was the only Nevada team to place. In addition, SNC had three of the six team finalists for the Nevada statewide competition. The team's cumulative winnings were $39,500. Pure Ski Experience's three team members are all Olympic athletes majoring in global business management and ski business and resort management.

We have approved the expansion of our athletic program; men and women's lacrosse launches in fall 2014, to be followed by cross country running and soccer.

New initiatives in alumni and parent programming, including our first major homecoming weekend in spring 2013, have transformed the way we reach out to these constituencies. By strengthening the connection between alumni, parents and SNC and expanding networking, we are increasing opportunities for both current students and graduates.

Strategic Partnerships – A key priority is to leverage our

core strengths to increase program opportunities through strategic partnerships and to expand our national and international reach.

We partnered with Middlebury College to bring their innovative MiddCORE Immersion program to Sierra Nevada College. Thirty-six students from colleges around the U.S., including schools such as Middlebury, SNC, Brown, and Stanford, convened on our campus for the intensive four-week program which also brought together an impressive array of mentors from around the country, as well as from here in Incline Village.

We partnered with Vail Resorts to enhance the talents and opportunities of Vail staff and SNC students, including a speaker series featuring Vail leadership on our campus, training from our faculty for Vail's staff, and internship and career opportunities for SNC students and graduates. It will take our ski business and resort management program to a new level.

We partnered with ChinaCast to bring students from Chinese universities to SNC. Four full-time students came in the spring and we expect eight to ten more full-time students in fall 2013. The program is a 1+3 program where the students will study their first year at a Chinese university, and complete their remaining three years at SNC. In addition, 25 senior level students from China will be here for two weeks in late July.

We developed new relationships with local businesses to place both interns and recent graduates. IT Convergence, a firm with worldwide offices, has hired six members of the class of 2013 and wants to employ twenty student interns in the coming academic year.

We have expanded our relationship with SummerFest and once again world-renowned artists will perform classical music on our campus, benefiting both the community and the region.

Financial Stability – A fundamental tenet of our financial policy is that operating revenues will exceed operating expenses.

For FY 2013, we will have a positive operating margin with operating revenues exceeding operating expenses. It will exceed the FY 2012 operating margin by approximately $1 million and exceed the average operating margins of FY 2007-FY 2011 by $4 million.

We hit our $2 million FY 2013 goal for fundraising, and this does not include the Holman Arts & Media Center that was booked in FY 2012.

In the fall, we had the highest undergraduate enrollment in our history with a student headcount of 553.

The most recent data shows our default rate on student loans is 4.1 percent, compared to 9.1 percent nationally and 9.5 percent in Nevada. This is a result of our work with our students to ensure that they borrow responsibly and also reflects their post-graduation employment success.

For the first time, our freshmen retention rate rose above the national average to 78 percent.

We continue to increase undergraduate enrollment during the summer. For the summer of 2013, undergraduate credit hours have more than doubled, increasing by 120 percent. Moreover, undergraduate credit hours have increased 449 percent since the summer of 2008.

We have strengthened the senior leadership team with two extraordinary hires in finance (Sue Johnson) and development (Dino Hernandez).

Although this list is far from exhaustive, it is an impressive array of accomplishments. More than anything, it is a testament to what we have all done together – Board, faculty,

staff, students, alumni, parents, donors, and community members. I look forward to providing you with an equally impressive list of our successes in FY 2014 and I invite you to continue to be a vital and integral part of our unrelenting quest for greatness.

Lynn G. Gillette is president of Sierra Nevada College.

Letter: Tourist has advice for South Shore

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner and is reprinted with permission.***

Hello JoAnn,

I read with interest your recent editorial in the *Lake Tahoe News* regarding improvements to the SLT area and comparisons with Stateline.

I was looking for a place to express my opinion as a first time visitor to the area. Honestly, many of our friends told us to avoid the South Shore, and I have seen descriptions of it as a "tourist ghetto". We are staying at Marriott's Timber Lodge.

We were, therefore, surprised and pleased when we set out on foot from the Marriott. We can see the new sidewalk construction will be a huge plus for tourists like ourselves who like to get out and see the neighborhood. We have been to other ski areas that are as tidy as a Disney movie, and we like the mix of new and vintage that we see here. The

combination of sports activities, water fun, backcountry experience, and downtown casinos seems to us to offer something for everyone and every taste. Yes, the highway is crowded, but it’s fairly easy to find seclusion when you want it.

