WASHOE COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS
1001 E 9th Street, Building A, Reno, NV
Date/Time: September 29, 2026 - 6:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

JOINT SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION OF WASHOE COUNTY
AND
STOREY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PRESENT:

Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County Board Members
Alexis Hill, Chair, Washoe County Commissioner
Devon Reese, Vice Chair, Reno City Council
Ed Lawson, Mayor of Sparks
Mariluz Garcia, Washoe County Commissioner (Via Phone)
Tracy Larkin Thomason, Director of NDOT
Bill Thomas, RTC Executive Director
Adam Spear, RTC Legal Counsel

Storey County Board of County Commissioners
Chair Carmona
Vice Chair Mitchell
Commissioner Gilman
Austin Osborne, County Manager
Clerk Treasurer Hindle
Assistant District Attorney Brown

ABSENT:
Hillary Schieve, Mayor of Reno, RTC Board

The Special Joint Meeting of the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County and the Storey County Board of County Commissioners was called to order by RTC Chair Hill at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was established for both governing bodies.

1. Welcome from RTC Chair

Chair Hill called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She welcomed attendees and recognized the meeting as the first joint meeting of the RTC Board and the Storey County Board of County Commissioners.

2. Call to Order

2.1 Roll Call

2.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Roll calls were taken separately for each governing body, and a quorum was confirmed for both. Assembly members Dickman and Anderson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Comment: ***Public comment taken under this item may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The Chair may take public comment on a particular item on the agenda at the time it is discussed. Comments are to be made to the governing bodies as a whole and not to individual commissioners.***

J Uhart discussed a proposed 13.3-mile aerial gondola system to transport workers to and from the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center (TRIC) and alleviate traffic congestion on I-80. He stated that the project has received preliminary support and that funding for a three-phase feasibility study is anticipated from Panasonic. The study would evaluate wind conditions, geography, and construction feasibility. Mr. Uhart emphasized that the fully electric gondola could transport approximately 5,500 workers per hour, operate around the clock to accommodate varying work shifts, and potentially reduce I-80 traffic by 63–70%. He highlighted the lengthy commutes experienced by Tesla and Panasonic employees and suggested the gondola as a more efficient and sustainable transportation alternative.

Gary Troyer opposed the La Posada alignment, citing potential traffic impacts to the Cimarron neighborhood. He questioned why the alignment remained under consideration, requested better public communication, and stated that any connector should provide four lanes to accommodate traffic during incidents.

Fred Krueger opposed the proposed connector, citing neighborhood quality of life, property values, and concerns that additional development would offset congestion relief. He disputed the report's characterization of stakeholder feedback and requested that the report reflect residents' opposition.

Chris Reilly spoke on behalf of Tesla in support of advancing both alignments into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. He described employee commute and retention concerns, Tesla's shuttle and vanpool participation, and investment in the Patrick Interchange. He stated that environmental review would provide information needed to evaluate an additional route.

Don Tatro spoke on behalf of Redwood Materials in support of studying both alignments. He described traffic impacts on employee recruitment, retention, family time, suppliers, and company operations, and encouraged regional collaboration and consideration of multiple transportation alternatives.

Daryl D. Gardipe spoke as Chair of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony (RSIC) and reiterated the Colony's opposition and concerns regarding the lack of early consultation. He requested correction of the report's description of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Sparks and RSIC, explaining that it reserves portions of Sections 31 and

32 for a potential transportation corridor without specifying a road. Michon R. Eben, the Colony's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, also presented a confidential cultural resources map, described the area's cultural significance, and emphasized protection of cultural sites and early coordination with the Colony.

Jackie Pierrott spoke on behalf of Panasonic Energy in support of Item 5.1 and advancing both alignments into NEPA review. She emphasized regional connectivity, emergency access, workforce growth, and the need to evaluate transportation benefits and potential impacts.

James Shepherd stated that a two-lane connector would be insufficient and recommended a freeway connection between U.S. 395 and USA Parkway with capacity for future expansion. He also proposed regional electric rail and toll incentives to encourage carpooling and public transportation.

Mary Claire Landke supported a Northeast Connector and emphasized the importance of alternate routes for evacuations, emergency response, and access to medical care. She recommended at least two lanes in each direction and expressed a preference for the Vista area connection. She also raised concerns about access to pharmacies and DMV services.

Thomas Bagan supported the connector and further study but requested quantitative modeling of cut-through traffic and impacts on Vista Boulevard. He suggested that La Posada could have fewer adverse effects on Vista traffic, supported immediate I-80 traffic management measures, and encouraged clearer public communication about the study.

Kristen Geddes supported advancing only the Vista alignment, citing the report's comparisons of cost, private property impacts, environmental resources, travel time, and traffic performance. She expressed concern that La Posada would direct additional traffic onto an already congested Pyramid Highway.

Joe Mudd expressed opposition to both alignments but stated that the Golden Eagle connection and connections to Los Altos and Prater would be preferable if a route were selected. He cited potential neighborhood traffic, pollution, and development impacts and encouraged preservation of the area as a regional park.

Mike Clark supported additional transportation access to TRIC but recommended a broader freeway system rather than the proposed connector. He suggested widening I-80, improving interchanges, and planning a future northern freeway connection to U.S. 395.

Tracey Thomas expressed concern that the La Posada alignment would create traffic and safety problems, including truck turning movements and access to the Spanish Springs fire station. She requested evaluation of a connection farther north at Calle de la Plata to serve the Spanish Springs Business Center.

Terry Lennon opposed both proposed western termini, citing traffic volumes near homes and safety risks to residents, cyclists, and recreational users. He requested consideration of a connection farther north on Pyramid Highway in an area with lower population density.

Geoff Donahue spoke on behalf of My Ride to Work in support of further study and alternate road access to TRIC. He described the company's employee transportation experience and emphasized public-private partnerships to address regional growth and transportation needs.

Kristene Biglieri described the effects of growth and congestion on residents and TRIC employees. She encouraged feasibility studies, continued community involvement, and careful consideration of potential development impacts to Spanish Springs and Palomino Valley.

Josh Hebert opposed the connector, stating that additional roads would induce demand and provide limited congestion relief. He questioned the projected safety, reliability, and economic benefits and urged investment in alternatives to single-occupant vehicles.

Eddie Goenne opposed both alignments and recommended prioritizing a larger I-80 expansion. He expressed concern that new roads would encourage development of public land, increase neighborhood traffic, and harm wildlife.

Justin Haghighi urged the Board not to advance either alignment, citing limited projected traffic benefits, long-term maintenance and operating costs, and safety concerns. He questioned funding for NEPA review and impacts on other transportation priorities and emphasized the benefits of the planned I-80 widening.

Teddy Elwell opposed both alignments and encouraged rail service, employer incentives, and a wider I-80 with emergency travel lanes. He cited concerns about wildlife, hunting and recreational access, and development of public land.

Yevette Perdue opposed both alignments, citing neighborhood safety, existing Pyramid Highway congestion, wildlife impacts, project funding, and potential housing development. She encouraged consideration of alternatives, including the proposed gondola, rather than directing additional traffic through residential communities.

The Board Clerk reported that eight emailed public comments had been received, distributed to both governing bodies, and would be made part of the permanent record.

4. Joint Presentation and Discussion Item

4.1 Presentation from staff regarding the Northeast Connector Feasibility Study Final Report and joint discussion and deliberation regarding the report and next steps for advancing the Vista Boulevard and La Posada Drive alignments into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for further evaluation. (No Action)

RTC Project Manager Bryan Byrne and Wood Rodgers Project Manager Bryan Gant presented the final feasibility study. They explained that the study evaluated a redundant east-west connection between eastern Sparks and Spanish Springs and TRIC to improve regional mobility, travel time reliability, safety, and economic development. The presentation noted substantial growth in I-80 traffic and the TRIC workforce and that approximately 85 percent of commute trips originate in the Truckee Meadows north of I-80.

They described screening of the corridor alternatives and public outreach, including approximately 1,000 comments and 705 survey responses. Public concerns included neighborhood traffic, trucks, noise, wildlife, cultural resources, funding, and other transportation modes. Approximately 85 percent of survey respondents identified I-80 congestion as a critical issue, approximately 60 percent supported moving forward, and approximately 31 percent favored exploring other options.

Staff reviewed revisions to the final report, including removal of the spur connecting Vista Boulevard and La Posada Drive, additional discussion of the Sparks-RSIC MOU, comparison of the remaining alignments, and incorporation of public outreach findings. Both alignments were identified as feasible for further evaluation, with estimated project costs of $275 million for Vista Boulevard and $450 million for La Posada Drive.

Executive Director Bill Thomas reviewed other transportation efforts. He described NDOT's South Meadows corridor study, with conceptual costs of approximately $870 million to $1.6 billion, and the decision to pursue I-80 widening. He also summarized the jointly funded rail feasibility study, including the need for state operating authority and Union Pacific approval, approximately $175 million in initial capital costs, approximately $1.2 billion at full buildout, and approximately $11 million in annual operating costs. He noted ongoing legislative consideration of rail authority and funding, private employee shuttles, and growth in RTC's vanpool program.

Storey County Manager Austin Osborne described the public-private partnership that completed the approximately $4.3 million Patrick Interchange improvement, potential routes within Storey County, participation in the rail study, and land use changes intended to reduce commuting on I-80. He stated that Storey County had planned for approximately 10,000 homes along the southern corridor and updated zoning and development requirements. He also discussed extended-stay, RV, and potential worker accommodations as parts of a broader transportation strategy.

Mr. Thomas reported that the I-80 East Widening Project completed NEPA review in September 2025 and was in preconstruction with Granite Construction. The project includes three general-purpose lanes in each direction, wider shoulders, and interchange and safety improvements. Construction was targeted for late 2027 or early 2028, with an approximately three-year construction period. Staff recommended advancing both connector alignments into NEPA review.

Vice Chair Reese reserved his comments for the later discussion. Commissioner Garcia asked about the feasibility study's cost and funding.

Deputy Executive Director Dale Keller reported an overall budget of approximately $1.3 million, expenditures to date of approximately $600,000, and local fuel tax funding.

Chair Hill asked about consultation with RSIC, the MOU, and protection of cultural resources.

Mr. Keller acknowledged that the Colony should have been engaged earlier and described subsequent discussions and the additional fieldwork and coordination required during environmental review. The consultant explained that NEPA review would include

formal tribal coordination, cultural resource and wildlife studies, and more detailed analysis of traffic and operational impacts at both termini. Chair Hill emphasized consultation before fieldwork and consideration of avoidance of cultural sites.

Storey County Vice Chair Mitchell asked whether funding evaluation could occur concurrently with environmental review and whether the study could accommodate two- and four-lane configurations.

Mr. Keller stated that funding options would be evaluated in parallel, that the project was currently identified as unfunded in RTC's Regional Transportation Plan, and that the feasibility study considered an ultimate four-lane corridor while projected traffic supported an initial two-lane facility.

Storey County Chair Carmona thanked attendees and acknowledged the public input.

No action was taken under this item.

5. RTC Board Action Item

5.1 Authorize staff to advance the Vista Boulevard and La Posada Drive alignments into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for further evaluation. (For Possible Action by the RTC Board Only)

Chair Hill explained that only the RTC Board could take action at this meeting and that Storey County would consider any participation at a separate meeting.

Mayor Lawson stated that he could support a study of La Posada but could not support the Vista/Golden Eagle alignment because of cultural resources and the MOU between Sparks and RSIC. He also requested consideration of a Calle de la Plata extension.

Commissioner Garcia supported further environmental and cultural analysis of both corridors and emphasized respectful coordination with RSIC. She asked about cost sharing for the estimated $3 million to $5 million NEPA process. Mr. Thomas stated that funding partners had not been finalized and that staff would seek participation from Storey County, the State, and businesses and present a funding proposal to the RTC Board.

Vice Chair Reese supported studying both alignments, citing the need for regional cooperation and an alternate route during I-80 closures. He acknowledged concerns about neighborhoods, open space, wildlife, cultural resources, property, and quality of life. He emphasized that environmental review would provide information for a later route decision, encouraged continued pursuit of rail and other transit alternatives, and called for shared regional funding.

Chair Hill supported a more resilient road network for Sparks and Spanish Springs and continued advancement of rail. She identified obtaining legislative authority and developing a rail funding plan as priorities and emphasized engaging RSIC at the beginning of the connector's next phase.

Chair Hill moved to authorize staff to advance the Vista Boulevard and La Posada Drive alignments into the NEPA process for further evaluation, including early engagement with

the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. Vice Chair Reese seconded the motion. The motion carried 3–1, with Chair Hill, Vice Chair Reese, and Commissioner Garcia voting in favor and Mayor Lawson opposed.

Mr. Thomas explained that Storey County's ability to take action outside its county was limited. Mr. Osborne stated that Storey County tentatively planned to consider the matter at its October 6, 2026 meeting. Vice Chair Mitchell thanked RTC for hosting and stated that Storey County would determine its participation through consultation with staff and its public process. Chairs Hill and Carmona acknowledged the importance of collaboration. The Storey County Board took no official action at this meeting.

6. Public Comment: ***Public comment taken under this item may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The Chair may take public comment on a particular item on the agenda at the time it is discussed. Comments are to be made to the governing bodies as a whole and not to individual commissioners.***

Eloisa Phelps expressed concern that the connector would shift congestion from I-80 onto local streets and impair emergency access. She encouraged commuter rail and I-80 widening instead of adding truck and vehicle traffic to residential roads.

George Forbush opposed both alignments on behalf of residents and wildlife organizations, citing effects on open space, wildlife, cultural sites, and neighborhood quality of life. He urged completion and evaluation of I-80 improvements before considering another corridor.

Trista Gomez questioned how residential and industrial growth had proceeded without adequate transportation infrastructure. She described the effects of congestion on residents' time and costs and called for stronger coordination of development, traffic capacity, safety, and emergency services.

Natha Anderson thanked the governing bodies for addressing the transportation problem and encouraged thoughtful evaluation. She noted ongoing legislative rail discussions and emphasized involving Nevada's congressional delegation because of the amount of federally managed land in the study area.

Fred Krueger expressed disappointment with the decision to advance both alignments and reiterated his opposition pending consideration of additional alternatives. He emphasized preservation of public land, open space, recreation, and neighborhood quality of life and stated that he intended to remain involved.

Matthew Setty supported moving forward and recommended a formal framework or MOU for consultation with RSIC. He emphasized early protection of cultural resources and respect for tribal sovereignty as critical to the environmental review process.

7. Adjournment

With no further public comment or Board comments, Chair Hill adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

ALEXIS HILL, Chair
Regional Transportation Commission

Copies of all presentations are available by contacting Michelle Kraus at mkraus@rtcwashoe.com.