



North Valleys Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes of the regular meeting of the North Valleys Citizen Advisory Board held on December 8th, 2025, at 6:00 P.M. Reno Stead Airport, 4895 Texas Ave, Reno NV 89506

1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

PRESENT – Aaron Jennings, Susan VanNess, Scott Finley, Shelia Herring, Roger Edwards
ABSENT – Krystal Ayers

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF November 10, 2025

Aaron Jennings motioned to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2025, North Valleys CAB meeting. Scott Finely seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

4. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Katherine Yriarte announced she is running for Washoe County Commissioner for District 5. She said her campaign is focused on ensuring every voice is heard and every community is well represented. Her priorities include improving limited county-level resources for seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers; addressing infrastructure challenges by holding developers more accountable for providing necessary infrastructure; protecting open space and the rural way of life; and recognizing the district's geographic size and diversity so residents can live as they choose and feel their communities matter.

Veronica Cortes shared her personal history and said her lived experience drives her desire to serve as Washoe County Commissioner for District 5. She spoke candidly about overcoming 15 years of substance use and being 16 years in recovery, noting the lack of local mental health and community resources and the need to rebuild communities from the inside out. Cortes highlighted her work as a lunch lady at Lemon Valley Elementary, where she sees firsthand the needs of local children and families, and her involvement on the Sun Valley Citizens Advisory Board. She described founding a nonprofit focused on ranching, farming, and youth education, working with courts to help people complete community service locally so they can become productive members of society. Emphasizing deep roots in the area, small business ownership, and community service, she said electing local leaders who live and work in the district is key to improving District 5.

Amy Cummings, a transportation planner working with the Regional Transportation Commission, announced an upcoming public meeting for the Sun Valley and Panther Valley Neighborhood Network Plan. She said the meeting will be held the following evening at Hug High School from 5 to 7 p.m. and will focus on neighborhood-level improvements, particularly for bicycle and pedestrian safety rather than major roadways. Cummings encouraged residents to attend,

review project maps, and share ideas and concerns directly with the project team, noting that additional information is available on the RTC website and that this plan is one of several neighborhood plans being rolled out across the region.

Russ Earle raised concerns about a proposed change to the Silver Hills development in Silver Knolls that may come forward in February. He said the developer is requesting what is being called a “minor change” to increase density on the east side of Red Rock Road from about one home per acre to as many as five to seven homes per acre, which residents view as a significant increase. Earle also noted the developer is seeking to remove previously required conditions, including widening Red Rock Road to two lanes in each direction and constructing an equestrian underpass to access nearby BLM land. He warned that higher density without road, traffic, and flood mitigation improvements could create serious impacts for Silver Knolls and surrounding areas and urged residents to attend upcoming meetings and speak out if the proposal moves forward.

5. CAB MEMBER/ COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/ COMMENTS

Susan VanNess suggested creating a single, shared online forum for residents across the North Valleys to communicate and receive information. She said posting in multiple community groups, such as Cold Springs and Red Rock, can be difficult and inconsistent, and having one centralized place would make it easier to share meeting notices, reminders, and local updates while allowing residents to communicate issues happening in their individual neighborhoods.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

Joe Schum, Division Chief with Truckee Meadows Fire and Rescue, provided a public safety update for the North Valleys and shared seasonal safety reminders. He reported that November call volume was lower than average, with fewer traffic accidents and no major incidents. He reminded residents that winter open burning is allowed with an online permit and urged them to check burn conditions daily due to weather and wind restrictions. Schum also emphasized fireplace and chimney safety, including chimney cleaning, preventing creosote buildup, and properly disposing of ashes. He closed with a reminder to watch for slip-and-fall hazards during winter storms and to help ensure walkways are safe, especially for older residents.

Laurie Rodriguez asked how prepared local fire crews are to respond to electric vehicle (EV) fires, particularly those occurring in garages or parking structures. Joe Schum explained that EV fires present a real and growing challenge due to “thermal runaway,” which makes them difficult to extinguish. He said Truckee Meadows Fire and Rescue provides ongoing and updated training for these incidents and uses specialized tools, including apps that guide responders on the safest and most effective techniques based on the vehicle’s make and model. Schum noted that in some cases vehicles may be tipped or allowed to burn out in a controlled area because there is no reliable way to fully extinguish the batteries. He emphasized that the department’s top priority is protecting people and homes, and while EV fires cannot be easily simulated for training, crews study real-world incidents and training exercises conducted elsewhere to stay prepared.

