

28 March, 2017

Sandra Moberly, Planning Manager
Town of Mammoth Lakes
P.O. Box 1609
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Sandra:

The following comments pertain to my review of the Alta Design conceptual plan “Walk, Bike, Ride”. I also attended and spoke to Brent at the open house, and attended most of the Town Council/Planning and Economic Development Commission workshop later that day.

It appears that this conceptual plan was developed with only a cursory review of important approved documents such as the North Village Specific Plan, and based upon other conceptual plans such as the Hart/Howerton plan. When I asked Brent about actual site visits and discussions with those having on-the-ground knowledge and experience, he indicated that Alta was tasked with using other “plans” as the basis for this document. The Alta plan revealed little understanding of some of our current achievements, including a fare-free transit system supported by TOT funds, a well-planned trail system with few gaps, and the successful ESTA/Forest Service contract for the Reds Meadow shuttle. Some specific comments follow:

- P. 3 – Community Center Park: It is not noted that this is a park, not merely a community center. It also has a child care center, tennis courts and bleachers, restrooms, picnic tables, playground, and trails.
- Chap. 2 – “long-term parking” and “park once” – While the concepts sound great, the implementation doesn’t seem realistic or practical for Mammoth. Where to locate these large structures is a big question. The consultant doesn’t seem aware of the planned (and approved) Hillside parking structure, a permanent parking structure (300 spaces, 3 stories) on dedicated land in the Village. Its location makes it “customer-friendly” for Village activities and events, the Lakes Basin shuttle and for gondola access to MMSA’s Canyon Lodge. Interestingly, the consultant notes that the gondola is “successful in reducing driving to MMSA ski area” (p. 21), even though that is counter to the NVSP, which doesn’t allow for day-skier parking.
- Chap. 3 – “Transit Hubs” - While the concept may be good, the location of these is vague. Each one lists all possible uses in transit hubs (mobility hubs?). For example, the symbol on p. 16 placed at the Community Center Park is labeled a “Major Transit Hub”, containing a parking structure with an information center, retail, and housing (?!). This site is the least likely for a Village transit hub, or any of the other listed uses, as it is adjacent to a residential area, the farthest site from the Village center, and its location (northeast corner of Forest Trail and Minaret) would be problematic for pedestrians, buses as well as autos. Most importantly, it is a park, which the consultant doesn’t recognize. Brent indicated that this “major transit hub” was intended to serve as the new location for the Reds Meadow Shuttle (which makes no sense at all, see my comments re: “transit only”). Removing this symbol and placing it nearer any of the

corners of Main/Minaret, as shown in the NVSP would not only prevent the loss of park land (as we are directed to do in the P & R plan), but would make greater sense. When a symbol such as this continues to be placed on “concept plans” (e.g. Hart/Howerton), it then reappears on other concept documents (Alta, p. 16), neither of which reflect the already-approved 3-story, 300 space Hillside parking structure as shown in the NVSP. Seeing this symbol in the park encourages the next (concept) consultant to place that symbol where it does not belong. The NVSP shows the Village hub nearer to the corners of Main/Minaret, as should this plan

- Mammoth Mountain Main Lodge is shown as a “Minor Transit Hub”, despite the fact that it is a major commercial center with a variety of activities, including the successful transit hub for the Reds Meadow shuttle. The location of the shuttle (with plenty of vehicle parking for all activities) provides a quick turn-around to the valley and back, and the proposed Village relocation of the shuttle access would drastically increase the contract costs (and fares), including the turn-around time, and require more buses and drivers. In addition, free transit is provided from the Village on the bike-park buses (space available), and often via the Red Line earlier (and later) in the day, as needed. Bypassing a major commercial center would not be good customer service to our guests, nor would the relocation of access to the Reds shuttle. MMSA’s Main Lodge should be shown as a “Major Transit Hub”, and the Community Center Park transit hub eliminated, as it makes no sense.
- P. 18 – The Lakes Basin shuttle “Major Transit Hub”, as shown, contains fewer than twelve parking spots. The consultant explained that this was to be a major hub for bicycles and e-bikes (not for autos), but could not explain how this would function. It would seem that cars would continue to drive up to this viewpoint (even if the Lakes Basin access were gated), then have to turn around and go back to the Village to find parking. If shuttles were there at the same time, it would be a real traffic jam. This “Major Transit Hub” should remain as a shuttle stop with limited parking for the viewpoint, restrooms, and information, as it is now. The approved Hillside parking structure would better serve the shuttle’s customers in the shuttle’s current location.
- P.26 – “Transit Only” is a wonderful idea, but it is obvious that the consultant did not talk to either the Forest Service or ESTA as to how this idea would work in reality. In fact, there are hundreds of campsites in Reds Meadow valley, plus there are several other exceptions (resort guests, fishermen with float tubes, boats, etc.) which allow autos in the valley. Therefore, during the summer season, there will always be hundreds of autos in the valley, even when some of the campers use the inner-valley shuttle during their stay. The Lakes Basin would face the same “exceptions”, due to the large number of campers, resort guests, and summer home permittees. The cost of running a check station (to exclude autos) would also have to be considered. The Reds Meadow fee covers the shuttle contract and some of the entrance station.
- Wayfinding – p. 46. The consultant seems not to aware that the Town has a well-designed (by a large community group and professional designer) wayfinding plan ready to go out for bid, awaiting funding.
- P. 49, table 4: It appears that the consultant isn’t aware that many of these recommendations are already in place
- Chapter 7, Financing: other than the EIFD, this chapter is pretty thin.

- General comment: a downtown gondola with several stations would bypass much of the commercial downtown businesses, as well as being very costly to construct and operate. Each added station is more costly, the gondola must slow down often, and capacity is diminished. Additional transit with more frequent stops would be much more cost-efficient and customer-friendly.
- General Comment: we have enough “concept plans” such as this one, including Hart/Howerton, which thankfully was provided by MMSA, not the taxpayer. It’s time to use our funds to start implementation of some on-the-ground projects, such as the downtown median and other approved projects. For many years, we have seen many consultants hired by the town who do not present concrete proposals, and the Alta “plan” is just one more of those.
- Minor edits: p. 17 – change “Mono County transit” to “ESTA”; p. 39 – change “into the park” to “Into the valley”; change “US Park Service” to “National Park Service”

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Feel free to call me if you have any questions concerning my comments.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sandy G. Hogan

Sandy Hogan