

This section evaluates the environmental resource areas potentially affected by the proposed Program and presents mitigation measures recommended to avoid or reduce those impacts. The evaluation is based on the findings of the technical studies completed for the proposed Program, which are listed in the Table of Contents and available for review at the Caltrans North Region Office of Environmental Management, 2800 Gateway Oaks Drive, Sacramento, California, 95833, and at the District 3 Office, 703 B Street, Marysville, California, 95901.

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15125), the assessment of potential impacts should be conducted against a baseline of existing environmental conditions. The purpose of this comparison is to isolate and identify specific impacts that could occur as a result of the proposed Program. For this Program EIR, the alternatives consist of the proposed Program and the No Project Alternative. The No Project Alternative reflects the conditions that would exist if none of the improvements proposed for the eight segments of US 50 and SR 89 were completed.

Cumulative impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects are described in Section 3.12. Impacts that could result from the proposed Program are summarized in the CEQA checklist in Appendix C.

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This section presents the existing conditions, potential impacts from the proposed Program, and mitigation related to land use, the community, traffic, recreation, and access to public and private land in the Program area.

3.1.1 Environmental Setting

3.1.1.1 Study Area

The study area for the community impact assessment consists of the South Lake Tahoe Census County Division (CCD), which encompasses the residential and recreational areas around the project segments within El Dorado County (Figure 3.1-1). This CCD includes the year 2000 Census Tracts 301.01, 301.02, 302, 303, 304.01, 304.02, 305.01, 305.02, and 305.03. A broad study area was used to incorporate the population within the project vicinity, which relies on US 50 and SR 89 as primary transportation and lifeline routes in and around the greater Lake Tahoe region. In addition, the South Lake Tahoe CCD provides a consistent area within which to compare Census and economic data.

Although the setting is described and impacts are discussed in the context of this study area, which encompasses all segments of the Program and the surrounding residential communities, the Program may have broader geographic impacts due to the number of visitors who travel to Lake Tahoe from outside of the region. Broader regional impacts are described in Section 3.1.3 where appropriate.

3.1.1.2 Land Use and Planning

Existing Land Use

A wide range of land uses exist in the study area (Figure 3.1-2). Along the western and southwestern portions of Lake Tahoe, from Tahoma to South Lake Tahoe, land uses are dominated by Forest Service and California State Park lands managed for wilderness access, campgrounds and beaches, historic sites, undeveloped forested/watershed areas, and recreation trails. The southwestern segments also include residential communities, primarily at Tahoma and Meeks Bay, with some residential development at the lakeshore and at or near Fallen Leaf and Cascade Lakes.

More concentrated areas of development are located primarily along the southern and eastern shores of Lake Tahoe, predominantly within the community of Meyers, the City of South Lake Tahoe, and Stateline. These communities include year-round residential housing as well as visitor-serving lodging. Commercial activities within these communities include general retail and services to support the large number of recreational and seasonal visitors to the region.

Meyers

Meyers is the first community encountered by travelers descending from the steep grade of US 50 below Echo Summit. It has been described as both a gateway and a way station for travelers entering the southern Lake Tahoe area. Meyers is an unincorporated community at the southern end of the study area, near the US 50/SR 89 intersection south of South Lake Tahoe (US 50 Segment 1 and SR 89 Segment 1). Meyers contains mostly single-family (one unit per parcel) residential lots with limited commercial development that provides retail goods and services to

the surrounding population and highway travelers. Some industrial developments lie south of the US 50/SR 89 intersection. Other land uses in Meyers include light industry and local, state, and federal public services. The US 50 corridor through Meyers includes a wide, unused right-of-way in several places, characterized by strip development set far back from the highway. Meyers is flanked by two smaller residential communities: Tahoe Paradise to the west (intersecting US 50 Segment 1), and Christmas Valley to the south (along SR 89 Segment 1) (TRPA 1998).

City of South Lake Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe, the only incorporated city in the study area, is situated at the southeastern shore of Lake Tahoe, between the Nevada state line to the east and National Forest lands to the west, north of Meyers. South Lake Tahoe contains a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses, including schools, beaches, and marinas. Residential development includes single-family homes, apartments, multi-family housing, and mobile home parks. Commercial activities appear typically in the form of strip development along US 50 and SR 89 and include motels; restaurants; and various service, recreational, and tourist-oriented developments. Commercial and tourism-oriented development is particularly intense along US 50 (Segment 3) at the California-Nevada border approaching the town of Stateline, which hosts several large hotel-casinos. South Lake Tahoe also has completed planned communities such as the Tahoe Keys, which is a human-made canal development that includes residences, recreational facilities, and limited commercial activity.

The Lake Tahoe Airport lies at the southern end of South Lake Tahoe, alongside US 50/SR 89 to the north of Meyers (US 50 Segment 2). The immediate area is characterized by sparse mixed-commercial use and industrial activity. Single-family residential development exists to the east of the airport along Pioneer Trail between Meyers and South Lake Tahoe.

Southwest Lake Tahoe

The southwest shore of Lake Tahoe extends from the western boundary of the City of South Lake Tahoe to the Placer County border in the town of Tahoma. Land uses are predominantly recreational and public lands, with limited residential and commercial development. SR 89 Segment 2, which extends between South Lake Tahoe and south of Emerald Bay, crosses through Forest Service land that is characterized by mostly recreation-oriented development. Pope Beach, Kiva Beach, and Baldwin Beach front Lake Tahoe. The area has picnic facilities, a Forest Service work center, bike trails, a marina, and the Camp Richardson resort. Vacation homes and Forest Service campgrounds at or near Fallen Leaf Lake and Cascade Lake are seasonally accessible from Segment 2.

SR 89 Segments 3 and 4, which skirt Emerald Bay and extend through D.L. Bliss State Park, contain few developed facilities beyond campgrounds (including a boat campground), picnic sites, and a few summer homes.

North of D.L. Bliss State Park (SR 89 Segments 4 and 5), the land uses along the highway are characterized by low-density residential and limited commercial development. The Rubicon Bay area has primarily single-family homes (one unit per parcel). The Meeks Bay area, managed by the Forest Service, primarily consists of the Meeks Bay Resort and other recreational development. The town of Tahoma, which lies along the border of El Dorado and Placer



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Counties, contains a mixture of low-density and high-density residential development, as well as some limited commercial services and motels.

Development Trends

The TRPA has implemented strict growth and development guidelines that limit the amount of new development in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Since 1987, residential construction has been limited to the addition of 300 units per year within the Basin. As a result, the region is expected to remain relatively stable in terms of growth and development (TRPA 2002).

Between 1990 and 2000, the greater Lake Tahoe region, which includes those areas surrounding Lake Tahoe in California and Nevada, averaged a growth rate of 1.8 percent per year. This compares with a growth rate of 3.7 percent per year for Placer County and 2.4 percent per year for El Dorado County overall. Within the South Lake Tahoe CCD, population grew 15 percent between 1990 and 2000, from 29,653 to 34,042. During the same 10-year period, 1,018 additional housing units were built in the study area (TRPA 2005; U.S. Census 2000).

The greater Lake Tahoe region is expected to see an increase in an elderly population over the next several years, as the “baby boomer” generation continues to age and relocate in the area. In addition, the percentage of Latino and Asian populations, although currently small, is expected to increase (TRPA 2002).

Adopted Goals and Policies

There has long been a struggle in the Lake Tahoe region between conservation of the area’s pristine beauty and resources and the expansion of residential, recreational, and tourist-oriented development. In the late 1960s, after two decades of rapid growth, the governors and lawmakers of California and Nevada approved a bi-state compact that created the TRPA to oversee orderly growth and development consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the region’s unique natural and human environment.

Several regional plans have been developed for the area, including the Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin (TRPA 1987), the Meyers Community Plan (TRPA 1998), and General Plan for the City of South Lake Tahoe (City of South Lake Tahoe 2003). These plans are described in detail in Section 3.1.2.3.

3.1.1.3 Population and Housing

Over 34,000 people lived in the South Lake Tahoe CCD in 2000. Half of the population was between the ages of 25 and 54, and over a third was under the age of 25. The median age was 35.3. The Tahoe Region had 22,015 housing units in 2000, approximately 34 percent of which are for vacation or seasonal use. A third of all housing units are owner occupied (U.S. Census 2000).

Over 80 percent of Census respondents identified themselves as white, and small percentages identified themselves as Asian—mostly Filipino—and other races. Approximately one-fifth of respondents identified themselves as Hispanic (U.S. Census 2000).

The median household income for the CCD was \$40,655 in 2000. There were 3,454 individuals (10.2 percent of the population) and 558 families (6.7 percent of all families) living below the poverty level in 1999 (U.S. Census 2000).

The majority of the housing in South Lake Tahoe consists of single-family, detached homes, although there is a mix of multi-family homes and condominium/apartment buildings. A majority (54 percent) of occupied housing units are owner-occupied, while a third of housing units are for vacation or seasonal use. The vast majority (88 percent) of housing units were built between 1940 and 1989, predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1990 and 2000, 2,300 new units were built, representing 10 percent of the total existing structures. In contrast, nearly 77 percent of residents moved into their homes after 1990. According to the U.S. Census, the median household value in 2000 was \$157,800; however, prices rose steeply between 2000 and 2006. According to the South Tahoe Association of Realtors, the median sale price for a home in the greater South Lake Tahoe area—extending from Emerald Bay to the Nevada–California state line—was \$489,000 in May 2006. Data from the Tahoe Sierra Multiple Listing Service show that the median sale price along the west shore of Lake Tahoe from Rubicon Bay to Tahoma was even higher, at \$627,500 (U.S. Census 2000; Deb Howard and Co. 2006; Welsh 2006).

3.1.1.4 Economic Conditions

Regional Characteristics

The economic bases of the Lake Tahoe region are tourism and recreation. In addition to Lake Tahoe itself, numerous state and federal parks and other facilities in the region provide a variety of outdoor recreational activities, including boating, hiking, camping, fishing, and skiing. Another large draw to the region is the hotel-casino resorts, located in Nevada and concentrated near the California borders. Millions of visitors come to the Lake Tahoe region each year, including four million skiers per season.

Travel spending in 2000 was over \$1.5 billion, with nearly \$500 million spent on gaming activities and nearly \$180 million spent on skiing and other recreational activities. Travel spending, both directly and indirectly, accounted for approximately 74 percent of all employment and 68 percent of all earnings in the region in 2000 (TRPA 2002).

The primary source of employment in the Lake Tahoe region is the accommodation and food services industry, which includes hotel-casinos and the associated gaming industry. In 2003, this sector employed 12,508 people and provided the greatest distribution of earnings by far, at \$296 million. The next-largest employment sector was retail trade, which employed 2,436 people and provided a \$58 million distribution of earnings (TRPA 2005).

Unemployment in the region declined through the late 1990s, reaching 3.5 percent in 2000. At the same time, visitation increased over those years based on revenues from hotel taxes in the region (TRPA 2002).

Employment and Income

In the City of South Lake Tahoe, the largest distribution of earnings came from the accommodation and food services industry, with over \$65 million of annual payroll.³ This was followed by the health care and social assistance sector, with nearly \$57 million in wages, and the retail trade sector (the largest sector in terms of revenue), with over \$37 million in wages (U.S. Census 2000).

In the South Lake Tahoe CCD, the greatest percentage (38 percent) of the workforce was employed in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industries in 2000. Fourteen percent worked in the educational, health, and social services sector; and 10 percent worked in retail trade.

Many employees commute into the region for work at leisure-related jobs (including hotels, food service, and casinos). For other types of jobs, however, residents of the region commute outside of the region for work (TRPA 2005). In 2000, approximately 30 percent of workers in the study area worked outside of their state of residence; another 7 percent worked outside of their county (within their state of residence). The median commute time was just over 17 minutes; however, more than a quarter of workers commute 30 minutes or more (U.S. Census 2000).

In the City of South Lake Tahoe,⁴ retail trade was the largest industrial sector, with over \$316 million in sales in 2002. The accommodation and food services sector was nearly as large, with over \$306 million in sales. The next-largest industry was health care and social assistance, with over \$150 million in sales (U.S. Census 2000).

3.1.1.5 Community Facilities and Services

Schools

The study area has two school districts, several private schools, and the Lake Tahoe Community College. In 2000, these schools served nearly 10,000 students aged 3 and up.

The Lake Tahoe Unified School District (LTUSD) represents seven elementary, middle, and high schools. The LTUSD encompasses the City of South Lake Tahoe, the community of Meyers, and the residential areas in between (LTUSD 2006). Private schools in South Lake Tahoe include the Hope Lutheran Preschool, Saint Theresa Elementary, and Mountainside Montessori.

The Tahoe Truckee Unified School District (TTUSD) represents 11 schools north of the study area, in the towns of Truckee, Kings Beach, and Tahoe City; however, the district extends into the study area through the town of Tahoma and into the community of Meeks Bay (TTUSD 2006).

Both school districts provide bus service within the study area. TTUSD has four school bus stop locations between Tahoma and General Creek Campground along SR 89.

LTUSD provides school bus service throughout the southern extent of the study area, Meyers, and South Lake Tahoe. LTUSD uses US 50 and SR 89 for several of its routes. Adequate

³ This information was not available for the South Lake Tahoe CCD.

⁴ Data were not available for the South Lake Tahoe CCD.

functioning of the school bus system requires that students be picked up and left off at a place that is at or near a regular stop so that they may proceed safely (Caltrans 2003d).

Police, Fire, and Medical Services

Police protection is provided within the study area by three organizations: the South Lake Tahoe Police Department, the California Highway Patrol, and the El Dorado County Sheriff. The South Lake Tahoe Police Department provides services within the City of South Lake Tahoe. The California Highway Patrol and the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department provide police protection along US 50 and SR 89 and in the unincorporated areas of El Dorado County within the study area (Caltrans 2003d).

Five organizations provide fire protection within the study area:

- The Meeks Bay Fire Protection District provides fire protection along the northern limits of the study area, from the border of Placer and El Dorado Counties to Eagle Falls, near the southwestern tip of Emerald Bay.
- The Lake Valley Fire Protection District, based in Meyers, has jurisdiction over the unincorporated areas of El Dorado County within the study area. The district runs from the border of Alpine and El Dorado Counties along SR 89, to Echo Summit along US 50, to Stateline outside the City of South Lake Tahoe, and west into the Cascade Lake area.
- The Fallen Leaf Lake Volunteer Fire Department provides service to the community surrounding Fallen Leaf Lake but only operates during the summer months.
- The City of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department provides fire protection within the city limits. There are three fire stations in the city.
- The Forest Service provides fire protection for the National Forest and Wilderness areas surrounding the study area.

Medical services in the study area are provided by Barton Memorial Hospital, which is located in South Lake Tahoe near the US 50/SR 89 "Y." Barton Memorial provides 24-hour emergency services and has 75 patient beds and 48 resident beds. The hospital is part of the Barton HealthCare System, which includes various medical and health facilities in South Lake Tahoe and in Stateline (Barton HealthCare 2006).

3.1.1.6 Traffic and Transportation

Traffic

Due to the number of visitors to the Lake Tahoe region and the limited road infrastructure in the area, US 50 and SR 89 can quickly reach capacity during weekends and other peak visiting times throughout the year. In 2006, the annual average daily traffic (AADT) was 32,500 on US 50 Segment 3 and 18,000 on SR 89 Segment 2 (Caltrans 2007b).

Transit

BlueGO is a coordinated public-private transportation system that provides a variety of scheduled and on-demand transportation services throughout the southern shore area of Lake Tahoe. BlueGO provides hourly round-trip service along five bus routes in South Lake Tahoe:

Routes A, B, E, and H, and the Nevada Flex Route. The routes primarily run along US 50 Segments 2 and 3 and SR 89 Segment 2. In addition, the Heavenly Ski Run Shuttle provides service along five routes in east South Lake Tahoe: the Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, and Blue routes. These routes all travel at least partially along US 50 Segment 3. Shuttles also provide service to the Nevada casinos. Additional on-demand shuttle service is available throughout South Lake Tahoe and Meyers. The Nifty 50 Trolley, which runs seasonally, has multiple routes between Emerald Bay and Zephyr Cove in Nevada. There is no regularly scheduled bus service outside of South Lake Tahoe (BlueGO 2006). Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART) runs bus service within the West and North Shore areas and Incline Village, including a route between Meeks Bay and Tahoe City.

Access/Circulation and Parking

The project segments in the vicinity of Meyers and South Lake Tahoe serve as major arterials to access secondary roads and residential areas, as well as various commercial and business activities including the Lake Tahoe Airport. SR 89 Segments 1, 3, 4, and 5 often provide the only route to remote residential and recreational areas. While commercial activities along these routes often have off-street parking options, vehicles use roadside shoulders and pullouts to park for access to scenic vistas and recreational activities.

3.1.1.7 Parks and Recreation

The study area is surrounded by National Forests and wilderness areas and contains several local and state parks and recreational areas. Near Meyers, the major parks and recreational areas include Washoe Meadows State Park and the Lake Valley State Recreational Area. South Lake Tahoe has lakefront beaches, marinas, the South Lake Tahoe Recreational Area (through which US 50 passes), and Bijou Community Park and Municipal Golf Course. West of South Lake Tahoe is National Forest land, with more lakefront beaches and recreational areas, and the Camp Richardson Resort and Fallen Leaf Campground. Further west are Emerald Bay and D.L. Bliss State Parks, both of which contain campgrounds and other recreational facilities. This part of the study area is surrounded by National Forest land, and farther out, national wilderness areas. The northern part of the study area near the Placer County border contains Meeks Bay and Sugar Pine Point State Park, both with campgrounds and recreational facilities.

Tahoe City has a Class I bike path that runs from the Placer/El Dorado County line south to Sugar Pine Point State Park. There are plans to extend the trail to Meeks Bay. The City of South Lake Tahoe, the Forest Service, and Caltrans have bike lanes/paths within the southern and western project segments. The bike lanes/paths are used extensively on the Tahoma and South Lake Tahoe portions of the study area. Cyclists also frequently ride along the highway shoulders throughout the study area, especially on SR 89 between Meyers and Luther Pass and on US 50/SR 89 between Meyers and the SR 89/US 50 “Y” in the City of South Lake Tahoe. Shoulder space is constrained in many mountainous areas of SR 89 from the Fallen Leaf Lake vicinity through Emerald Bay.

3.1.2 Regulatory Setting**3.1.2.1 Federal**

The management of National Forest lands along SR 89 from the City of South Lake Tahoe to Emerald Bay is guided by the LTBMU *Land and Resource Management Plan* (Forest Service 1988). The plan provides for increases in recreation opportunities suited to the area's natural attractions with sensitivity to the environment. In doing so, the plan emphasizes dispersed, nonmotorized recreation; access to Lake Tahoe and its shoreline; skiing, scenic viewing, environmental awareness programs, camping, and hiking; and the needs of the nearby urban population.

3.1.2.2 State***Significance Criteria***

Potentially applicable CEQA significance criteria for the Program are discussed below.

Land Use and Planning

- Physically divide an established community.
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

Population and Housing

- Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure).
- Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.
- Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Community Facilities and Services

- Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the following public services:
 - Fire protection.
 - Police protection.

- Schools.
- Parks.
- Other public facilities.

Traffic and Transportation

- Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections).
- Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways.
- Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks.
- Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incomplete uses (e.g., farm equipment).
- Result in inadequate emergency access.
- Result in inadequate parking capacity.
- Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks).

Parks and Recreation

- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
- Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

3.1.2.3 Regional**Land Use and Planning**

In 1987, the TRPA developed a Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin (TRPA 1987). This plan, which is currently being updated, consists of various components relating air quality, water quality, transportation, and scenic resources, to overall goals and policies encompassing the entire Lake Tahoe region. Several local, state, and federal agencies contributed to the development of this plan, including the City of South Lake Tahoe and the community of Meyers, to ensure consistency in developmental activities throughout the region.

The TRPA developed environmental threshold carrying capacities to protect and enhance the quality of Lake Tahoe and other natural resources in the region. One of the goals of the TRPA Regional Plan is to “direct the amount and location of new land uses in conformance with the environmental threshold carrying capacities...” (TRPA 2004). This goal translates into a Regional Plan policy that “the total population permitted in the region at one time shall be a function of the constraints of the regional plan and the environmental threshold carrying capacities” (TRPA 2004). Other goals of the TRPA Regional Plan include the reduction of

sediment, nutrient, and other pollutants into Lake Tahoe from surface runoff and other sources to maintain and improve the water quality of the lake and its contributing rivers and streams.

As part of the Regional Plan, individual planning areas throughout the Lake Tahoe region developed Plan Area Statements. The Statements provide brief descriptions of the planning area, planning statements and considerations, and a list of special policies along with details about permitted uses. Each Statement includes a policy to implement the EIP.

Population, Housing, and Community Facilities and Services

No specific environmental thresholds for socioeconomic conditions were set by the TRPA, the City of South Lake Tahoe, or other regional regulatory agencies. For the purposes of this analysis, an impact is considered significant if implementation of the Program would substantially alter the socioeconomic base of the community, particularly if such alteration creates conflicts with the existing tourism-oriented economy. Significant socioeconomic impacts might also arise if the Program would attract new residents with significantly different demographic characteristics than the existing community. The TRPA Initial Environmental Checklist was used to determine the nature and significance of impacts based on TRPA considerations for these resources.

Traffic and Transportation

Pursuant to the TRPA Code of Ordinances, potential impacts to traffic and transportation include the generation of additional vehicle trips; changes to parking facilities or the demand for these facilities; changes to existing transportation systems; alterations to circulation patterns; alterations of waterborne, rail or air traffic; or the increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists or pedestrians.

Parks and Recreation

TRPA thresholds apply to recreation resources. They include:

- R1 – It shall be the policy of the TRPA governing body in development of the regional plan to preserve and enhance the high quality recreational experience, including preservation of high quality undeveloped shorezone and other natural areas. In developing the regional plan, the staff and governing body shall consider provisions for additional access, where lawful and feasible, to the shorezone and high quality undeveloped areas for low density recreational uses.
- R2 – It shall be the policy of the TRPA governing body in development of the regional plan to establish and ensure a fair share of the total basin capacity for outdoor recreation is available to the general public.

3.1.2.4 Local

Meyers Community Plan

The Meyers Community Plan was developed in 1993 and updated in 1998 as part of the TRPA Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin. It refers to the goals of the TRPA Regional Plan as well as its own goals to enhance the identity and image of Meyers as a community and as a gateway to the Lake Tahoe region. One major focus of the plan is to enhance the US 50 corridor that runs through Meyers by visually and physically improving the large rights-of-way and strip

commercial development along the road. The Meyers Community Plan also contains programs to improve water quality through implementation of BMPs and improvements to SEZ lands along US 50 (TRPA 1998).

General Plan for the City of South Lake Tahoe

The 1999 General Plan for the City of South Lake Tahoe also refers to its consistency with the TRPA Regional Plan and its goal to direct development in accordance with the environmental carrying capacities of the region. A major focus of the plan is to improve the character of the US 50 corridor by transitioning the current commercial strip development of the roadway into a more traditional village character. As new development and population growth is severely limited, various incentives are provided to redirect and relocate commercial development to centralized locations. The plan includes a goal and discusses actions to conserve and improve the water quality of Lake Tahoe (City of South Lake Tahoe 2003).

The *South Tahoe Redevelopment Agency Implementation Plan (January 2005 through December 2009) for Redevelopment Project No. 1* (South Tahoe Redevelopment Agency 2005) established a plan area along US 50 in the City of South Lake Tahoe from Ski Run Boulevard to the California-Nevada state line. US 50 Segment 3 of the proposed Program falls within this redevelopment plan area. The *Implementation Plan* goals include item B, which states that projects must be environmentally beneficial consistent with TRPA thresholds.

The *Implementation Plan* includes the Triangle Project, a 6-acre plan area located in the triangle formed by Pioneer Trail, US 50, and Midway Road. The Triangle Project is the entry to the completed Heavenly Village Project and proposed convention center. The concept is to develop a coordinated land use plan for the entire 6 acres that would include new lighting, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and landscaping.

3.1.3 Impacts

3.1.3.1 CEQA Considerations

Overall, the primary Program impact is related to construction activities. On a long-term basis, the Program would neither change the capacity of the existing roads (US 50 or SR 89) nor substantially change or provide new access to any lands that are not currently served by the existing roads. Following completion of construction, US 50 and SR 89 would have improvements along the road such as enhanced control and treatment of runoff and improved surfacing of roadway shoulders and pullouts. Therefore, all segments along the two highways affected by the Program would be the same as they were prior to construction in terms of motorized traffic flow and access to existing parcels. No new areas would be accessible that are not already served by the existing highway and local road system; consequently, there would be no changes or effects with regard to future land use patterns or growth.

Temporary construction impacts would occur while the planned improvements are being implemented; therefore, the impacts discussions in the following sections focus on these temporary construction activities.

Lane and road closures would be needed where work must be performed within or close to traffic lanes. Closures would also be needed to provide access and work areas sufficient to accelerate

work schedules and allow completion of the proposed improvements within the limited seasonal work periods allowed in the Tahoe Basin.

The Program would result in temporary delays in traffic due to construction activities. Wherever possible, at least one lane in each direction would remain open. This may be achieved by using temporary lane width reductions (where two-way traffic can be maintained but would be slowed) or paved shoulder areas. Lanes may require temporary closure where highway shoulders are narrow or work must occur within the travel lanes. Under such circumstances, traffic may be temporarily stopped in one or both directions, and traffic would move in alternating one-way directions. As work progresses along each segment, the location of any temporary delays would shift as work is completed. Table 2-1 in Section 2 describes a conceptual staged construction lane closure scenario.

Land Use and Planning **Community Cohesion**

Community cohesion generally refers to the level of commitment or attachment among the individuals, neighbors, institutions, groups, or businesses/services that make up a community. The Program will improve community cohesion by correcting current water quality violations and implementing elements of several EIP projects, installing BMPs, and improving runoff quality water from state highways. It reflects the social value placed on protecting the natural resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Within the study area, US 50 and SR 89 have long served as the primary routes that residents, visitors, and businesses have relied on for their transportation needs. Over the long term, the Program would have no effect on the communities that these two highways currently serve. During the construction period, roads would be open and travel would be unrestricted during all non-construction periods. Where temporary lane closures may be necessary along highway segments that have only one lane in each direction and limited shoulder widths, motorists could experience delays in traveling through areas of active construction. The delays may discourage some travelers from using the highways during those times. Although this impact could be temporarily disruptive, travelers may be delayed but would still be able to reach their intended destination. Within areas where the local circulation system is more developed, such as at Meyers, near Stateline, and at South Lake Tahoe, drivers could potentially use non-highway routes through neighborhoods during the day to avoid construction areas. There are, however, limited areas within the study area where this could effectively occur, and therefore the potential for diverted traffic to significantly disrupt existing neighborhoods or community areas would not be widespread or significant.

Overall, the Program could cause traffic delays within each specific area where construction is active each day, but it would not have a significant impact on community cohesion. Any delays would be temporary, and during construction times, access along each highway would still be available. The communities along US 50 and SR 89 have already developed along each side of these well-traveled routes and would not be further physically divided or separated.

Long-Range Planning

The Program is consistent with the goals of plans developed by the TRPA (including individual Plan Area Statements), South Lake Tahoe, Meyers, and El Dorado County. These plans stress improving water quality in the Lake Tahoe area.

Consistency with planned development will be evaluated as each project segment is advanced for implementation. A basin proposed for US 50 Segment 3 is adjacent to and northeast of two parcels (029-170-01 and 029-170-02) owned by the South Tahoe Redevelopment Agency that are part of the Triangle Project Area (see Section 3.1.2.4). To avoid conflicts with existing land uses on these parcels (two convenience stores), the basin would have to be designed to use available vacant land and avoid the permanent structures. The South Tahoe Redevelopment Agency would be consulted during further planning for this segment of the Program.

Economic Conditions

Local Businesses

Although the temporary construction activities described above are not expected to impact existing community cohesion, they would affect travel times. Drivers may delay or be temporarily discouraged from making trips they otherwise had anticipated or planned. Segments that already have relatively confined roadway widths may be subject to alternating directions of lane closures during daily construction.

The greatest focus of commercial activity in the study area is located within the developed areas of Meyers and South Lake Tahoe. US 50 and SR 89 widen to two lanes in each direction through portions of these areas, which can better accommodate lane closures while leaving at least one through travel lane open in each direction.

The potential for impacts to local businesses would therefore be limited to temporary travel delays during active construction periods. In general, the range of effects from construction-related congestion can include discouragement of customers from traveling to a business and increased travel time for employees or deliveries. The potential for these effects to occur and/or substantially impact an existing business is not considered significant because of the limited time that the activities would take place in any single location (i.e., construction would actively progress along the highway during each construction season). Also, roadways would be kept open to the maximum extent possible, and total closure of a highway over a long time period is not expected. Mitigation measures are identified in Section 3.1.4 to further reduce or minimize potential impacts to businesses. Finally, it is noted that economic effects on their own are not normally considered a significant impact to the environment under the CEQA unless the economic effects can be associated with a significant physical environmental impact. No such impacts are anticipated.

Property Acquisition

Caltrans has preliminarily identified up to 32 parcels along US 50 and 174 parcels along SR 89 that could be affected by the Program. These parcels would be used temporarily for equipment staging or acquired permanently for construction of new basins and pullouts. The majority of takes would be partial acquisitions for infiltration basin installation, roadway and shoulder widening, roadway realignments, and utility relocation, among other needs. These parcels would be acquired from private, commercial, and public landowners. Compensation for any property acquisition would be based on fair market value. No relocations of homes or businesses are planned, and no adverse environmental impacts associated with acquisition are identified.

Community Facilities and Services

Police and Fire Protection

Program construction has the potential to cause temporary traffic congestion and delays where active construction work is under way; however, emergency vehicles are exempt from road and lane closures. Every effort would be made to allow police and fire vehicles to pass through construction zones without delay. As a result, the Program would have a less-than-significant impact on police and fire protection.

Schools

School bus service is provided throughout the study area by TTUSD and LTUSD. TTUSD has four bus stops along SR 89 between Tahoma and the Meeks Bay resort. LTUSD has four bus stops that intersect US 50 or SR 89 in South Lake Tahoe and Meyers, which are used by a number of different bus routes. In addition, LTUSD has approximately 13 bus routes that travel on portions of US 50 and SR 89, primarily Segments 1 and 2 on US 50 and Segment 1 on SR 89. Table 3.1-1 lists the bus routes that run along each segment (LTUSD 2006, TTUSD 2006).