Here’s where I think you need improvement: the pedestrian sidewalk in Stateline is just filthy and unattractive. Of course you can’t widen it, but does that mean it has to be so dirty? Why can’t it be pressured-hosed daily (as they are doing at Edgewood)? Why don’t Harrah’s and Harveys take a little more care to landscape and better maintain the scarce planters that border the main drag? Why aren’t there butt containers to accommodate the smokers who hang out near the exit doors? Why can’t the Horizon do a better job with their grounds and sidewalk entrances, which are the shabbiest and messiest on the strip?

I realize you are a council member for SLT and I’m guessing you have no control over these areas which are in NV, but I was hoping you’d pass on my comments to someone who has the influence.

These are very inexpensive details, which would go a long way toward assuring the visitor that one is in a tourist area that really cares about appearances. These little things – and especially cleanliness – means a great deal to a visitor.

I think it’s simply ridiculous that casino management is so careless about the pedestrian avenue.

Yours truly,

Barbara Johns, Palm Desert

Letter: Sell S. Tahoe's parking kiosks to Reno

To the community,

As I read in the *Reno Gazette Journal* about Reno's decision effective July 12, 2013, to cancel their paid parking kiosk contract with Reno-based Curb System, it suddenly occurred to me that this could be a golden opportunity for South Lake Tahoe. After more than two years of system failures, citation abatements and citizens' complaints, Reno is now shopping for a new provider for their pay-to-park services. Bingo!

While many may disagree, I consider our city manager, Nancy Kerry, imaginative and she is known to be an effective negotiator. It would not be at all surprising to learn that she has already been on the phone with Reno's city manager, Andrew Clinger, negotiating to sell SLT's 30 never-been-used and almost-never-been-used parking kiosks. Could this be the silver lining to the dark cloud saga of South Lake Tahoe's paid parking kiosks and residential permit parking program?

Peggy Bourland-Madison, South Lake Tahoe



Paradise Avenue on July 16 at 4pm.



Venice Drive on July 15 at 4pm; approximately 80 paid spaces.



Paradise Avenue on July 11 at 10am; 45 spaces available for paid parking. Photos/Peggy Bourland-Madison

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Letter: Invitation to S.

Tahoe labyrinth

To the community,

Last year Unity at the Lake built a labyrinth next to our sanctuary and annex at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd., across from the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center playground. This labyrinth was lovingly created by our spiritual community for our greater Lake Tahoe community to use and enjoy.

Walking the labyrinth is a walking meditation. It is an experience of mindfulness, inviting you to let go of your regular mental chatter and expand your heart awareness. Walking this mystical path is a personal pilgrimage to spiritual wholeness.

We welcome everyone to take advantage of our labyrinth. All we ask is that you come in peace and leave everything the way you found it. We are in the process of installing a welcoming bench on which to rest and reflect before and after your walk. There are brochures available at the site with more information.

The Revs. Stew and Hillary Bittman, Unity at the Lake spiritual leaders

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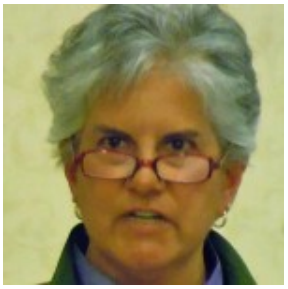
Opinion: TRPA makes it easy to remodel a home

By Joanne Marchetta

Can I help save Lake Tahoe and also improve my home?

Now the answer is yes and here is how: Before the first nail is pounded, before the first coat of paint goes on, many simple home improvement projects have already started helping protect Lake Tahoe. That's because water quality best management practices to minimize stormwater pollution and erosion are required with every significant remodel or house addition project.

Leading up to the 2012 Lake Tahoe Regional Plan update, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency heard loud and clear that simplified land coverage rules were needed to keep many of these lake-saving projects moving forward. We listened, and through hard-fought compromise, we've made a start at making coverage rules more user-friendly. New land coverage exemptions are in effect that give a break to many homeowners who have installed their BMPs and could make a small addition to your Tahoe home possible.



Joanne
Marchetta

Here are the basics. The water quality plan for Lake Tahoe is innovative because it is based on soil protection. What happens on the land affects Tahoe's water, so requiring a certain amount of open space on every parcel is a cornerstone of the water quality plan. The rest of the parcel can be covered with structures or pavement, called land coverage, as long as the soil on the property is considered non-sensitive. In the past, home improvement projects were blocked on some parcels because there was already too much coverage. Now, the new rules encourage small home improvements and additions by

exempting certain permitted structures and surfaces from a parcel’s land coverage limit with a BMP completion certificate.

Any property owner in the basin can protect Lake Tahoe and help restore its lost clarity by installing water quality BMPs. Science shows that 72 percent of the fine sediment entering Lake Tahoe is from stormwater runoff from our homes, roads and businesses. Most property owners choose to install and certify their BMPs only during a renovation project, so the more home improvement projects completed, the cleaner the lake gets. The new regulations will improve water quality by encouraging more small projects that include BMPs. This is part of the incentive-based approach to environmental improvements TRPA is implementing in the new Regional Plan.

