

DRAFT Descriptions of Project Alternatives for the Proposed Regional Plan Update's EIS



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INTRODUCTION

In 1987, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) adopted a Regional Plan to describe the needs and goals of the Tahoe Region and provide a policy guide for decision making. Adoption of such a plan is a requirement of the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (Compact).

In contrast to most other jurisdictions' plans, TRPA's plan (and all its elements, ordinances, rules, and regulations) must achieve and maintain an adopted set of environmental threshold carrying capacities (Thresholds). This is required by the Compact.

The Compact also requires that TRPA take an interdisciplinary approach, using the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the environmental design arts in planning. This interdisciplinary approach is the way to harmonize the needs of the region as a whole so as to ensure equilibrium between the Region's natural endowment and its man-made environment.

The lifespan of the 1987 Regional Plan was set at 20 years. In order to update the 1987 plan, TRPA must provide policy alternatives that represent a set of different possibilities for planning and regulation in the Tahoe Basin. TRPA must submit an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess the implications of these alternatives.

The Compact provides a mandate for the protection of the scenic, recreational, educational, scientific, natural, and public health values of the Tahoe Region. TRPA must select the one EIS alternative (or a combination of alternatives) that will meet the Compact's requirements to both achieve and maintain the Thresholds and ensure equilibrium between the human and natural environments.

This document describes the different alternatives being proposed for the update of TRPA's Regional Plan. Updating the plan (by adopting amendments as proposed in the different EIS alternatives outlined in this document) would allow TRPA to continue following this mandate using current information and approaches that may not have been available when the 1987 Regional Plan was adopted.

In 1987, the focus of the plan was on achieving and maintaining the Thresholds and providing both for redevelopment and for orderly growth and development on vacant land consistent with the constraints imposed by the Thresholds. The development allocations provided in the Regional Plan are nearly exhausted today; the Region is almost at build-out of anticipated growth.

As the Basin approaches build-out conditions, the land use trends needing to be addressed over the next several decades are the following:

- redevelopment
- implementing smart planning principles
- updating and improving an aging built environment
- promoting walkable, compact, affordable, and livable mixed-use communities that provide for environmental protection and a sustainable economy

Since 2002, TRPA has been gathering technical data and scientific information needed to update its plan. In addition, extensive public input has been integrated into the process, which has been coordinated with partner agencies at all levels of government and with communities around the Basin.

More than 2,500 people have contributed to the Regional Plan Update through Place-Based Planning workshops and the Pathway Forum. These people have described in explicit terms how they would like to see their communities evolve over the next 20 years. A preponderance of them have expressed a vision for revitalizing existing town centers, combining land uses, and promoting alternative modes of transportation.

TRPA staff and consultants have articulated a “regional vision” that combines the technical and scientific directives with the desired conditions spelled out by citizens. Focusing future land use on redevelopment provides a tool for leveraging the environmental improvements in the Basin that are required under the Compact. These include water quality improvements, reduction of vehicle miles traveled, air quality improvements, and improved recreation.

The Pathway Forum produced an extensive analysis of the Thresholds. In the public process that followed the Forum, a large slate of proposed Threshold changes was narrowed down to a small number of amendments that were deemed to be incontrovertibly sensible. As part of this EIS alternatives document, that small group of agreed-upon Threshold amendments is included.

THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN REGIONAL VISION

The Vision Summary is the result of outside-of-the-Basin surveys, the Pathway Forum, and the Place-Based Planning process; it represents a variety of local, regional, and national interests. The process engaged local community members, second home owners, and visitors in its development. The following vision statement for the Region that resulted from the process:

In 2027, the Lake Tahoe Basin is an exceptional place where communities thrive in harmony with the natural environment. The overwhelming presence of nature is apparent. The Lake is blue and clear, the air is clean, the region’s ecosystem healthy and natural sounds evident. Within communities, the economy is strong and sustainable; the population diverse and vital, the richness of everyday life is obvious.

Based on mutual respect and the integration of human and natural communities, a balance exists that inspires and motivates residents, businesses, visitors, and governments alike to work together to maintain the Lake’s value as a national and international treasure. Lake Tahoe is a truly unique and special place. (Pathway Forum)

ALTERNATIVE DESCRIPTIONS

The following text provides a brief description of the alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS. The alternatives were developed with the following objectives in mind:

- *As required by the TRPA Compact: Achieve and maintain the Environmental Thresholds Carrying Capacities*
- *Focus amendments to the TRPA Goals and Policies, Plan Areas Statements, and Code of Ordinances to provide environmental gain*
- *Achieve the environmental standards while providing an opportunity to enhance the built environment of the Lake Tahoe Region and implement the planning principles of the Place-Based Planning process.*

TRPA is proposing four different alternative projects for analysis at an equal level of detail in the EIS:

- ❖ Alternative One is the “no project” alternative. Under this alternative, the only changes proposed are those that are necessary to achieve or maintain consistency with already-adopted regulations of other federal or state agencies.
- ❖ Alternative Two, the alternative proposed by TRPA staff, focuses on a combination of incentives, regulation, and collaboration to achieve the environmental thresholds required by the Compact. This alternative recognizes the results of recent inquiry, which show that the majority of pollutants affecting Lake Tahoe’s clarity come from urbanized areas where the land uses are largely private; it responds to the sentiment that TRPA needs to work with the owners of those uses and provide them with incentives to participate in the environmental improvement of the Basin.
- ❖ Alternative Three is largely like the “no project” alternative, except that it allows for development to continue at a pace very similar to (but slightly slower than) the one we have seen over the past 20 years. Though this alternative can be referred to as the “status quo” alternative, it also proposes the greatest amount of new allocations. Therefore, in some cases, Alternative Three contains changes that go beyond the ones necessitated by the unavoidable mandates of other federal or state agencies in order to ensure that environmental thresholds continue to be met.
- ❖ Alternative Four takes the approach that a decreased amount of allocations and an increased amount of regulation is the best way to ensure that the Thresholds are attained. Like Alternative Two, this alternative is designed to incorporate the best science currently available. And while other alternatives continue, in some cases, to regulate the Tahoe Basin as the purview of two states, Alternative Four consistently aims to apply the highest available standards Basin-wide.

TRPA’s Regional Plan contains Goals and Policies, and these support Implementation Measures. The aim of this draft document is to assist anyone reviewing the list of proposed changes to the Goals and Policies, as well as the new Implementation Measures. As stated above, it is a narrative document. Each Subelement of the plan is included in the narrative as its own section. The format of each section is as follows:

- **Overview** of the Subelement as it currently exists in the 1987 Regional Plan, including

the salient goals and policies currently in effect.

- Explanations of Alternatives One through Four, consecutively. Each explanation contains the following:
 - A **Summary** of the Subelement's main function within the plan, in light of the particular alternative.
 - A synopsis of the **Goals and Policies** included under the particular alternative, as well as rationales for their inclusion.
 - A list of the **Implementation Measures** included under the particular alternative, as well as rationales for their inclusion.

Note: While the complete complement of the Goals and Policies in each Subelement can only be found in the full Regional Plan Update, the Implementation Measures under each alternative represent the entirety of the list of these measures. Each measure is preceded by a bullet in the text and can be found under the Implementation Measures heading.