Opinion: Progress in Tahoe is measurable

By Joanne Marchetta

The recent South Shore economic forum gave a sense of what's possible when we come together around a vision to improve our Tahoe communities and the region's environment. Recognizing that "planning" means little without implementation, let's review some of the on-the-ground improvements accomplished under the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan just this last year.

Many of these achievements stem from the fact that the agency today is different than it was 20 years ago. We have made changes to be more effective, to partner with other organizations, and to institute a science-based vision for environmental restoration efforts at Lake Tahoe.



Joanne Marchetta

The first notable accomplishment is the recent clarity data released jointly by TRPA and UC Davis scientists. The average clarity reading for the lake in 2012 was the best it's been in 10 years and the loss of clarity, which had been on a path of steady decline for several decades, has stopped. Clarity gains in 2011 and 2012 are especially significant because high levels of precipitation measured in both years were expected to diminish lake clarity. We are still working with scientists to discover new strategies to improve summer clarity and the

near shore, which remain a concern. The science is showing that restoration efforts, through the environmental improvement program (EIP), are on the right track.

The EIP is the capital investment strategy designed to achieve Lake Tahoe's environmental targets, which are called threshold standards. Private property owners, the federal government, both states and local governments all contribute to the restoration program and together, we have hit some major milestones in the past year:

Aquatic invasive species

• 5 acres of the lake bottom treated for Asian clam removal

• 7 acres for invasive weed removal

• 30,000 watercraft launches were overseen by inspectors to prevent other invasive species from being introduced

• 3,700 boats decontaminated

Recreation

• Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe

• Lakeside Trail in Tahoe City

• Nevada Stateline-to-Stateline Bikeway, Kahle Drive to Elks Point Road in Round Hill

• Sawmill Bike Trail Section II near Meyers.

Forest health and fuels

• The 10,000-acre U.S. Forest Service South Shore Fuel Reduction Project started last season with the thinning operation along Highway 89 near Camp Richardson

• 19 homeowners in Logan Creek partnered with Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District to complete fuel reduction and

defensible space work in their neighborhood by matching the district's costs with a $20,000 private contribution.

Along with these high-profile projects, significant stormwater improvements were completed on roadways last year – many were years in the planning stages. These accomplishments are meaningful for Lake Tahoe. A recent evaluation of the thresholds found that 63 percent of measurable standards were in attainment or improving. The scientifically peer-reviewed report also showed the areas where we need to accelerate progress, and the recently adopted 2012 Regional Plan focuses on those areas.

TRPA is working at full steam to implement the updated plan, which includes streamlining permit processes for property owners through the new area plan framework. Local governments have already set to work developing their area plans and community members are participating in the process. TRPA is maintaining its regional role by collaborating to ensure the plans help attain Lake Tahoe's thresholds. This is a significant priority because it allows the community's vision to become an on-the-ground reality. If you aren't already, I encourage you to become involved in the area plans of your community by going online.

While we are facing litigation on the plan from the Sierra Club, we remain confident the court will uphold the plan. It not only meets our mandate to achieve and maintain regional standards, but is also a 21st Century model of sustainability. Far from being a growth strategy, the plan cuts the rate of residential allocation in half, eliminates 10,000 vehicle miles traveled in the basin annually, and anticipates an additional 1,200 parcels will be protected or restored. No other set of proposals analyzed comes close to this level of restoration. The challenge at Tahoe today is not stopping runaway growth, it's stopping the decline in our environment and communities.

The 40-year-old bi-state Compact that created TRPA is working to deliver meaningful results for Tahoe. This year's accomplishments alone show what can be achieved when public organizations and the private sector work together to increase environmental restoration and support our communities. We need more accomplishments like this next year and beyond to realize those images of a better future for Tahoe we collectively applauded at the South Shore forum. For more information, our website.

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

Opinion: Questioning Tahoe's clarity improvement

By David McClure

Have you heard? Lake Tahoe clarity is getting better now.

