



November 15, 2021

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
Attn: Melanie Sloan
128 Market St.
Stateline, NV 89449
msloan@trpa.gov

Subject: Cascade to Meeks Bay Trail

Dear Melanie:

The Friends of the West Shore (FOWS) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed approach to the Feasibility Study (Study) for the Cascade to Meeks Bay Trail (Trail). FOWS mission is to work toward the preservation, protection, and conservation of the West Shore, our watersheds, wildlife, and rural quality of life, for today and future generations. FOWS represents community interests from Emerald Bay to south of Tahoe City.

FOWS supports projects that will provide alternatives to vehicle use to alleviate congestion, improve public health and safety, and protect the environment, and we look forward to working with the project implementors to assess the best location for the Trail. In general, we also support the use of an *approach* that examines a variety of criteria as presented at the 10/25 webinar. However, we understand that the *method* to implement this approach is still being refined; for example, it has not yet been determined whether certain criteria are given higher rankings. We look forward to further engagement regarding the methodology that will be used in the feasibility study.

Trail Alignments:

With regards to the conceptual trail alignments presented at the meeting, we have the following comments:

1. General Comments:

We support the construction of a path that is separated from the highway to improve user safety and recreation experience. However, we are also concerned about the potential impacts to neighborhoods, private property values, noise, and local circulation (e.g. parking, pedestrian/driver safety, traffic) where alternative alignments are proposed through residential neighborhoods.

- a) We recommend the Study examine every opportunity to keep the Trail out of neighborhoods and the yards of private homeowners (whether the path would be located on an easement across private property or in the Right-of-Way bordering private property).
- b) Impacts to private property values, privacy and security, traffic/congestion, parking, safety, noise, and other impacts should be thoroughly examined where routes are proposed along existing residential streets.

- In addition, routing what will no doubt be a popular, highly-used public Trail through quiet residential neighborhoods also creates concerns with regards to trail maintenance, trash, security, and other impacts that unfortunately occur when areas are designated for such public use. These impacts should also be taken into account in the Study.
- c) While we understand the desire to provide for views of the lake along the new Trail, we would be concerned with a route that prioritized providing views along a stretch of the new Trail at the detriment of private property views. We recommend views be enhanced where it is feasible to do so without impacting private property.

2. Tahoe Hills:

One area of specific concern includes the “Rubicon Segment” that shows all possible routes cutting through the Tahoe Hills residential community, which is a quiet, idyllic neighborhood. In fact, according to the maps, the only community where alignments run *through* the neighborhood is Tahoe Hills.

- We question why there are no alignments in this area which avoid cutting through the neighborhood, especially as there are alignments provided that would avoid other residential areas in the Study.
- It is also unclear why the HOA in this area has not been included and identified on the maps. Notably, it appears that all areas identified as HOAs on the map have alternative alignment options included in the Study. We recommend the maps be updated to reflect this HOA.
- While we understand there are constraints along the SR 89 corridor in this location, we believe the Study should include a route along the corridor so that those constraints can be thoroughly analyzed and options considered. As currently proposed, the Study will not examine any routes that avoid the Tahoe Hills neighborhood. As the ‘new’ SR 28 Trail from Incline Village to Sand Harbor shows, it is possible to locate the trail in areas with significant constraints, including steep slopes, and to do so in a way that is sensitive to the environment while also preserving the safety and experience of users.
 - a) A route along SR 89 should be evaluated.
 - b) We also recommend the Study include a route that runs to the west of the Tahoe Hills neighborhood, similar to the “Mid-slope” and “Mountain” options provided for the southern end of this segment.

3. Unpaved trails:

We do not favor alignments that would pave over or negatively impact existing non-paved hiking and biking paths.

- a) We recommend the Study analyze routes that avoid such impacts as much as possible.

4. Trail access and parking/vehicle impacts:

Although a primary goal of the Trail is to provide an attractive option for accessing recreation areas along the SR 89 Corridor and reduce vehicle use, as the SR 28 Trail has shown, the route can become its own attraction and draw more traffic and people to the area (as opposed to simply ‘mitigating’ vehicles associated with existing use). Unlike the SR 28 Corridor where access solely comes from Incline Village, there are many locations along the Meeks Bay to Cascade Lake area

where users may seek to park on residential streets and along the highway in order to access the Trail.

- a) The Study needs to examine the potential increase in use associated with the Trail and the impacts of additional traffic, parking, etc., and mitigation options that will be necessary to accommodate trail users while avoiding such impacts.

Process Timeline:

We are also concerned that the timeline for the Study and public involvement occurs outside of the summer months, when fewer residents, homeowners, and visitors are apt to be as involved in Tahoe planning matters involving hiking and biking. While we will share information with our members, we encourage the agencies to take extra measures to engage all full- and part-time residents and visitors and/or amend the timeline to focus on public engagement during the summer months.

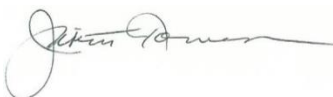
Trail Design and Use:

We anticipate the need to consider the type of users when evaluating the ultimate design of the trail (e.g. width, slope, etc.). Will the Study evaluate what users the Trail will be designed for and what the associated specifications will be? For example, will the Trail allow electric bikes? Will it be designed to provide alternative access for emergency responders? What impacts would these uses have on the design, and thus feasibility, of the proposed routes?

Further, we recommend the Study consider the anticipated numbers of users, especially during peak periods, and the feasibility of designs and alignments that will minimize conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,



Judith Tornese,
President