



**STAFF REPORT
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF May 9, 2019**

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Hilary Roverud, Deputy Director of Development Services
RE: Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project

RECOMMENDATION:

After staff presentation, public comment, and commission discussion, the planning commission should take the following actions:

1. Adopt Resolution 2019-14 adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project.
2. Approve the Design Review Permit based on findings in this staff report and subject to conditions of approval contained in the attached draft permit.

BACKGROUND:

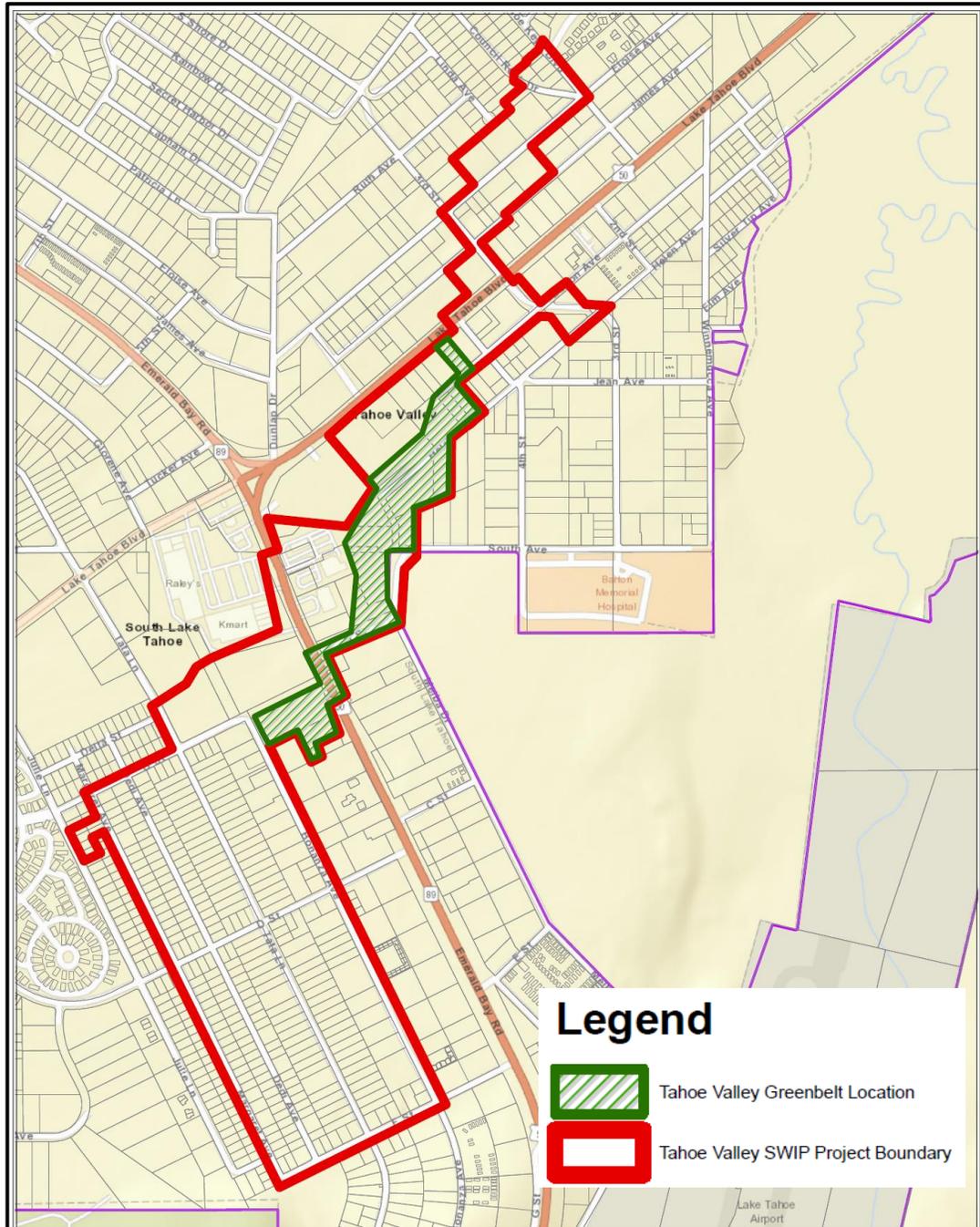
Project Location and Setting

The Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project (Project) is located south and east of the "Y" intersection on the west side of the City (Figure 1) and consists of a 320-acre Project drainage area that is bisected by the US Highway 50 (US 50) and State Route 89 (SR 89) corridors.

Project Background

The Tahoe Valley Area Plan (TVAP), adopted in 2015, provides land use regulation and zoning for the Tahoe Valley area, consistent with the policy directions of the City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan (General Plan) and the TRPA Regional Plan. The Project is a combination of two key projects (Tahoe Valley Greenbelt Project and Tahoe Valley Stormwater Project) that were identified in the TVAP as having the potential to help meet environmental thresholds for water quality, recreation, soil conservation (i.e., SEZ restoration), and air quality.

Figure 1. Project Location and Boundary



The Project implements policies and fulfills goals and objectives of regional and local plans and programs, including but not limited to the following:

- TRPA RPU;
- Lake Tahoe EIP;
- Regional Transportation Plan;
- City's General Plan;
- TVAP;
- Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program; and
- Pollutant Load Reduction Plan.

Project Description

The Project is designed to improve upon and expand existing stormwater infrastructure and to develop recreational amenities, increase pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, serve as a visual amenity for adjacent commercial and residential uses and encourage investments to help achieve economic development goals for the community. The 30% project design plans are included as Attachment 1, and the Greenbelt conceptual plan is included as Attachment 2.

Stormwater Quality

