

Path puts users in woods, off major Tahoe road



Cyclists no longer have to ride on Lake Tahoe Boulevard on the South Shore. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Sometimes riding on Lake Tahoe Boulevard between Highway 50 and the Angora burn area can be an adrenaline rush. The problem is it has nothing to do with pedaling and everything to do with drivers.

With the vehicle lanes being narrow and the shoulder non-existent, it can be scary with cars whizzing by at speeds topping 55 mph, even though the posted speed limit is 50 mph.

Now there is an alternative to that harrowing ride. A 1.7-mile Class 1 bike path was laid down this fall. It essentially follows what had been a dirt path mountain bikers would use.

It starts at Viking Way at the base of South Tahoe High School, meanders through the woods – with singed trees from

the 2007 Angora Fire still visible, and ends at Sawmill Road.

The nearly \$800,000 trail is on U.S. Forest Service land, operated by El Dorado County under a special use permit.

“There is no plan to extend a Class 1 bike path,” Donaldo Palaroan, senior civil engineer with El Dorado County, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “However, we do plan to construct bike lanes toward Clear View Drive where the bike lane currently ends. So, a Class 2 bike lane will be extended from Clear View Drive/Mule Deer Circle to Sawmill Road to connect with the Lake Tahoe Boulevard bike path and the Sawmill 2 bike path.”



Erosion control measures
line the trail.

While road bike riders traditionally prefer the road to a path because they can go faster and not be encumbered by other users, they have been seen on this trail.

“Bikers are hypersensitive to 3,000-pound-plus metallic objects lumbering down the road at or above of 50 mph while rocking out to Axle Rose and Slash, particularly when those objects are within an arm’s reach,” Garrett Villanueva, USFS trails specialist, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “So, I think some roadies will use the bike path and I think recreational or less experienced bicyclists will tend to use the path exclusively.”

Mountain bikers are also using the trail. This gets them to dirt trails in the Tahoe Mountain area. A sign at the Sawmill end includes a permanent map that lists the various trails in the area.

Walkers, dogs and inline skaters have also been populating the trail.

At the Sawmill juncture people have the choice to get onto Lake Tahoe Boulevard without any lane markings or to cross the boulevard to get onto Sawmill Road. Eventually the county is going to reduce Lake Tahoe Boulevard to one lane in each direction from Sawmill to Tahoe Mountain Road.

At the crosswalk there is a button that will trigger a flashing yellow light to warn motorists people are in the road.



The new path connects to the Sawmill Road trail.

Once across people have the opportunity to be on a trail for seven-tenths of a mile along Sawmill Road that was built in 2012. In 2015, the rest of the trail will be constructed. In total it will be 1.3 miles. The second half will remain on the same side as the current trail (which wasn't always the plan) and has already been outlined. The erosion control work for

the trail was done this year.

Once that section is done it's possible to be on a bike trail from Meyers to STHS.

Future connections include going from STHS to the Y.

There is limited parking at Sawmill Road and Lake Tahoe Boulevard.