

Date: December 12, 2023

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: Scott Mathot, Senior Engineer

Title: **Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extension (C1503) - Project Update**

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Recommended Action: (1) Accept the studies completed to date as presented in this staff report and attachments; and (2) Direct staff to suspend work on the Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extension project until community and staff capacity exist to conduct community opinion polling related to a local tax measure to fund this specific project.

Discussion: The Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extension (PTBSE) project is identified in the Truckee General Plan and Traffic Impact Fee Program. It is a proposed new roadway connection into the Tahoe Donner subdivision that would create a connection from Northwoods Boulevard to the Pioneer Commerce Center and to Downtown Truckee. Figure 1 shows the proposed roadway alignment. In 2002, the *Third Tahoe Donner Connection Preliminary Alignment Study* was completed to identify an alignment for the roadway for future transportation and land use planning purposes. Project development activities led by the Town were not advanced beyond the 2002 study because the general community interest in the project at that time was lacking and the Town has chosen to focus on other transportation improvement priorities in the intervening years since that time.

Staff would note that at the time the 2002 study was completed that the Pioneer Commerce Center, Alder Creek Middle School, and Pine Forest Subdivisions did not yet exist. As those projects were developed, Town staff worked with the project developers to ensure that the portions of Pioneer Trail and Comstock Drive that exist today were constructed to be consistent with the alignments that were established as a part of that 2002 study. In 2021, the Town re-initiated work on the project when it entered into a contract with Lumos and Associates, Inc. for baseline environmental studies, updating alignment alternatives with cost estimates, a traffic/GHG analysis, and a financial feasibility analysis.

In 2021, staff envisioned the project design and environmental review would occur in three phases:

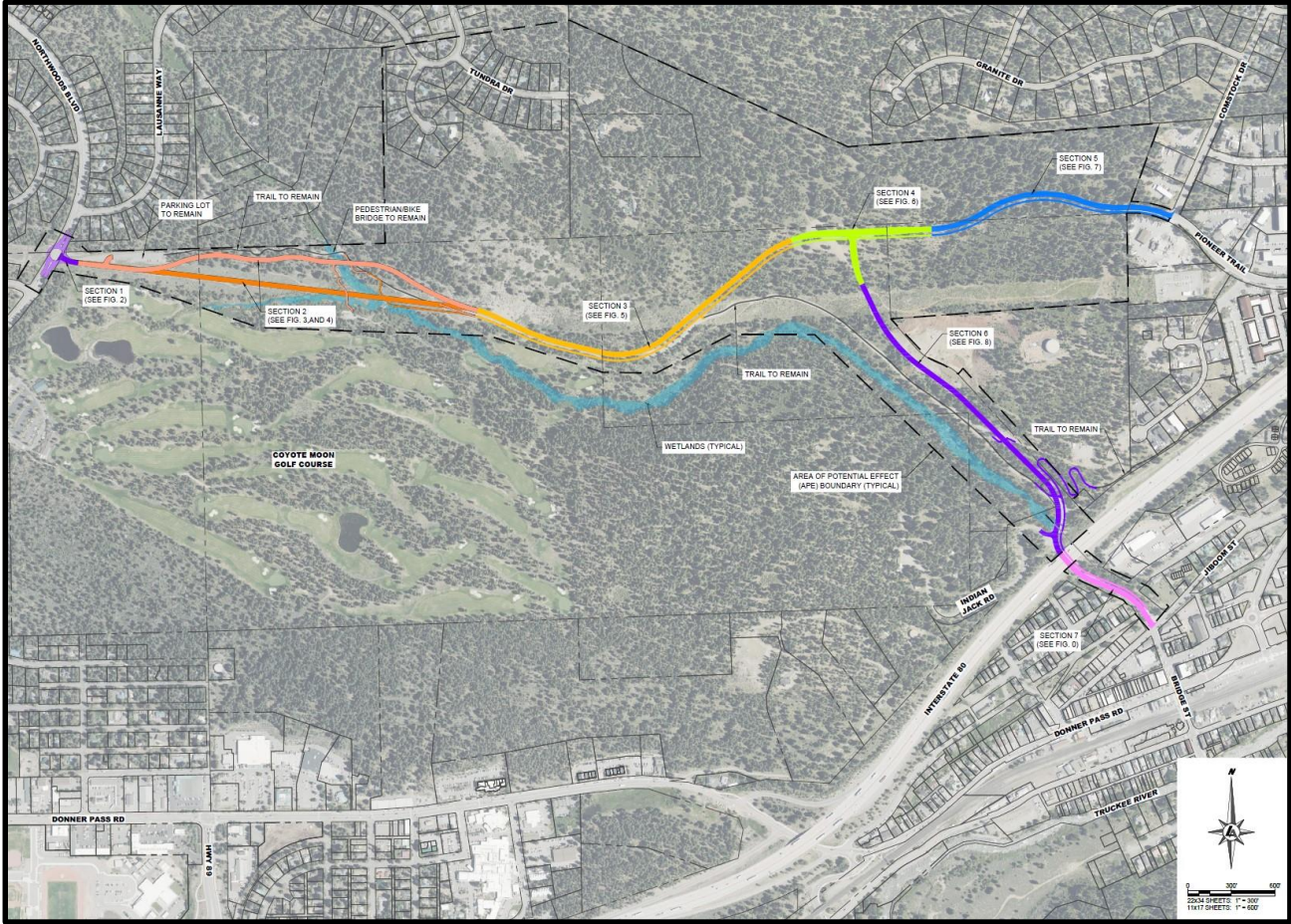
1. Phase 1: Evaluate roadway alignment alternatives to determine a preferred alignment; analyze financial feasibility based on community input and polling; and provide baseline engineering for use in current and future phases.
2. Phase 2: Take the information procured during the first phase to develop 30% project design, associated environmental documentation, and project funding.
3. Phase 3: Procure final environmental permitting and develop the final design package for construction of the project.

Currently, the Phase 1 work is substantially complete (with the exception of the originally planned community input and polling specific for this project), and includes the following that are further detailed in this staff report and the attachments hereto:

- Roadway Alignment Alternatives and Base Mapping, including design level topographic data.

- Updated existing cost estimates based on the alignment alternatives.
- Baseline Environmental Studies, including wetland/floodplain delineation, biological resources assessment, and cultural/historical resources studies.
- Traffic Analysis, including greenhouse gas emissions, level of service, vehicle miles travelled, and emergency evacuation.
- Financial Feasibility Analysis.

Figure 1: Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extension Alignment Alternatives



Roadway Alternatives Analysis and Cost Estimates

The purpose of the PTBSE Alternatives Analysis (**Attachment A**) was to further refine the alignment alternatives and update cost estimates. The roadway alignments roughly follow the initial alignment study from 2002 with additional considerations for the subsequently constructed Trout Creek Trail, and development activity in the Pioneer Commerce Center and Pine Forest subdivision areas that has occurred since the 2002 study was completed. The roadway extensions are proposed to be two-lane roadways with Class II bike lanes. The existing Trout Creek Trail is to be maintained where possible and realigned and reconstructed where required. Grade separated trail crossings are planned near the new roadway bridge overcrossing Trout Creek and on Bridge Street near the Interstate 80 roadway undercrossing. A new Class I trail is proposed along Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street in areas that do not currently have connectivity.

Updated planning-level cost estimates were developed for the project, as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Project Cost Estimates

Section	Description	Lengths	Cost
Estimated Design and Project Management Costs			\$5 million
Section A (West)	Pioneer Trail West Extension (Northwoods Blvd to Bridge Street Connector)	1.1 miles new roadway 0.5 miles realigned trail 0.2 miles new trail	\$21.8 million
Section B (East)	Pioneer Trail East Extension (Bridge Street Extension to Pioneer Trail)	0.4 miles new roadway 0.4 miles new trail	\$4.3 million
Section C (South)	Bridge Street Extension (Jibboom Street to Pioneer Trail Extension)	0.7 miles new roadway 0.1 miles realigned trail 0.4 miles new trail	\$12.3 million
Construction Subtotal			\$38.4 million
Construction Management/Engineering			\$0.8 million
TOTAL			\$42.6 million

Baseline Environmental Studies

The baseline environmental studies that were prepared include an Aquatic Resource Study (Ascent Environmental, **Attachment B**), Biological Resource Study (Ascent Environmental, **Attachment C**), and Cultural Resources Study (Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc., not attached due to sensitivity of content). The findings of the study may be summarized as follows:

- Special-status plant and animal species may be present in the project area and will need to be avoided/mitigated during design and construction.
- Trout Creek and surrounding wetlands run through the middle of the project area and will need to be avoided/mitigated during design and construction.
- Cultural resources are present in the project area. Additional studies may be necessary as part of final design and construction to insure protection of those resources.

