



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 20-1133, **Version:** 1

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Department of Transportation recommending the Board take the following actions related to the Pioneer Trail/ US Highway 50 Intersection Safety Improvement Roundabout Project, Capital Improvement Program project number 36104026:

- 1) Adopt the California Environmental Quality Act Mitigated Negative Declaration based on the Initial Study; and
- 2) Approve the Pioneer Trail/ U.S. Highway 50 Intersection Safety Improvement Roundabout Project as described in the CEQA document.

**FUNDING:** Highway Safety Improvement Program (40.44%), Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Air Quality Mitigation Funds (2.96%), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (14.21%), Regional Surface Transportation Program (1.58%), To Be Determined (Federal, State, and Local Grants) (40.8%).

### **DISCUSSION/BACKGROUND**

The El Dorado County (County) Department of Transportation (Transportation) proposes to replace the current signalized intersection at Pioneer Trail and U.S. Highway 50 with a modern roundabout. On August 6, 2019 (Legistar #19-1140, Item 26) the Board received a presentation regarding the engineering and outreach work performed for the Pioneer Trail/US Highway 50 Intersection Safety Improvement Project (Project) and voted 4-0 to select a roundabout as the preferred alternative for improving this intersection. Since much of the Project will be constructed in State right-of-way, final approval of a modern roundabout as the preferred alternative was obtained from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) with the approval of the Intersection Control Evaluation report on February 2020.

Transportation is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency for the County and prepared the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) to consider the significance of potential Project impacts in accordance with CEQA Guidelines (14 CA Administrative Code, §14000 et seq.). Certification of this MND by the Board would complete the CEQA portion of the environmental phase toward ultimate delivery of this Project. Because the Project is within the State Highway System, Caltrans is the lead agency to administer the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion, utilizing the required studies completed by Transportation and its consultant, Nichols Consulting Engineers, CHTD (NCE), for CEQA as lead agency for the County. At this time, NEPA has not yet been approved, however, Caltrans confirmed a Categorical Exemption will be filed under Section 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 771.117(c): activity (c)(26).

**Project Need:** The Project is identified in the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) for the Lake Tahoe Region (EIP 03.02.01.0026), and is considered an overall benefit to the Lake Tahoe environment by assisting in attaining environmental thresholds for air quality, water quality, recreation, and transportation. The Project is included in the 2021 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) adopted by the Board on June 8, 2021, (Legistar #21-0624, Item 54).

Agency and Public Outreach: Transportation has been engaging in public outreach related to the Project for the past few years. Transportation has met with the following individuals and groups:

1. El Dorado County Sheriff's Office (EDSO) - Transportation met with Lieutenant Bryan Brown on March 21, 2019 and explained the project alternatives. The EDSO position on the project alternatives is neutral. EDSO will respond to calls regardless of which intersection option is implemented.
2. California Highway Patrol (CHP) - Transportation met with CHP Lieutenant Terry Lowther and CHP Officer Gartner on March 21, 2019 and explained the project alternatives. CHP has no objection to a roundabout at Pioneer Trail/ U.S. 50.
3. South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) - Transportation attended the May 1, 2019 meeting of the BAC. After providing a presentation to the BAC and answering questions from its members, the BAC voted 7-0 to provide a letter endorsing the roundabout option.
4. Meyers Advisory Council - Transportation attended the May 1, 2019 meeting of the Meyers Advisory Council (MAC). After providing a presentation to the MAC and answering questions from the MAC and the public, the MAC voted 7-0 to provide a letter endorsing the roundabout option. Then on August 26, 2020, Transportation provided a project status update to the MAC.
5. Lake Valley Fire Protection District - Transportation met with then-former Fire Chief Tim Alameda and Battalion Chief Brad Zlendick, now current Fire Chief, on May 9, 2019. Lake Valley Fire had the following requests: rolled/mountable curbs, tree thinning near the Project, and ensuring adequate room for traffic inside the circle to move to the right during emergencies. When the design features of the roundabout were explained to Chiefs Alameda and Zlendick, they had no objection to a roundabout at the intersection of Pioneer Trail and U.S. 50.
6. Community Mobility Workgroup from the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative - Transportation met with the Community Mobility Workgroup (Workgroup) on May 28, 2019. After presenting the Project alternatives to the Workgroup and answering questions, the Workgroup provided a letter of support for the roundabout alternative.
7. Public meeting/open house - Transportation held a public meeting on June 12, 2019 in Meyers. 73% of attendees that provided comments were in favor of the roundabout option.
8. Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) - Transportation met with the Chamber on June 20, 2019. After presenting the Project alternatives to the Chamber and answering questions, the Chamber's Board of Directors voted 11-0 with one abstention to provide a letter of support for the roundabout alternative.
9. Board of Supervisors - On multiple occasions Transportation presented to the Board. First on January 29, 2019 (Legistar #18-1837, Item 19), the Board approved a contract with NCE for design and environmental services for the Project. During the discussion of the January 29 Item, the Board directed Transportation to return to the Board with a 'Roundabout 101' presentation, which occurred on March 19, 2019 (Legistar #19-0362, Item 26). At the January 29, 2019 meeting, the Board also directed Transportation to return to the Board to provide the Board an opportunity to state its preferred alternative for the Project. On August 6, 2019 (Legistar #19-1140, Item 26), the Board selected a roundabout as the Board's preferred alternative for improving the intersection.

A Notice of Intent to Adopt the MND was advertised in the Tahoe Daily Tribune and the entire document was posted on Transportation's website at <http://www.edcgov.us/government/dot/pages/CEQA.aspx>. A hard copy was available at the

Transportation office located at 924 B Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe. The public comment period included the submittal of the Notice of Completion (NOC), Notice of Intent (NOI) to adopt the Initial Study (IS)/MND to the State Clearinghouse and to other appropriate resource agencies for review. The public review period began on August 2, 2021 and ended on September 2, 2021.

**Project Description:** The Project site is located in eastern El Dorado County, within the Lake Tahoe Basin, south of the City of South Lake Tahoe and within the community of Meyers. The Project is along U.S. Highway 50 at Santa Fe Road/ Apache Avenue from the south, Arapahoe Street to the north, Meyers Creek to the west, and along Pioneer Trail approximately 525 feet to the east (Attachment D). The purpose of the Project includes, but is not limited to, improve safety and mobility at the U.S. Highway 50/Pioneer Trail intersection for all modes of travel; improve traffic flow; provide access to and connectivity between nearby walking and cycling facilities; and ensure consistency with local, regional, and state planning.

**Right-of-Way:** Permanent easements on parcels owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy will be required. A temporary construction easement will also be required on a private parcel to accommodate the associated grading with realignment of the Class 1 shared-use path west of the highway.

**Construction:** Construction would be scheduled once a funding commitment has been made, all approvals and permits have been obtained and improvement plans completed. The construction phase of the Project will be publicly bid and Transportation will retain a construction contractor who will be responsible for complying with all applicable rules, regulations, and ordinances associated with construction activities and for implementing the adopted construction-related mitigation measures. Transportation anticipates securing the additional funding in 2021 with Project construction potentially beginning during the summer 2023 construction season.

**Mitigation Measures:** Mitigation measures are added to the Project to reduce potential impacts to a level of insignificance. Avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are established in the Section 5, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan and summarized in Table 6 of the IS/MND.

**Comments:** During the 30-day public comment period, 28 comments were received from residents and one comment received from TRPA. Transportation responded to each comment; included in Attachment B. Changes have been incorporated in the IS/MND. None of these changes substantially modify the analysis or conclusions of the document, but instead simply clarify aspects of the previously-circulated document. The responses were posted on Transportation's website at <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/dot/Pages/ceqa.aspx> prior to the request for Board action. Commenters were notified of the document posting for their reference.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

- 1) The Board could choose not to adopt the IS/MND and approve the Project. Transportation would make adjustments as directed by the Board and bring this item back to the Board at a later date. This would increase Project cost and delay delivery.
- 2) The Board could cancel the Project. Transportation would be required to return all federal funds spent thus far.

## **PRIOR BOARD ACTION**

See Discussion / Background Section above.

## **OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

County Counsel reviewed and approved the IS/MND.

## **CAO RECOMMENDATION**

Approve as recommended.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

This Project is included in the 2021 CIP adopted by the Board on June 8, 2021, (Legistar #21-0624, Item 54), with funding provided by the TRPA Air Quality Mitigation, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and Surface Transportation Block Grant funds. Project delivery prices and construction prices have increased significantly since the original \$2.9 million Highway Safety Improvement Program grant funding was awarded in 2016.

Transportation currently estimates a project funding deficit of just under \$4 million, which Transportation plans to fund with a combination of Federal, State, and Local grants. There is no change to Net County Cost as a result of this item.

## **CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

N/A

## **STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT**

Infrastructure

## **CONTACT**

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Department of Transportation