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Newsletter: October/November 2015

Have we already exceeded the Basin's carrying capacity?

"Gridlock." "Don't leave your home." "Stay off the roads." Do any of these terms sound familiar to you?

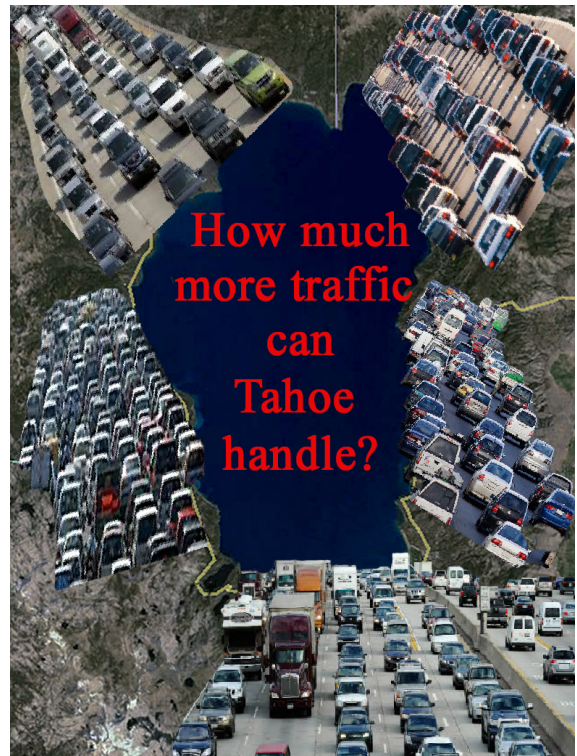
As we observed this summer, with an improving economy comes the return of more traffic on our roadways. Yes, we want visitors to come enjoy Lake Tahoe and help support our local economy. But at the same time there is a risk of "Loving Tahoe to death." More vehicles, pollution, crowding, and noise impact our environment, quality of life, and visitor experience. Proper planning is needed to ensure we don't exceed what Tahoe can handle.

But are we already there? Several approved but not-yet-built projects will draw 1,000's more vehicles to the Basin's already congested roadways (i.e. Homewood Mountain Resort and Boulder Bay). At the same time, major population increases in California and Nevada will mean more people (think: *millions* more) living within just a few hours' drive to Lake Tahoe. Extreme increases in greenhouse gases (GHGs) seem unavoidable. Unfortunately, TRPA, Placer County, and corporate developers continue to push for even more large developments in the region.

The pressure for significant growth in the Tahoe Region threatens not only the health of Lake Tahoe and surrounding mountain areas, but also our quality of life and economy. Will future generations know what was so special about Lake Tahoe, or will they only see intermittent glimpses of a murky lake through large buildings, cluttered ridgelines, and glaring nighttime lights, all surrounded by a sea of vehicles? If we want to protect what is special about the West Shore and Lake Tahoe, we can not sit idly by and let profit-driven developers call the shots. We need to get involved and demand better for our environment and community.

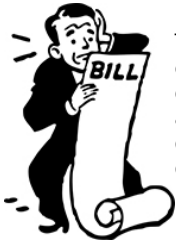
Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart
President, Friends of the West Shore



Membership Dues:

In our last Newsletter we included a gentle reminder for your tax-deductible annual membership. We thank those members who have since responded. FOWS works diligently to bring to you startling information concerning incompatible developments in the planning phase for the future of Lake Tahoe. We are working with like-minded groups to make a difference but we need financial support. It is important to keep you updated but equally important to do something to affect these projects with a well-orchestrated campaign. We hope you find our efforts to protect the West Shore and Lake Tahoe, and to continue to keep you updated on projects and plans that affect our environment and quality of life, helpful and informative. Although our Board and members contribute significant time and resources, we still have to pay the bills. Your financial support is necessary for us to contest these projects.