Traffic Analysis

The traffic analysis (**Attachment D**) was prepared by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., and analyzed existing and future traffic volumes and operations, intersection, and roadway Level of Service (LOS), Vehicles Miles Travelled (VMT), greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), and emergency evacuation. The results of this analysis are summarized below:

Level of Service

Traffic operations at the study intersections and roadway segments are assessed in terms of Level of Service (LOS) and delay. LOS is a concept that was developed by transportation engineers to quantify the level of operation of intersections and roadways (Highway Capacity Manual, Transportation Research Board, 2022). LOS measures are classified in grades "A" through "F". LOS "A" signifies the

best level of operation, while “F” represents the worst. The Town of Truckee 2040 general plan identifies LOS D or better (outside of the Downtown Core) as being the Town’s traffic operations goal. Within the Downtown core, LOS E or better is identified as the traffic operations goal with the exception of the Bridge Street/Donner Pass Road, Bridge Street/West River Street and Truckee Way/Glenshire Drive Intersections which establish LOS F as an allowable standard.

If the PTBSE were constructed in 2024, it would result in the following changes to current traffic operations at the studied intersections:

- **Donner Pass Road/Northwoods Boulevard** - Traffic operations would change from LOS C to LOS B.
- **Bridge Street/Jibboom Street/High Street** - Traffic operations would change from LOS A to LOS C as a result of additional traffic accessing the Bridge Street extension through this intersection.
- **Pioneer Trail/Comstock Drive** – The intersection would operate at LOS A without the project or LOS C with the project as a result of additional traffic accessing the Pioneer Trail extension through this intersection.
- **Northwoods Boulevard/Pioneer Trail (New Intersection)** – The intersection would require separate westbound left turn and westbound right turn lanes. A single-lane roundabout would also provide adequate operations.
- **Donner Pass Road/SR 89 South/ Frates Lane** – The signalized intersection would operate at LOS D either with or without the new roadways.
- **Truckee Way/Pioneer Trail** – The existing single-lane roundabout operates at LOS C with or without the project.
- **Donner Pass Road Capacity** - The LOS for the segment of Donner Pass Road from SR 89 South/Frates Lane would change from LOS E (standard exceeded) to LOS D (standard achieved).

With future growth under the Truckee General Plan, the LOS implications of the new roadways on studied intersections would be as follows:

- **Donner Pass Road/ Northwoods Boulevard** – As a signalized intersection, would operate at LOS E without the new roadway and LOS D with the roadway (improvement). If a roundabout is pursued at the intersection, it would be constructed as a hybrid roundabout with some one-lane and some two-lane approaches in order to obtain acceptable level of service with or without the project.
- **Bridge Street/Jibboom Street/High Street** – This intersection would operate at LOS F as a stop-controlled intersection and additional analysis would be needed to determine what intersection improvements would be needed to obtain acceptable operations.
- **Pioneer Trail/Comstock Drive** – The intersection would operate at LOS B without the project or LOS C with the project as a result of additional traffic accessing the Pioneer Trail extension through this intersection.
- **Northwoods Boulevard/Pioneer Trail (New Intersection)** – The intersection would need separate left turn and right turn lanes on the westbound approach to meet LOS standards. A single-lane roundabout is recommended to provide adequate operations and would be preferable to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle movements, while reducing the risk of

serious injury accidents.

- **Donner Pass Road/SR 89 South/ Frates Lane** – The signalized intersection would operate at LOS E either with or without the new roadways, requiring a two-lane roundabout be constructed to improve the LOS.
- **Truckee Way/Pioneer Trail** – The existing single-lane roundabout would need to be converted to a two-lane roundabout to achieve LOS standards (with or without the new roadways).
- **Donner Pass Road Capacity** - A 13% traffic reduction on Donner Pass Road between Northwoods and SR89 South would occur with the construction of the new roadway.
 - For the section of Donner Pass Road located east of SR 89 South, providing the new roadways increases the percent of total general plan growth that can be accommodated before LOS E conditions occur from 21% (without the new roadways) to 66% (with the new roadways).
 - The segment of Donner Pass Road west of SR 89 South currently operates at LOS E. With the new roadways, LOS D conditions would be provided initially and 24% of General Plan anticipated growth can be accommodated before LOS E conditions are reached.

