



## Inside This Issue

<b>Cover</b>	Successful Season
2	Choices Ahead
2	RTC Thanks Blue Ribbon Committee
3	Transit Centers Moving Forward
4	When it Comes to Streets and Highways
4	When it Comes to Planning
5	Priority Projects
6	The Important Question for Transit
7	Sales Tax Drop May Mean Service Cuts

### Successful Season RTC Delivers Several Projects Ahead of Schedule

Wrapping up a successful construction season, the RTC and construction partners finished several projects early, delivering quality work that reduced congestion and improved safety in the Truckee Meadows.

RTC's road reconstruction project on Greg Street finished five weeks ahead of schedule. The intersection of Greg Street and Sparks Boulevard, a major travel point for warehouse distribution with high truck traffic, is reopened with a new surface especially designed for durability.

"We worked hard to come up with a really good product for this area, and we are especially happy that it is finished ahead of schedule. We know how important that is to everyone who uses these roads," said Garth Oksol, who managed the project for the RTC.

Design consultants PBS&J, of Reno, and contractors Q&D Construction, of Sparks, partnered with the RTC on the \$5 million project. Work included new concrete paving on Greg Street from Sparks Boulevard east to Vista Boulevard which is designed to withstand high volumes of heavy loads over a long lifespan.

RTC also included construction techniques that reduced the amount of water necessary to cure the concrete. Special solar-type blankets kept the materials moist without wasting water or contributing to runoff.

Crews worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week to maximize progress and minimize the impact to local businesses that depend on the heavily traveled commercial route.

#### Sparks Boulevard Successes

Just in time for the Hot August Nights car festival, RTC celebrated the early completion of two projects on Sparks Boulevard that not only help traffic flow but finished early. The RTC had two projects under construction in July on the busy Sparks road. One was on the northbound lanes from Prater Way to Baring Boulevard.

"The reconstruction was completed quickly and it will be a long time before we need to come back again," said project manager Michele Dennis.



**Back in Business** — Greg Street is back in business now that reconstruction efforts finished five weeks early. The intersection of Greg Street and Sparks Boulevard, a major travel point for warehouse distribution with high truck traffic, is reopened with a new surface especially designed for durability. Design consultants PBS&J, of Reno and contractors Q&D Construction, of Sparks, partnered with RTC Project Manager Garth Oksol on the \$5 million project. Work included new concrete paving on Greg Street from Sparks Boulevard east to Vista Boulevard which is designed to withstand high volumes of heavy loads over a long lifespan.

RTC expedited the Prater Way to Baring Boulevard project by requiring an aggressive construction schedule that included diverting local traffic around the work area.

Contractor Granite Construction completed the \$1.3 million project in less than one month, more than a week ahead of schedule, with support from consultants MACTEC and Sierra Surveying.

The second RTC project was the \$3 million widening of Sparks Boulevard and Vista Boulevard at Los Altos Parkway.

"Because construction can be tough on commuters and businesses, the RTC worked hard to get these done quickly," said Doug Maloy, project manager for the job that was fully opened to traffic more than two weeks ahead of schedule.

"We worked out the details all along the way. It takes a lot of coordination with residents, businesses, local elected officials, agency staff as well as motorists to get the job done, and done early," Maloy said.

*Continued on page 7...*

## Choices Ahead

— by Greg Krause  
Executive Director

Our Board of Commissioners voted in May to give Washoe County voters the opportunity to vote on two ballot questions in November that could authorize additional funding for badly needed transportation improvements in Reno, Sparks and Washoe County.



Acting on recommendations from the commission's Blue Ribbon Committee on Transportation Funding, the board approved one ballot question that would protect gas and diesel fuel taxes from inflation by indexing them to the Producer Price Index for Street and Highway Construction. If approved by the voters, these measures would recover an estimated \$2.6 billion in purchasing power lost by inflationary erosion of these existing revenue streams through 2040.

In 2002, voters approved indexing local gas taxes to the Consumer Price Index, but experts say this has not accurately reflected the increases in highway construction costs and produces 20 percent less per mile driven since 2003. Federal and state gas taxes collected in Washoe County, which are not indexed, collect about 33% less per mile driven today than they did in 2003.

The group's second recommendation adopted by the board is activating a one-eighth percent increase in the existing sales tax. RTC-2, if approved, will avoid 20-25% RTC RIDE service cuts. Both questions are intended to address transportation funding shortfalls which are expected to reach \$5 billion for streets and highways and \$1.1 billion for transit over the next 30 years.

This was no small task, and I appreciate that the members of the committee worked hard to find consensus. Because the federal and state gas taxes have not been raised in 15 years, we have fallen behind in repairing and building our roads. These questions will allow the public an opportunity to choose to pay a modest increase in gas and sales taxes in return for maintaining and improving our transportation system and quality of life for all the citizens in this area.

*“This was no small task, and I appreciate that the members of the committee worked hard to find consensus.”*

The Blue Ribbon Committee, a diverse group of community leaders, met eight times since creation by the RTC in January. They were tasked with making recommendations to the RTC board on ways to address the shortfall in transportation funding. They considered which projects could be undertaken in the next 10 years if funding measures are approved by voters and also looked at steps to address the shortfall in mass transit funding.

## RTC Thanks Blue Ribbon Committee Members

Michonne Ascuaga, Chris Bosse, Bill Brainard, Steve Brown, Jeff Codega, Rod Cooper, Paul Curtis, Skip Daly, Norm Dianda, Perry Diloreto, Milton Glick, Cliff Heller, Keith Lee, Anne Macfarlane, Joe Mayer, Steve Muchicko, Tina Nappe, Terry Oliver, Chad Osorno, Jonnie Pullman, Steven Sepulveda, Grant Sims, Jeff Siri, Mike Smart, G. Blake Smith and Ron Smith.

### What the Blue Ribbon Committee Found

- Shortfalls in transportation funding are significant
- 60% of street and highway shortfall is due to inflationary erosion of existing revenue streams
- Inflationary problem only grows with time
- Public transit is in immediate crisis
- With current economic times a phased in approach was preferred for addressing both road and transit needs
- RTC-2 and RTC-5 were recommended

The board also adopted the committee's recommendation to conduct periodic reviews of any new revenues approved by voters to insure that funds in excess of needs would not be collected. Other recommendations from the committee included addressing equity with adjacent counties for transportation impacts and approaching the federal government to increase spending on transportation infrastructure.

We are working to make sure that the public has appropriate information to use in making their decisions before the election. You'll find some important transportation funding information in this issue. We'll be happy to provide any other information that will help voters make an informed decision about their transportation future.

## Transit Centers Moving Forward



Work continues on RTC CENTENNIAL PLAZA in Sparks. Opening ceremonies are Tuesday, Oct. 21, beginning at 11 a.m. Bus operation begins Sunday, Oct. 26. See [rtcwashoe.com](http://rtcwashoe.com) for more details.

RTC continues to make progress on two transit centers designed to take the RTC RIDE system well into the 21st century. Work on the facilities has been a decade in the making.

To make the best use of transit dollars, the RTC sought and received money for the centers from special federal funds available for capital improvements, not for operating costs, so the agency could continue to provide as much service as possible. Money for the new centers did not come from transit operating budgets.

The benefits are already paying off. Finishing touches are nearly all that is left before the new RTC CENTENNIAL PLAZA begins to serve passengers as a transportation hub for the region. Designed by consultants Parsons Brinkerhoff, it fits beautifully into its environment with local art, earth friendly design and community space. Blending the best of the community, the new facility honors the rich traditions of the city, its rail past and its promising future. Eight years in the making, it is the product of many hands who partnered to make the new place a centerpiece of form and function.

West Coast Contractors of Nevada, contractor for the RTC, will deliver the facility in time for grand opening ceremonies set for Tuesday, October 21. Chris Tschirhart is RTC's project manager.

RTC CENTENNIAL PLAZA's opening will indeed be a celebration, with special guests, building tours and refreshments. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend this historic event. RTC RIDE operations begin on Sunday, October 26, when RTC RIDE service changes go into effect.



West end of RTC CENTENNIAL PLAZA.

## Saved Money Accelerates Projects

With a savings in estimated costs for the 2008 construction season, the RTC was able to move up two projects that were planned for next year.

"Because of economic conditions that led to some increased competition, we saved about \$2.6 million this year," said Robert Russell, director of engineering for the RTC.

That savings allowed the agency to begin work ahead of schedule on a project on MaeAnne Avenue in Reno and a second one at Boxington Way in Sparks. By beginning both projects early, the RTC saved even more when considering inflation costs.

"We are always looking for opportunities to stretch our dollars," Russell said. "This is a prime example."

At MaeAnne Avenue, crews rehabilitated the pavement from Avenida de Landa to McCarran Boulevard. Summit Engineering, of Reno, designed the project.

The Boxington Way job replaced pavement from Lincoln Way to Lillard Drive and upgraded catch basins with minor curb and gutter work. The work was designed by Lumos and Associates, of Reno.

Granite Construction is the contractor for both jobs which were completed in September.



Crews begin site preparation for RTC 4TH STREET STATION.

Work on RTC 4TH STREET STATION is becoming a reality along with its revitalized neighborhood. Site preparation began in August on RTC 4TH STREET STATION, the \$35 million transit improvement planned for downtown Reno at 4th and Lake streets. The Reno City Council and the RTC Board approved the agreement to sell the old location, RTC CITICENTER. Proceeds will go back into transportation.

While groundbreaking for the new RTC 4TH STREET STATION will be in 2009, crews are onsite to lay the groundwork before construction of the building. Granite Construction of Reno was awarded a \$700,000 contract to complete work that includes preparation of the site, which was once used in radiator repair. Sewer line relocation is included, along with the removal of a small amount of hazardous materials in the soil by Granite's subcontractor Clean Harbors, of Reno.

## When it Comes to Streets and Highways, Time is Money

### The answer is two cents.

The question would be, "Over the last 15 years, how much has the primary source of road funding increased?" That's right. Federal, state and local fuel taxes have only increased two cents since the time when the price of a stamp was 29 cents.

Since then, Washoe County's population has grown and is predicted to reach 620,000 by 2030. Roads are challenged by congestion, crashes, deterioration and, most of all, inflation. Federal and state gas taxes buy 33 percent less than they did in 2003 due to inflation.

To meet the requirements of current residents, their families and visitors, Washoe County needs an additional \$5 billion in revenues over the next three decades. The problem only grows with time and as motorists turn to more fuel-efficient vehicles, they will drive more miles but pay fewer fuel taxes.

RTC-5 on the November ballot gives voters an opportunity to consider an important first step to making a dent in that shortfall. It considers giving fuel taxes an important protection from the high cost of materials during periods of inflation. It would adjust (index) fuel tax rates annually just enough to recover the purchasing power lost due to construction inflation. If there is no inflation, there would be no increase.

### What Your Two Cents is Worth

If voters approve RTC-5, based upon historic rates of construction inflation, the price of gas could increase by 2 cents a gallon in 2010. Over the next 32 years, indexing would recover an estimated \$2.6 billion in lost purchasing power. Approval of this measure would allow near-term bonding of \$250 million in street and highway construction that would create thousands of well paying jobs, stimulate the local economy, and address some of the community's most urgent traffic congestion problems.

Every minute of traffic delay costs money for drivers and businesses which rely on the road system. Is it worth two cents a gallon in additional costs to reduce time and money lost in traffic congestion and delays in getting to your destination?

A no vote on RTC-5 would mean the continued loss of purchasing power due to construction inflation and leave us with insufficient funds to address current and future needs. Congestion would continue to mount in the community making our commutes longer, businesses less productive, travel less safe, the air more polluted, and preservation of our outstanding quality-of-life more difficult.



Existing roads cannot handle forecasted demand.

If voters approve RTC-5, based on historic rates of construction inflation, the price of gas could increase by two cents in 2010 and cost \$13 per motorist per year.



Reporter Linda Hosmer from Channel 2 News covers the 2040 Plan public meeting with RTC Planner Jack Lorbeer.

## When it Comes to Planning, 2040 is Just Around the Corner

RTC held several open houses recently to hear what people have to say about transportation through the year 2040. Long-range planning is essential to preserving the quality of life in the Truckee Meadows. The community has many choices to make. The 2040 Plan process is a guide to making those choices with knowledge.

The plan addresses air quality, congestion, transportation alternatives and needed improvements for systems that serve cars, transit, bikes, pedestrians, rail and goods movement. It is a blueprint to describe the community's vision through 2040 and the projects, services and programs that the community supports to make that vision a reality.

Stakeholders are involved early on in the planning process. The plan is developed in cooperation with community advisory groups, neighborhood boards, stakeholders and local governments.

"We meet and continue to meet with just about anyone who wants to participate and we spend countless hours listening to the public and incorporating many good ideas. By law, our plan must show that we have or can reasonably be expected to have the financial resources to fund the plan, so we take that into consideration too," said Deputy Executive Director Derek Morse.

Among the goals for the plan are to provide for a mix of transportation modes; to plan regional improvements with other jurisdictions; to try to balance land-use and transportation needs; and to deliver safe, functional, environmentally acceptable and aesthetically pleasing services that serve the greatest number of people.

## Impacts if RTC-5 is Approved by Voters

- Would add two cents per gallon of gas
- Local money/local control: what's collected in Washoe County stays in Washoe County
- Solid first-step to address the \$5 billion street and highway funding shortfall
- Moves community toward sustainable funding
- Would allow for bonding of \$250 million in street and highway construction
- Thousands of well-paying construction jobs; creates economic activity
- Accelerates key regional congestion relief projects

Most funding for streets and highways comes from federal, state and local gas taxes.



*Reduced congestion saves time and money and improves the quality of life.*

## Priority Projects

If the citizens approve Question RTC-5, the following are some of the “Congestion Relief” projects that could be constructed to save time and money.

U.S. 395/I-580 Meadowood Way	New Interchange \$50 million
McCarran Boulevard at Pyramid Highway	New Interchange \$45 million
McCarran Boulevard Greg Street – Longley Lane	Widen to 6/8 lanes \$28 million
Vista Boulevard Los Altos Parkway to Hills Drive	Widen to 6 lanes \$15 million
McCarran Boulevard W. 4th Street – W. 7th Street	Widen/Interchange \$64 million
Southeast Connector S. Meadows Parkway – Greg Street	New 6-lane arterial \$152 million
Vista Boulevard I-80 to Los Altos Parkway	Widen 6/8 lanes \$23 million
Moana Lane I-580 to S. Virginia Street	Widen to 6 lanes \$32 million
McCarran Boulevard Prater Way to Greg Street	Widen to 8 lanes \$27 million

## The Important Question for Transit

- Increased gas prices have drastically impacted our community. People are looking to mass transit as a viable alternative to driving.
- RTC RIDE, RTC SIERRA SPIRIT and RTC INTERCITY have seen record ridership numbers over the past 12 months, reaching more than 9 million rides.



At a time when ridership has increased to unprecedented levels, the RTC is facing tough choices in offering regional transit services.

Sales tax revenues are the primary source of transit operating funds and they are down significantly with a decline in the economy. RTC watches forecasted revenues carefully to make reasonable and responsible changes to services as the need arises.

Fares were increased earlier this year and are now set at a rate that puts the local system among the highest fares in the country for comparable size.

In addition to increasing fares to meet the financial challenges, the RTC Board of Commissioners voted to cut about 9 percent of existing bus service this year with the latest cuts taking effect in October. Without new funding, additional cuts of up to 25 percent are possible beginning next year.

In the long term, the shortfall in the amount needed to provide expanded transit services for our community is estimated at more than \$1 billion through 2040. Question RTC-2 will be on the November ballot and will ask Washoe County voters to consider the approval of a one-eighth of one percent increase to the sales tax rate which is authorized by Nevada statute. It is a binding question and not advisory.

The proposed one-eighth of one percent sales tax would raise about \$280 million by 2040. It would add a little more than a penny to a \$10 purchase. The average person would pay about \$1.94 a month, just about what a single bus ride costs today.

If RTC-2 passes, collection of the one-eighth of one percent increase could begin in April 2009. The need to cut service an additional 25% would be avoided, some service would be restored and some expansion would be possible where needed and effective.

If voters choose not to approve RTC-2, the RTC Board would be faced with making \$3.2 million in cuts in 2009 to reach the 25 percent level of cutbacks needed. Service could be eliminated on routes, frequency might be reduced to certain days or times, or cuts could be based on location and ridership. To make the 25 percent reduction in service possible, cutbacks could also touch transit services previously not impacted including services for the elderly and the disabled provided by RTC ACCESS.