Recent press releases claim a second year of improved lake clarity, "the best in 10 years," no doubt misleading the casual observer to infer that Lake Tahoe's water quality problems are behind us.

Have you seen the near shore, shallow water lately? More to the point, do you remember what it was like 25 years ago? Many of us do, which raises the questions of what was omitted from the press releases and why create the false impression?

In the Tahoe Environmental Research Center's (TERC) annual State of the Lake Report for 2012, "A factor different to last

year was the depth of mixing. This year the entire 1,645-foot depth of the lake mixed." To data analysts this periodic mixing of clear, deep water dilutes contaminants and shows improved Secchi measurements often for a couple of years.

Why was this fact omitted from the improved clarity claim?

Drought and numerous other factors influence clarity. But even with the upwelling of deep water and improved winter clarity, TERC's State of the Lake Report continues, "There is the continued decline in summer time clarity. In 2011, summer clarity was the second worst value on record."

The fact that summer clarity continues to decline during years of deep water mixing has caused some consternation among TERC scientists.

In the comprehensive Lake Tahoe Watershed Assessment, "An important lesson contained in the Secchi depth data is that by using a short-term subset of even five to six years, it is easily possible to arrive at a totally incorrect interpretation of the data (Goldman 1993)." So why was a press release made which prematurely interprets incomplete information?

The Tahoe Environmental Research Center leads the way for data gathering and monitoring of numerous variables effecting Lake clarity. This scientific organization performs so noble a purpose that it deserves independent funding. Today, TERC's funding is channeled through the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, which is embroiled in political and legal controversy, and is hardly an unbiased funding source.

Lake clarity is directly affected by sediment flowing into the lake. To substantiate any claim of long-term clarity improvement there must be factual evidence that lake inflows from storm water pipes and specific projects are measurably reducing the fine sediments and nutrients that cause water quality degradation. That evidence is lacking.

The best management practices that are intended to infiltrate runoff (i.e. seep into the ground) from every parcel have only been installed on a small percentage of properties, and many of those are not maintained. The vaults which are intended to filter storm water from roadways (before it discharges directly into the lake) lack evidence that the filters actually remove the super fines that comprise 75 percent of the fine sediment contamination.

Models of what these measures are supposed to do is no substitute for actual field measurements. And sadly, the models and their modeled results often direct spending on ineffective but politically expedient activities to reduce contaminants.

Lake Tahoe water quality is in peril. Only to the extent that the science is divorced from politics can there be an accurate representation of reality. This is a call for independent funding of TERC's monitoring activities, real-time provisional release of water quality data, and an end to misleading press releases aimed at influencing public opinion.

David McClure is president of the North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance.

Letter: Irish dinner benefits South Shore

To the community,

So proud of our community when organizations get together for a special event or holiday that helps the underprivileged or children's programs get ahead.

During this St. Patrick’s Day weekend there have been numerous celebrations all over town for St. Paddy’s Day and that Irish charm. One corned beef, cabbage, and potatoes dinner was done by the Knights of Columbus at St. Theresa’s Catholic Church Saturday. All the festive activities included a raffle/prizes and the real Irish coffee.

The highlight was Emeritus Father John Grace in his own Grace Hall, partaking in dinner with us all.

Hats off to all the Knights of Columbus and volunteers making this all work. With special recognition to Tom Finn, Al Toster, George Westinghouse, Gary Brand, others members, etc.

The elementary school at St. Theresa’s will have the children benefit from these ongoing education programs. No wonder the cliche is “Erin go Bragh, or simply Luck of the Irish.”

Ron Zehren, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Use of drones says a lot about a country

To the community,

To drone or not to drone, that is the question. And should one man decide who will be droned and should we be assassins, and should we be torturers, and so on and on?

If we have to debate the above, we have already crossed the line on our way to creating a new dark age of barbarianism, worlds where anything goes. That’s especially so when deadly policy is shrouded in the secrecy of a national security state that commits acts of terrorism.



Bill Crawford

In post World War II Germany, all Germans were thought to be responsible for the Holocaust. No German had clean hands. The nation was guilty.

Reason of state is not a defense for acts of terror, so said the Nuremburg Court presided over by an American judge, Justice Jackson. In post Civil War America, the same standard was applied in the Andersonville trial when a Southern commander of a prisoner or war camp was found guilty of the horrible mistreatment of Union soldiers. He was executed.

If we travel down the road of barbarianism, then we kill the social contract between the people and the government. The Constitution will become a hollow hypocrisy. A dead letter, a scrap of paper.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: CTC needs to come clean about its parcels

To the community,

Because the California Tahoe Conservancy is experiencing

challenges funding the agency and managing its 4,400-plus parcels, the CTC has begun the process of selling off “asset lands”: potentially 400 parcels. Why should the public care?

Property owners on the California side and California Realtors should be concerned. Often a buyer’s or seller’s main motivation and price decision is based on whether or not the property is adjacent to “protected” conservancy lands.

When the public is encouraged to buy license plates, approve bonds or donate in support of the CTC, the general understanding is that the CTC buys up and retires property from development in perpetuity to protect the environment. Their original mission was to “preserve, protect, restore, enhance and sustain the natural resources”.

But the sad new reality is the CTC has bought property, stripped off non-existent coverage “rights” and potential entitlements and, in the case of these 400 parcels, can now resell these environmentally sensitive sites to anyone – including big development. One of their new guiding principles includes “cultivating partnerships with the private sector” … “to recoup a portion of the public’s capital investment in these acquisitions for future high-priority projects through the sale of the banked development rights”. Translation: the CTC now wants to buy up old motel rooms (TAUs) and become the TAU Broker for the Lake.

Does this sound like preservation, protection, restoration to you? It sounds more like a cash-strapped agency trying to justify its existence.

Since its inception in 1984, that’s 28 years ago, the CTC has only transferred 32 properties. Mostly for public utility easements and public access. The sale of “asset lands” is a totally new direction that should stop immediately until there is full public understanding of the implications from using the public’s money to further development. The public spent

$108 million through the CTC to purchase 4,600 parcels to “reduce development”.

Another kicker: the CTC plans to trade 1,200 acres to California State Parks (900-plus acres at Burton Creek) and an additional 1,900 acres to the Forest Service.

Who knows how many private parcels will be affected with this massive land swap? (Contact Executive Director Patrick Wright: pwright@tahoe.ca.gov.)

What can we do? The agency should produce a public list of addresses and parcel numbers of the 400 alleged “asset lands” parcels. The CTC owes it to every California citizen to have a full comparison and review of the CTC’s old and new missions, as well as the significant change in course under its current leadership. The CTC owes the public an explanation of the sharp turn it has taken with regard to Tahoe’s protected lands.

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance

Opinion: South Tahoe looks great compared to Stateline

By JoAnn Conner

Being an elected official can be difficult. No surprise there, but sometimes our “job” blends with the fact that we are also individuals and residents of this community. As such, I have been doing a lot of reflection lately, and there are a few observations I would like to share.

I have heard repeatedly that our town, not South Shore, but

the city of South Lake Tahoe is drab, dirty and stuck in the past. I have heard, primarily from outside sources, that we are not doing anything to improve our town and it is dying. Really? In the past few years, in spite of a down economy, our little town has accomplished some amazing achievements:



JoAnn Conner

• Lakeview Commons. No one can say it is not one of the most beautiful, free public access points on the entire lake.

• The Harrison Avenue project is moving forward to revitalize the business core next to Lakeview Commons, and includes more walkable and bikeable areas.

• Bike trails have been built, not just along the streets, but paths with scenic quality, and more are coming this summer, along with much needed repair.

• Sidewalks on Highway 50 from the Y to the corner of Pioneer and Highway 50, initiated by the city, are being built by Caltrans to join the sidewalks already in place near Stateline. Those sidewalks are scheduled to round the corner and proceed down Pioneer Trail to Larch Avenue, then to Ski Run Boulevard. Definite steps to a walkable and bikable community.