**Table 3.1-1
School Bus Routes Along US 50 and SR 89 Project Segments**

Project Segment	School Bus Routes
US 50 Segment 1	6, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29
US 50 Segment 2	6, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26
US 50 Segment 3	14, 16, 20,
SR 89 Segment 1	6, 14, 22, 24, 26
SR 89 Segment 2	7, 28
SR 89 Segment 3	None
SR 89 Segment 4	None
SR 89 Segment 5	TTUSD Bus (no route number)

Note: Routes are LTUSD buses unless otherwise noted.

Construction activities may cause temporary delays to school bus service within the project segments. In some areas, traffic flow could be reduced to one-way, alternating movements. As a result, school bus schedules would need to be revised or alternate routes would need to be found. Delays in any one location would be temporary, and the active work areas within each segment would move as construction is completed. One-lane travel in each direction would be maintained during construction activity where multiple lanes and shoulder width allow.

With the mitigation measures proposed in Section 3.1.4, the Program would have a less-than-significant impact on school bus service. No other impacts to schools would occur.

Utilities

Utility relocations may be required for the construction of the proposed facilities. This might include relocation of aboveground or belowground utilities outside of a widened roadway or right-of-way. The study area for the Program includes area outside of the roadway and right-of-way. Although any specific needs for utility relocation would not be defined until the final

design of each segment, the relocations are expected to be within the areas evaluated in this EIR. Continuous utility service during construction would be required of the contractors, and no substantial disruption of service is anticipated. The Program would therefore have no impact on utility service.

Traffic and Transportation

Traffic

US 50 and SR 89 provide the main transportation and lifeline routes for the South Lake Tahoe region. Thousands of vehicles use the roads daily to access residential, commercial, and recreational areas throughout the study area. The Program would not change the capacity of US 50 or SR 89 or provide new access to any lands that are not currently served by the existing highways.

The Program would result in temporary lane closures along work areas close to traffic lanes, resulting in temporary delays. Wherever possible, at least one lane in each direction would be maintained by using lane width reductions or paved shoulder areas. Traffic flow may be restricted to alternating, one-way movement where road shoulders are narrow or work takes place within the traffic lane; however, delays in any one area would be temporary as construction progresses along each segment.

With the implementation of mitigation measures proposed in Section 3.1.4, the Program would have less-than-significant impacts on traffic.

Transit

BlueGO provides hourly round-trip service along five bus routes in South Lake Tahoe, which primarily run along US 50 Segments 2 and 3 and SR 89 Segment 2. In addition, the Heavenly Ski Run Shuttle provides service along five routes in east South Lake Tahoe, which all travel at least partially along US 50 Segment 3.

Construction activities within these segments may cause traffic delays for public transit. However, delays would be temporary, as the active work areas within each segment would move as construction is completed at any one location. In addition, it is expected that one-lane travel in each direction would be maintained during construction activity, as US 50 and SR 89 are four lanes wide in these segments. On-demand shuttle service and the Nifty 50 Trolley would face traffic impacts when operating outside of South Lake Tahoe.

Project impacts would be less-than-significant for transit operating within South Lake Tahoe. Mitigation for these impacts is proposed in Section 3.1.4.

Access/Circulation and Parking

The Program would require that work areas be set up along US 50 and SR 89 where active construction work is taking place. As noted previously, these active work areas would transition or move along the highways within each segment as construction is performed and completed at any one location. Along some portions of both highways, parking is allowed at designated pullout areas or stretches of the highway where vehicles can safely park off of the road. Portions of the segments have areas where parking is very limited and in high demand, especially during the summer season.

For example, Segments 2, 3, 4, and 5 along SR 89 pass by popular vista points and recreational facilities. Some off-highway parking is available, but at the most popular trailheads and visitor locations, such as along Emerald Bay, parking for locations at Eagle Falls, Vikingsholm, and other trailheads can overflow. During the day, drivers would use available shoulder space on the highway. Slow-moving vehicles seeking limited parking spaces in these areas can also create increased congestion or risk of conflicts with through traffic on the highway. During construction, these shoulder areas may be impacted by the need to set up work and construction staging areas. Access to some of these recreational destinations may be further limited or restricted because of these construction needs. Slow-moving construction vehicles accessing or leaving the work areas could also impede through-traffic flow on the highway. These are potentially significant impacts, and mitigation is identified in Section 3.1.4.

Besides the typical high visitation use that the Tahoe Basin normally receives, the region is also popular for annual events that attract large groups of users and visitors. These include fairs, festivals, and sporting events (e.g., bike or running races), some of which may rely on access to or along US 50 and SR 89 within the study area. The majority of these events occur on weekends or holidays, which should not directly conflict with active construction work. To further avoid the potential for conflicts, mitigation is proposed in Section 3.1.4.

Parks and Recreational Use

The Tahoe Basin is an important recreational destination, and beaches, campgrounds, hiking trails, and popular historic sites are all present within the overall study area. The potential for impacts to recreational resources would be limited to construction activities and possible land acquisition where a wider state right-of-way is necessary to accommodate the planned facilities or construction.

Construction impacts may include traffic delays traveling to and from recreational facilities (as previously described). All campgrounds and beaches along the segments are accessed through roads or driveways that meet either US 50 or SR 89 at an intersection, and it is expected that existing access can be maintained during construction or, at most, intermittently delayed. All of the campground areas along these routes are set back from the highway and would not be directly impacted by construction. However, construction activities starting in the morning and continuing through the end of the afternoon/day would create temporary noise levels that may be audible at the facilities, at least those areas nearest the highways. At all of the campgrounds, the construction noise level would not be severe because the campgrounds are set back from the roads. However, the noise levels may be disruptive at times because of the quiet/serene objective of the land use and the perceived sensitivity to human-made noise under such circumstances, especially construction involving heavy equipment. Mitigation is proposed in Section 3.1.4.

The existing bike path facilities should not be affected by the Program, with the potential exception of where temporary construction crosses a path or route. For safety purposes, it may be necessary to temporarily close portions of a bike path while construction takes place. This would temporarily affect use of the facilities, and mitigation is proposed in Section 3.1.4.

Environmental Justice

The Program would not have disproportionately high or adverse effects on any minority or low-income populations. No residences or businesses are being acquired, and the Program impacts

would be primarily limited to increased traffic delays during construction. This would impact drivers on US 50 and SR 89 but would not disproportionately impact any specific demographic or population group within or outside of the study area. No concentrations of minority or low-income populations were observed or identified along any of the project segments during the review performed for this Program.

All considerations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes have been included in this Program. Caltrans' Title VI Policy Statement is included in Appendix D.

3.1.3.2 TRPA Considerations

Land Use and Planning

The TRPA requirements for land uses are contained in Plan Area Statements. The Statements describe allowable uses and densities of development within the Lake Tahoe Basin. The proposed Program would not change the types or concentrations of land uses in the area and is therefore consistent with the TRPA land use requirements.

Population, Housing, and Community Facilities and Services

No TRPA thresholds directly relate to community impacts, population, housing, community facilities and services, or utilities and service systems. The Program would not alter the composition, location, distribution, or density of population or housing in the area. Similarly, while properties are expected to be acquired, no relocations are anticipated. Furthermore, no unplanned changes to community facilities or services would occur as a result of the Program. Based on the TRPA Code of Ordinances, no adverse impacts to these community features are anticipated.

Traffic and Transportation

Pursuant to the TRPA Code of Ordinances, potential impacts to traffic and transportation include the generation of additional vehicle trips; changes to parking facilities or the demand for these facilities; changes to existing transportation systems; alterations to circulation patterns; alterations of waterborne, rail or air traffic; or the increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists or pedestrians. As described in Section 3.1.3.1, impacts to circulation and transportation facilities would occur during construction and would be temporary in nature. During construction, impacts would include reduced vehicle throughput due to fewer available traffic lanes, and reduced access to properties due to lane closures, construction of infiltration basins, and driveway adjustments. However, whenever possible, one lane would be kept open throughout construction areas. No sustained impact to these resources is anticipated. The Program would not increase capacity or otherwise attract additional traffic.

Parks and Recreation

The Program would not reduce recreational opportunities in the Lake Tahoe Basin. While access may be temporarily affected during construction, traffic mitigation measures will minimize inconvenience to recreationists. The Program is consistent with TRPA Thresholds R-1 (to provide high-quality recreational experience and access) and R-2 (to ensure a fair share of recreational capacity to the general public).

3.1.3.3 No Project Alternative

The No Project Alternative would consist of not implementing the EIP projects for which Caltrans is the lead agency. No impacts to land use or the community would result.

3.1.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation

The following measures would be applied to each segment or project when they are advanced for design.

Traffic Management Plan (TMP)

A TMP would be developed as part of the final design phase of each project. The TMP would include construction restrictions, requirements, and definitions that would apply to the contractor(s) based on the type of work. These may include, as appropriate:

- During the peak summer travel season between July 1 and Labor Day, no lane closures would be allowed after noon on Fridays, or on Saturdays and Sundays. Work planned off of the highway travel lanes that does not impede normal traffic flow would not be subject to this restriction.
- Lane closure charts would be developed for each segment or area of work to address any planned temporary lane changes or closures. These charts and schedules would be made available for public notification and information.
- Lane closures would be limited to 1.6 km (1 mile) in length or less.
- Emergency vehicle access would be maintained throughout the construction process.

Recreational Land Use

Construction activities may disturb some recreational users at sensitive land uses such as parks, trails, beaches, campgrounds, and similar publicly accessible facilities. Typical measures may include the following:

- Prior to construction, Caltrans or its contractor would provide information on the activities, locations, and types of potential disturbances and how they might affect recreation access or use should be noticed, advertised, or otherwise made publicly available so that users of the sites are aware and can plan accordingly.
- Construction activities in the vicinity of noise-sensitive uses, such as camping, shall be restricted to daytime hours.

Public and Private Property Access

Access to a property, driveway, or access road along US 50 and SR 89 shall not be blocked unless the occupant of the property (or responsible party) has been notified. Where access during the day may be impracticable during active construction, it would be provided by the end of each working day. Notification shall be made prior to commencing any construction work that could affect property access.