

January 22, 2024

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
Governing Board Chair and Members
128 Market St., Stateline, NV, 89410
Submitted via email

RE: VMT Threshold. League recommendation the TRPA Governing Board recognize that DP-5.4 has not been met and all development except deed-restricted affordable/workforce housing and single family residential must be no-net unmitigated VMT.

Chair Gustafson and Governing Board members,

The League thanks TRPA Governing Board and staff for the continued opportunity to work with staff and leadership to make progress on reducing vehicle miles traveled in the basin, an endeavor vital to protecting the lake from runoff from our urban landscape and roadways. The League is dedicated to supporting adaptive management of our environmental standards, including the important process of updating our environmental thresholds to meet current pressures and incorporate the best available science. We are committed to continued engagement in extensive dialogue around future updates. The Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) threshold update approved by this board in April of 2021 was the result of these lengthy discussions. We provide more detail in two of our past comment letters, attached.

As outlined in policies in DP-5.4.B of the Regional Plan¹, it must be acknowledged that we have not met the safeguard standard established by this threshold policy that was updated in April of 2021. The first binding requirement of this adopted policy is a funding trigger that goes into effect Jan 1st of 2024, if we do not have **ongoing funding** of \$20 million additional annual revenue to implement the vision laid forth in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The additional \$20 million annually was identified through the threshold update process as needed to drive progress towards threshold standard attainment, and is consistent with the current "7-7-7" funding framework.

Although the League **acknowledges and commends the work done** by our Tahoe collaborative, including local, state and the private sectors, to bring in significant funding towards transportation, including securing this year's funding goals, we have not met the established standard of an ongoing funding source(s).

The League recommends that the TRPA Governing Board recognize that Goal DP-5.4.B has not been met, and therefore, as stipulated in the TRPA's Regional Plan, there shall be no-net unmitigated VMT², except for deed restricted affordable and/or workforce housing and single family residential. Furthermore, the League commits to doubling efforts to identify and secure regional ongoing funding.

¹ TRPA Regional Plan amended April 28, 2021. Pg. 7-12. <https://www.trpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/Adopted-Regional-Plan.pdf>

² *ibid.* Pg. 7-13.

As mentioned above, this safeguard was diligently created through numerous conversations, iterations, and thoughtful intention to drive a collaborative process to secure ongoing funding. The \$20 million annual funding gap was identified as the barrier to implementing the RTP and therefore reducing VMT. The past funding strategy of struggling each year to get competitive funding from the two states and federal sources was deemed unsustainable. The goal is to not add vehicle miles to Tahoe, making the situation worse, while getting motivation from all stakeholders to identify and implement a regional ongoing funding source.

Leading up to threshold adoption, there were hopes but no certainty that some type of user fee, which was a self-help source of funding for the Basin, could be implemented. Unfortunately, that strategy is not viable now for various political and logistical reasons. While the 7-7-7 framework is showing promise, ongoing funding has not yet come to fruition and the safeguard put in place for this instance is now the backstop triggered. This first binding funding trigger is a standard of significance for all projects in the basin (except affordable housing) of no-net unmitigated VMT.

The conversation at this month's Governing Board meeting should be around supporting and advising on how to ensure projects can achieve no-net unmitigated VMT and a recommitment of partners to find an eloquent (and likely creative) source of regional ongoing funding.

Lastly, but equally as important, the League does not want to take away from the success in achieving the 7-7-7 framework for discrete funding. The formal commitment by Nevada, Placer County, the City of South Lake Tahoe and the informal buy-in from partners such as the League to this framework, shows that the threat of this trigger has been working. For example, the League played a foundational role in bringing microtransit to Tahoe, and most recently launched and funded Lake Link on the South Shore. We also continuously lobby for transportation funding. Placer County has also demonstrated a commitment to additional ongoing funding with its Business Improvement District and tourist occupancy tax revenues dedicated to transit, employer trip reduction program, and parking management efforts. Despite this strong commitment to this framework, it remains that we do not have ongoing funding for the \$20 million annual gap as directed in the updated threshold.

The League looks forward to continuing advocating with the Tahoe partnership for ongoing funding for transportation --- our collaborative efforts will be vital to ensuring success. We hope that we can continue the invigorated efforts by all partners to find solutions to ongoing funding and for helping projects to be no-net unmitigated VMT to work together to ensure the health and sustainability of the Tahoe Basin, its residents, and Lake Tahoe's renowned clarity which we all enjoy.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly with any questions.

Sincerely,



Gavin Feiger

Policy Director

On behalf of the League to Save Lake Tahoe