South Tahoe Project Shared Use Trail Operations, Management and Maintenance Strategy (OMMS)

This Operations, Management and Maintenance Strategy (OMMS) establishes Operator guidance for the Dollar Creek Shared-Use Trail Project (Project). As project planners complete environmental study and final design details, and as use of the completed trail or trail segments dictate, additional requirements may arise and will be addressed.

The Operator retains responsibilities of the project area that extends beyond trail uses. For example, the land management addresses stewardship responsibilities related to protection of natural and cultural resources and control of neighborhood access points and parking. The OMMS addresses these and other ongoing programs *only* as they relate to existing and proposed future trail uses.

The Operator will be the designated agency assigned to the operation and maintenance of the built Project. Because the project has not been funded yet for construction, the designated Operator has not been determined. The Project area is located within the jurisdiction of the North Tahoe Public Utility District (NTPUD) who operates and manages other multiuse trail facilities within their district boundaries. From a continuity and resource perspective, the NTPUD could be the logical lead agency for taking on the Operator role and administrating the OMMS. Formal determination of Operator lead agency shall occur following construction of the Project.

Objectives

The Operator's project goals provide direction for development of the proposed project design. Adequate long-term management and maintenance is required to assure project features continue to provide transportation and recreation benefits. The following management and maintenance objectives state clearly the Operator's intent for long-term project support.

- a. Manage trail use to provide broad access to users of all age groups and abilities.
- b. Manage trail use to protect natural and cultural resources.
- c. Manage trail use to create a neighborhood asset.
- d. Use the least restrictive means available to effectively manage trail use, increasing degree of restrictions only in response to actual conditions.
- e. Maintain trail facilities adequately to meet safety needs for all user groups.
- f. Maintain trail facilities adequately to protect the public investment in construction costs.

II. Protection of Critical Resources

The Dollar Creek Shared-Use Trail route passes through areas of sensitive and diverse vegetation communities and habitats, as well as areas of containing cultural resources. The Operator commits to protection of these resources with the provision and process described below.

- a. <u>Design features.</u> The trail design incorporates features to keep through travelers on the protected surface of the trail through SEZ areas and other sensitive sites. The design also recognizes the high desire for access to neighborhoods and recreational amenities and provides specific, protected ways to accommodate that desire. To preserve neighborhood connections and an existing unpaved trail system where resources permit, the design also incorporates BMPs on existing trails to reduce their impacts. The project description includes full discussion of these items.
- b. Education and Interpretation. The project design relies on education and interpretation as a first means of resource protection. Directional signage to specifically designated access areas will decrease the pressure to develop new volunteer trails. Interpretive signage will improve compliance with these directions and enhance the sense of stewardship of trail users. Mileage markers will provide a sense of distance and map location. This OMMS recognizes the abilities of strategic sign placement to direct most users as well as the limitations of this approach in high use or particularly sensitive areas.
- c. <u>Adaptive management.</u> In addition to directional and interpretive signing, the project design uses physical barriers in critical areas to more emphatically direct users. If new volunteer trails develop through the SEZ, additional measures such fence sections or areas of new planting can be used to direct travel. Outside of SEZ areas, the design uses forest debris or targeted planting to discourage access, use of which can be expanded if necessary.

III. Public Access and Use Guidance

The following management direction provides specific guidance for public access and use along the Project.

- a. The Project is a non-motorized trail, intended to meet environmental thresholds by providing for the non-auto transportation and non-motorized recreation needs of residents and visitors. The trail specifically accommodates bicyclists, pedestrians, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, and those with special access needs.
- b. The Project provides safe, direct access for persons with mobility disabilities in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions. Use of other powered mobility devices by persons with mobility disabilities as allowed by ADA will meet transportation and recreation goals for those persons. The Operator will stay vigilant to user safety needs and may amend use guidelines for any user group in response to specific future circumstances.
- c. Authorized personnel in motorized vehicles, such as maintenance crews, will occasionally require access on the trail. In recognition of the safety concerns related to mixing non-motorized and motorized users on the same trails, these vehicles will operate under heightened safety conditions. This could include temporary trail closures, flashing lights, or warning flags or signs. Emergency medical or police/fire personnel requiring vehicle access, and using emergency lights and/or sirens, will use the protected trail surface as the law allows. No routine or administrative access in vehicles will be allowed.

- d. The Conservancy has long considered snowmobiling incompatible with its mission and snowmobiles are prohibited by statute from operation within Conservancy-owned lands. NTPUD similarly does not permit snowmobile use on NTPUD-owned lands.
- e. No camping on Conservancy and NTPUD land along the Project route is permitted.
- f. After construction of the Project, the protected surface of the trail will serve many trail access needs on the parcels through which it passes. Some needs will continue to be met best by smaller unpaved trails.
- g. The nature of a shared-use trail mixes different types of users traveling at different speeds. The Operator supports the "Yield to Wheels" and "Safe Speeds" outreach efforts to ensure safe and enjoyable use. Signage, trail markings, and education will improve compliance. Maintaining a safe trail experience for all users may require additional management strategies in the future. The proposal includes no posted speed limits.
- h. The Project is part of a developing bicycle access network with a goal of providing a completely non-auto route between origination and destination points. It is understood, however, that some trail users in the Tahoe Region drive to trail connections, generating a parking demand at connection points. Access from legal parking areas along public streets will occur. While parking along public streets is legal in most places and will not be prohibited through this proposal, this use can create conflicts with neighbors. Conflicts can include trespass, littering, sanitary concerns, noise, and off leash dog activity. The Operator employs use of adaptive management strategies to address this type of use conflict. In this situation, strategies could include (but may not be limited to) increasing educational signs concerning respectful use, increased visitation by management personnel, placement of user management fencing or boulders or trash cans, or consideration of parking facility permitted as part of Project but not built at time of trail constructoin.
- i. Access to the Project from developed public sites will also occasionally occur. Project facilities are assets to Tahoe City parks and the existing trail network south of the Project area. However, no public facilities along the Project route are designed to serve as trail heads for a regional bicycle trail. If extended parking for Project trail use competes with needs generated by other day uses, adaptive management strategies will be employed to protect park access for other user groups. This may include developing specific parking restrictions at public parking locations to limit or preclude bike trail network parking or building parking facility permitted as part of Project but not built at time of trail construction.
- j. The Project proposal relies on use of adaptive management strategies to address issues for long-term maintenance. These strategies could include (but may not be limited to) increasing outreach concerning respectful use, increased visitation by management personnel, or placement of fencing or trashcans.

IV. Operations and Maintenance

The Project brings new users to the project area and proposes new facilities that require periodic maintenance. The Operator retains the responsibility to ensure public access consistent

with project goals and to maintain trail features for safety and to protect the investment of public funds used in their construction. Several strategies exist to provide management and maintenance; the appropriate combination will change over time to reflect need and changing circumstances.

- a. <u>Urban Land Management (ULM) Personnel.</u> At present, the Operator uses permanent land management staff and seasonal lot inspectors, site hosts, and land stewards to address issues as diverse as encroachments, land disturbance, hazard trees, needed maintenance, and disruptive users. These employees engage in pro-active inspections and respond to citizen calls. Seasonal field crews also accomplish site restoration and maintenance such as building fences and other barriers, posting signage, and grading and revegetation.
- b. Enforcement Contract. The Operator cooperates on enforcement actions needed in extreme situations on Conservancy and NTPUD parcels within Operator limits. These usually involve activities with threat of imminent harm such as illegal camping or campfires. This cooperation is critical, as the Placer County Sheriff staff have law enforcement authority. It is important to note that County law enforcement officials exercise their authority in relation to the laws of the respective jurisdictions. Law enforcement officials will not enforce Operator trail and land management policies described that are not also prohibited by local or state statute.
- c. Maintenance Contracts/Agreements. Many recreation providers, including the County, Conservancy and NTPUD, regularly contract with other entities to manage and maintain specific recreation properties and facilities. If contracts occur with eligible local jurisdictions for Project maintenance activities, funding for certain aspects of this type of agreement may be eligible for local tax funding that generates maintenance funds for new bicycle trails. Additionally, many communities rely on volunteer services for some types of public facility upkeep. Maintenance needs such as litter patrol are well suited for this kind of assistance.

Maintenance needs for trail features will change over time, increasing with facility age. As the Project is constructed, specific maintenance needs will be identified and planned. The following description includes general maintenance issues and serves as a guide in developing a specific approach as plans mature.

- Asphalt Concrete Trail Surface. The asphalt concrete trail surface will require scheduled maintenance. Asphalt concrete sealing is important to maintain the integrity of the surface; sealing frequency responds to site conditions such as proximity to snow removal from roadways and sun exposure. Other asphalt concrete repairs can include crack sealing, patching, or repair of heave damage from tree roots.
- 2. Asphalt Concrete Markings. Repainting trail markings or roadway crosswalks must occur frequently. For crosswalks on roadways, maintained by other jurisdictions, annual repainting will typically be necessary. Trail centerline striping or other trail symbols require less frequent renewal.
- 3. Bridge Maintenance and Repair. If the final design uses wood decking on the bridge span, scheduled maintenance will include sealant application to protect material integrity. Synthetic surfaces avoid this requirement. However, all trail surfaces require some element of regular maintenance.

- 4. Repair. Other facility features such as signs and fences will require repair and periodic replacement. This includes trail and site features that can be damaged by snow load, vandalism, or improper use. Annual inspections and citizen reports can identify repair needs to be planned and completed as necessary.
- 5. Spring Clean-up. Interest in shared-use trail use in Tahoe begins with the first warm days in Spring, usually long before the snow melts on trail surfaces. The Operator does not plan to clear snow from the Project, yet expects that local interest exists and snow removal could be provided by others. Other spring tasks include sweeping the trail, seal coating or repainting pavement markings if necessary and addressing hazard vegetation or other facility repair.
- 6. Regular Maintenance. Keeping the trail surface clear and free from obstacles requires regular sweeping, trimming trailside vegetation, and litter control and removal. Future tree or limb removal may be necessary to reduce safety hazard for trail users. Certain areas may benefit from placement of "mutt mitt" receptacles.
- 7. Site Protection/Restoration. The Project relies on placing trail obstacles and revegetation of cut and fill slopes and disturbed areas. New public access to some areas could encourage establishment of new trails or widening of existing trails in the project area. To assure that new trails accessing the Project do not develop, the Operator will rely on a system of regular monitoring and adaptive management. The adaptive management techniques available, as described above, include: use of interpretive and directional signage and placement of additional trail obstacles or user management fences.
- 8. Highway 28 Trail Crossing. The proposed trail crosses Highway 89 near Dollar Drive which includes operation and maintenance of the pedestrian-activated signal, installation and removal of seasonal center lane pedestrian refuge, maintenance of pavement striping and signs affiliated with crossing, and applicable traffic control protocol deployed during performance of these activities. These activities will be permitted and performed under a Caltrans encroachment permit acquired by the Operator.

V. Project Monitoring

Project monitoring addresses the following:

- 1. Construction Monitoring as determined by TRPA and NPDES construction permit conditions; and
- 2. Post-Project Monitoring (Revegetation and Restoration, BMP Effectiveness, Noxious Weed and Invasive Species, and general trail use).