• In regards to transportation, the city of South Lake Tahoe, with some service club partnerships, has installed bus shelters to help protect those who travel by bus.

• Lake Tahoe Airport has received millions of dollars from the

FAA because of the determination of city government to rebuild its runway and tarmac area to ready it for the return of commercial service and keep it active for private and emergency service.

• The Village Center and the Heavenly Village areas, all on the California side of the “tourist core,” have been renovated, are walkable and bikable, and provide a variety of experiences, from shopping, to ice skating, to dining outside.

• The Ski Run BID is alive and well, with help from the city and funds from the California Tahoe Conservancy. The farmers’ markets in the summer are wonderful and well attended by locals and visitors alike.

• The city has adopted its own General Plan that is consistent with goals in the TRPA Regional Plan. We do review it, and we have made progress.

• Neighborhood meetings have been established and citizens invited to participate to gain input and consensus on a variety of important issues.

• Our area plans for the Y and Stateline are being advanced to encourage local economic growth and prosperity for existing businesses within South Lake Tahoe.

• The city government continues to make storm drainage improvements throughout South Lake Tahoe, as well as funding road resurfacing and repair projects for the whole community. We know more work is needed.

• We are working on a linear park near Wildwood and Highway 50.

• Bijou Park successfully hosts several community events per year, including the upcoming Earth Day.

• We have torn down some older buildings and built affordable housing, the most recent of which, The Aspens, is due to begin

construction this building season.

• Our community college has added buildings and has one of the best fire academies in the state, if not the nation. It is working toward becoming a four-year college.

• The city and Recreation JPA are working in partnership with Lake Tahoe Unified School District to repair our playing fields and build a new one this season.

• The city also partnered with the school district and gave over $225,000 for the-state-of-the-art track at the recently upgraded middle school.

• Our high school has been renovated and over $100 million was spent to create a school that is far above most in the state for education, and offers preparation for careers in the arts, work force, and professional fields.

• The city of South Lake Tahoe is working in partnership with Lake Tahoe Unified School District, El Dorado County, and state and national entities to make our schools safer for our children.

I reflected on those that say the entrance to our “tourist core” needs work, and maybe some destruction. And again, I wondered why these things are being said and by whom? In my opinion, the California side of the “tourist core” looks pretty good, especially comparatively speaking, and we have made as many, if not more, improvements than the other side of “the core.” Think about this:

• The Bottle Shop is quaint and historic, and is at least as attractive as Dart Liquor.

• The triangle parcel with 7-Eleven and the Taqueria is much more pleasing and far less offensive than the Lucky Beaver sign, according to input from many of our citizens who drive that corridor.

• Many also feel that the upgraded Holiday Inn Express is certainly more attractive than the Lakeside Inn, with its ’70s era shingle siding.

• The entire Heavenly Village and Village Center, in California, with their upgraded shops, ice skating rink, and smokeless access to a quality movie theater are, in my opinion, far more attractive than the casino area of the “tourist core” with their dated exteriors.

Some say we haven’t done anything to bring jobs or businesses to the city. We have added Grocery Outlet, Ross, DIY, T.J. Maxx, and Big 5 is coming. These all provide jobs, some above minimum wage, and while some have added a little competition to existing businesses, their existence here have added to the tax base, allowing us to do more, and have helped contain “retail leakage” with more dollars being kept in our town.

The city also helped to bring SnowGlobe here, which, like it or not, still brought a lot of revenue to our businesses. We also have some new light manufacturing.

We have done this as the city of South Lake Tahoe, not South Shore. We don’t need our neighbors permission to make improvements and they don’t need our permission to do the same. Yes, we still have work to do, but the point is we are getting it done without funding from the rest of South Shore. Stop the blame game and start fixing up your own backyard.

If you live in a part of the South Shore that wants to expand sidewalks, plant greenways, or renovate buildings, do it. If you want to build bike paths, put in recycling bins, bring better than minimum wage jobs, and replace old buildings with affordable housing, we aren’t stopping you.