Vehicle Miles Travelled and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (VMT and GHG)

The proposed project would reduce existing peak Summer daily VMT by 6,600 (or 0.6% of total townwide daily VMT). This VMT reduction would be 13,900 Summer daily VMT under general plan buildout traffic conditions (0.9% of townwide daily VMT). Annually, the proposed project would reduce townwide VMT by 1,784,000 per year from existing traffic conditions, and 3,758,000 per year from general plan buildout traffic conditions.

Annual GHG emissions would be reduced by 591 metric tons of CO₂ from existing traffic levels, and 1,244 metric tons from General Plan buildout traffic conditions if the project were to be implemented.

Emergency Evacuation

The proposed project would reduce the time needed to perform a full evacuation of Tahoe Donner by 32% (3.4 hours vs. 2.3 hours). This assumes that as a part of the project, two separate southbound lanes would be striped on Northwoods Boulevard from the Northwoods/Northwoods intersection down to the proposed Northwoods/Pioneer Trail intersection.

Financial Feasibility Analysis

The Project is estimated to cost approximately \$42.6 million (in 2022 dollars), which includes design and construction. The Project's entire cost is included in the Town's Traffic Impact Fee (TIF) program, but it would require approximately 20-25 years to accumulate that amount of capital to fund the project with upfront cash assuming that no other roadway projects were funded out of the traffic impact fee program during that same time period and assuming that the traffic impact fee amounts increase to keep up with construction cost inflation over that same period. An analysis of funding strategies (**Attachment E**) was developed by Economic and Planning Systems, Inc. to assist with determining funding options for the project that would allow for project construction that does not require accumulating 20-25 years of funding with no other community TIF program investments during that same time period. The intent of these strategies would allow the Town to fund other priority roadway projects in the TIF program and allow the PTBSE to be constructed sooner than 20-25 years in the future.

The analysis evaluated existing and new potential funding sources that are within the control of the Town and its citizens to implement and presents three basic funding strategies for consideration. The evaluated strategies do not represent all possible variations for funding the Project but are intended to create a framework for discussions regarding project funding.

All three evaluated strategies assume a base level of funding that would equal \$26 million as follows:

- Existing budgeted TIF and TSSA 1 funds (\$2.5 million each for a total of \$5 million).
- An additional \$5 million in upfront TIF funding beyond that included in the adopted CIP budget.
- \$2.2 million in Measure U funds to fund the new trail portion of the project.
- Using the entire amount of revenue generated by TSSA 1 (\$597,000 per year) over the next 30 years to secure bond financing.
- An additional \$750,000 in TIF funds per year over the next 30 years to secure bond financing. Note that this represents approximately 50% of the average annual TIF revenue that has been collected over each of the past 7 years.

The difference in the presented funding strategies is how the remaining \$16+ million funding gap would be met and is summarized at the bottom of Table 2 below. The analysis essentially evaluated three primary ways to close the funding gap: 1) \$200 parcel tax on Tahoe Donner properties, 2) \$85 parcel tax on all Town properties, and 3) \$150 parcel tax on Tahoe Donner properties plus an additional \$375,000 annual TIF set aside. Again, it is important to note that there are many variations of funding strategies that could be employed, but staff is presenting the following three to frame a range of alternatives that can be controlled at the local level.

Any parcel tax would require a two-thirds majority of property owners to approve and so the feasibility of all these taxing strategies would need to be determined through polling that would be focused on this project. The polling could also be used to provide a sensitivity analysis, through which it could be determined at what rate (if any) that property owners would be supportive of a parcel tax. For example, a property owner may be supportive of a \$50 annual parcel charge to fund the project but not a \$150 annual parcel charge. In addition, staff does not currently support Strategy 3 because it would result in the need to expend/set aside approximately 75% of the average annual TIF revenues. Not only would this impact the development of other TIF-funded projects, such as future roundabouts or turn lanes, it risks depleting the TIF fund altogether, requiring the use of General Fund to cover the bond obligations.

Table 2: Funding Strategy Summary

Base Funding (Included in all Strategies)	
Source	Funding Generated
\$2.5 million of existing budgeted Traffic Impact Fee Funds	\$2,500,000
\$2.5 million of existing budgeted Truckee Special Service Area (TSSA) 1 Funds	\$2,500,000
\$5 million additional Traffic Impact Fee Revenue	\$5,000,000
\$2.2 million Measure U for new trail construction	\$2,160,000
\$597,000/year TSSA 1 to secure bond	\$6,140,000
\$750,000/year Traffic Impact Fees to secure bond	\$7,805,000
Subtotal	\$26,105,000

Strategy 1		Strategy 2		Strategy 3	
Source	Funding	Source	Funding	Source	Funding
New parcel tax on TD property owners (\$200/yr for 30 years)	\$16,862,000	New parcel tax townwide (\$85/yr for 30 years)	\$16,862,000	New parcel tax on TD property owners (\$150/yr for 30 years)	\$12,592,000
				Additional \$375,000/year. TIF revenue for bonds dedicated to the project	\$3,955,000
Subtotal	\$16,862,000		\$16,862,000		\$16,547,000
TOTAL	\$42,967,000		\$42,967,000		\$42,652,000

Public Outreach

Property Owner Outreach

The proposed alignments travel through and adjacent to property owned by the Tahoe Donner Association, Coyote Moon Golf Course, Truckee Donner Public Utility District (TDPUD), and private property owners. Roadway rights-of-way already exist on, albeit not necessarily on the proposed alignments of the new roadway, the properties owned by Coyote Moon and TDPUD. Final alignment refinements would result in the need for additional acquisition of right-of-way to match the final preferred alignment of the project. Staff has been in contact to varying degrees with these property owners and made them aware of high-level project alignments. Staff has received feedback from at least two of the property owners in the project area, stating that the roadway could provide access opportunities to support potential infill development projects. Additional discussions regarding alignment and easements will be necessary with the property stakeholders during future design phases.

Tahoe Donner Association Outreach

Town staff has communicated with the Tahoe Donner Association (TDA) staff and Board since the project was reinitiated in 2021. In addition, staff provided a brief update on the project to the TDA Board on April 28, 2023, and more recently provided a more comprehensive update on November 17, 2023. At the November meeting, Town staff presented a broad overview of the study results, as well as the potential funding strategies and encouraged the TDA board to provide feedback to the Town Council on the decision to continue or pause this project. Initial feedback that was heard by Town staff during the presentation to the TDA Board was as follows:

- Concerns regarding cost of the new roadway and impacts to TSSA-1 availability under certain funding scenarios.
- Interest in pursuing alternative emergency evacuation routes/options that are less expensive, as emergency evacuation is the main TDA priority.
- Member support for the new roadway is unclear and is recommended to be determined with community polling.
- Members value the solitude of the Trout Creek Trail and could be concerned with its proposed proximity to the new roadway.

Summary and Recommendation

The work that has been completed to date has allowed for the refinement of the design and cost estimates for the project. The project is currently projected to cost approximately \$43 million to implement, which exceeds what the Town has available in Traffic Impact Fee funds now or in the foreseeable future. Staff's opinion is that the next step in the project development would be to conduct community polling to determine whether a Tahoe Donner or townwide parcel tax would have adequate support to pass and at what funding level (amount of charge per parcel). However, as there are various other community funding measures under discussion currently, including the potential Transportation Revenue measure and funding for a new Truckee Library, staff does not recommend initiating additional polling at this time. Instead, staff recommends delaying the project for a year or more with reinitiation being considered as a part of the Fiscal Year 25/26-26/27 Work Plan.

Priority:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhanced Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Infrastructure Investment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Emergency and Wildfire Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Core Service

Fiscal Impact: Delaying work on the Project until additional polling can be conducted will avoid inefficiencies with continuing to start and stop project work or proceeding with design before community support is vetted. The work to date on the project is all within the Town's adopted CIP budget and Council-authorized consultant contract amounts. Since the community polling was not completed as planned with the current consultant contracts, the Town has saved approximately \$80,000 during this initial phase of the project.

Public Communication: Staff has presented this project to varying degrees to TDA, Coyote Moon Golf Course, Truckee Donner Public Utility District (TDPUD), and two adjacent private property owners. The TDA Board provided initial feedback during Town staff's presentation at the November 17, 2023, TDA Board meeting, that has been summarized in this staff report. Each of the property stakeholders consulted with were open to the idea of the project, with varying levels of support, questions, and concerns that would need to be addressed as part of subsequent phases of the project. Further communication with stakeholders will need to occur following the results of community polling for the financial portion of the project.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extensions Alternative Analysis (Lumos and Associates, Inc.)

Attachment B – Aquatic Resources Delineation Report – Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extension Project (Ascent Environmental, Inc.)

Attachment C – Biological Resources Technical Report - Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extension Project (Ascent Environmental, Inc.)

Attachment D – Traffic Study (LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.)

Attachment E - Proposed Financing Strategies for the Town of Truckee Pioneer Trail and Bridge Street Extension Project (Economic and Planning Systems, Inc.)