



## Newsletter: February/March 2017

### Winter and traffic have returned to Tahoe...

Two things have returned to the Tahoe Basin with a vengeance - winter and traffic. While most people are happy to see the return of old man winter, the record amounts of snow and rain that fell in January caused major problems including [power outages, road closures, leaks, floods, avalanches, mud slides, and other issues](#). FOWS would like to thank the [public service officials and volunteers who checked in on West Shore residents during an extended power outage in January](#).

Unfortunately, much-needed water wasn't the only thing that came in scores this winter; significant traffic has jammed up our roadways on most Sundays and Holidays. Making matters worse, new smartphone apps are sending drivers into residential areas previously available as alternative routes for residents and emergency personnel. In fact, the Tahoe Basin is [earning a bad reputation for frequent gridlock](#) - and that's *without* the increased traffic we have yet to see from future projects like the Homewood Village Resort, and recently-approved projects in Martis and Squaw Valley.



Source: Jan. 28 Sacramento Bee [article](#)

Our land use and transportation agencies have been working to reduce vehicle use once people are in the Basin; however, when experts were recently questioned about what they are doing to reduce the entry/exit gridlock, ["none of the four speakers could deliver much in the way of satisfactory answers."](#) The recently-released draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update proposes some helpful strategies, but they are not aimed at reducing the entry/exit traffic - prioritizing that problem is delayed for at least another four years (more below). Furthermore, the idea of not approving new development that significantly increases traffic does not appear to be part of the RTP update. FOWS believes we need more responsible planning whereby solutions are developed and implemented *before* problems are made worse.

#### Did you know?

FOWS has reached an important milestone this year - 2017 is our *10 year anniversary!* Stay tuned for future updates as we celebrate and look back at what we've accomplished with your help. We thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart  
President, Friends of the West Shore

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## Special Update regarding Homewood Resort:

### **Homewood Evacuation Plan:**

In our [last Newsletter](#), we reported on issues related to the Homewood Evacuation Life and Safety Report ([Evacuation Plan](#)). FOWS requested another public meeting with sufficient notice and advertisement by Homewood Village Resort and Placer County (neither entity has responded). We are discussing this matter with the North Tahoe Fire Protection District and recently submitted [questions and concerns](#) regarding the proposed Evacuation Plan. We are optimistic about the opportunity to help coordinate and/or facilitate a public meeting in the future to better inform and engage residents, visitors, and property owners along the West Shore.



Exhibit "A" Concept Plan and Base Area Map

HMR Concept Plan and Base Area Map  
[\(View larger image\)](#)

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## Regional and Local Planning Updates:

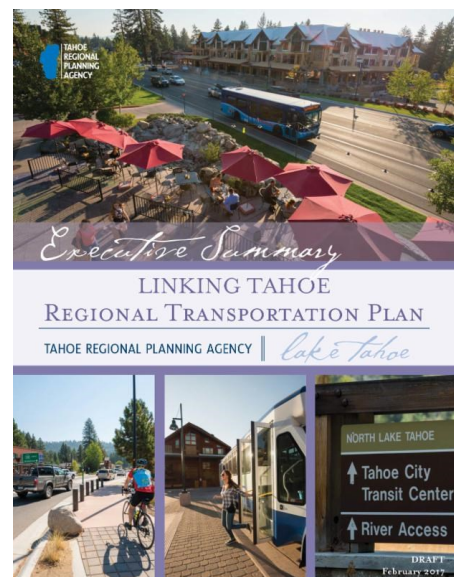
### **Placer County - Tahoe Basin Area Plan (TBAP):**

The [Tahoe Basin Area Plan](#) (TBAP) was unanimously approved by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Governing Board on 1/25/2017. The public raised questions including concerns about traffic, public health and safety, and water clarity. As we have seen with the increased ski resort traffic, intense snowfall, and rain-on-snow storms that create substantial [flooding, mudslides, and avalanches](#), the capacity of our roadways has been repeatedly exceeded and it doesn't take long for our only access route to the West Shore - S.R. 89 - to become impassable. Unfortunately, the TBAP did not include all possible means to help reduce the traffic and safety impacts in our area, although such planning is most effectively done at the areawide (TBAP) and regional scale.

