

STAFF RECOMMENDATION METHODOLOGY

None of the project alternatives are perfect. Each has its own pros and cons which must be weighed against each other to find the alternative that provides the best balance of benefits to meet the needs of the community. The project provides a unique opportunity for the County to achieve a variety of important goals that will benefit both the County and the region. It serves as an example of a project encouraging and balancing the needs of various modes of travel as well as implementing several designated environmental improvement projects (EIP).

The staff recommendation was based on evaluating the following criteria:

- Maximizing on the stated project purpose and need
- Contribution to Community and Regional Vision
- Input from the Community
- Environmental Analysis of Impacts and Benefits

1. Maximizing Purpose and Need of the Project

The purpose of the project is to

- 1) Improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety in the Commercial Core of Kings Beach
- 2) Improve Water quality within the watershed; and
- 3) Improve the aesthetics and scenic character of the Commercial Core

All of the proposed build Alternatives have similar and substantial benefits to bicycle mobility (adding bike lanes) and improvements to water quality (construction of drainage improvements and BMP's). The 4-lane alternative with its wider roadway pavement would require additional sanding (ie more roadway to sand) during the winter months which has been found to be an additional contributor of fine sediment to runoff entering Lake Tahoe as well as aerial deposition into the lake.

The three lane Alternatives provide the greatest level of pedestrian mobility and safety enhancement by providing wider sidewalks and shorter crossing distances across the highway. The four lane alternative provides much better pedestrian mobility and safety than the no project alternative with the addition of sidewalks and a traffic signal but does not provide the same level as the three lane alternative.

The three lane alternative contribute to better aesthetics by allowing more space (sidewalk area) for community amenities (streetscape and landscape) and less pavement. The four lane alternative would contribute much better to aesthetics than the no project alternative by having a more organized right-of-way and a designated sidewalk but not as much as the three lane alternatives. The visual analysis shows a marked increase in the scenic quality of the corridor (even more than the 4-lane alternative) with the 3-lane alternative.

2. Contribution to Regional and Community Vision

TRPA has developed a Regional Plan for the Tahoe Basin to guide and prioritize land use, environmental protection and infrastructure investment. The County of Placer and TRPA have further refined this vision for Placer County with adoption of the Kings Beach Community Plan to help shape decision making in the Kings Beach Community.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Compact states that the goal of transportation planning shall be to reduce dependency on the automobile. The Transportation Element of the Regional Plan reiterates this goal to “establish a safe, efficient and integrated transportation system which reduces reliance on the private automobile, provides for alternative modes of transportation and serves the basic needs of the citizens of the Tahoe region.” Transportation Goal 2 and 4 stress the importance of alternatives to the automobile including bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Transportation Goal 7 discusses the desired level of service criteria on Tahoe roadways. The three lane alternatives are superior to the four lane alternative in regards to pedestrian facilities but the three lane alternatives are inferior to the 4 lane alternative in moving automobiles along the highway. However, because the Compact and Regional Plan both cite reducing dependency on the private automobile as a priority, Goals 2 and 4 were given a higher priority than Goal 7 during project selection.

The Kings Beach Community Plan envisions a “pedestrian tourist village oriented toward the main street”, pedestrian in scale, reliance on shared parking and wall to wall buildings. The Community plan also recognizes that the highway is a four lane facility and includes the need for an efficient transportation system. Although these statements can be viewed as contradictory, the opening chapter vision of a “pedestrian tourist village” and traffic circulation goal of reducing dependency on the automobile is found to be a higher level theme and desire within the community plan. If reducing dependency of the automobile and encouraging alternative modes of travel (ie pedestrian, bicycle and transit) is the mission, then portions of our roadway right-of-ways will need to be allotted to these alternative modes. The three lane hybrid alternative allocates approximately 25% of the right of way to pedestrian use.

3. Input from community

The Kings Beach Community has participated in numerous community forums regarding the project as well as their vision for their community. These forums included a series of place based planning workshops associated with Pathway conducted by TRPA, a Main Street Design Group sponsored by the Business Community and Redevelopment Agency, as well as more than a dozen public meetings on the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project. Project efforts included a series of workshops conducted in 2007, by the Sierra Business Council (SBC), on behalf of the County. Hundreds of citizens participated in these meeting to provide their input and desires for their community and/or the proposed project.

Particularly early on, all input stressed the desire for a pedestrian village that was a place people came to visit rather than drive through. Initially there was an overwhelming desire to narrow the street to provide additional space for pedestrians. As the traffic impacts with narrowing the street were identified, concern about traffic congestion was raised and the debate grew regarding the relative importance of traffic circulation to the pedestrian village concept.

On-highway parking has been a concern for merchants along the highway who wish to maximize parking in close proximity to their businesses. The four lane alternative provides an additional number of on-street parking spaces as the three lane alternatives, but maximizes on-highway parking year around.

The general public input received to date greatly favors the three lane alternative although merchants along the highway are more evenly divided.

4. Environmental Analysis of Impacts and Benefits

The three lane hybrid alternative has several identified benefits over the 4-lane alternative including substantial additional benefits to pedestrian mobility and safety; and the visual/aesthetics of the commercial core. There are also additional nominal benefits to water quality of runoff.

The 3-lane hybrid alternative analysis identified 4 significant and unavoidable impacts:

1. Reduction in Intersection Level of Service (LOS)
2. Reduction in Roadway Section Level of Service (LOS)
3. Reduction in Transit LOS
4. Cut Through Traffic in adjacent residential neighborhoods during peak periods that exceed 3,000 vehicles per day

These impacts come about due to the large influx of visitors, particularly the Summer season. During these peak periods traffic congestion will form. When this happens busses will be caught in the congestion (lowering transit LOS at these times) and some motorists will elect to cut through the adjacent residential community that has a grid network of streets. These peak periods in the short term will be limited to Summer weekends and will be extended as the region grows into the future. At buildout of all community plans in the region , including the Town of Truckee, the periods of congestion are predicted to include most days of the Summer season (Fourth of July to Labor Day).

The four-lane alternative does not experience any significant impacts to Transportation and it provides many benefits over the no project alternative. It does not, however, have the same degree of benefits as the 3-lane hybrid alternative.

Conclusion

Staff recommends the 3-lane hybrid alternative as best maximizing on the purpose and need of the project as well as aligned with the community vision as represented in the

Regional Plan, Community Plan and public input. Although the proposed 3-lane hybrid alternative has many environmental benefits over the 4-lane alternative, it does, however, have the 4 significant and unavoidable traffic impacts associated with traffic congestion during peak periods. We believe the 3-lane hybrid alternative provides the best balance of competing interests while accomplishing the projects purpose.