

A Dream to Build a Trail along the Truckee River Takes Shape

2002-03 A Vision

Two years into retirement from her position as water policy director for Sierra Pacific Power Co., Janet Phillips (formerly Carson) took on a mission to complete a bikeway following the 116-mile Truckee River from its mouth at Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake. She began scouting a trail alongside the Truckee River foot by foot in the Truckee Canyon between Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake.

November 2003 Volunteers!

A newspaper article detailed Janet's dream to fill the gaps for a trail alongside the river when the Reno Gazette Journal published a lead article in a special section called "Truckee River Tomorrow." Janet's words rang true for many Truckee Meadows residents: "I have a passion for the river. I know many of the players along the river and I want to see a trail from Tahoe to Pyramid." Less than two months later, her efforts morphed into an organized outfit of more than 40 volunteers contributing engineering, construction, permitting and legal expertise.

Janet stated, "I am thrilled with the incredible diversity of talent that has raised their hands and said, "I can do something." The group started as a project under the auspices of the Nevada Land Conservancy (now Nevada Land Trust).



January 2004 Planning Committee: Jack Sorenson, Brent Boyer, Bill Watson, Jack Trainor, Janet Phillips

In 2005, the group formally becomes a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization called the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway. The name was later changed in 2018 to the Tahoe-Pyramid Trail to reflect its use by hikers as well as bikers.

March 2005 "Rez Trail"

The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe formally supports the Bikeway traveling through their Reservation and opened a dirt road to bikers on the northernmost 14 miles leading to the lake, saying the

trail would be another way to generate low-impact tourism. In 2006, the bikeway group tackled nine miles of trail north of Wadsworth. With the help of Truckee Meadows Trails Association volunteers, the group built part of this section by hand! Using wheelbarrows, they moved 300 tons of gravel, dirt and cement to stabilize the trail for three-quarters of a mile on top of a bluff.



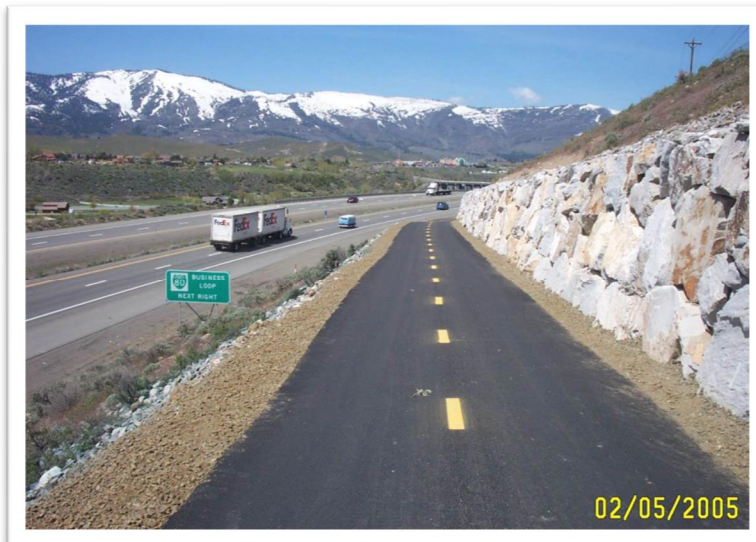
2008 Rez trail—south end near Wadsworth and high bluff section near Gardella Ranch

It took until 2008 to complete the 24-mile “Rez Trail.” Since then, an annual ride in October called “Ride the Rez” still occurs for cyclists to witness fall colors.

May 2005 Reno to Verdi

The first project opens to connect Reno to Verdi via a paved mile-long trail parallel to Interstate 80 west of Mogul. Prior to trail development, riders pedaled a white-knuckled route on Interstate 80. Local planners had been working to find a solution for 20 years and NDOT staff said it would be too costly to build.

The Reno to Verdi ride had long been the region's most popular bike ride and it could now be a part of the region's new “America's Adventure Place” campaign. “Tourism people can't market a trail that puts people on the Interstate,” Phillips said at the time. With this addition, a bike rider could travel from east Sparks to Verdi. Except for downtown Reno and part of west Reno, the 12-mile route through Reno and Sparks follows a paved trail next to the river.



The Bikeway group raised \$398,000 in grants and donations to fund this first project. Volunteers with engineering and construction expertise contributed hundreds of work hours.

2007-2011 Challenges & Successes

Just east of Sparks, the Storey County Commission kills a proposal to declare a dirt road across private property as an historic public road. Rainbow Bend residents protested the trail would bring more homeless people in the rugged canyons near their homes. Without this link, the bikeway group forfeited a \$486,000 state grant to build a footbridge at the historic Pioneer Crossing. To this day (2019), this leaves a railroad trestle as the only way, albeit illegal, for people on foot to get from Rainbow Bend to Sparks.

In 2008, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) agrees to open its maintenance road at the east end of the Truckee River Canyon near Verdi if the Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway group helps fund a project to re-build the Fleish pedestrian bridge. Much more engineering and permitting work with TMWA and Sierra County lies ahead.



In April 2010, NV Energy opens two miles of bikeway on its Tracy Generating Station property east of Sparks as does the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center. The dirt trail sits atop a wide, man-made berm. The Tahoe Reno Industrial Center (TRIC) welcomes the Bikeway across its property near Waltham Way.