### **TRPA Regional Plan Update (RPU):**

#### Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update:

On 2/22, the TRPA released the [draft Regional Transportation Plan Update](#) (RTP) for a 30-day public review (comments are due March 24). Based on presentations to date, the RTP includes several beneficial strategies that may help to improve transportation options within the Basin; however, we are concerned that actions to address the extensive gridlock caused by entry/exit visitor trips are in large part delayed for at least another four years (to the next RTP update). FOWS will continue to review the document, attend public hearings, and prepare comments over the next few weeks. We encourage you to do the same ([more information here](#)).



## Measuring transportation impacts/benefits:

TRPA's Advisory Planning Commission (APC) recently discussed plans to compile information on how to best measure traffic levels in ways that are most useful for planning. For example, the existing "Vehicle Miles Traveled" (VMT) standard is useful in measuring impacts from 'per mile' driving (e.g. tailpipe emissions and resuspended dust), whereas the Level of Service ("LOS") standard measures the extent of congestion. However, existing methods do not adequately measure the impacts from the extensive "Sunday gridlock" we have been experiencing. TRPA anticipates releasing a report in July with this information as a first step to potential updates to TRPA's standards.

## Threshold Update Initiative:

Beginning this year, TRPA will launch the [Threshold Update Initiative](#) process, whereby potential revisions to the agency's [environmental standards](#) will be evaluated. As these standards provide the backbone of TRPA's required protections, FOWS will be following this process closely, and will continue to advocate for threshold standards that are based on sound science and protection of Tahoe's natural resources.

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## **Lake Tahoe West (Forest) Restoration Partnership**



[A new partnership](#) comprised of a broad mix of public and private stakeholders has been formed to address the management of forests along Lake Tahoe's West Shore (including lands in both Placer and El Dorado Counties). FOWS is encouraged by the opportunity to improve the restoration and long-term management of our forests and watersheds, recreation opportunities, and public health and safety, and looks forward to participation in this effort. We will keep you informed as the process moves forward.

If you belong to a Homeowners Association or other organization along the West Shore, project leaders are interested in opportunities to share more information and discuss the partnership at your next available meeting. Please contact Dorian Fougères, Ph.D., California Program Manager for the National Forest Foundation, at [dfougeres@nationalforests.org](mailto:dfougeres@nationalforests.org) or (530) 902-8281 for more information.

## **Fanny Bridge/SR 89 Highway Realignment Project:**

According to the [Tahoe Transportation District's website](#), construction of the new bypass and roundabouts remains scheduled for this spring and summer.

## **Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan (VSVSP):**

Sierra Watch [filed a second lawsuit](#) against the Squaw Valley project on 1/19/2017 stating Placer County failed to follow public meeting laws when an agreement was reached between the developer and California Attorney General whereby a relatively [minor amount would be paid to the TRPA](#) to presumably mitigate the significant traffic impacts to the Lake Tahoe Basin. Sierra Watch's attorney [recently reported](#) on the actual travel conditions experienced on a non-Holiday weekend. Traffic was backed up from Squaw Valley to I-80, and even on the interstate. One of the take-home messages is: "when you are in a hole, the first thing you should do is stop digging."

## **Martis Valley West Parcel Specific Plan (MVWPSP):**

Unfortunately, the [California Attorney General's office agreed not to challenge Placer County's approval of the MVWPSP](#) project based on the developer's payment of a small mitigation fee for traffic impacts to Lake Tahoe. As with Squaw Valley, the public was not included in this discussion nor provided the opportunity to comment on the agreement. Also like Squaw Valley, the paltry one-time payment of \$385,612 will have little impact as Lake Tahoe's restoration costs run in the billions, and ongoing *annual* costs for transit systems run in the millions.

## **Alpine Meadows to Squaw Valley Base-to-Base Gondola:**

No schedule for the draft Environmental Impact Report has been provided. Background information can be found [here](#).

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### **Easy ways to help FOWS!**

#### **Save Mart:**

Did you know that up to 3% of your purchase at Save Mart and [other stores](#) can be donated to FOWS at no extra cost to you? A program previously known as "SHARES" allows shoppers to designate FOWS to receive donations earned through their purchases. Sign up for a new account or register your existing account [through this link](#), then you simply provide your phone number at checkout and funds are donated to FOWS. It's easy and there is no cost to you!

#### **Amazon Smile:**

We've joined the Amazon Smile program; all you have to do is order from Amazon through [this link](#) and 0.5% of your purchase will be donated to FOWS at no additional cost to you!



**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](mailto:jqtahoe@sbcglobal.net), or Susan Gearhart, FOWS President, at: [susan@friendswestshore.org](mailto:susan@friendswestshore.org).

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