

1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1, “Introduction,” of the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS included a description of the project located along U.S. Highway 50 (US 50) from approximately 0.25 mile west of Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe, California, to Nevada State Route (SR) 207 in Douglas County, Nevada. This chapter also provided a brief description of the project site and project study area (see Exhibit 2-1 on page 2-4 of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS).

A summary of the contents of the sections in Chapter 1 are provided below as well as any changes that have been made to these sections of the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

1.1 LEAD AGENCIES

Section 1.1, “Lead Agencies,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS identifies Tahoe Transportation District (TTD), the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as the lead agencies for the joint environmental document for the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project. These three agencies determined that an EIR/EIS/EIS is needed to effectively analyze the project, evaluate the environmental impacts of the project and discuss alternatives to the project. TTD is the project proponent.

No changes have been made to Section 1.1, “Lead Agencies,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Section 1.2, “Project Background,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS describes the history of the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project as being contemplated since the 1970s and was included in the Lake Tahoe Compact, which required the consideration of “completion of the Loop Road in the States of California and Nevada.” The project has moved through many iterations, including environmental review cycles and planning efforts. Agency stakeholders, interested parties, and business community members have contributed input into the alternatives development and evaluation processes. The project is also included in the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) 2015 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) list, the Draft 2017 FTIP, the 2012 Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), and the 2017 Regional Transportation Plan (2017 RTP).

No changes have been made to Section 1.2, “Project Background,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

1.3 PURPOSE, NEED, AND OBJECTIVES

Section 1.3, “Purpose, Need, and Objectives,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS provides the information necessary to present the purpose and need and basic project objectives of the proposed US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project per the requirements of NEPA and CEQA. TRPA does not have specific requirements for a project to identify the purpose, need, or objectives of the project. The project objectives also reflect the TTD Board’s commitment to provide replacement housing as part of the project, including deed-restricted affordable and moderate-income housing, for displaced residents.

Changes to Section 1.3, “Purpose, Need, and Objectives,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review are shown below.

1.3.1 Purpose

Section 1.3.1, “Purpose,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS describes the overall purposes of the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project.

The following change has been made to Section 1.3.1, “Purpose,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

Page 1-7 of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS is revised as follows:

The overall purposes of the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project are described as follows:

- ▲ Improve the corridor in a manner consistent with the Loop Road System concept;
- ▲ Advance multi-modal transportation opportunities;
- ▲ Improve vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle safety;
- ▲ Improve the environmental quality of the area;
- ▲ Reduce congestion;
- ~~▲ Improve safety for residents, pedestrians, and bicyclists in local neighborhoods.~~
- ▲ Implement regional and local plans, including the Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan;
- ▲ Enhance visitor and community experience;
- ▲ Promote the economic vitality of the area; and
- ▲ Improve safety for residents, pedestrians, and bicyclists in local neighborhoods.

1.3.2 Need

Section 1.3.2, “Need,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS explains how the purposes of the project would fulfill specific needs within the study area. The needs that would be fulfilled by the project include completion of a Loop Road System concept, multimodal mobility and safety, environmental improvements to help achieve TRPA’s adopted environmental threshold carrying capacities, reduce congestion, reduce neighborhood “cut-through” traffic, implement adopted regional and local plans (e.g., Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan), and create opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization of the study area.

The following changes have been made to Section 1.3.2, “Need,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

The text beginning on page 1-7 of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS is revised as follows:

- A. *Loop Road System concept.* Article V(2) of the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (Public Law 96-551), 1980 (Compact), requires a transportation plan for the integrated development of a regional system of transportation within the Tahoe Region. The Compact requires the transportation plan to include consideration of the completion of the Loop Road System in the States of California and Nevada. Improvements are required to the corridor to meet the intent of the Loop Road System concept. The Loop Road System concept is described in Section 1.2, “Project Background,” and Table 1-1 of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS.
- B. *Multimodal mobility and safety.* Ongoing and proposed ~~resort~~ redevelopment in the study area and an increase in visitors has ~~increased~~ increased and amplified ~~pedestrian~~ pedestrian regional traffic, creating a need for improved pedestrian safety, mobility, and multi-modal transportation options that provide

alternative options to the private vehicle. Improvements to pedestrian facilities, bicycle lanes, and transit are needed to connect the outlying residential and retail-commercial uses with employment and entertainment facilities, including hotels, resorts, and gaming interests. Currently, there are no bicycle lanes on US 50 through the project site, and sidewalks are either not large enough to meet the increased demand, or do not exist. These issues adversely affect pedestrian and bicyclist safety and the visitor and community experience of the area. These needs could be addressed through development of a complete street—a street designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities—in the main tourist corridor of the Stateline area. Injury and fatality accident rates for pedestrians and vehicles through the study area are 14 percent above the statewide average rates for the latest three-year period of available data (Caltrans 2016, NDOT 2016).

The roadways within the project site study area also have inadequate facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. The inadequate facilities detract from community character and quality of life of both residents and visitors. The poor-limited transportation facilities and pedestrian/bicycle environment create constraints to the hinder economic vitality redevelopment of the study area (TTD 2013:3). There is a need for enhanced connectivity, transit use, walkability, and bicycle use in the study area to reduce dependence on private automobiles.

- C. *Environmental quality in the area.* Environmental improvements are needed necessary in the area to help achieve TRPA's adopted environmental threshold carrying capacities (thresholds), including for water quality and air quality. Paved roadways are the primary source of the fine sediment particles that are impairing the clarity of Lake Tahoe (Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and Nevada Department of Environmental Protection 2010). Improvements to stormwater runoff drainage, collection and treatment facilities are needed to meet TRPA, Nevada Department of Environmental Protection, and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board regulations and requirements for protecting the water quality and clarity of Lake Tahoe.

As supported by analysis in the *Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement*, reduction of vehicle congestion and numbers of vehicles on the roadway through enhanced pedestrian and multi-modal opportunities and opportunities for compact, mixed-use development in the tourist core is needed to provide for a reduction in mobile-source greenhouse gas emissions (TMPO and TRPA 2012a:3-57 through 3-61).

Landscape improvements are needed to enhance the scenic quality of the project site, to facilitate compliance with TRPA's scenic thresholds, and to enhance the community and tourism experience. Currently, the three TRPA roadway travel units in the project site (Roadway Travel Unit #32, Casino Core, a portion of Roadway Travel Unit #33, The Strip, and a small portion of Roadway Travel Unit #45, Pioneer Trail [North]) are not in attainment and are targeted for improvement in the Scenic Quality Improvement Plan and other adopted agency plans that apply to the area.

- D. *Minimize congestion.* Study area intersections and roadway segments are currently operating at marginally acceptable levels during a typical summer PM peak hour (level of service D) (Wood Rodgers 2016:14 – 15); however, higher traffic during holidays, special events, and certain summer and winter peak periods results in long vehicle spillback to upstream intersections, long delays throughout the tourist core area, and-undesirable traffic operations, and hinder emergency management operations. The study area is projected to experience substantial increases in traffic congestion in the casino core in the future that would result in level of service E or worse conditions during normal summer peak hours.

1.3.3 Project Objectives

Section 1.3.3, “Project Objectives,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS identifies the basic project objectives identified by TTD that recognize the needs for the project and would support the fundamental purposes of the project. Some of the project objectives include decreasing dependence on the use of private automobiles; developing a “complete street” for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit, and vehicles; create gateway and streetscape features that create a sense of place; and no net loss of housing in the South Shore area.

The following changes have been made to Section 1.3.2, “Need,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

The ninth bullet on page 1-9 of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS is revised as follows:

- ▲ create gateway and streetscape features that ~~create~~ accomplish a sense of place, align with complete streets principles, are reflective of Lake Tahoe’s natural setting, and provide effective way-finding;

1.4 LOGICAL TERMINI AND INDEPENDENT UTILITY

Section 1.4, “Logical Termini and Independent Utility,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS describes how the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project alternatives studied in this environmental document would meet the three criteria for defining logical termini and independent utility as required by FHWA regulations (23 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 771.111[f]). Logical termini are defined as rational end points for a transportation improvement. A project is considered to have independent utility when it can function, or operate, on its own without further construction of an adjoining segment. Projects must not preclude the opportunity to consider alternatives for a future, related transportation improvement.

No changes have been made to Section 1.4, “Logical Termini and Independent Utility,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

1.5 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Section 1.5, “Summary of Public Involvement,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS provides an overview of the public outreach that has occurred as part of the environmental review process. With the release of the Notice of Preparation (NOP)/Notice of Intent (NOI), agencies and the public were invited to provide input into the scope and content of the environmental document. This scoping process also included two public scoping meetings. TTD also engaged in numerous public outreach activities, including presentations to the City of South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County, community review committee and business review committee meetings, and stakeholder meetings.

The following additional information has been added to Section 1.5, “Summary of Public Involvement,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS on page 1-12 to describe the public involvement activities that have occurred following its publication and circulation for public review.

