

# Shortened Greenway bike trail out for environmental review

By Kathryn Reed

It's not exactly what planners had hoped to bring to the table, but the proposed 3.86 miles of bike trail being studied would connect a significant chunk of South Lake Tahoe.

Though still known at the South Tahoe Greenway, the environmental documents being released today do not provide a continuous trail from Meyers to Stateline. Instead, the route under review goes from the end of Sierra Boulevard at Barbara Avenue to Van Sickle Bi-state Park at the state line.



Money and land ownership are preventing the full 9-plus miles from being studied as this point.

“Connecting to the Y, connecting to Meyers are important parts of the overall network in South Lake Tahoe,” said Sue Rae Irelan, program analyst for the California Tahoe Conservancy. “It’s certainly not off the table. It is still part of the bike and pedestrian master plan.”

Irelan has been working on this project since 2002. Four years ago the thought was pavement would start to be laid this summer. Clearly, that isn’t going to happen.

First, the environmental impact report and the U.S. Forest Service’s environmental analysis will be out for comment for 30 days. The final environmental documents should be done this fall. At that time funding will be sought. Not a penny is in place to build this trail.

Irelan said having the final environmental documents signed off is a criterion for many funding sources to start writing checks.

When California was flush with cash the CTC had relatively easy access to money for projects like this. Not so anymore. But the agency is going forward with planning so it can seek funding.

The soonest Irelan foresees any ground being disturbed for the Class 1 trail is 2013. Even then it's likely this stretch of trail will be built in phases.

Irelan won't put a dollar figure on the trail, saying others are working on those estimates, which should be available this month. It has been costing between \$1.5 million and \$2 million per mile of bike trail in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

When it comes to building the boardwalk bridge over Trout Creek, the expense shoots up.

One thing that will keep costs down is much of the land is high-capability and disturbed – meaning laying the 10-foot-wide asphalt trail won't be as expensive.

The Conservancy owns much of the land that follows the old Caltrans right-of-way. (At one time a four-lane highway was going to be built by the state.) The Forest Service, city and county also have land along the route.

The route will allow the Sierra Tract area access to Lake Tahoe Community College and the Bijou area a trail to Bijou Community Park.

“What we recognized is we need to make the highest value links that we can to produce the network benefits people are looking for,” Irelan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

With the trail that is in place now, this section of the Greenway will provide a little more than 4 miles of continuous

cycling through the center of South Lake Tahoe to Nevada.

There is still a chance the Stateline demonstration part of the Stateline-to-Stateline bike route will break ground this year. This, then, means eventually having an even longer continuous trail. The Forest Service needs to sign off on paperwork for movement to begin.

For the Greenway, it will start on the east side of Barbara near where Caltrans dumps snow at the end of Sierra Boulevard. It will follow Martin, cross over Trout Creek via a new bridge, head toward the South Tahoe Public Utility District on Meadow Crest, and then connect with the trail by the ball field at Lake Tahoe Community College.

It connects to the bike route on Al Tahoe Boulevard for people wanting to get off there.

Then the Greenway crosses Al Tahoe, following along the edge of Bijou park on the old Caltrans right-of-way toward Glenwood Way. From there it crosses some neighborhood streets before angling toward Herbert and Aloha.

At this point it heads toward Pioneer Trail. It hits Ski Run Boulevard, crosses Pioneer Trail and hooks up with David Lane. A steep grade will require it to wind a bit, along with the need to build retaining walls.

The route stays upslope of Pioneer Trail, following the old right-of-way to Van Sickle park where it will end below the barn.

“The trail we are designing is capable of being plowed. We would have to find a separate funding source for that and that has not been real obvious,” Irelan said.

What isn't plowed, she foresees being used as a cross country ski trail in the winter.

The document may be viewed online as of 5pm today or at the

Conservancy's office on Third Street, the Forest Service office on College Drive, the county library on Rufus Allen Boulevard – all in South Lake Tahoe, or the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office on Market Street in Stateline.

An open house is scheduled for June 15 from 6-8pm at the Forest Service office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.