Stormwater and SEZ enhancements include improvements to existing drainage-ways and stormwater systems to spread, treat, infiltrate, and retain surface water flows from roadways, commercial areas, and other high-priority urban areas. The Project stormwater improvements are designed to enhance the existing stormwater management system from an area-wide drainage area perspective, and achieve pollutant load reduction milestones in compliance with the Lake Tahoe TMDL requirements for the City.

The Project will retrofit existing drainage systems and install a series of new stormwater collection, conveyance, and infiltration facilities to provide water quality treatments for fine sediment particles, total nitrogen and total phosphorus pollutant loads.

The area-wide stormwater treatment system is separated into three (3) general areas as follows:

- 1) Bonanza Area (west of US 50)
 - Retrofitting and restoring existing storm drain inlets, drainage channels, road shoulders, and storm drain systems within residential areas;
 - Construction of a roadside rock-lined channel along F Street;
 - Installation of new storm drain inlets and below-ground pipelines;
 - Installation of new stormwater treatment basins at D Street/Margaret Avenue, and mid-block portion of Bonanza Avenue;
 - Installation of a new area-wide stormwater treatment basin at Bonanza Avenue/B Street; and

- Routine maintenance of City stormwater facilities and roadway shoulders to remove accumulated sediment.
- 2) Greenbelt Area (southeast of the “Y” intersection)
- Retrofitting and expanding the existing Helen Avenue basin and Greenbelt area drainage channels;
 - Installation of new area-wide stormwater treatment basin designed to blend into the surrounding existing meadow system;
 - Construction of new stormwater basins at Third Street/Barton Avenue/Helen Avenue;
 - Retrofit of existing and installation of new storm drain inlets and below-ground pipelines; and
 - Routine maintenance of City stormwater facilities and roadway shoulders to remove sediment buildup.
- 3) James/Eloise and Outfall (north of US 50)
- Retrofit of existing storm drain inlets, stormwater drainage, road shoulders, and stormwater treatment system;
 - Restoration of SEZ areas and enhancement of existing SEZs;
 - Construction of new below-ground storm drain pipelines;
 - Restoration and expansion of the existing shallow stormwater treatment basins at James and Eloise Avenue;
 - Construction of meandering vegetated channels and micro-basin catchment areas within the existing stormwater drainage catchment; and
 - Routine maintenance of City stormwater facilities and roadway shoulders to remove accumulated sediment.

Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Recreational Improvements

The “Greenbelt” portion of the Project Area, located southeast of the “Y” intersection, is designed as a central feature of the area-wide stormwater treatment system, and will retain areas for the development of recreational amenities and enhanced community mobility and connectivity infrastructure. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements include connecting the Project Area to the regional network with pedestrian pathways and a Class I shared-use trail with all-weather crossings. Recreational improvements include open space, view corridors, passive seating areas, natural play areas and public art.

Within the Greenbelt, recreational amenities will include the realignment of the existing shared-use Class I trail through the Greenbelt section to improve

connectivity and access between residential and commercial areas, specifically the TVAP commercial core. Greenbelt options for recreational amenities include:

- Interpretive path;
- Seating areas;
- Adventure play areas;
- Construction of all-weather crossings and overlook at the meadow area;
- Wayfinding map/kiosk;
- Expanded plaza area behind The Crossings commercial development;
- Path connectivity and open space across a parcel lot between Barton Avenue and US 50; and
- New pedestrian-oriented trail lighting compliant with City's Public Improvement and Engineering Standards.

Submittal:

Project Plans dated March, 2018

Supporting material contained in File #18-087

Existing site factors:

Zoning: Bijou/Al Tahoe Community Plan

Land Use Category: Commercial, Public Service

ISSUE AND DISCUSSION:

Tahoe Valley Area Plan and General Plan Consistency

The TVAP is located within the City's General Plan land use designation of Town Center. Town Centers are identified in the TRPA Regional Plan as containing most of the region's non-residential services and have been identified as a significant source of sediment and other contaminants that enter Lake Tahoe. Town Centers are targeted for redevelopment projects that improve environmental conditions, create a more sustainable and less auto-dependent development pattern, and provide economic opportunities in the region.

Specifically, the following policies from the TVAP give directive to implement the Tahoe Valley Stormwater Project and Tahoe Valley Greenbelt Project as one overall Project:

Policy NCR-5.1: Construct the Tahoe Valley Water Quality Improvement Project as part of the Greenbelt Project to treat stormwater from Tahoe Valley and adjacent residential areas, in order to reduce fine sediment loads to the Upper Truckee River and Lake Tahoe, and restore disturbed SEZs.

Policy NCR-5.5: Coordinate with TRPA to implement the EIP water quality improvement projects in the Tahoe Valley area, with priority on Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) pollutant load reduction opportunities.

Policy REC-2.4: Construct the Tahoe Valley Greenbelt as multi-use area incorporating stormwater treatment facilities, pathways, and open space. Allow for the accommodation of active and passive recreation uses that include but are not limited to installing bike/pedestrian paths, pedestrian amenities, and interpretive signage.

The Tahoe Valley Area Plan describes the Greenbelt project as having, "...two key elements: (1) construction of a comprehensive regional storm water treatment system (see Tahoe Valley Erosion Control Project description); and (2) construction of a recreation and open space community amenity. This project will create a distinct and unique recreation and open space amenity southeast of the "Y" intersection. The project will include SEZ restoration, installation of pedestrian-bicycle pathways, pedestrian amenities and interpretive signage along with storm water improvements. The Greenbelt will serve as a visual amenity for adjacent residential and commercial uses and provide a bicycle and pedestrian link from residential neighborhoods to the Tahoe Valley commercial core. There are existing bicycle paths and stormwater facilities in the area, which would be upgraded and enhanced as part of this project."

