



FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series

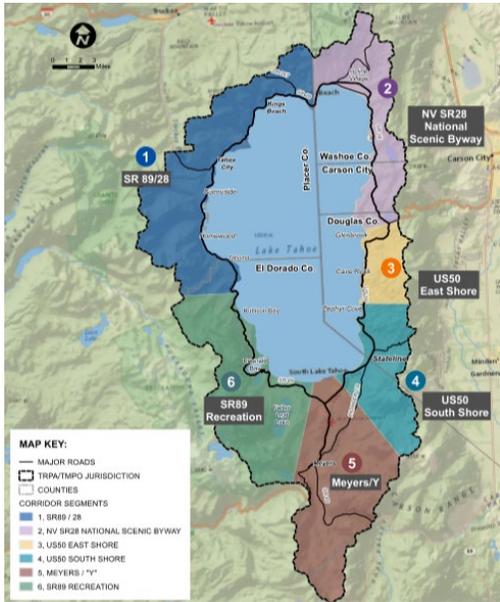
FHWA-HEP-20-040

Engaging Underserved Communities in Active Transportation Planning in the Lake Tahoe Region

Challenge

The Lake Tahoe region is a scenic area nestled between the California and Nevada border with a population of approximately 55,000 people. Persons who identify as Hispanic or Latino account for nearly 14 percent of the regional population. The region is also home to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, which owns land and manages shorelines along the eastern edge of Lake Tahoe. The region's highway system primarily consists of two-lane roadways leading to and around the lake, including U.S. Highway 50, State Route 28, and State Route 89. Federal and State agencies manage nearly 90 percent of the land in the region, including the U.S. Forest

Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California Tahoe Conservancy, and Nevada Division of State Parks. These environmental protections, along with the community's desire to preserve the area's natural resources, limit the ability to expand roadways to meet the region's growing travel demands. These constraints also highlight the need to provide a robust active transportation network that provides all residents with improved access to goods, services, and opportunities.



Lake Tahoe Region Transportation Corridor Map. Image courtesy of Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) aimed to increase active transportation and improve the bicycle and pedestrian network through a regional plan. TRPA sought to shift more trips to active transportation and transit through the planning process to alleviate the seasonal and recreation-based congestion from tourism and visitors, which hinder mobility for residents and workers. As part of its 2016 Active Transportation Plan (ATP), TRPA developed an extensive public engagement process to collect input from underserved populations and active transportation users, including strategic outreach to Hispanic/Latino communities and key stakeholders such as the Washoe Tribe.

Community Engagement Approach

In 2015, TRPA conducted public involvement activities to better understand the baseline conditions, needs, and community priorities related to the active transportation network in the Lake Tahoe region. These efforts included door-to-door outreach, informal lunch gatherings, newspaper advertisements, social media, and mailings, as well as presentations at community events throughout the region such as workshops and Spanish-speaking Parent Teacher Association meetings. TRPA hired a Spanish-speaking consultant team to better connect with Spanish-speaking residents. TRPA and the consultant team surveyed Hispanic/Latino residents in

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



the North Shore area over a four-month period. The outreach allowed TRPA to learn about the community's travel behaviors, mode choices, qualitative crash data, and residents' preferences for improvements.

Engagement with community members highlighted safety challenges and issues related to multiuse path conflicts, high collision areas, and bicycle capacity on buses. Input from the Washoe Tribe revealed concerns regarding transit access, safety along major roadways, connectivity of existing active transportation infrastructure, and the importance of protecting the Tribe's sacred sites from construction impacts. The Tribe expressed concerns related to environmental protection and ongoing maintenance of the planned transportation improvements. The survey results indicated which transit stops needed more bicycle parking, and willingness to shift modes or travel by bicycle more often if facilities were available. The responses also underscored residents' dependency on active transportation to access jobs and other destinations during off-peak hours or outside transit service areas. Many survey responses highlighted safety concerns and user conflicts on shared paths for bicyclists and pedestrians. The collection of qualitative data also informed quantitative data collection. The survey responses identified popular bicycle and pedestrian paths on which to place monitoring tools in order to provide supplementary count data. The survey results were incorporated into the **2016 ATP**, which emphasized resolving path conflicts, reducing collisions involving bicyclists and pedestrians, and increasing bicycle storage capacity on buses as well as bicycle parking near transit stops.



Pedestrians on a crosswalk. Image courtesy of Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Conclusion

TRPA's outreach process indicated that many minority and low-income residents rely on active transportation facilities for various mobility needs, but feel unsafe at several locations throughout the network. The 2016 ATP prioritizes **improvements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure** to improve safety and ensure that the priorities reflect the values and needs of the broader community. The ATP lists proposed improvements to over 85 miles of shared use paths, nearly 30 miles of bicycle lanes, and over 25 miles of bicycle routes region-wide. It also lists Federal funding opportunities and the identified strategies align with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) bicycle/pedestrian-related resources and best practices, including considerations to utilize design and funding flexibility in multimodal design. Since the completion of the plan, TRPA has continued to prioritize active transportation improvements in the region. In 2017, TRPA collaborated with FHWA and the BiState Consultation on Transportation Working Group to kick off enhancements to Tahoe's travel management program. In 2018, TRPA completed the **ATP Technical Amendment** which provides a progress update on the programmed projects, noting that actions are either partially implemented, mostly implemented, or fully implemented. TRPA will complete a full update of the ATP in 2020, which will precede the 2021 Regional Transportation Plan update. Overall, these community outreach efforts helped TRPA prioritize work to address safety issues and identify future funding needs for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the Lake Tahoe Region.

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Federal Highway Administration: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability

