

Land deal could reroute South Tahoe Greenway bike path

By Kathryn Reed

An opportunity to buy the largest remaining parcel of private property along the Upper Truckee River may cause planners to change gears when it comes to the Meyers to Stateline bike path.

The approximately 212 acres known at the Johnson Meadow (in the ranching world a parcel is named after the previous owner not the current one) could be acquired by the California Tahoe Conservancy. It wasn't until just recently that the landowner indicated a willingness to sell.

"There's no agreed upon price. We've just started talking," Bruce Eisner, with the CTC, said. But he said it would be in the millions.



Bill Mosher talks about his family's land.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Bill Mosher, whose family owns the land by the river east of the Lake Tahoe Airport to about Grocery Outlet, has fond memories of his family running cattle on the land for decades.

Standing along the river by the airport, Mosher points to the undeveloped land on the other side. Those 125 acres known as the Lyons Ranch East were sold to the Conservancy in spring 2008 for \$6.2 million. The Lyons owned it in the 1800s. The Barton-Ledbetter-Mosher clan had it for more than 100 years.

Now the Mosher family is in negotiations with the CTC to sell another stretch of land. Finding the money puts a big asterisk on the reality of an acquisition ever occurring. Still, if the deal is consummated, it may mean altering the Conservancy's plans for the 9.6-mile South Tahoe Greenway bike trail.

The much talked about path that at one time had been slated to break ground this summer, originally called for going through the Mosher property that is now being negotiated. This route would bring the trail closer to Highway 50.

In 2006, though, the Moshers would not consider selling.

That sent CTC officials back to the drawing board to scope out a different route. That route has the trail close to Pioneer Trail. The administrative draft Environmental Impact Report for the project has the Pioneer linkage in it.

"The potential for public acquisition on this property brings forward a lot of questions for phase three," Sue Rae Ireelan, who has led the charge on the project, told the CTC board last week.

In order to move forward with the project, the Conservancy wants to build phases one and two while the land issue involving phase three gets worked out.

The first two phases are the eastern portion of the trail, with the latter being the Meyers section.

It will be a Class I trail, meaning the path is separated from vehicles and will accommodate various uses. In most places it will be 10-feet wide, with a grade no steeper than 5 percent.

This allows access for wheelchairs and easy passing by cyclists or hikers or people pushing strollers.

Snow removal in the winter is not likely. The trail could be used by cross country skiers or snowshoers.

Irelan said the plan is to have environmental documents ready for public review in early 2011. Construction could begin in 2012. Each phase is likely to take more than one building season.