I have lived in South Lake Tahoe for 32 years, raised my family here, and I am helping to raise the next generation in our town. The best accomplishments and the most significant achievements have come from respect for the work of others,

helping your neighbor, and working together. Sometimes you work with your neighbors, and sometimes you've just got to get it done yourself.

The worst effects have been seen when property has been taken (eminent domain), jobs have been lost, families have been devastated, and people start blaming others for their problems. I believe, personally, that most of us want to work together in ways that benefit us all fairly and equally.

We are really good at working together as a community. We have seen that with fundraisers for our sick children, injured community members, and after the Angora Fire. We know how to pull together and get something positive for all.

Please stop listening to outside sources and look around for yourselves. And the next time someone tries to tell you your town looks like garbage, I hope you set them straight.

JoAnn Conner is on the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

Editorial: El Dorado County needs to deal with grand jury

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the March 13, 2013, Sacramento Bee.*

Civil grand juries investigate the nuts and bolts of local government. When they work well, they can shine much-needed light on the inner operations of cities, counties, schools and special districts. Using their subpoena powers, grand juries interview witnesses under oath, tour public facilities and

review records. In their local government watchdog function, they are sometimes the first to spot mismanagement, waste, inefficiency and sometimes even criminal malfeasance.

Not all grand juries work well. There are times they become politicized, captured by one faction in a community and used to embarrass a rival faction or to push a preconceived agenda. But at their best, grand juries serve as a healthy extra pair of eyes and ears for the benefit of the community.

So what happens when a grand jury implodes? Apparently, that is what has occurred in El Dorado County. Fourteen of 19 members of the county grand jury abruptly resigned last month. The five remaining are far short of the minimum 12 jurors required for deliberations.

With no alternates left, the supervising judge who oversees the grand jury for the El Dorado Superior Court said that he had no choice but to dissolve the 2012-13 panel. The jury was already eight months into its term, much too late, the judge said, to select and train new grand jurors and to allow them enough time for the level of meaningful deliberation needed to produce a credible report.

That means that this year there will be no El Dorado County grand jury report, an unprecedented development that the court should investigate.

Rumors are rife about what may have led to the breakdown. According to accounts in the *Lake Tahoe News* that were later verified by the *Bee's* Cathy Locke, one member of the jury violated confidentiality of closed-door sessions. The investigation reportedly involved a member of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors. But no one privy to the grand jury's secret deliberations has disclosed the reason for the dissension within the panel, which grand juror may have violated confidentiality or exactly who or what was being investigated. So, at this point, all remains conjecture.

That seems unfair to the possible targets of investigation whose names have been bandied about, to grand jurors who did nothing wrong, to the community and to the grand jury process itself. Still, while the court should try to find out what happened, any probe that leads to sanctions for a grand juror may be counterproductive – likely discouraging future good potential candidates for the grand jury from serving.

Ultimately, given the secrecy surrounding grand jury deliberations, the details of what went wrong this year may never be made public.

Nonetheless, the unsettling experience can serve as a useful lesson for El Dorado County's next grand jury. The presiding judge has said she is already taking steps to make sure no future grand jury is rendered incapable of carrying out its duties. Changes may include overlapping grand jury terms, more alternates and, most important, grand jurors better prepared for their responsibilities.

Letter: Unity provides meal for Tahoe's hungry

To the community,

The Bread & Broth program is very grateful to be the recipient of Unity at the Lake's "We Believe in You" tithe donation which recognizes organizations and individuals who make a difference in the world.

Unity at the Lake members have long supported Bread & Broth's feeding of the South Shore's hungry. In fact, many of B&B's fourth Monday of the month's cooking and serving volunteer

crew are members of Unity at the Lake.

Unity at the Lake's donation was used toward the Feb. 25 Adopt A Day of Nourishment. An energetic Unity sponsor crew joined the regular B&B crew to provide a Mexican theme dinner featuring a tasty taco casserole and lots of guacamole.

Paige Rice, a Unity sponsor volunteer wrote, "It was an honor to meet and serve the spectacular people of Lake Tahoe. Unity at the Lake is happy to continue their support of the B&B program."

Bread & Broth is very fortunate to have the support of Unity at the Lake and their exceptional members whose work and service have made South Lake Tahoe a more enlightened and giving community. B&B appreciates Unity's involvement in this much needed community service.

If you would like to join Bread & Broth in feeding the hungry of our community, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Editorial: California GOP needs more than new packaging

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the March 5, 2013, Sacramento Bee.***

There were two key questions coming into the California Republican Convention in Sacramento last weekend: Would party leaders acknowledge that the GOP needs to shift on certain issues to have a chance of regaining power in California? Or

would they take a Madison Avenue approach, and attempt to put new packaging on an old product?

Based on certain comments by party leaders, it appears that Madison Avenue is winning.

Speaking to the Northwest Regional caucus, incoming California GOP chairman Jim Brulte blamed outside groups for suggestions that the party should have an internal discussion about policy positions.

“I refuse to buy into this Democratic plan, which is perpetrated by the media, which is that we ought to spend the next six months arguing with ourselves about what we believe,” Brulte was quoted as saying by the Calbuzz blog, written by a pair of veteran newspaper journalists.

“We’re Republicans – we know what we believe,” said Brulte. “We’re the party of Abraham Lincoln, we’re the party of Ronald Reagan. We’re the party that believes in individual liberty and greater personal freedom and individual rights. We believe in smaller government and lower taxes and greater parental control and more local control.”

In other words, no need for the party to shift positions on immigration, reproductive rights, gay marriage, voting access or other issues that have alienated Latinos, women, gays and lesbians, African Americans and younger voters. All the party needs to do – the thinking goes – is improve the messaging, taking it directly to voters instead of filtered through the media.

To their credit, many California Republicans recognize that new packaging alone won’t sell their product. Former Lt. Gov. Abel Maldonado told the Bee that many Latinos “want people to fight for them to allow their grandpa and grandma to have the opportunity to become a legal resident.”

Meg Whitman, who supported Proposition 8 when she ran a losing

race for governor against Jerry Brown, has now signed a legal brief stating that gays have the constitutional right to marry.

Republicans are also trying to build a “farm team” by electing libertarian-leaning Republicans to local offices. These are candidates who are more consistent in getting government out of people’s lives when it comes to abortion, same-sex marriage, medical marijuana and other issues.

The small-government theme is a winner for Republicans, but only up to a point. Voters want California Republicans to succeed partly because they want a check on Democrats – always eager to enhance benefits for public employees and help other favored constituencies. But voters don’t want the party of Abraham Lincoln to stop investing in universities, transportation systems, flood-control levees and other public works. Lincoln was a big advocate of public infrastructure – think transcontinental railroad – a fact that Brulte and other Republicans forget as they seek to attach the modern GOP to Lincoln’s legacy.

We think that, despite their internal divisions, Republicans have an opportunity to win back voters in droves. But if their leaders fall back on old sound bites and conspiratorial excuses instead of taking an honest look at their policies, they will only dig themselves a deeper hole. They need to stop digging.

Letter: Loop road will help

South Lake Tahoe

Publisher's note: ***The author of this letter first sent this to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and he asked for it to be reprinted here.***

Dear Council Members,

Unfortunately I am not able to attend the Special Council Meeting on March 12, 2013, at 6pm, but I would graciously request that you read this letter during the discussion and make it publicly available.

As the owner of Basecamp Hotel, South Lake Tahoe, I am a small business owner in the community and wish to make a public comment regarding the Highway 50 Re-alignment project.

I believe we are all in agreement that the current situation of high unemployment, a blighted tourist core area, and an economy in decline is not acceptable as a vision for our community. It is clear that we need to re-invent our core to keep South Lake Tahoe as a major tourist destination while maintaining and creating jobs and opportunities for our residents who depend on our main industry for their livelihoods. A vibrant, walk-able core is vital to create an inviting environment for the visitors, reduce car trips and abate pollution that is contributing to the long-term decline in clarity of our most important asset; our lake.

