

Wiping out hodgepodge bike trail system on North Shore

By Katherine E. Hill

TAHOE CITY – Winter is approaching as the days grow cooler, but crews are continuing to work to complete a section of the region's growing network of bike trails before weather puts a halt to their work.

Tahoe City Public Utility District's network of bike trails that extend from Tahoe City to Dollar Hill, Olympic Valley and down the West Shore have long been a patchwork of trail systems that go for miles in some areas, with only small sections completed through Tahoe City. Work on the last lakeside sections that will connect the west and east ends of Tahoe City have been under way this fall, with the section from the Tahoe City State Recreation Area extending west in front of the Lighthouse Center to be finished before snow falls.



North Shore bike trails will soon be better connected.

Photo/Katherine E. Hill

On the west end of town, the bike trail that meanders along

Commons Beach ends abruptly at a pump station at the base of Grove Street, which forces pedestrians and cyclists to climb the steep hill at Grove to reconnect to a roadside path along Highway 28. The new section will extend east on the lakeside around the pump station, along the Tahoe City Marina property and the Boatworks Mall before connecting to the section at the Lighthouse Center. Work will continue on this section until winter and will continue in the spring. Work will be postponed again during the busy, summer months with the heavy use at the marina and then restart in fall 2012 when it will be completed, according to Kelli Twomey, TCPUD director of resource development and community relations.

The two sections being built now and a third recently completed section come at a cost of \$3.3 million that was funded entirely by grants, Twomey said.

The missing sections will be welcomed by pedestrians and cyclists who find it dangerous to ride along Highway 28 in Tahoe City in order to connect to the bike trail system.

"Folks are anxious, especially with kids," said Peter Underwood, owner of Olympic Bike Shop. "Riding through town has long been dangerous."

Underwood said Tahoe City has long needed a dedicated bike trail, especially for families who often use trailers with small children. He also said that's he lost rental customers when families discover they must ride along the busy Highway 28.

"This is a going to help our community in a lot of ways," Underwood said. "It's not just going to help our business, but to help people coming through town."

Olympic Bike Shop opened in 1973 and rents 100 to 200 bikes a day from July to early September. Underwood said that he often directs people to ride down Grove Street to pick up the bike trail along Commons Beach or to take Fairway Drive that runs

behind the Tahoe City Golf Course and then cross Highway 89 to connect to the Truckee River bike trail.

Missing link in Homewood

Twomey also said that the last one-mile section to connect the bike trail through Homewood will be “shovel ready” by next spring, but that construction will likely be delayed until 2013 when Caltrans will be doing erosion control work in the same area.

Right now, the bike trail extends for 5.7 miles from Tahoe City to Cherry Street in Homewood, where pedestrians and cyclists must then continue on Highway 89, where there are no bike paths or shoulders, before picking up the paved trail again at Fawn Street. It then continues another 3.7 miles before ending in Tahoma just past Sugar Pine Point State Park.

Underwood said the missing section in Homewood was dangerous and that he often directs families not to ride down the West Shore for this reason.

The final route of the bike trail has not yet been determined, but Twomey said that the proposed route calls for continuing from Cherry Street along Highway 89 south to Trout Street. From Trout, the trail would follow Sans Souci Terrace, connect to Silver Street and run through the interior of the parking area at Homewood Mountain Resort before connecting to the existing trail at Fawn. When completed, the TCPUD network will include 20 miles of trails.

More trails on the horizon

The TCPUD network ends near the top of Dollar Hill along Highway 28, but plans are in the works for a 2.5-mile section through California Tahoe Conservancy and North Tahoe Public Utility district lands that would extend behind the Highlands and Old County neighborhoods. The Dollar Creek section, being developed by Placer County, would pave hiking and mountain

bike trails that are already being used by local residents. The proposed trail should start near Dollar Drive on Highway 28, skirt past the eastern edge of the Tahoe Cross Country Ski Area, go by Dollar Reservoir and come out at Fulton Crescent Road in Carnelian Bay.

Public comments are now being accepted through the Placer County Department of Public Works with construction eyed for 2013, contingent on available funding, according to county officials.

Public comments on the Dollar Creek trail are being accepted at pkraatz@placer.ca.gov or in writing at Placer County Department of Public Works, Attn: Peter Kraatz, P.O. Box 336, Kings Beach, CA 96143.

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