In addition, the following General Plan policies support the implementation of the Tahoe Valley Greenbelt and Stormwater Project:

Policy LU-2.7: Tahoe Valley Community Plan Area. The City shall transform the Tahoe Valley Community Plan area into an attractive gateway commercial district that serves both residents and visitors.

Policy LU-2.11: Tahoe Valley Node Purpose. The City shall ensure that the Tahoe Valley Gateway District will be a primary area in the city for resident-serving commercial uses, workforce housing (e.g., housing affordable to local workers in all industries), and affordable housing. The City should work with property owners to transform the Node into a contemporary, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use, commercial service district served by a transit center and alternate transportation opportunities.

Policy LU-3.2: Neighborhood and Recreation Connectivity. The City shall improve connections and access to a wide range of recreational opportunities, which will improve the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Policy NCR-1.1: View Corridors and Passive Open Space. The City shall use stream environment zone restoration and storm drainage basins to create view corridors and passive recreation open space, particularly to help relieve the strip commercial character of major roadways.

Policy NCR-2.3: Stormwater Quality Management Improvement. The City shall improve stormwater quality management by including, along with other proven options, the use of swales and natural treatment systems and integration of runoff

into functional design elements and public art. The City shall also incorporate the latest technologies for water quality treatment facilities into restoration efforts.

With the implementation of conditions of approval contained in the attached permit, the project is consistent with the development standards of the Tahoe Valley Area Plan and City Code and is consistent with the guidance of the City Design Guidelines.

Project Review

Use: The project includes stormwater infrastructure and SEZ restoration on lands contained within the following zoning districts:

Tahoe Valley Area Plan: Town Center - Gateway (TC-G)
Town Center - Center (TC-C)
Town Center – Neighborhood Professional (TC-NP)
Town Center – Mixed Use Corridor (TC–MUC)
Open Space (OS)
Commercial Mixed Use Service (CMX-S)

Plan Area Statement 111

Plan Area Statement 114

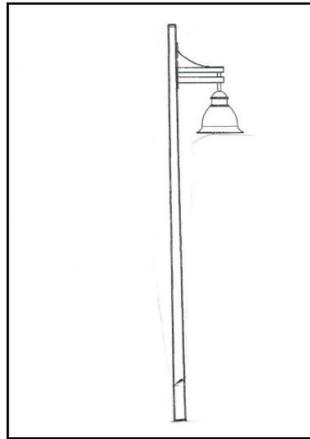
Each of these districts includes water quality improvement and watershed management, vegetation resource management, erosion control, runoff control, SEZ restoration, open space, and day use recreation as allowable uses.

The project includes multi-use trails in the Town Center and Open Space districts where transportation routes and riding and hiking trails are listed as allowable uses.

Trail design and amenities: Final design of the pedestrian trail may include infrastructure and amenities that are not specified as part of the conceptual design. These may include railings, retaining walls, fences, and seating. A condition of approval requires these elements to be constructed of natural materials (i.e. wood and rock) where feasible. Any other materials shall be non-reflective earth tone colors.

Signs: The project also includes the installation of wayfinding signage and interpretive signage. Wayfinding and interpretive signage will be designed and planned with consultation with the City Parks and Recreation Commission. There is also the potential that cautionary signage may be included in the project as the construction plans are developed and evaluated by engineers for compliance with City Code and the Public Improvement Engineering Standards (PIES). Signage details will be required to be submitted to the Planning Division for review for compliance with size, height, color, material and placement standards.

Lighting: The project proposes to install infrastructure to support the installation of lighting along the Class 1 paths. A condition of approval is included in the draft permit, requiring the submittal of lighting specifications for approval by the Planning Division. Lighting shall be compliant with the Tahoe Valley Area Plan and City standards (City Code 6.10.160.4) requiring lighting to be directed downward, have a screened light source, and utilize cutoff shields where necessary. The City specifies the following standard light assembly for pedestrian lighting in its Public Improvement Engineering Specifications:



Ameron square, spun, pre-stressed, concrete pole
and Bieber fixture and bracket.

The Public Works Director has the discretion to approve alternative lighting assemblies if proven equivalent in style and function.

Landscaping: The majority of the landscaping included in the project is necessary for SEZ restoration efforts. As specified in the draft permit conditions, the project will utilize native landscaping and the final reseeding/landscaping plan will be reviewed by the Planning Division for consistency with the City Code and TRPA Recommended Plan List for the Tahoe Basin.

Plaza and Adventure Play: The Adventure Play area and Plaza area adjacent to The Crossings commercial development is only conceptually designed at this time. Surrounding property owners and the general public may want to provide input on the design of these aspects. Final designs will include additional details that should be presented to the public for review and comment. A condition of approval requires the final plaza design to be presented at a publicly noticed Parks and Recreation Commission meeting for recommendations and to the Planning Commission for approval.

Public Improvement Engineering Standards: The project has been reviewed by the City Engineering Department for compliance with the PIES. A condition of approval requires that project design details to meet public improvement standards

for sidewalks, bikeways, lighting, curbs, sidewalk ramps, detention basins, stormwater infrastructure, utilities and erosion control measures.

Building Code: Final plans are required to be submitted to the Building Division for review for consistency with Building Code and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

Public Input

One public meeting, three scoping workshops, and an online survey were held to solicit opinions regarding the design of the project. The public meeting was held on December 14th, 2016 to discuss preliminary concepts that were developed for the Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project. Staff from the City, Cardno and Design Workshop presented the project overview, stormwater alternatives, and recreational concepts. The intent of the public workshop was to gather feedback from the community in order to help inform the design moving forward. Twenty-one people attended the Public Workshop. An additional 224 people responded to an online survey which was open to the public between December 12, 2016 and January 30, 2017.

Three workshops were hosted by the City of South Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (TRCD) between 2014 and 2015 for property owners within the TVAP 'greenbelt study area' to receive comment from public and business owners on the idea of utilizing the greenbelt area for stormwater quality and management, recreation opportunities, and revitalize the Tahoe Valley commercial core, among others. The workshops identified public and business owners' concerns, areas of weakness, strength, and opportunities for the concept plans.

A presentation was provided to the Planning Commission at their March 14th meeting and public input was solicited. Verbal comments on the project design were provided by the Commission and Peter Fink. Written comments on the project design were provided by, Evan Goldin, Gavin Feiger representing the League to Save Lake Tahoe, and Steve Teshara representing the South Shore Chamber of Commerce (See Attachment 3). The project design comments are discussed below.

Need for a crossing of Hwy 50/89 from the Bonanza area to the Greenbelt area

In addition to policies and project directives for the Tahoe Valley Greenbelt Project, Section 8, Transportation and Circulation, of the Tahoe Valley Area Plan also includes an implementation strategy to, "coordinate with Caltrans to evaluate alternative crossings that create safe passage across US 50 and SR 89 for pedestrians and cyclist." Preliminary analysis of a potential crossing of Hwy 50/89

at B Street has been conducted (See Attachment 4). The analysis leads to the following recommendations:

- No immediate action is recommended to incorporate a traffic control signal or other significant safety countermeasure facility (such as flashing beacon or pedestrian hybrid beacon) in the vicinity of the US-50 at B Street intersection.
- Conduct a road safety audit (RSA) of the in-service facility, including pedestrian and bicycle users, for the US 50 corridor, at a minimum between Lake Tahoe Boulevard and D Street.
- Collect and analyze crash data from Caltrans and the CSLT to further develop cost/benefit analysis.
- Conduct further Traffic Operations Analysis for the US-50 at B Street intersection with an emphasis on traffic patterns & circulation, emergency vehicle access, as well as anticipated future growth and development in relation to the Barton Memorial Hospital master plan.

Although a more detailed analysis of a potential crossing of Hwy 50/89 in the vicinity has not been funded or included in the scope of the Tahoe Valley Stormwater Improvement and Greenbelt project, it remains an important component of the City work plan. At their April 16, 2019 meeting, with a recommendation from the Public Works Department, the City Council authorized City staff to submit an application to the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization for Regional Grant Program Cycle 3 Transportation Grant Federal Funding (RGP Cycle 3). On April 26, 2019, Public Works staff submitted an RGP Cycle 3 application, requesting transportation funding for the required transportation studies and submittals necessary to obtain Caltrans approval for the B Street Crossing. This funding would be utilized to initiate more detailed planning and design of the B Street Crossing within the confines of the Caltrans approval process for any modifications to the state highway system. A major component of this effort will be working with Caltrans to secure approval for any planned enhancements and continue to use RSA data to inform the design and approval process with Caltrans.

The detailed studying necessary to justify and design a safe pedestrian crossing of a five-lane highway, subject to approval by Caltrans, will require time and funding that could lead to a project that is complimentary of the Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement project in the future. Currently secured multi-benefit stormwater planning grant funds cannot be used to further pursue transportation studies and design required to obtain Caltrans approval for the B Street Crossing.

The stormwater basin and associated infrastructure proposed for parcels between Hwy 50/89 are designed to allow pedestrian access between the neighborhood and the highway frontage, however, a paved multi-use path is not included in this project. When an appropriate Hwy 50/89 crossing is installed in this area a paved multi-use path could be constructed, facilitating connectivity directly between the Bonanza neighborhood and the Greenbelt area.

Paving of streets after installation of infrastructure

Although funding for construction of the Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project is not yet secured, the stormwater infrastructure components will likely be funded with grant funds specifically for water quality improvement projects and will not cover costs of full width roadway paving. However, other funding for road paving may be available. At their April 16th meeting, the City Council approved the submittal of the Tahoe Valley Pavement Rehabilitation Project as an eligible project for the use of Senate Bill 1 (Gas Tax) funds from the State Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account (RMRA) and the State Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program (RMRP). The Tahoe Valley Pavement Rehabilitation Project includes rehabilitation and repaving of streets in the Bonanza neighborhood and industrial area.

The SB 1 funds, along with other sources of funding, will allow for the phased repaving of streets within the project area over multiple years. Southwest Gas is in the process of a citywide vintage steel pipe (VSP) replacement project to ensure public safety of high-pressure natural gas service lines. Southwest Gas is planning an initial VSP replacement project in the Bonanza neighborhood this summer. City Public Works staff will prioritize and coordinate street paving with respect to the Southwest Gas project and other utility construction projects to ensure that all paving funds are utilized effectively. With the completion of the Tahoe Valley Pavement Rehabilitation Project, roads affected by the installation of stormwater infrastructure will receive a full width paving.

Potential amenities and trails in the James/Eloise basin area

The project includes the construction of a meandering vegetated channel on vacant property owned by the City and California Tahoe Conservancy adjacent to James and Eloise Avenues. There are existing dirt footpaths across these properties that are utilized by pedestrians and bicyclists. The City-owned parcel at 2209 Eloise Avenue is currently completely fenced off with chain link fencing, which was part of an old Environmental Improvement Project (EIP) and the fencing was included to address challenges from illegal industrial dumping and inappropriate vehicle access. The current plans will include partial removal of the chain link fence and replacement with more aesthetically appealing vehicle barriers such as log fencing to match the Conservancy owned property to the south. Adjacent property owners have filed claims against the City requesting payment for fencing due to concerns of homeless activity and security concerns in the past. Current fencing on adjacent private property around private businesses installed for security purposes will remain. Although additional paved paths are not proposed in this portion of the project area, access across the properties will not be prohibited. Fencing to prevent illegal dumping, vehicle access, or for safety may be necessary immediately surrounding stormwater infrastructure.