Therefore, we kindly include this reminder to contribute your annual [membership dues](#) and/or donate, and encourage new supporters to join. Your tax-deductible dues will help support ongoing efforts of the only organization providing a collective voice for West Shore communities (and beyond). If you aren't a member already, [here's how your membership helps](#) . [Individual memberships](#) are as low as \$25 (although additional donations are welcome), and information for Homeowners Associations can be [found here](#) . If you have questions, ideas, suggestions, or just want to shoot the breeze on Tahoe issues, please feel free to [contact us](#) ! [Dues may be paid online or mailed to FOWS](#) .

**Even better - all donations through November 30 will be matched by private donors. *
You can have *double* the impact!**

[Regional and Local Planning Updates:](#)

Placer County - Tahoe Basin Area Plan (TBAP):

At the 9/23/2015 TRPA Governing Board's "Regional Plan Implementation Committee" (RPIC) meeting Placer County and TRPA staff requested feedback on [proposed alternatives](#) to analyze in the Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/S) for the TBAP.

FOWS [expressed several concerns](#). For example, inclusion of the Tahoe City Lodge pilot project (Lodge project) in the Area Plan's EIR/S is inappropriate and will make an already complex and difficult public process even more confusing. Some RPIC members also questioned this combination, but in the end they did not request it be removed. FOWS also believes the range of proposed alternatives is too narrow, and requested an Action Alternative that includes less density and other considerations in Town Centers (e.g. Tahoe City and Kings Beach), additional protections for ridgelines, nearshore areas, and other resources (no changes were made at the meeting). Placer County plans release of the the draft EIR/S in early 2016.

Martis Valley West Specific Plan (MVWSP)

The MVWSP proposes the development of 760 residences and 6.6 acres of commercial/retail uses near Northstar, with buildings located up to and on the ridgeline above North Lake Tahoe. The project area is immediately adjacent to the in-Basin location where 112 luxury homes, and now a 550-unit campground, are proposed (more below). FOWS submitted comments on the [Notice of Preparation](#) last March, raising concerns regarding in-Basin impacts including scenic resources and traffic. The [MVWSP draft EIR](#) was just released on 10/22.

Contrary to all logic, the draft EIR concludes "no significant impacts" to visual, traffic, or water impacts, as noted in [a recent opinion piece authored by the developer](#). A public hearing will be held on [11/19/2015 in Kings Beach](#) to receive input. All comments are due by 12/7/2015.



A new campground with 550 units is proposed on the ridgeline above North Lake Tahoe and adjacent to the proposed Martis Valley West Specific Plan <http://www.brockwaycampground.com/index.html>

Area Plan / "Brockway Campground" - Placer County:

At the 9/23 TRPA Board hearing, the project applicants (and their consultants) [presented information](#) on the proposed Brockway Campground. FOWS [submitted comments](#) prior to the meeting. Fortunately, TRPA has determined a full environmental impact statement is required. [Over 200 people attended, and most were opposed to the development](#). Highlights from the applicant's presentation include:

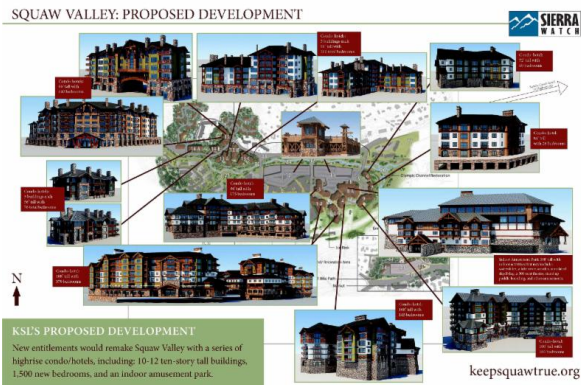
- A claimed demand for camping in the area, although no evidence was provided to back this up;
- Reliance on groundwater for the campground, although groundwater in California and the Tahoe Basin is declining;
- Sidestepping traffic concerns, which include the obvious expectation that campers will drive to Lake Tahoe during their stay (a fact represented by a [picture of a family on Lake Tahoe](#) in the applicant's own notice for the hearing); and
- Rather than admit that Fibreboard Freeway would have to be widened, the applicants stated it would have to be "enhanced" in 20 places.

FOWS will follow this closely and keep you apprised regarding the release of a Notice of Preparation or other activities.

[Local Project Updates:](#)

Squaw Valley Village Expansion:

Although outside of TRPA's legal boundaries, the Squaw Valley expansion will significantly impact the Basin. [On 9/23, Sierra Watch encouraged TRPA to engage with Placer County](#). FOWS, the League to Save Lake Tahoe, and others have also made this request. In fact, some TRPA Board members were surprised staff hadn't commented on the [draft Environmental](#)



KSL's Proposed Development
 (From: <http://www.sierrawatch.org/squaw-valley/>)

[Impact Report \(EIR\)](#) prior to the deadline, and asked TRPA to be more involved. *Notably, the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan environmental analysis did not include Squaw Valley or Martis Valley projects in its cumulative traffic analysis.*

FOWS is concerned with the proposed project's impacts ([read FOWS 7/14 comments](#)). In fact, the draft EIR concludes 'significant and unavoidable' congestion impacts in Tahoe City, while traffic impacts to the West Shore were not fully examined. An overwhelming majority of comments [oppose the size and scale](#). No release date for the Final EIR has been provided.

Fanny Bridge/SR 89 Realignment Project:

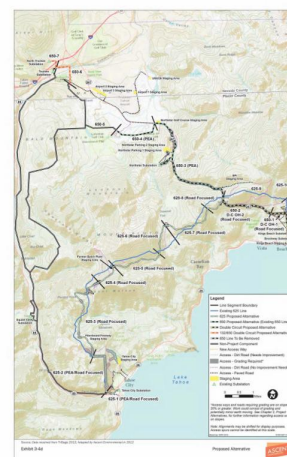
The remaining money needed to fund the project [has now been secured](#). Construction is anticipated to begin in 2016. FOWS supported rehabilitation of Fanny Bridge, but [opposed the selected project](#) as a new highway overpass (notably the

first of its kind in Lake Tahoe) will create numerous environmental impacts, cost taxpayers unnecessary funds, and not address one of the primary causes of congestion in the area - the pedestrian crossings and activity in Tahoe City.

Liberty Utilities (aka Calpeco):

Work has started on the [Liberty Utilities Electrical Upgrade line](#), a large new power line in North Lake Tahoe that will have significant impacts to Tahoe's environment and ratepayers' pocketbooks. The primary reasons for this project appear to include supporting increased development outside of the Basin (e.g. Northstar), and profit for the corporation that owns Liberty Utilities (which can then bill its 49,000 customers for the approx. \$50,000,000 "upgrade" project). *Yes, you read that correctly - the math does not bode well for Liberty customers.* Although [active citizens](#) worked hard to challenge it, the project was approved, albeit with requirements for construction to be done in three phases.

The [Sierra Sun](#) recently reported on the schedule. Work on the Truckee-to-Kings Beach line (Phase 1) has started, and will resume in spring 2016. The timing of substation work (Phase 2) will depend on Liberty demonstrating that actual and expected load thresholds exceed system capability. Phase 3 (a new transmission line from Tahoe City to Kings Beach) is not anticipated before 2020, and is the most damaging to Tahoe's environment.



[View larger image](#)

Tahoe Keys proposed herbicide use in Lake Tahoe:

The Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association (TKPOA) is proposing to use herbicides to manage invasive plants (i.e. milfoil) in the Tahoe Keys lagoons. According to the TKPOA report, although there are many methods available to reduce the plants' growth, other options appear to be dismissed or minimized because they interfere with boating use of the lagoons and/or may cost more. FOWS submitted [comments to the TKPOA](#) on 9/17/2015 requesting other options be considered for the sake of the entire Lake, even if those options temporarily inconvenience boaters. If the TKPOA pursues herbicide applications, they will be required to complete an environmental analysis for the Lahontan Water Board.

We invite you to contact us to learn more, ask questions, or simply get to know the FOWS Board.

Please contact Jennifer Quashnick, FOWS Conservation Consultant, at: jqtahoe@sbcglobal.net, or Susan Gearhart, FOWS President, at: susan@friendswestshore.org or (530) 525-0368.

* *The first \$5,000 in donations will be matched.*

