



PIONEER TRAIL/ U.S. HIGHWAY 50 INTERSECTION SAFETY IMPROVEMENT Project Fact Sheet

Project Overview

The community of Meyers functions as the primary entry point into the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) with more visitors entering the Basin through Meyers than any other area around the lake.

The stretch of U.S. Highway 50/ State Route 89 (US50/SR89) traversing Meyers is designated as a scenic corridor by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and Caltrans, offering breathtaking panoramic vistas of Tahoe's alpine peaks. The biking and hiking trails that traverse the area provide access to some of the region's best recreational resources.¹

The County of El Dorado (County) as the project sponsor and Lead Agency, in cooperation with Caltrans, is proposing to convert an existing signalized intersection at the US50/SR 89 and Pioneer Trail intersection into a three-leg modern roundabout.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to improve safety at the US50/SR89 and Pioneer Trail intersection for all modes of travel, improve traffic flow, reduce vehicle speeds through the intersection and into the Meyers area, reduce vehicle emissions associated with traffic delays, and improve access to nearby bikeways and trails.

Several prior plans and studies have identified a need for safety and transportation improvements at the study intersection. Three issues help define the need for improvements:

- High number of collisions;
- Disjointed pedestrian and bicycle facilities lack connectivity; and
- Unacceptable intersection level of service (LOS) during peak periods.

These issues correspond to three needs for this project, described in greater detail below:

- Enhance Safety;
- Provide Bicycle and Pedestrian Access; and,
- Reducing speed and improving traffic flow through the corridor.

In 2012, the US50/SR89 and Pioneer Trail intersection was identified as a high collision location.² It was determined that most collisions at the intersection were a result of drivers traveling at unsafe speeds in snowy or icy conditions. Most collisions occurred on the northbound right-turn movement onto Pioneer Trail. Collision data collected for the last three years showed that the most common collision type was broadside collisions.

When compared to traditional intersection controls, roundabouts have fewer conflict points for

¹ County of El Dorado, *Meyers Area Plan*, 2018, page 1-4.

² County of El Dorado, *2011 Annual Accident Location Survey*, 2012.

vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. This directly correlates to improved safety. Roundabouts have the potential to reduce the number and severity of broadside collisions, reduce vehicle speeds, and reduce exposure for people bicycling and walking compared to traditional intersections. A study of 55 roundabouts in the United States concluded that roundabouts generally reduce crashes by 35 percent overall, reduce injury crashes by 76 percent, and reduce fatal crashes by 90 percent.³

At the study intersection, pedestrian crossings are currently only permitted in the crosswalk on the north leg of the intersection. All other pedestrian movements are prohibited. While this crosswalk connects to a shared use path on the west side of US50/SR89, it does not connect to another pedestrian facility on the east side. A Class I shared use path parallel to US50/SR89 on the west side does not connect to Class II bicycle lanes or the Class I shared use path on the east side of US50/SR89. Accommodation for people walking, bicycling, and riding transit was identified as a need in the 2020 *Regional Transportation Plan*.⁴

Both US50/SR89 and Pioneer Trail are heavily traveled routes between Meyers and South Lake Tahoe. Traffic levels at this location are highly variable throughout the year, as the intersection serves tourist traffic to and from Lake Tahoe, Nevada, and a variety of other outdoor recreation opportunities. Traffic levels can vary significantly based on weather, economic conditions, special events, and other factors. The summer months typically have the highest traffic volumes due to the wide range of tourist attractions throughout the Tahoe Basin, but traffic congestion is typically worse in winter due to weather conditions, chain restrictions, and avalanche control operations.

LOS standards for the project are set by Caltrans, the TRPA, and the County. The existing intersection currently operates at an unacceptable LOS during Sunday peak hours, with a LOS E or F between 10:45 AM and 2:00 PM. With no improvements, LOS at the intersection would continue to worsen and result in extensive delays and long queues. The County's 2018 *Meyers Area Plan* includes policy and implementation language that recommends reducing traffic speeds through Meyers without adversely affecting air quality and enhancing the intersection at US50/SR89 and Pioneer Trail to improve LOS and traffic flow, reduce vehicle emissions, and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Total Project Cost & Anticipated Completion

With an anticipated completion of 2025, the total estimated project cost is \$9.13 million.

Funding

This County General Plan circulation improvement and safety project is funded by the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ), Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG), and local funds from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Mitigation Funds.

³ Federal Highway Administration National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 572, *Roundabouts in the United States*, 2007.

⁴ Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, *Regional Transportation Plan*, 2021.

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Project Approval History

Capital Improvement Program (CIP)	June 2012
Caltrans Cooperative Agreement for Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) Phase	September 2017
Caltrans Cooperative Agreement for Plans, Specifications, and Estimate (PS&E) Phase	November 2019
Preferred Project Alternative	August 2019
Final Environmental Document	January 2022
Caltrans Project Report Approved	March 2022

Public Outreach / Meetings, 2016 – 2022

Agency stakeholder meeting	February 2016
Road Safety Audit field and office meeting	February 2016
Road Safety Audit draft report discussion	March 2016
Pop-up tent/table in Meyers	April 2016
Two (2) pop-up tent/table events in Meyers	June 2016
Community/Public Meeting at CCC Tahoe Center	July 2016
Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce	October 2016
Emergency Responders Meeting	January 2017
Agency stakeholder meeting	February 2017
Board of Supervisors ‘Roundabout 101’ presentation	March 2019
Meyers Advisory Council presentation	May 2019
Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative/ Community Mobility Group	May 2019
Public Workshop and Open House Meeting	June 2019
Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce	June 2019
Preferred Project Alternative Selected	August 2019
Meyers Advisory Council project update	August 2020
CEQA adoption and approve project by Board of Supervisors	January 2022

Questions or comments regarding the Pioneer Trail/ U.S. Highway 50 Intersection Safety Improvement Project, visit the project website at:

<https://www.edcgov.us/government/dot/tahoeengineering/pages/meverscoip.aspx>

The El Dorado County Department of Transportation 2022 CIP is available online on the El Dorado County website at: <https://www.edcgov.us/government/dot/pages/cip.aspx>