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STAFF REPORT

Date: July 19, 2023
To: Governing Board
From: TRPA Staff
Subject: Tahoe Regional Trails Strategy Update

Summary and Staff Recommendation:

Tahoe's system of 585 miles of dirt trails, managed by four different land managers and maintained by a coalition of trail stewardship organizations, is enjoyed by hikers, bikers, equestrians, dirt bikers, rock climbers, backpackers, and backcountry enthusiasts year-round. For the first time ever, land managers, trail stewardship organizations, and trail users came together to develop a comprehensive vision and strategy for the future of trails at Lake Tahoe, known as the Tahoe Regional Trails Strategy. Staff will provide an informational presentation on the multi-year planning effort to develop the Regional Trails Strategy and what it means for Tahoe's dirt trails moving forward.

Required Motions:

This is an informational item. No action is required.

Project Description/Background:

Beginning in 2020, TRPA staff convened a steering committee made up of key trail partners to create a long-term vision for a connected and accessible trail network for the Lake Tahoe Basin. The key goal for creating a Strategy document was to take a regional perspective to trail planning and building, to break through individual silos that have long been present, and to build coordination between agencies to enhance implementation of priorities and objectives. TRPA, as the regional convener, facilitated the planning process to help establish trail priority projects in the EIP. Partners that participated on the steering committee included:

- Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
- Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
- Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association
- Tahoe Fund
- Tahoe Rim Trail Association
- California State Parks, Nevada State Parks
- California Tahoe Conservancy
- Achieve Tahoe

After nearly two and half years, the final Strategy outlines priority trail and trailhead improvements, decommissioning projects, and maintenance projects in the basin over the next 15 years. Implementation details of singular projects, including specific trail alignments and environmental

review, are the responsibility of the land manager. Projects were rated and prioritized based on a set of goals and objectives developed by the steering committee and public, which included:

- **Environmental sustainability:** Projects should be sustainable and culturally respectful. Projects that could be accessed without a car (via transit or paved path connection) and did not cross sensitive wildlife habitat scored higher.
- **Equitable:** Improve trail options and accessibility for all, especially for people with disabilities, underserved communities, and tribal members. Projects that would provide multi-use access, were located near a Community Priority Zone, and would be constructed to allow people with physical disabilities scored higher.
- **Connected:** Create a seamless, connected, and navigable trail system. Projects that would create connections to the existing dirt trail and paved path network scored higher.
- **Enjoyable:** Create a positive experience for Tahoe's diverse set of trail users. Projects that would provide scenic vistas, lead to points of interest, or provide a unique experience scored higher.
- **Feasibility:** Ensure the long term feasibility of the trail system through ongoing coordination of priorities, resources, and funding. Projects that would be constructed by one land manager, had broad public support, and did not have conflicts with private property owners scored higher.

Over the next 15 years, partners are expected to implement approximately 53 new miles of trail connections, reroute four miles of existing trails to more sustainable alignments, formalize seven miles of social trails, improve trailhead amenities at 26 locations, and add six new trailheads. New trail connections such as the Emerald Bay to Meeks Bay connector and conceptual Incline Lower Connector, will provide access for mountain bikers to legally circumnavigate the lake outside of wilderness areas designated for hikers and equestrians. Trail reroutes such as the Tahoe Meadows Interpretive Loop will improve accessibility for people with disabilities and create loop trail options.

Until now, there has not been a collaborative priority list of dirt trail projects for the region. With the completion of this strategy, the five-year priority list of projects will be adopted into the EIP and the steering committee will be formalized as an EIP working group to set annual priorities and leverage funding for trails.

More information on the Regional Trails Strategy can be found at tahoetrailsplan.org.

Contact Information:

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