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NEW TAHOE CITY STATE ROUTE 89 ALIGNMENT PLANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY CONCERNS

*SR 89/Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project
Focuses on an Increase in Emergency Access and Evacuation*

Sept. 16, 2011 (Stateline, Nev.) – Nearing the end of its useful life, 83 year-old Fanny Bridge in Tahoe City, Calif. is in need of repair. This situation has prompted the Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) to take a close look at how fixing Fanny Bridge, which is on the National Register of Historical Places, and constructing a new State Route 89 would aid in solving community evacuation concerns and emergency access.

Quite possibly more important than its historic significance, Fanny Bridge serves as the main artery for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians to enter and exit Lake Tahoe's West Shore to Tahoe City and/or Truckee. The bridge during peak summer months holds an average of 22,300 vehicles per day and nearly 400 cyclists and pedestrians per hour, according to 2009 Caltrans vehicle counts and TMPO pedestrian and cyclist counts.

Currently along Highway 89, West Shore Drive, during an emergency situation such as a forest fire or earthquake, the number of north versus southbound lanes needed for evacuation over Fanny Bridge will vary based on the incident. When one southbound lane is being used over Fanny Bridge for emergency vehicles to access the West Shore, only one northbound lane is available for evacuation.

The TTD's SR 89/Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project proposed alternatives all offer at least three outbound (northbound) lanes going over the Truckee River in case of an emergency with one inbound lane devoted to emergency vehicles. Increasing the outbound, (northbound) evacuation capacities aids in meeting the safety needs of businesses and residents on the West Shore of Tahoe.

"For the safety of the public, two ways in and out of the West Shore are extremely important to us in an emergency situation," said Fire Chief Duane Whitelaw, North Tahoe Fire District. "During the August 2007 Washoe Fire near Granlibakken, we found the traffic back-ups on West Shore Drive to be a real constraint."

"In terms of vehicular access and egress to the West shore, there are basically four ways in or out: north, south, east or west. To go east, you would need a boat. To go west from the west shore if you can't get over Fanny Bridge, you'll need a serious 4WD to get over the Rubicon Trail or mountain bike or good hiking shoes," noted Fire Chief John Pang, Meeks Bay. "If Fanny Bridge is out, you won't get far going north. Going south is fine unless you hit one of the 40 or so days that Emerald Bay is closed due to avalanche hazards. In this case, North Tahoe's ambulances from Meek's Bay need to rapidly travel down the West Shore to get to Tahoe Forest Hospital in Truckee."

Another safety concern noted by the TTD is that the Tahoe Region is also a seismically active region. The last reported earthquake in its region shook as recently as January 2011. Currently designated as a seismically deficient structure, Fanny Bridge, in the case of an earthquake could be destroyed resulting in a catastrophic situation for West Shore areas south of the bridge. If the older seismically deficient Fanny Bridge were to be rendered inoperable, a newly constructed two-lane bridge would still facilitate northbound vehicular evacuation from the West Shore to areas located north of the Truckee River.

"An increase in the number of vehicles that are able to evacuate this area during an emergency situation is something we've taken into serious consideration in relation to all our goals for this project," said Carl Hasty, district manager, TTD.

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“The project alternatives with two bridges over the Truckee River lessen the probability for disaster because of the availability of multiple travel routes,” said Mark Rayback, principal engineer, Wood Rodgers.

The new Fanny Bridge construction also plans to reconstruct a bridge to structurally last for more than 100 years, meeting future traffic demands for the next 20 years. It will be built to sufficiently hold emergency and other large vehicles, such as delivery trucks and water tender fire trucks that often weigh in excess of 30,000 pounds.

After the devastating impact of the 2007 South Lake Tahoe Angora Fire, Tahoe Basin communities have been increasingly concerned about sufficient evacuation routes. The Angora Fire burned approximately 3000 acres of Jeffrey Pine and mixed conifer forest between June 24 and July 2, 2007. Much of the fire burned at a high severity due to strong winds, unseasonably dry fuels, and high forest fuel loadings, destroying 254 homes. Fire suppression costs totaled approximately \$160,000,000 placing the Angora Fire among the costliest wildfires in US history (USFS-LTBMU Burned Area Report, 2007).

“It’s imperative that a community like Tahoe City and the West Shore of Lake Tahoe take a close look at its evacuation options to evaluate needed safety route alternatives and current options,” added Hasty.

“In case of an evacuation from wild fire, earthquakes or any emergency situation, two escape routes are always best,” noted Whitelaw and Pang.

For information about Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Planning, visit: www.ntfire.net or contact the Board of Directors of the Fire Protection District and staff at customerservice@ntfire.net or by calling 530.583.6911.

For more information about the Tahoe Transportation District and the SR89/Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project, visit: www.TahoeTransportation.org or call 775.589.5500.

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About the Tahoe Transportation District

The Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) is responsible for the implementation and management of transportation projects and programs in the Tahoe Basin. The organization has facilitated many area safety infrastructure projects, including bicycle paths, roadway improvements, pedestrian thoroughfares, water quality and water shed improvements and public transit solutions.

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