This banner is TRIC's idea of a "small welcome sign"!

East of Sparks, the Nature Conservancy installs a new pedestrian bridge at its McCarran Ranch property, critical in routing the trail. With the help of a crane, the new 110-foot long bridge is installed in one day in November 2011.

*Installation of new bridge at
McCarran Ranch, November 2011*



May 2012 McCarran Ranch

The Nature Conservancy officially opens McCarran Ranch to the public after spending several years creating river bends and planting new wetland areas. The Army Corps of Engineers straightened the river in the 1960s for flood control in Reno. This single track was built in 2011.

With a dirt road serving as a trail across the Mustang Ranch and a trail on the south side of the river through the McCarran Ranch, ten miles of trail opened between Mustang and USA Parkway (the east end of the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center).



Single track trail on McCarran Ranch built in 2011

June 2013 Fleish Bridge

The Fleish suspension footbridge is rebuilt, opening the first four miles of trail into the Truckee River Canyon near Verdi. A safer footbridge was required before the Truckee Meadows Water Authority would allow its utility maintenance road to be used as a public trail. This trail section spans the CA-NV state line, making the Bikeway a bi-state trail.



TMWA, a “Recreational Trails Grant”, and several private donors raised the money for the \$500,000 project. The route goes up and down the steep canyon, crossing forests of Jeffrey pine, mountain mahogany and cedar. The craggy tops of steep canyon walls come into close view.

Fleish Bridge near the CA-NV state line, rebuilt in 2013 by TMWA and TPB

October 2014

Truckee River Canyon

On the west end of the Truckee Canyon, the Nevada County Board of supervisors voted in October 2014 to save the old Highway 40 Hirschdale bridge to provide access to the trail and river to hikers, bikers and fishermen. Combined with the Fleish Bridge, the two bridges will make it possible to open up the entire 12-mile canyon. “Eventually,” said Phillips, people in Truckee “will be able to ride their bikes all the way to Reno. “



Old Highway 40 bridge at Hirschdale, once slated for demolition by Nevada County, a key part of the Tahoe-Pyramid Trail

In June 2014, voters in Truckee approve a quarter-cent sales tax to build more than 130 miles of trails and bikeways, including its Truckee River Legacy Trail.

A 2.2-mile stretch of the Truckee Legacy Trail opens in August 2014, connecting downtown Truckee with the Glenshire subdivision. With this addition, the town of Truckee now boasts 10 miles of smooth, paved trail along the river. The Legacy Trail will be designated part of the Trail.

In the Truckee River Canyon west of Reno, a two mile section of the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway is opened between Farad and Floriston. The project involved building a staircase and bridge over giant pipes at an 1899 hydro power plant near Farad. This left a two-mile gap from Farad toward the Fleish Bridge to the east.



2015-2016

Progress in the Truckee River Canyon

The two-mile gap in the trail east of Farad was almost completed by September 2015, involving difficult trail building and stabilizing the trail through a vertical field of boulders just east of Farad. Rocks and boulders were placed here by Caltrans for erosion protection when Interstate 80 was built. With this gap filled in 2016, a much easier ride has now been created for those wanting to reach Fleish Bridge than the hilly approach from Verdi – an 11-mile round trip on relatively flat land next to the river. Access to the trail is at I-80 freeway exits at Farad and Floriston.



2016 trail built through boulder field near Farad by installing 300 cubic yards of rock in gabion cages.

In December 2015, the Federal Highway Administration announces a \$2 million grant to complete the last four-mile leg of the trail in the Truckee River Canyon. The project is to be overseen by California State Parks and the Truckee Donner Recreation and Park District.

November 2017

Hirschdale



The first grant-funded section of trail is opened near Hirschdale. It is two miles long, utilizing part of old Highway 40 and part single-track trail construction. It follows the original alignment conceived in 2008.

Fall 2017, 2 miles of trail from Hirschdale eastward is opened

2018

"Bikeway" to "Trail" and the last California legs

The Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway nonprofit announces that it officially has changed its name to the Tahoe-Pyramid Trail to recognize that it is open to hikers and runners as well as bikers, and that much of the route is not paved outside the cities. (Bikeway generally implies a paved route.) The new name is especially warranted to reflect all the users on the trail in the Truckee River Canyon.

Richard May Construction wins the contract to build the last segment of the trail in the Truckee River Canyon after building previous trail projects in the canyon. The two miles west of Floriston is considered the most difficult trail section by far. Here the trail is being built beneath and alongside a steep, sloped curve on I-80.



Summer 2018: 1.25 miles of single-track trail built west of Floriston



The Caltrans wall had to be traversed without touching it: before and after photos.

The Tahoe-Pyramid Trail group announces in its September 2018 newsletter that work on the last half-mile segment of the trail in the Truckee Canyon is not expected to be complete until 2019. Too many rocks and a shortage of lumber and steel hindered construction. However, the first three miles from Hirschdale are open to riders. They can connect eastbound via I-80's shoulder.

2019

Projected Truckee to Reno Completion

The last section of trail between Truckee and Reno is slated for construction, using complex steel and wood elevated boardwalk in the summer of 2019.