

Newsletter: February/March 2015

It's going to be a busy year for Placer County and the West Shore...

If it appears more voices and groups in the West and North Shore areas are raising concerns about the 2012 TRPA Regional Plan Update (RPU), Placer County's new plans, and resort development interests, it is because the project descriptions are coming out, and people are seeing that what they are proposing could forever change the landscape of our mountains, lake, and communities.

The year began amidst the release of the **Fanny Bridge/S.R. 89 Realignment Project** draft environmental report. The proposed "bypass" is far greater in size and scope than many imagined, will create significant environmental damage, and yet fails to solve the very problem the project claims to address: congestion at the Wye.



Concerned communities are speaking up

In late January, the developers of the proposed **Martis Valley West Area Plan** (aka "Ridgeline Project") requested a change in their application to separate the in-Tahoe portion. Unfortunately the full story wasn't reflected in most media reports because the project is still on the table, and the process has become even more convoluted.

February provided us with a glimpse of the revised proposal of the Placer County **Tahoe Basin Area Plan**, which includes major increases in new tourist units, large resort hotels, more traffic and crowding, and spot zoning to the benefit of selected projects. In addition, taxpayers may be paying for many of these changes, yet resort developers will reap the rewards.

Please read more below to learn about these upcoming projects and plans which have the potential to completely transform our communities and environment.

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart,
President, Friends of the West Shore (FOWS)

Local Project Updates

Fanny Bridge/S.R. 89 Realignment Project:

FOWS recently submitted [comments](#) on the draft Environmental Impact Report/Study (DEIR/S) for the proposed [Realignment of State Route 89](#) (in the area known as "Fanny Bridge"). Although the goals of the project have been advertised to include reducing congestion at the Tahoe City Wye and S.R. 89, the proposed bypass options are likely to result in even *more* traffic. Further, many citizens were not aware the proposed bypass would be elevated up to 10-feet above ground level, and could range between 80 to 100 feet wide. The simulated image of the bypass on the right is based on a **65-foot wide bridge**. Alternative 1, a bypass alternative, is considered the proposed action by the lead agencies.



Simulated Image:
Fanny Bridge/S.R. 89 Realignment Bypass
Provided by Jim Sajdak

Learn more from these [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

The draft environmental analysis is extremely flawed, from the unsupported conclusion that the project will reduce congestion (contrary to current transportation information), to failing in many areas to gather even the most basic information (i.e. recreation surveys on the 64-acre Tract) yet proclaiming no significant impacts.



Community Meeting in Tahoe City regarding
Fanny Bridge Project (2/11/15)

On February 11, a community-led meeting was held to inform other Tahoe City and West Shore residents and business owners of the scale of the project. FOWS was happy to participate and summarize our concerns with the proposed bypass. About 35 people attended, and most were unaware of the expanse of the proposed bypass options, and very concerned with the rushed public process.

Upcoming meetings:

Although the public comment deadline has passed, there are two upcoming meetings the public can attend.

- 1) The [TRPA Governing Board](#) will hear a presentation from staff on **February 25th**.
- 2) The [Tahoe Transportation District](#) is hosting a public workshop on **February 26th**.

We encourage you to attend and learn more, ask questions, and provide your thoughts on this project.

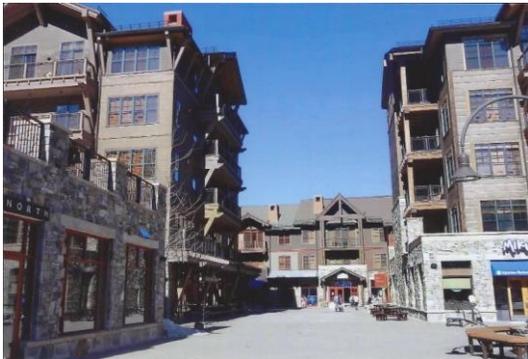
Placer County – Tahoe Basin Area Plan:

Recent [information](#) provided by County staff indicates the revised draft Area Plan proposes significant changes, including but not limited to:

- Commodity transfers to support an additional 500 tourist units in Tahoe City and Kings Beach (there are about 181 existing hotel rooms);
- Increased parking to accommodate visitors using the 500 new tourist units;
- A revised Town Center (urban) boundary that includes areas on the Golf Course; and
- Special planning areas (much like "spot zoning") to support large projects.



