

# Officials to consider southeast connector design

**BY JEFF DELONG**  
jdelong@rgj.com

Construction of a controversial road linking Sparks to southeast Reno should proceed sooner rather than later to save money and improve Steamboat Creek, transportation officials say.

On Friday, the Regional Transportation Commission will consider the next step in the long-debated project, beginning preliminary design of the so-called "southeast connector road" and seeking needed permits from the federal government.

While actual construction of the road is probably five years off, proceeding with the next phase immediately could offer important benefits, said Garth Oksol, project manager.

"My recommendation is that we start now," Oksol said.

Construction of the road, expected to cost between

## If you go

**WHAT:** Regional Transportation Commission

**WHEN:** 9 a.m. Friday

**WHERE:** Regional Transportation Center, 2050 Villanova Drive

\$203 million and \$221 million, could increase between \$20 million and \$40 million each year construction is delayed, he said.

The RTC would be required to restore wetlands and offset flood impacts along Steamboat Creek, with an opportunity now to merge the road project with a major restoration project long planned for Steamboat Creek by the Washoe-Storey Conservation District.

"There's potential for partnership with some other groups to do the work in conjunction," Oksol said. "I think there's an opportunity to do something more, above and

beyond what we would have to do."

If the project is delayed, Oksol said in a report to the RTC, "opportunities may be harder to accomplish or may be completely gone. The project team feels time is of the essence."

First proposed in 1965, the road formerly known as the Tahoe-Pyramid link has been debated for years. Officials said it is a critical alternative to U.S. 395 for north-south travel.

The road is opposed by many. Last November, when the RTC selected a precise alignment for the road that would go 9 miles from the base of Geiger Grade through Rosewood Lakes and cross the Truckee River by bridge to end in Sparks, many in the audience voiced their dismay.

"We all have an issue with it," Hidden Valley resident Roger Jewett said. "We just don't think it's needed."

Jewett said he believes there are alternatives to the road construction, including widening McCarran Boulevard.

"Fix McCarran. Fix the freeways. Don't be putting in another road," Jewett said.

Jewett said he's concerned the project will "ruin" Rosewood Lakes Golf Course and damage wetlands.

"To me, it seems there is a disregard for the last remaining wetlands here," he said.

One recent change will reduce impacts on wetlands, Oksol said. When flood control officials decided against building a \$300 million flood control dam in the Huffaker Hills as part of the Truckee River Flood Project, some changes in the alignment of the road's southern stretch were made possible.

That should reduce the amount of wetlands affected from about 10 acres to as few as eight, Oksol said, adding he hopes to reduce that number further.