Snow Removal on Class 1 paths

The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority (JPA) consists of City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District. The purpose of the JPA is to enhance the recreation facilities in the South Lake Tahoe area of the County (including the City). The JPA funds the construction and maintenance of recreation facilities including Class 1 bicycle paths. The JPA Bicycle Advisory Committee provides recommendations to the JPA Board with respect to funding bicycle facilities, including the use of Measure S funds for maintenance and snow removal. Mr. Peter Fink is a member of the Bicycle Advisory Committee and requested that City staff attend meetings to provide updates and information on upcoming projects that include Bicycle facilities that may require future maintenance funding. A condition of approval has been included in the draft permit to require consultation with the Bicycle Advisory Committee as more detailed project designs and maintenance plans are developed.

A presentation was provided to the Parks and Recreation Commission at their April 9, 2019 meeting in order to provide information on the current status of the project and future opportunities for consideration of recreational elements to be designed, reviewed and funded once the major stormwater and multiuse pathway elements of the project are completed.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Pursuant to the requirements of CEQA, a Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared for the project to analyze the potential for environmental impacts associated with the project. The IS/MND is included as Attachment 5.

The Draft IS/MND provides analysis of the potential for the project to result in significant environmental impacts. Areas of analysis include aesthetics, agriculture and forestry, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation and traffic, utility and services systems, and additional mandatory findings of significance related to potential cumulative impacts. The analysis demonstrates that the project has either no impact or the potential for less than significant impacts in most of these areas. However, there are potential significant impacts to forestry resources and biological resources. Forestry impacts are due to the need to file a Timberland Conversion Permit waiver with CalFire for the removal of an estimated 189 trees throughout the project area. It is necessary to remove these trees for the construction of new stormwater basins, multi-use paths and other Greenbelt amenities. Biological impacts are due to the need to conduct a wetland delineation to identify wetlands within the Project Area that could be impacted by the Project.

If the delineation determines that there could be impacts to wetlands the project design or location would need to be modified to avoid those impacts.

The IS/MND was sent, along with a Notice of Completion, to the California State Clearinghouse for distribution to state and regional agencies for review. The public review and comment period was between March 1st and April 1st. A Notice of Availability, advertising the review period and the Planning Commission meeting dates was published in the Tahoe Daily Tribune on March 1st and mailed to all property owners within the project area and within 300 feet of the project area.

The City received written comments on the IS/MND from the following:

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Attachment 6)
- The League to Save Lake Tahoe
- TahoeChamber.org

Verbal comments on the IS/MND were provided by Jeff Marcus at the March 14th Planning Commission meeting. A detailed response to the comments is included as Attachment 7.

FINDINGS

CEQA

Findings required for the adoption of the IS/MND are included in the attached Planning Commission resolution (Attachment 8).

Design Review

The project is consistent with the applicable City design standards. The project is consistent with the Tahoe Valley Area Plan and City-Wide Design Standards, provided the specific conditions listed in Attachment 9 are met.

CITY APPEAL OPPORTUNITY

Pursuant to Section 2.35 of the City Code, should the applicant disagree with the City Planning Commission decision or conditions of this permit, they may appeal to the City Council. A completed appeal form (available through the City Clerk's Office, 1901 Airport Road) along with the appeal fee, must be filed with the Clerk's office within 15 days from the date of this decision.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1: 30% project design plans
- Attachment 2: Greenbelt conceptual plan
- Attachment 3: Project Design comments

- Attachment 4: Pedestrian Crossing Alternatives for Tahoe Valley “Greenbelt” Project
- Attachment 5: Tahoe Valley Stormwater Improvement and Greenbelt IS/MND and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan
- Attachment 6: California Department of Fish and Game CEQA comments
- Attachment 7: Response to CEQA comments
- Attachment 8: Resolution 2019-14 adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project
- Attachment 9: Draft Design Review Permit