More traffic on our roadways



Northstar Mountain Village
Can you imagine this in Tahoe City?

Will more hotel rooms and taxes solve our economic woes?

Also released this month is a County-commissioned report titled "[Economic Development Incentives for North Lake Tahoe Town Centers](#)" which purports to evaluate the economic conditions in North Lake Tahoe, yet in perfect sync with resort interests, proclaims the need to obtain more tourist units, add more parking, reduce environmental protections, and have the County find ways to expedite project approvals. Further, public dollars are proposed to help supplement the developers (e.g.

"Enhanced Investment Finance Districts" are among the suggested means for the public to cover costs related to developing the 500 new tourist units). With more visitors coming to Tahoe City (and then driving around the Lake), and more employees having to commute from outside of the Basin because they cannot afford the increased cost-of-living, the end result would be more traffic, water and air pollution, noise, crowding, and a loss of many of the characteristics that make our area unique (in fact, the report specifically favors Squaw Valley and Northstar "village-style resorts").

Based on recent updates provided to community "planning teams," the draft Notice of Preparation and area plan language may be released for public review this spring. A 60 day public comment period will be provided for public review and comment.

The next [West Shore Planning Team](#) meeting is being held tomorrow, **February 24, from 5:30-7:30pm**, at the Tahoe City PUD Board Room (221 Fairway Drive).

Regional and Local Planning Updates:

Martis Valley West Parcel Area Plan (aka "Ridgeline Project") - Placer County:

This [proposed project](#) includes 112 luxury homes as part of a gated community on a forested, undeveloped ridgeline in North Lake Tahoe. Last month, the developers sent a [memo to Placer County](#) requesting the in-Basin portion be separated from the non-Basin portion of the project. Although [press messages](#) may have implied the MVWP Area Plan is now off the table, [this is not the case](#).

- First, in lieu of the proposed 112 luxury homes, a high-intensity campground on the ridgeline is now part of the discussion. The conceptual campground could include swimming pools, recreation centers, cafes, coffee shops, and other "amenities" not typical of other campgrounds around Lake Tahoe.
- Second, the project involving the 112 luxury homes has only been 'suspended.' **It has not been removed.** According to the memo to Placer County, if the developer cannot get approval for what they would deem a "viable" project under existing uses, the Area Plan will not be 'terminated.' Here is an excerpt from the memo:

- 4) **Terminate.** If the Land Owner seeks permits under permissible uses for land within the Tahoe Basin and the permits are granted for such a project, it will be requested that the MVWP Area Plan be terminated. The proponent will work with Placer County and other agencies to appropriately terminate the MVWP Area Plan if a viable project under permissible uses is approved.
- 5) **Preservation of Rights.** The proponent will maintain its rights to secure any permissible uses, offsite utilities, ingress and egress for permissible uses or other allowable projects.

In other words, our communities must remain diligent and continue to engage with each other, and with our representatives, regarding this project.

Ridgeline Protections:

FOWS and others have requested the TRPA and Placer County swiftly adopt new regulations to [protect our ridgelines](#) from development. The MVW ridgeline project, if approved, would set a precedent that could threaten other ridgelines around the Basin. Further, even the new structures on the Martis Valley side of the (relatively flat) ridge would be viewable from Lake Tahoe.

Notably, the **Tahoe Sierra Board of Realtors** [recently adopted](#) the following land use policy:

"A standing land-use zoning policy position that supports ridgeline protection from obtrusive man-modified structures or features. Further, that this overarching (non-project specific) policy stance be articulated when and where appropriate to various units of local and regional government."



Tahoe Basin boundary line on ridge
(Lake Tahoe can be seen behind the trees)

We will continue to keep you informed regarding this project.

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

Please write to Jennifer Quashnick, FOWS Conservation Consultant, at: jqtahoe@sbcglobal.net, or Susan Gearhart, FOWS President, at: susan@friendswestshore.org.