



# **“WAYFINDING IN SOUTH LAKE TAHOE”**

A PROJECT FOR LAKE TAHOE’S SOUTH SHORE  
IN COOPERATION WITH THE



CITY OF SOUTH LAKE TAHOE  
AND



EL DORADO COUNTY

STATUS REPORT TO COUNTY  
AUGUST 2008

**WAYFINDING IN SOUTH LAKE TAHOE**  
**STATUS REPORT #2 (EL DORADO COUNTY)**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This is a Status Report submitted to El Dorado County in accordance with the Request for Proposals and award of same to the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) for the Wayfinding project (RFP 08-918-027). This Status Report will review all activities performed since the previous two reports.

## **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The project, "Wayfinding In South Lake Tahoe" includes the jurisdictional boundaries of both the City of South Lake Tahoe and the unincorporated portions of South Lake in El Dorado County. The project is funded by El Dorado County (\$42,500) and the City of South Lake (\$88,000).

For purposes of this Status Report the "Project" includes Meyer's area (El Dorado County) along Highway 50 into the City's jurisdiction through the "Y" area and out to the Stateline/Conference & Event Center area.

## **PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The overall goal of the Project is to design and install an engaging, clear and safe set of signs with a consistent and visual identity from beginning to end to enhance the visitor's experience by easily directing them to places they would like to visit. As a result, the visitor will more easily navigate the community and likely observe civic, cultural, commercial, conference, lodging and recreational amenities they might not otherwise have noticed. A good and effective Wayfinding signage program quickly becomes intuitive to the community and visitor and uses a thematic scheme to promote the identity of the community and activity.

Specific goals of the Wayfinding project are to:

- 1. Reduce visual noise by reducing the number of signs along Highway 50.** Currently, the collection of signs along Highway 50 are of various size and proportion resulting in one or two message per sign, most frequently and multiple signs with similar messages. In addition, international symbols are frequently on a separate post or attached to the post of another message type.
  - Objective: Reduce the number of highway signs by replacing multiple signs with one Wayfinding sign containing more than one message.
- 2. Orient drivers more quickly to their environment.** Orienting the driver more quickly to his/her environment allows drivers to location their destination which can reduce traffic hazards and improve driver safety.
  - Objective: Provide a consistent set of signs using the same colors, fonts, and type with consistent messaging structure and sign construction.
- 3. Other program goals** include improved driver experience resulting from ability to navigate the urban environment more easily; opportunities for community collaboration through project management; and utilization of multiple funding partners.

## **PROJECT ACTIVITIES THROUGH AUGUST 2008**

### **Agency Approvals**

City: As noted in the previous Status Report, the Wayfinding project was proposed to the City of South Lake Tahoe in response to their RFP in the spring of 2007. In July and August of 2007, the City discussed and then voted to set aside \$88,000 for the Wayfinding Project payable in quarterly payments provided the project progressed sufficiently in each quarter.

El Dorado County: In Response to the County's RFP 08-918-027, the Chamber submitted a proposal, which was subsequently funded in the amount of \$42,500.

Douglas County NV: The Chamber submitted a grant proposed to the Nevada Commission on Tourism to install signs in Nevada to match the signs that will be installed on the California side of the project. The NCOT awarded \$20,000 to the project for the Nevada portions (Stateline, Kingsbury to Zephyr Cove). The Chamber continues to seek additional funding to construct sufficient signage on the Nevada side of the South Shore.

### **Public & Committee Input**

#### Web Access for Wayfinding Project

In an effort to provide more access and input between the community and the progress of the Project the Chamber set up new pages on its website ([www.tahoechamber.org/wayfinding.aspx](http://www.tahoechamber.org/wayfinding.aspx)) where all documents, handouts and design concepts are posted for public review. All news relating to the Wayfinding Project is posted on the website and maintained by the Chamber.

#### Public Input

As with any community Project, public input is vital to achieve an outcome acceptable and desired by the community. On January 30, 2008, a public workshop was held at which participants heard from the consultants about design options and strategies. During the workshop participants heard offered opinions, solutions and ideas about Destination Categories, and prioritization of messages at specific locations. The workshop resulted in a Draft Sign Plan (Attachment 1) which a detailed list of all the messages to be considered at various locations. The Draft Sign Plan will be paired down to no more than 3 messages per sign (Caltrans & Federal Highway Standards) and only the highest priority messages should be considered.