To help you understand what types of structures are exempt and how to find out if these exemptions can be used on your property, TPRA has put together a helpful information packet available at your local building department and online. In many cases, your local government planning department will be able to permit your exemption on TRPA’s behalf because of agreements in place that streamline the permit process. Regardless of where you apply for your exemption, the primary starting point is your parcel’s land capability and amount of existing coverage. If you haven’t had either of these verified by TRPA, you will need to apply for a site assessment as soon as possible to help move your project forward.

For many property owners, a deck or room addition that couldn’t be built before due to lack of coverage may now be possible. Since there are approximately 25,000 properties remaining in the Lake Tahoe Basin that do not have a BMP completion certificate, this could lead to many more homeowners doing their part to improve Lake Tahoe’s clarity.

TRPA is moving forward to implement the updated Regional Plan. Land coverage exemptions for homeowners are only a part of it.

The new rules also support other environmental benefits such as encouraging more bike trails by exempting them from land coverage mitigation requirements and encouraging restoration of sensitive stream environment zones. When implemented, the plan is projected to eliminate 10,000 vehicle miles traveled annually in the Tahoe basin.

So when you sit down to start planning that remodel or addition, take some time to find out about the new land coverage exemptions that may be available for your property and remember these new exemptions are part of what you can do to protect and restore Lake Tahoe.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Letter: Barton gives back to the community

To the community,

The Bread & Broth program would like to congratulate and thank Barton Healthcare's Physician Billing and Customer Service Department employees.

As a result of meeting quarterly service goals established by Barton Healthcare, the employees received a monetary award and they decided to donate a portion of their award to sponsor a B&B Adopt A Day of Nourishment on July 8.

In addition to donating $250 for the Monday evening dinner, Diane Caccamise, Sonia Del Mercado, Ryan Justus and Anita Jones arrived at 3pm to help the Bread & Broth volunteers

setup and serve a tasty rosemary barbecue chicken dinner to the evening's guests. Then at 5:15pm, Marisol Jimenez and Kay Stewart joined the B&B volunteers in cleaning tables and sweeping and mopping the kitchen area.

The Barton employees were an enthusiastic and hard working group. In regards to their volunteering to help feed the needy, they agreed that, "It was a rewarding experience. An eye opener that should be shared with family, friends and co-workers."

Bread & Broth would like to recognize and thank Barton Healthcare's Physician Billing and Customer Service Department employees for not only consciously performing their job duties but being mindful of the less fortunate in the South Lake Tahoe community.

B&B is a nonprofit, all volunteer organization that serves full course meals every Monday to those in need and is grateful for the support it receives from all our special sponsors.

If you would like to support Bread & Broth's program, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Letter: Tahoe Bike Challenge a growing success

To the community,

With your support, we have just completed the 8th annual Tahoe Bike Challenge and made significant changes to the campaign

that produced measurable results.

I have prepared a thorough event summary for your review. I realize this time of year is busy for your professional and personal life, so I greatly appreciate your time in glancing at the attached document. Should you have any questions, suggestions and/or offers, please feel welcome in contacting me and I will be delighted to be of service.

In reviewing the results, I see great opportunity to increase participation in 2014 and I'm hopeful you will join us to help make that a new reality. One of the key growth opportunities is to engage agencies, organizations and businesses to get more involved internally with their staff/employees, and externally by being more strategic by cross-promoting the campaign – leveraging everyone's combined resources (email lists, websites, newsletters, etc.).

The Tahoe Bike Challenge is the only basinwide bicycle promotional campaign that is working to transform behavior, reduce dependence on the automobile, improve public and environmental health, stimulate the economy, and demonstrate the need for a basinwide bikeway system connecting our communities. By getting all of us working together, using the Challenge's momentum, infrastructure, and good will, we can create a "tipping point" for community transformation and show the funding sources our commitment and need for more facilities.

Another new and exciting to the campaign is to extend the Tahoe Bike Challenge until Sept. 30, 2013, and thereby making all the tools available for our visitors. Imagine a family coming to Tahoe and signing up for the Challenge where they can log their miles, upload their photos, and share their Tahoe bike holiday stories about the amount of CO2 they didn't emit into the atmosphere, the calories they burned, and the gasoline dollars saved – complete with photos and videos.

On behalf of the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, I want to personally thank you for helping us make the 2013 Tahoe Bike Challenge a success. We look forward to our continued success, growth and collaboration with you.

Kind regards,

Ty Polastri, Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition