

VOICES

ONE VIEW

Bike trail holds opportunity

Northern Nevada is blessed with spectacular alpine to high desert scenery, vast open space and a wonderful climate. State



WILLIAM DOUGLASS

government and the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority — funded primarily by the hotel-casinos — now tout us as a major outdoors destination as we strug-

gle to reinvent our tourist industry. Right on.

However, I would argue that beneath our very noses lies largely neglected one of the most obvious opportunities: the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway Project.

Thanks to the incredibly dedicated efforts of a core of organizers and their believers, there are now many pieces of the 116-mile trail in place, with others on the drawing board. By the end of 2014, roughly two-thirds of the trail will be functional.

The remaining third poses serious political and physical challenges. Doubters remain to be won over, and at least one

section will have to be carved out of sheer canyon walls. Progress is still measured in relatively modest increments. Under the present program, completion of the Reno-to-Truckee section could take at least five years, and Reno to Wadsworth might require 20.

I would venture that no bike trail in America has more potential than the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway. Indeed, our project has already won two national awards. In 2012, the Coalition for Recreational Trails named it one of the top projects in the U.S.

Many cyclists today are young professionals, often organized into clubs that seek exciting new places to cycle together. I can imagine a whole new market of group business for Northern Nevada tourism — with Reno-Sparks as its hub. You fly into Reno (traffic for our beleaguered airport) and book into one of our hotels (all presently challenged). The next morning, you are shuttled to Lake Tahoe and spend the day riding the first half of the trail back to Reno (meanwhile, your noncycling spouse and friends

avail themselves of other visitor activities — including gaming). You set out for Pyramid Lake the next morning. The hotel shuttle picks you up there that evening and brings you back. That's a minimum of three nights of room occupancy (plus meals, gaming, shopping, bike rentals, side trips, etc.).

Completing the Tahoe-Pyramid Bike Trail as soon as possible should be among the highest priorities of the RSCVA and state and local tourism and business agencies. Every 24 hours of delay is another day's lost revenue for our community and state. And then, of course, there is the tremendous side benefit of providing local residents with a world-class cycling opportunity. It's called win-win.

William Douglass is professor emeritus at the University of Nevada, Reno.

COMING UP

WEDNESDAY: Reno mayoral candidate Eddie Lorton explains his lawsuit seeking to bar term-limited City Council members from running for mayor.