#### Wayfinding Committee

A Wayfinding Working Group Committee was organized to discuss the Project on a periodic basis. The Committee is comprised of a wide range of public agency staff members including those from the City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, TRPA, CalTrans and members of the community and LTSSCC(Chamber). The committee has met on several occasions and communicated via electronic messages (e-mail) about the Consultant's recommendations, design strategies and message concepts. The Committee and in particular those from public agencies have spent considerable time discussing proposed sign options and modifications.

The general Wayfinding Committee includes the Working Group and a wide variety of interested persons who have asked to be kept informed about the project.

## CalTrans Defines Wayfinding Standards

Most of the Wayfinding signs will be installed along Highway 50 in the CalTrans Right-of-Way (ROW) and therefore will require CalTrans approval. In response to the South Lake Tahoe City Council's request to approach this project conservatively pending CalTrans approvals, the Chamber communicated extensively with CalTrans throughout this project and continues to coordinate with the agency.

CalTrans expressed an interest in reducing the number of signs along Highway 50, particularly signs that contribute to driver confusion or signs with international symbols that can be misleading (eg: Boat launch signs for which there is no boat launch). CalTrans traffic engineers have expressed an understanding of Wayfinding projects throughout the United States and have also expressed a desire to help the community obtain approval for a Wayfinding project design which meets the community's needs.

On Monday, June 9, 2008, with the assistance of South Lake Tahoe's City Manager, a meeting was held between CalTrans District Director and her staff members, City staff members and Chamber staff to discuss any potential modifications to CalTrans standard policies and rules for Highway signs.



The meeting resulted in CalTrans providing a Draft Wayfinding Sign Program Guidelines (Attachment 2) and further providing written approval via electronic communication (e-mail) (Attachment 3) to allow two colors (green and brown) and to allow the international symbols embedded into the sign rather than below the sign (as shown on the photo to the left). These modifications to CalTrans standards represent a significant collaborative effort on the part of all involved.

### CalTrans Tentative Approval

At this point in the process, if signs are constructed following the standards defined by CalTrans, they have indicated the signs would be approved – pending submittal of an encroachment permit for each location, and a Maintenance Agreement for maintaining the signs at standard conditions.

## Test Sign

A Test Sign conforming to CalTrans standards (with Wayfinding modifications) was constructed and installed on Al Tahoe Blvd on August 1, 2008 (as shown on the right and in Attachment 4). The Test Sign was constructed to provide a true and accurate reflection of what the signs would look like once they are installed on Highway 50. The only difference in the test signs to the actual signs in the construction material, which was foam core to minimize costs.

The Al Tahoe location chosen for its light traffic density patterns and for its proximity to locations of interest such as the Government Center, Community College and US Forest Service. The purpose of selecting a site with less traffic than Highway 50 was to provide motorists and opportunity to slow down and take notice of the sign and note any corrections and suggested changes.



### Public Input on Test Sign

As with all projects, public input is vital to understanding the community's views on the project. To solicit public input and comments on the Test Sign, a Press Release (Attachment 5) was released which resulted in a story in the Tahoe Daily Tribune announcing the Test Sign and location and providing the community information on how to provide comments. In addition, the Chamber updated its website to include a "Wayfinding" icon on the home page to make it easy for those wishing to provide written comment easier to navigate to the Wayfinding pages and a link to send an email.

During the week the test sign was up the Chamber received 13 emails, about half were supportive of the project and the other half were not. In addition, the Chamber received approximately five phone calls and other ancillary comments all of which were supportive of the signs, in general. Of those who were not supportive, the comments generally addressed:

- Sign size too large
- More signs are not needed
- Artistic elements should be included to reduce visual noise and impairment.

The Chamber specifically addressed the following in replies to community comments:

- Sign size is determined by CalTrans and while artistic elements such as an "Alpine Motif" and lower to the ground are desired by most community members the signs must conform to traffic safety standards set by CalTrans.
- One of the goals of the Wayfinding program is to reduce visual noise by installing signs with consistent design and by replacing two to four inconsistent signs with one Wayfinding sign.

### Test Sign Results

The test sign indicated a few modifications to the final design are needed:

- Removing the 'box' from around the international symbol.
- Not using any abbreviations (such as "Gov't") on the signs.
- Not using redundant messages (eg: US Forest Service logo on the same line as text).
- Other modifications will be discussed following City and County official input and committee input.

