



STOREY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Storey County Courthouse
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March 1, 2015

Re: Update on State Route 342 Closure and Anticipated Remedy

Storey County residents, businesses, et al.:

The Tuesday, March 3, 2015, Storey County Board of Commissioners meeting agenda includes an update pertaining to the temporary road closure of State Route 342 in southern Gold Hill. The following summarizes anticipated conditions and resolutions to the matter following continued close collaboration between Storey County, Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), Comstock Mining, Inc. (CMI), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other applicable entities. We hereby provide this release to the public. Please note that the terms and conditions described herein are tentative and subject to change. We hope this summary answers any questions that the public may have on the situation. This subject matter will also be discussed in detail at the March 3 meeting.

- Storey County, NDOT, other applicable regulatory agencies, and CMI have met to discuss and consider possible alternatives for temporary and permanent reopening and realignment of State Route 342 in Gold Hill. After consideration, NDOT recommended to Storey County the most viable options. According to those recommendations, the following will be performed.
- As illustrated in the attached map provided by CMI, portions of State Route 342 near the Lucerne Pit and the failing historic Silver Hills shaft will be re-aligned around both the pit and historic shaft. The realignment will occur over two phases, with Phase 1 taking approximately 10-12 weeks to complete and Phase 2 taking an additional six months to complete.
- CMI will excavate and remove approximately 40 feet of loose unconsolidated fill now existing above base bedrock level and immediately beneath the existing road. CMI will then construct the new bypass road upon the base bedrock and permanently cap the historic Silver Hills shaft. Removing existing loose fill and constructing the road on the base bedrock is expected to facilitate permanent long-term road stability.
- Phase 1 will commence after the March 3 Commission meeting, after NDOT provides temporary permits, and after AT&T relocates several phone line poles in the subject area.
- The estimated cost of the road realignment project is \$3 million. Project costs and surety bonding for its guaranteed completion will be provided by CMI. The surety bond will be posted with the Storey County Clerk's Office along with the portion of CMI's required post-mining reclamation bond exceeding Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) minimum requirements.
- As shown on the attached map, the north half of the new road (shown in gray) will become part of the permanent realignment; the southern half (shown as two black lines) will temporarily connect the permanent northern portion of the new road to existing State Route 342. Phase 1 completion is expected to take 10-12 weeks, pending weather and unforeseen circumstances, and is expected to open on or before June 6, 2015. (Note: Sufficient progress is expected by May to facilitate the Reno-Tahoe Odyssey run through Gold Hill.)

- Phase 2 will commence as soon as Phase 1 is complete. CMI will perform some Phase 2 work concurrently with Phase 1; however, some Phase 1 work is prerequisite to Phase 2. Phase 2 will commence at the south edge of the Phase 1 road (permanent portion) and will continue southward past the Lucerne Pit area before it abuts existing State Route 342. When completed, the temporary bypass connection (shown in double black lines) will be removed. The Phase 2 southern alignment will cross the Gold Creek in two places. The new road, however, will bridge the creek without affect it, thus eliminating any impact to the creek and minimizing permitting requirements. A jurisdictional determination has been made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Gold Creek, and the creek will be carefully avoided. According to CMI, an archeological survey approved by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was reviewed for the project and the work area was found to have no impacts on cultural sites. Storey County will validate this claim and continue its communication with the SHPO throughout project development.
- While north and southbound traffic travels on the Phase 1 permanent alignment and temporary bypass, CMI will continue working on Phase 2 of the project through most of December of 2015. This includes design, engineering, permitting, and construction of the road, as well as developing both creek crossings. Once complete, the Phase 2 road will be connected to Phase 1 road, thus finalizing the entire permanent State Route 342 realignment.
- A second but relatively brief road closure will be necessary on or about the second week of December in order to finish culvert foundations and connect the new alignment to the remaining existing road. The length of this closure depends on crossing types employed. Storey County, CMI, and other regulatory agencies will work together on scheduling this December road closure around key tourism events, such as “Christmas on the Comstock”.
- During and following Phase 2 work, CMI will begin partial reclamation of disturbed land between the new road and the Lucerne Pit, including portions of the Lucerne Pit’s east high-wall. When completed, there will be a new engineered slope between the new road and the existing Lucerne Pit. It appears from Storey County’s communication with CMI, but not yet verified by NDOT, that the slope will be approved by NDOT and assessed by it and the applicable agencies for its interrelation to the new road. As initially planned, CMI will finish mining the Lucerne Pit downward 60 more feet until the ore is exhausted (this will not commence until after the March 3 Commission meeting).
- In the meantime, CMI and NDOT will continue monitoring potential ground movement before and after local blasting. Starting Wednesday, March 4, 2015, Storey County staff will physically observe pre- and post-blast data from each area ground vibration monitoring device. Thereafter, Storey County will be provided results of all blasts (pre and post) so that it may monitor conditions and require changes as appropriate.
- At the March 3 Commission meeting, CMI will present technical materials pertaining to the above and will answer questions of the board and public. A representative from NDOT is also expected to be present.

Sincerely,

Austin Osborne
Storey County Planning Director

Enc.: Illustration of proposed 342 bypass