Roger Edwards referenced firefighting techniques used in the military, asking whether foam agents commonly used on fuel fires could be applied to electric vehicle fires. In response, Joe

Schum explained that EV battery fires involve metal fires, which require specialized suppression agents and cannot be treated with traditional foams or water, as water can worsen metal fires. He noted that Halon is no longer permitted and that while some experimental foam and mineral-based agents are being tested, including those developed in Nevada in coordination with manufacturers like Tesla, there is currently no widely available or fully effective solution. Schum emphasized that thermal runaway remains the primary hazard, leaving firefighters to carefully balance containment and safety rather than full extinguishment.

Mary Pollard asked whether very large fire-suppression blankets are being used to address electric vehicle fires. In response, fire officials explained that blanket systems and similar tools are still experimental, with no single method proven to be fully effective. They noted that the department's training and operations teams are actively monitoring these emerging technologies and updating training to ensure firefighters remain current on evolving challenges, including new construction materials and vehicle technologies.

Caitlin Finley asked about a past incident in which a driver continued operating an electric vehicle that was on fire, causing vegetation along the roadway to ignite, and whether fires spreading away from the vehicle are harder to extinguish. Fire officials explained that once the fire spreads into vegetation, it becomes a wildland or brush fire, which crews can more effectively contain. In those situations, responders often focus on stopping the vegetation fire and protecting nearby homes while allowing the vehicle itself to burn, since the EV battery fire remains difficult to extinguish.

Russell Earle asked whether fire officials have been informed about a proposed battery storage facility in the planning phase and raised concerns about how it would be managed, noting that the monitoring company is based in South Carolina. In response, fire officials explained that any battery storage facility must go through the fire code and code enforcement review process. Applications are reviewed against national fire codes and local ordinances, and safety requirements are addressed before approvals are granted. Officials noted that similar facilities already exist within the fire district and that while they could not comment on the specific status of this proposal, all such projects are required to apply through the fire district and undergo full fire code review before moving forward.

Washoe County Sheriff's Office

There were issues with the sound and as a result, there were no updates from WCSO. Lieutenant Nick Tone said he would take any questions and type responses in the chat.

7. NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Nanette Maxwell provided a detailed update on the North Valleys Transportation Project, explaining NDOT's role in maintaining highways and state routes in the region and outlining the overall limits and purpose of the U.S. 395 corridor improvements. She said the project is being delivered in phases to address growing traffic demand, safety, and efficiency as the North Valleys continue to grow. Phase 1A is complete, Phase 1B is currently under construction from McCarran Boulevard to Golden Valley Road, and Phase 2 will extend from Golden Valley Road to Stead Boulevard. For the current Phase 1B work, Maxwell explained that NDOT is adding a third general purpose lane in each direction, auxiliary lanes between interchanges, a braided ramp at the Golden Valley Road interchange, new sound walls where warranted, full roadway repaving, drainage improvements, and intelligent transportation systems. She reported that the

project is well underway, with major elements such as drainage, electrical, and ITS nearing completion, paving and bridge work progressing, and northbound lanes already open. Construction occurs six days a week with efforts to maintain two lanes in each direction during daytime hours, and she encouraged residents to sign up for text alerts to stay informed about traffic changes. Looking ahead to Phase 2, Maxwell said the highway will be widened to three lanes in each direction between Golden Valley Road and Stead Boulevard, with additional improvements at the Golden Valley interchange including ADA upgrades, bike lanes, sidewalks, and added turn lanes. She also described planned sound walls, retaining walls, new permanent traffic signals, upgraded lighting, stormwater improvements, and landscaping and aesthetic features that reflect the North Valleys' natural and cultural identity. She noted that Phase 2 has been advertised for bids and will begin once Phase 1B is complete. Maxwell also outlined a related multimodal project on North Virginia Street that will be built alongside Phase 2 using federal grant funding. That project will include roadway rehabilitation, shared use paths, bike lanes, ADA improvements, future transit accommodations, pedestrian crossings with flashing beacons, and enhanced lighting to improve safety and connectivity. She concluded by stating that the overall project remains on schedule and that NDOT staff are available to answer questions and provide additional information to the community.