### Neighborhood Designation

From the beginning of this Project identifying neighborhoods as a method to develop a sense of community and neighborhood spirit has been desired by a number of the community and committee members involved in the project.

CalTrans standards do not allow neighborhood designations on highway signs (eg: Bijou Neighborhood"). However, the concept to install signs to identify a particular Neighborhood continues to be the desire of the committee and community members involved in the project. The City of South Lake Tahoe's sign ordinances may allow for such signs provided they are installed on City or County roadways. For the time being, the Neighborhood Designation is not going to be included on the first set of signs to be installed, which will be on Highway 50.

## **PROJECT SUPPORT AND UPCOMING ACTIONS**

### **Project Support from Elected Officials**

The Project has received support from various elected officials including the South Lake Tahoe City Council, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, Douglas County Commissioners and Assemblyman Ted Gaines.

### **Project Timeline**

In response to the South Lake Tahoe City Council's request to proceed conservatively pending CalTrans approvals, the originally proposed timeline included dates and times predicting project completion by the end of summer, 2008. However, as stated in the previous reports, the timeline has become more fluid to account for the length of time spent collaborating with CalTrans although the Chamber has been moving the project continuously forward albeit at a slower pace than first projected. Any costs for the additional time have been absorbed by the Chamber through a loss of staff time spent managing this project without reimbursement.

### **Summary of Phases:**

- Phase 1      Design Strategy is **complete**. Modifications to the strategy will continue through the rest of the Project.
- Phase 2      Sign Design is ready to solicit quotes for construction. Following input by the City Council at the August 19<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting and input from the County on the same date, this phase will move toward
- Prioritizing locations and selected messages for those locations;
  - Preparation of construction drawings and RFP to construct the signs.
- Phase 3      Sign Review will include presenting the selected locations to the City and County for approval followed by:
- Submission of an encroachment permit to CalTrans for specific locations based on costs of construction.
  - CalTrans requires a Maintenance Agreement for maintenance of the signs to be in place prior to approval for installation.
- Phase 4      Installation

## **PROJECT BUDGET**

**Table 1**

### **Wayfinding Project Budget (R & E) and Projected Expenses**

<b><u>REVENUE SOURCES</u></b>	<b><u>DESCRIPTION</u></b>	<b><u>AMOUNT</u></b>
City of South Lake Tahoe	\$88,000 was set aside for the project of which \$66,000 has been invoiced and received	\$ 88,000
El Dorado County	Community Marketing RFP 08-918-027	\$ 42,500
Douglas County Commission on Tourism	\$20,000 in grant funds awarded but will not be included in this budget which ONLY addresses California expenses and revenue sources	-- n / a --
	<b>Subtotal CA Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 130,500</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>	<b><u>DESCRIPTION</u></b>	<b><u>AMOUNT</u></b>
Design Workshop	Design consultant. Fees and reimbursable expenses including test sign construction, consulting fees and sign design	\$ 29,780
Supplies, Printing	Expenses are limited to supplies, copies, printing, and reimbursable gas mileage	\$ 920
Survey	Temporary assistance to interview and collect 300 surveys from visitors	\$ 1,500
	<b>Subtotal CA Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 32,200</b>
	<b>AVAILABLE REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 98,300</b>
<b><u>FUTURE EXPENSES (estimate)</u></b>		
Consultant Sign Design	Prioritizing locations, prepare construction drawings	\$ 15,000
Sign Fabrication	40 signs / \$1,800 per sign	\$ 72,000
Sign Installation	Includes CalTrans in-kind contributions	\$ 5,000
General Administration	Copies, handouts, signs	\$ 2,000
Contingency	Sign/Consulting Fees 5%	\$ 4,300
	<b>Subtotal Future Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 98,300</b>
	<b>PROJECTED BUDGET OVER OR (UNDER)</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>

### **In Kind Contributions**

\$ 11,288 Project Manager: Director of Public Affairs for LTSSCC

Other in-kind contributions of staff time have been provided by the following:

- LTSSCC Board members for project management, document review and input
- City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, TRPA and CalTrans for document review, meeting participation and input.
- Community members meeting participation and input.



## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Sign Plan as provided by Design Workshop, Project Consultant
2. CalTrans Wayfinding Sign Program Guidelines (Draft) provided by CalTrans
3. Electronic communication (e-mail) from CalTrans District Director Jody Jones authorizing two colors (green and brown) and the embedding of international symbols into the sign.
4. Test Sign Photos
5. Press Release announcing the Test Sign installation