Our biggest asset is our natural environment from the mountains to the lake, so the current situation of a four-lane highway dividing the mountains from the lake in our core tourist area with dangerous traffic, noise and pollution is not an environment that is attractive to visitors who come to Tahoe to experience nature and get away from their car. Other mountain destinations from Aspen to Whistler have been stealing away our visitors with their superior, walkable environment. In fact, I would challenge you to find another

successful outdoor-focused mountain resort that has a four lane highway separating its bed base from its main attractions, shops and restaurants.

Change is always tough, and whenever cities are required to make bold decisions, there are always people who will be affected, as well as people who are resistant to change in any form.

Bold changes however are necessary to transform the future of any community, which is why we should not shy away from change here in South Lake Tahoe.

Imagine San Francisco's Embarcadero if they still had a double-decker freeway running along the waterfront. The bold decision by the Board of Supervisors to remove eight-lanes of highway, against the will of a very vocal opposition, was not initially popular, but ended up transforming the waterfront in San Francisco from a wasteland of blight, high crime and drugs into the most vibrant part of the city, a haven for runners, hikers, bikers, restaurant goers and shoppers.

Unquestionably the decision to remove the freeway in 1982 is the main reason why San Francisco is able to host the America's Cup in 2013.

While we are not San Francisco, nor do we want to be, the Embarcadero is an example of what can be achieved when leaders have an open mind and make the types of bold decisions that are necessary to map out a vision for the future of their city, our city.

As a City Council I believe that it is your job not only to listen to the various voices in the community, but also to create a vision and sell the community on the full potential of our city. Great leadership is not about trying to please everybody, it's about doing what is right for your city, even if it means that you'll upset some constituents for the greater good of the city. As civic leaders you will be acutely

aware that there is no decision that doesn’t have some vocal opposition.

As a business owner on the “wrong (lake and project 3) side of the tracks (highway)”, I send my guests to go eat, shop and play at the wonderful businesses within walking distance (and as such within walking distance of 5,700 hotel rooms in my immediate vicinity) such as Basecamp Pizza (no relation), Driftwood Café, Lucky Beaver or Naked Fish Sushi that are in our tourist core. When it comes to asking whether they can walk, my inclination is to say yes, but I frequently have guests who come back saying that they were not comfortable crossing a poorly lit highway, especially at night and with their children, can you blame them? The next time they go out they take their car and drive despite being within walking distance, hardly a good solution for a destination that prides itself on its natural environment. I’m sure my colleagues on the mountain side of the freeway have the same issue when sending people to go see the wonderful lake.

I have read the Economic and Planning Systems Inc. report date March 1, 2013, entitled “Economic Analysis of the US50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project,” and I find it to be a compelling argument for the need to create a “compelling main street.” While it is clear that there is still much work to do to find the best alternative, I would urge the City Council to:

1. Continue on the path of exploring alternatives that would re-align a four-lane highway away from our tourist core.

2. Create a better non-motorized connection from the mountains to the lake.

3. Create a walkable tourist core with vibrant retail and entertainment that encourages guests to leave their cars parked and use alternative methods of transport to explore the area.

4. Make bold decisions for the future of South Lake Tahoe in five, 25, and 50 years, without being overly focused on 2013-2018 when there will be inevitable disruption and discontent.

5. Fairly compensate those who will be directly and adversely affected by whatever plan is chosen without being held hostage by the vocal minority.

I wish I could have been at the meeting to voice my points in person, but I hope that you find the time to read my letter and perhaps take in some of my thoughts. Now is not the time to stick our heads in the sand, now is the time to map a vibrant future for South Lake Tahoe, and the evaluation of re-alignment alternatives is a great first step.

Respectfully yours,

Christian Strobel, founder Basecamp Hotels