A CAB member asked whether doing the North Virginia Street improvements at the same time as Phase 2 of the North Valleys project would restrict residents' ability to get in and out of the area, expressing concern about lane reductions occurring simultaneously. In response, Nanette Maxwell clarified that the two projects are not located in the same immediate area and would not shut down access routes at the same time. She explained that Phase 2 begins at the Golden Valley interchange and that key ramps and connections will already be open as part of Phase 1B, ensuring continued access for North Valleys residents while construction moves forward.

A resident raised concerns that even with ramps open, people living in Lemon Valley, Stead, and Red Rock still must travel through multiple construction zones to reach town and questioned whether on-ramps or lanes would be closed at the same time. In response, Andrew Lawrence, District 2 Assistant District Engineer, explained that NDOT is actively coordinating the planning and scheduling of Phase 2 and the North Virginia Street project to avoid overlapping lane closures. He said staff closely review construction sequencing and work hours to prevent simultaneous reductions on both the freeway and North Virginia Street, recognizing that there are limited alternate routes in the North Valleys. Lawrence acknowledged current congestion challenges during incidents and emphasized that mitigating access impacts for residents is a key consideration as final construction plans are developed.

A CAB member emphasized that clear and timely communication is critical for North Valleys residents and asked whether NDOT would proactively contact the CAB and community so members can help keep neighbors informed during construction. In response, Andrew Lawrence agreed that communication and feedback are essential, stating that input from residents and CAB members helps NDOT understand what is working and what is not. He noted that while he does not live in the area, NDOT staff are regularly in the North Valleys and rely on community feedback to improve coordination and communication throughout the project.

A CAB member asked who is responsible for coordinating and operating the temporary northbound traffic signal at the Golden Valley on and off ramps, questioning whether it is managed by the City of Reno or another agency. In response, Andrew Lawrence explained that the temporary signal is maintained by the construction contractor, while signal timing and

operations are coordinated in partnership with the City of Reno. He advised residents to report any issues through NDOT's info email or help desk, which will route concerns to the appropriate staff so adjustments can be made with the contractor and the City.

Earl Stemple expressed strong frustration with current traffic conditions and construction impacts in the Lemon Valley and Stead areas. Drawing on decades of experience in major roadway projects, he said the North Valleys lack adequate secondary or side streets to absorb traffic when incidents occur. He described how crashes on U.S. 395 quickly cascade into gridlock because residents have no alternate routes, particularly when access to North Virginia Street is constrained. Stemple criticized past planning decisions that allowed significant commercial and residential growth without sufficient supporting infrastructure and said recent construction changes have worsened congestion. He emphasized that residents are paying the price through missed appointments and daily travel disruptions, and he urged planners to recognize the real-world limitations of the area's road network.

Tammy Holt-Still asked for clarification about Phase 1B, specifically whether a northbound exit at Golden Valley Road would remain once the braided ramp configuration is built. She noted that some project graphics appeared to show no northbound Golden Valley exit and emphasized the importance of keeping that access, which she said she and Councilwoman Ebert have strongly advocated for. Nanette Maxwell confirmed that the northbound Golden Valley exit will remain in place. She explained that the braided ramp design separates movements by having the off-ramp descend while the on-ramp rises, which may have caused confusion in the diagrams. Maxwell clarified that drivers traveling northbound on U.S. 395 will still be able to exit at Golden Valley Road, although access from old U.S. 395 to Golden Valley will require using local routes rather than staying on the ramp as in the past.

Russ Earle asked whether Phase 2 of the North Valleys project is fully funded, citing concerns about changes to federal infrastructure funding and potential clawbacks. He questioned whether NDOT and the State of Nevada still have the necessary funding in place to move forward. Pedro Rodriguez responded that Phase 2 is fully funded. He explained that the funding was secured through a federal grant, including coordination with the South Virginia Street project, and was awarded before any federal policy changes occurred. Rodriguez confirmed that Phase 1B and Phase 2 both have secured funding, that Phase 1B is on schedule and nearing completion, and that Phase 2 will begin next. He acknowledged that construction causes short term disruption but said coordination between freeway and Virginia Street work is planned to reduce impacts. He added that once complete, the project will provide significantly increased capacity and long-term congestion relief that the region has needed for many years.

A resident questioned why bridges along U.S. 395 were not widened as part of the project, specifically referencing the Parr Boulevard bridge and expressing concern that additional lanes were not added underneath. In response, Pedro Rodriguez explained that the Park Boulevard bridge was rebuilt early under Phase 1A due to structural needs and could not be delayed. He said the bridge was designed with future expansion in mind and can be widened later if required for long term projects, including potential future connections. For now, the bridge includes the capacity needed to support current traffic volumes and the improvements being delivered through the North Valleys project.

Laurie Rodriguez asked whether the dual left turn onto southbound U.S. 395 would be metered, expressing concern about heavy traffic volumes and the short distance before vehicles merge

near Virginia Street. She noted that while additional lanes should help, metering might improve safety and flow. Nanette Maxwell responded that the dual left turn will not be metered. She explained that although there are two left turn lanes initially, the configuration tapers down to a single lane as traffic approaches the on ramp, similar to the previous setup. This tapering is intended to manage vehicle flow onto the freeway without the need for signal metering.

Katherine Yriarte asked how NDOT plans to mitigate ice and snow buildup near sound walls, citing past incidents where drifting snow and shaded areas created icy conditions that contributed to major crashes. She expressed concern about where snow, ice, and runoff will go during large storms, especially when sound walls block wind and sunlight. NDOT responded that sound wall placement and drainage are carefully considered during design to move water off the roadway as quickly as possible, though weather and ice formation cannot be fully controlled. Officials explained that the project includes improved drainage and the restoration of full inside and outside shoulders, which will provide additional space for snow storage and plowing operations. NDOT acknowledged the challenges created by shadows and drifting snow but said the design aims to reduce hazards and give maintenance crews more room to manage snow and ice safely.

George Still asked whether the improvements to U.S. 395 will significantly increase traffic capacity and, if so, how secondary and local streets will be able to handle the additional throughput. He expressed concern that increasing freeway capacity without corresponding improvements to surface streets could worsen existing congestion. NDOT responded that the freeway project will increase capacity on U.S. 395, but coordination with local road networks is handled through ongoing communication with the cities of Reno and Sparks and the Regional Transportation Commission. NDOT explained that it is responsible for highways and state routes, while local agencies and the RTC plan and implement improvements on arterial and secondary streets. While NDOT coordinates schedules and shares information, it does not control local roadway planning and encouraged residents to engage directly with the RTC regarding planned improvements to the surrounding street network.

Jody Pool raised concerns about congestion leading up to the Golden Valley interchange, questioning whether NDOT's improvements begin only at the point where left turn lanes expand while traffic approaching the intersection remains constrained to a single lane. She described severe backups, long waits through multiple signal cycles, unsafe driving behavior, and a lack of access to the freeway before reaching the interchange and asked whether any improvements would be made ahead of NDOT's project limits. NDOT responded that widening and improvements are being made within the interchange and immediately approaching it, but only within NDOT's jurisdiction. They explained that they cannot widen roadways beyond that area because those roads are owned by other agencies. NDOT acknowledged the current congestion and said the Regional Transportation Commission has separate projects planned or underway on local roads, including past coordination at Lemon Valley. Officials added that much of the current cut through traffic is a result of freeway construction and said that once Phase 2 is complete, the added freeway and auxiliary lanes should pull traffic back onto U.S. 395 and reduce pressure on local streets.

Kaitlin Finley asked whether lanes would be narrowed or reduced during Section B construction and expressed concern about maintaining two full lanes for emergencies, particularly evacuations during fires or other disasters. She emphasized the limited escape routes from the North Valleys and worried residents could be trapped during an emergency. NDOT responded

that they generally avoid lane reductions during peak travel times and coordinate closely with emergency responders well in advance of construction activities. Officials explained that NDOT meets regularly with fire, police, EMS, and state patrol to plan access routes, staging areas, and incident response during construction. They cited past wildfire incidents during Phase 1B where advance coordination allowed emergency access without major impacts. While acknowledging that large scale evacuations are challenging due to limited roadway capacity, NDOT said communication, coordination, and rapid response planning with emergency agencies are the primary tools to ensure residents can evacuate safely if needed.

Mark Rodriguez asked for an update on reports of settling issues with the graded framework at the Golden Valley bridge. In response, NDOT staff explained that construction work has resumed after addressing the problem. They said the issue involved temporary falsework supports used during bridge construction that settled unevenly, which can create structural concerns. To ensure safety and quality, the contractor removed and reset the supports so the bridge could be built correctly. Officials emphasized that this decision was made out of caution, that the corrective work is underway, and that the project remains on schedule.

Shelia Herring commented to the presenters from NDOT that they did a great job.

A community member asked whether NDOT construction projects are open to out-of-state companies or limited to local contractors, noting examples from other states where outside firms completed large infrastructure projects more quickly and efficiently. NDOT responded that all projects are awarded through an open, competitive bidding process and that any contractor, including out-of-state firms, may bid as long as they are prequalified and meet Nevada licensing and regulatory requirements.

Mary Pollard asked for a more specific timeline for when the current phase of the North Valleys project will be completed, seeking clarity on whether completion would be earlier than the general 2026 timeframe and if a more precise summer estimate was available. NDOT responded that the current target for completion is summer 2026, with the exact timing dependent on weather conditions. Officials explained that bridge construction is the main constraint and that if mild winter weather continues, much of the work south of the Panther Newport overpass could be nearly complete by winter. They noted that traffic will shift in the coming weeks to allow completion of remaining widening work and that, with an average winter, conditions should improve significantly by early spring 2026, followed by final striping and signage work in the summer.

Brenden Rasmussen asked about NDOT's staffing levels for snowplow operations this winter, expressing concern that inadequate plowing in recent years has contributed to winter crashes on U.S. 395 in the North Valleys and asking whether staffing is being increased. NDOT responded that staffing shortages have been a major challenge in recent years due to high vacancy rates across the agency, including maintenance crews responsible for snow removal. Officials said vacancy rates were once as high as 70 percent in some areas but have improved following pay increases and recruitment efforts. They reported that current vacancy rates are closer to 10 percent, but noted that many employees are relatively new, with about half having less than five years of experience. NDOT explained that snowplow operations require significant training and experience, making retention and workforce development ongoing challenges despite improved hiring.

8. NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB & OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Sally Johnston walked attendees through how residents can stay informed about development activity and projects in Washoe County. She explained how to use the County's online tools, including the Development Hub and the Washoe County application portal, to view upcoming projects, track applications by district, and access Citizen Advisory Board information. Johnston noted that residents can also sign up for email notifications and filter projects specifically for District 5 to see current and upcoming development proposals.

9. CAB MEMBER/ COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS/COMMENTS

There were no announcements.

10. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Rob Pierce spoke as a North Valleys resident to share resources and context that could help address concerns raised during the meeting. He noted that Washoe County Emergency Management is currently conducting an evacuation study and encouraged residents to participate by dropping pins online to identify problem areas such as flooding, road construction, or evacuation bottlenecks. Pierce also pointed residents to the RTC website for information on planned and ongoing transportation projects, while cautioning that project timelines can change over time. He referenced past examples where road expansion plans were pushed out in long-range planning documents and advised residents to view posted dates as subject to change. Pierce closed by saying he believes the freeway improvements will ultimately benefit the community once completed.

Mark Sutton said that while widening U.S. 395 will improve traffic flow, the benefits are limited if residents cannot easily access the freeway from local roads. He asked whether someone from the city could attend a future meeting to address access issues and coordination on local streets leading to the freeway.

A CAB member reminded residents that updates and meeting reminders for the North Valleys Citizens Advisory Board are shared on the Citizens Guild of the North Valleys Facebook page. The members encouraged people to follow the page to stay informed, then closed by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and encouraging residents to be safe during the holiday season.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 P.M.