The US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS was released for a 75-day public review period from April 24, 2017 through July 7, 2017. Written comments from the public, stakeholders, and agencies were received during that time. Oral comments were also received at a series of public hearings. During the review period, public hearings were held on June 9, June 14, and June 28, 2017 to accept comments on the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS.

1.6 NEXT STEPS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Section 1.6, “Next Steps in the Decision-Making Process,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS describes the process for public review of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS, preparation of the Final EIR/EIS/EIS, EIR certification, and preparation of Findings of Fact. This section also notes that public meetings would be held by TTD and TRPA as part of considering project approval, and that FHWA would prepare a record of decision (ROD) documenting its decision regarding the project.

The following information has been added to Section 1.6, “Next Steps in the Decision-Making Process,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS after the sixth paragraph on page 1-12 to update the description of the next steps in the environmental review, including consideration of the project for approval.

Following consideration of public comments and preparation of this final environmental document, TTD, TRPA, and FHWA staff have identified Alternative B as the preferred alternative from among the alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS. Alternative B was identified in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS as the locally preferred action (or proposed project for CEQA purposes). This preferred alternative will be presented to the TTD Board and TRPA Governing Board for consideration of project approval. The lead agencies will make the final determinations of the project’s effects on the environment with required findings and notices in conjunction with project approval. Public hearings will be held by the TTD Board and TRPA Governing Board during the meetings when they consider the preferred alternative for approval. Notices will be distributed in advance of these hearings and posted on the TTD and TRPA websites at: www.tahoetransportation.org/ and www.trpa.org.

Under CEQA, the EIR must be certified as adequate by the TTD Board. After EIR certification, TTD will consider the preferred alternative for approval, and if approved, adopt CEQA findings for all identified significant impacts, adopt a statement of overriding considerations for any significant and unavoidable impacts, and adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for mitigation incorporated into the project (see Appendix P of this Final EIR/EIS/EIS). The adoption of findings, statement of overriding considerations, and MMRP will occur in conjunction with a project approval action. Upon approval of a project alternative, TTD will file a Notice of Determination with the California and Nevada State Clearinghouses that will document the action.

The Draft EIR/EIS/EIS was prepared in accordance with Article VII of the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, Chapter 3 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances, and Article VI of the TRPA Rules of Procedure. Following the public and agency consultation period, substantive comments relating to the environmental analysis were reviewed and responses prepared (see Appendix O of this Final EIR/EIS/EIS). The final environmental document will be presented to the TRPA Advisory Planning Commission, which will make a recommendation to the Governing Board with respect to certification of the proposed final document. The Governing Board will provide an opportunity for comment on the proposed final environmental document at a Governing Board hearing. The Board will then consider taking action to certify the Final EIS and adopt findings (TRPA Code of Ordinances Section 4.4) prior to considering approval of a project alternative.

In accordance with NEPA and FHWA regulations, FHWA will issue a Record of Decision after the TTD Board and the TRPA Governing Board have certified the EIR/EIS/EIS and made a decision regarding project approval.

1.7 OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Section 1.7, “Opportunity for Public Comment,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS identifies the TTD and TRPA offices, South Lake Tahoe Public Library, and Zephyr Cove Library as locations where hard copies of the draft document are available. The draft environmental document is also available on TTD’s website

www.tahoetransportation.org/us50 and TRPA’s website www.trpa.org/get-involved/major-projects/. This section also provided contact information where written comments on the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS could be sent. Public hearings for the draft environmental document were held on June 9, June 13, and June 28, 2017.

The following additional information has been added after the fourth paragraph on page 1-13 in Section 1.7, “Opportunity for Public Comment,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.

The US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS and this Final EIR/EIS/EIS are available for public and agency review online at TTD’s website: www.tahoetransportation.org/us50 and TRPA’s website: www.trpa.org/get-involved/major-projects/. In addition, hard copies of the document are available at the following locations.

Tahoe Transportation District
128 Market Street, Suite 3F
Stateline, NV 89449

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
128 Market Street
Stateline, NV

South Lake Tahoe Public Library
1000 Rufus Allen Boulevard
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

Zephyr Cove Library
338 Warrior Way
Zephyr Cove, NV 89448

1.8 PERMITS, REVIEWS, AND APPROVALS

Section 1.8, “Permits, Reviews, and Approvals,” in the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS identifies the permits, reviews, and approvals that would be required for project construction.

No changes have been made to 1.8, “Permits, Reviews, and Approvals,” in the US 50/South Shore Community Revitalization Project Draft EIR/EIS/EIS following its publication and circulation for public review.