## AVERAGE TRAFFIC DELAYS IN WASHOE COUNTY WILL GROW FROM 4 TO OVER 30 MINUTES IN 10 YEARS!

### BETTER ROADS & TRANSIT SAVE TIME AND MONEY!

- By 2018, the average resident of the Truckee Meadows will spend 65 hours a year stuck in gridlock.
- The annual impact of traffic delays and wasted fuel to our local economy is more than \$80 million-or \$710 per traveler, and growing each year.
- Traffic congestion now wastes almost 4 million gallons of fuel annually costing Washoe County taxpayers \$13 million and could increase more than five fold in just the next ten years.
- Public Transit takes thousands of cars off our roads each day saving you time and money.

**THE BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS:**

**RTC-2** would activate a one-eighth of one percent increase in the transportation sales tax already authorized by NRS 377A. This would cost the average person \$1.94 per month and would avoid transit service cuts of about 25%.

**RTC-5** adjusts fuel tax rates to construction inflation. This would cost the average driver about \$1.10 per month beginning in 2010 and would recover \$2.6 billion in lost purchasing power over the next 30 years; reducing road congestion, stimulating our local economy, and saving us all time and money.

*All revenues generated will be used only in Washoe County.*

**Transportation: It's THAT Important!**

**RTC**  
[rtcwashoe.com](http://rtcwashoe.com)  
**Vote Nov. 4th!**

## Impacts if RTC-2 is Approved by Voters

- Adds one-eighth of one percent in sales tax
- Stops about 20-25 percent cuts in current transit services
- Would allow restoration/expansion of transit service (Spanish Springs, Summit Sierra)
- Provides potential funding for the first phase of rapid transit services in the Virginia Street Corridor and growth of RTC ACCESS

RTC-2 would add 1.3 cents on a \$10 purchase or about \$23 per year per resident.

## Ridership Sets Records on RTC Systems

Ridership on RTC RIDE, RTC INTERCITY, and RTC SIERRA SPIRIT reached highest levels ever over the last 12 months, according to Ed Park, RTC assistant transit planner, who is charged with keeping an eye on statistics. Park said there were more than 9 million system rides during that period. For July, the 798,980 rides represented an increase of 4.3 percent over last year, the highest July total ever. At 25,839 trips, average daily ridership was 2.4 percent higher than last year.

Adult ridership was up 4.3 percent. Senior & disabled ridership was up 9.4 percent. RTC INTERCITY ridership at 5,429 was up 61 percent compared with last year and RTC SIERRA SPIRIT was 44,842, up 29 percent.

Park said nearly all categories were at record levels even though the system endured service cuts of nearly two percent that were implemented in May, reducing frequency or span of service on many routes. RTC also raised fares in May for adults, senior and disabled riders and for passes. With the changes, productivity was five percent higher than last year. As gas prices hit an all time record—more than one dollar per gallon more than last year—people took the bus.

## Successful Season...

*continued from page 1...*

Built by Sierra Nevada Construction, the Los Altos intersections project at Sparks and Vista boulevards included adding lanes and traffic signal improvements to better handle all the traffic in Spanish Springs. The work will make those intersections operate better and safer while moving more traffic more efficiently.

Grand opening ceremonies for the \$9.2 million Regional Transportation Commission project at the intersection of Pyramid Highway with La Posada Drive and Eagle Canyon in Sparks were held June 26.

Local officials joined project partners to mark completion of the job, which added two roundabouts adjacent to the intersection and provided for dual turn lanes all around to ease movement. A new acceleration lane allows traffic to merge onto southbound Pyramid Highway from eastbound Eagle Canyon.

Work began in summer 2007 on the project also managed by Dennis. Stantec Consulting designed the project built by Sierra Nevada Construction.

## Sales Tax Drop May Mean Service Cuts

Sales tax collection for the county is down significantly over last year with the economic slowdown. RTC projects that declining revenues will force bus service cutbacks to keep expenses in line with resources as early as spring 2009. Sales tax funds 70 percent of the operational costs of the service for RTC's RIDE, ACCESS, SIERRA SPIRIT and INTERCITY. Service reductions of 25 percent are projected. Some routes would be eliminated and some would see reduced frequency but no decisions have been made yet on where it would be best to cut.

Most funding for transit comes from local sales taxes.



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