

Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway nearing completion: Phillips

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(Photo: Provided by Janet R. Phillips)

Two more miles to go and the Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway through the steep, rugged Truckee Canyon west of Reno will be complete, hopefully this year.

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Planning and construction bidding documents are now being prepared for the two most difficult miles to complete – the area where Interstate 80 makes that long curved descent between Floriston and Hirschdale Road. Construction is expected to begin this spring.

With a huge effort, the new path could be open in September, in time for visitors from the Interbike International Expo, the world's largest bike industry convention to be held in Reno. Construction is being split among three contracts to get the job done.

In the steepest section of the canyon, the trail will run along the hillside beneath Interstate. Long steel spikes will be driven into the hillside at a slant to stabilize the trail. Rocks and boulder will then be rolled into place below, creating a base for the trail. California State Parks chose the project for a \$2 million grant in 2015 and the bikeway group has raised more than \$300,000 in required matching funds.

Currently, there's a bikeway, bike lane or designated route for three-quarters of the 116-mile journey of the Truckee River from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake. Landowner issues block the completion of the trail between Sparks and Wadsworth.

The bikeway group began tackling the Truckee Canyon five years ago and has opened a section of earthen trail through the canyon every year. Not even the Donner Party ventured into the 12-mile canyon, taking a detour at Dog Valley in Verdi and crossing what is now Stampede Reservoir to Truckee.

The project has earned four national awards and, as founder, I was named the Trail Champion of the Year by California Trails and Greenways last year. I accepted the award on behalf of the many local volunteer engineers and other professionals who have made the project possible. A trust fund recently was set up to provide for annual trail maintenance.

When opened, the Truckee Canyon ride will entice locals and visitors alike. People can choose to ride a section of the trail, as they can now, or attempt the 60-mile ride from Reno to Tahoe once complete. Last fall, a three-mile section from Hirschdale toward Floriston to the east opened. It largely follows the old highway and some of the old guardrails remain.

From the Reno side, people can ride from Crystal Peak Park in Verdi, up and down the mountain cliffs to the Fleish Bridge and on to Floriston. The trail from Floriston to the Fleish Bridge makes for an 11-mile round-trip on mostly flat land. So far, more people are hiking along the canyon trail than mountain biking.

New signage is planned for all sections of the trail this year and maps for each section can be downloaded at www.tpbikeway.org.

Janet R. Phillips is president of Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway.