

Trails and Pathways

The Truckee Meadows Region is blessed with an abundance of trails and pathways, both within our development footprint and in the surrounding exurban lands. These trails provide many recreational opportunities including hiking, equestrian riding, biking, and four-wheeling. Our local trail and pathway network is great for our community's overall quality of life and offers a number of physical and mental health benefits. It also boosts our economy, fosters a community sense of place and connectivity, and provides for alternative transportation to cars which in turn lowers greenhouse gas emissions.

(Callout Box): Trails and Our Economy - When visitors participate in outdoor recreation, they spend their hard-earned money on gear, equipment, food, lodging and more, and contribute \$65.3 billion in annual tax revenue to federal coffers and untold billions to state and local community funding streams. Much of America's recreation infrastructure on federally managed lands and waters is also associated with revenue streams — fishing and hunting licenses; entrance and activity fees; campground, slip and boat launch fees; recreation permits and registration fees; and excise and fuel taxes, (American Trails).

- Takeaways on how trails boost the economy:
 - o A 2018 study of Helena, Montana's trail impact revealed a \$4.3 million annual impact for the town of 31,000 residents. This is just one example out of hundreds from across the nation of trails playing a vital role in the economy.
 - o Outdoor recreation now outpaces the oil and gas industry in economic impact. The outdoor recreation industry is built on trails, making trails an important economic driver.
 - o Properties near trails increase in value.
 - o Trails both drive tourism, and make communities a more desirable place to live.
 - o Trails boost physical activity, creating measurable and substantial savings in healthcare costs
 - o Trails create jobs. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects create 8–12 jobs per \$1 million of spending. Road infrastructure projects create 7 jobs per \$1 million of expenditures (Garrett-Peltier, 2011). (American Trails)

It is important to understand and inventory our trail network within Washoe County to ensure connectivity and provide up-to-date information to trail users. In 2019, Truckee Meadows Trails (TMT) partnered with the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA) and the Great Basin Institute (GBI) to map existing trails in the Truckee Meadows using existing trails data, recreational grade GPS equipment, and digital photo interpretation. A geospatial data set of inventoried trails and draft mapping products were produced for internal discussion, public meetings, land management agencies, and for the TMT Plan. These data were vetted and refined by staff at local jurisdictions and other land management agencies. The trail inventory is a "living" data set that is maintained and added to as new trails are built or planned. TMRPA's GIS mapping inventory identified over 251 miles of natural surface (i.e., soft), single-track trails that are managed and maintained by a jurisdiction or organization (e.g., HOA). Hard trails or "pathways" are primarily owned by cities of Reno and Sparks with 41% owned by Reno and 33% owned by Sparks. Approximately 53 miles of non-maintained "social trails" were identified. Most of these social trails have been developed by the public without permits and have not been adopted nor are they considered "system trails" by the various land management agencies (TMT). Trail maintenance is a crucial aspect of providing a world-class trail system for our residents and visitors. Trails that do not

have an agency designated to manage their upkeep present significant challenges and in many cases should be removed or re-routed for sustainability and adopted by an official entity.

Link and callout box to TMT Plan and/or trail maps*

Many of our trails and pathways cross between jurisdictions and thus it is important to foster agency coordination in regards to who is responsible for upkeep and management of them and, to the degree possible, share the burden of upkeep in a consistent fashion. Another challenge, is that while some trails are single-purpose, many trails allow multiple uses which can lead to a variety of issues to be addressed in order to ensure all users can enjoy them. Strategies such as limiting uses types on specific trails or specific days can help minimize conflict, but are difficult to enforce.

Additional constraints for our trails include funding and staff capacity. The public's use of trails has steadily increased; however, the number of trails, and often funding for maintenance of existing and/or creation of new trails, has not kept up pace with the growing number of users. The overuse of our trails coupled with underfunding efforts to maintain or increase trail networks is detrimental to communities and the environment, (American Trails and NPR). Creating trails for the public helps to ensure that when people want to get outside and hike, they have a place to do that and a route to follow rather than wandering through habitat and disrupting wildlife.

To that end, TMRPA is engaged in policy work for the Regional Plan to recognize and consider regional trails and connectivity in conjunction with the development review process. The Truckee Meadows Trails (TMT) effort and associated Regional Trails Plan helps provide a holistic approach and dataset to consider when evaluating any development for conformance with the Regional Plan. TMT is a community-led initiative designed to improve the range of opportunities for residents and visitors by identifying and establishing non-motorized routes for greater trail connectivity in the Truckee Meadows region. The initiative started in 2017 with a coalition of land managers, government agencies, non-profits, and private businesses that all came together to create the TMT Plan and Report. The plan outlines a vision of a healthy Truckee Meadows community connected by trails and provides a framework for completing future projects. TMT's mission is to work with community and agency partners to create a regional, sustainable, system trail network that enhances the quality of life for Truckee Meadows residents. The TMT plan lays out the goals and objectives that will help guide future trail projects in the region. The Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation's Trails Coordinator is currently working with our coalition partners to identify priority projects and an action plan for 2024 and beyond, (Truckee Meadows Parks Foundations and Truckee Meadows Trails).

Trail benefits extend not only to the residents and tourists that utilize our local trails, but if sustainably managed they may also have positive environmental impacts. Public open space, trails, and parks may serve as buffers between high wildfire hazard areas and neighborhoods or other uses. They may also support fire response efforts, for example by improving access to wildland areas, (APA PAS Report).

(Callout Box): Leave no trace: Trail Etiquette – Every trail user has the responsibility to keep trails safe and enjoyable for all, and to protect our natural resources. Here are a few rules of the road:

- Keep an eye and an ear out for others on the trail.
- Cyclists yield to hikers, hikers and cyclists yield to horses.

- Always travel at a safe, controlled speed and alert other users as you approach from behind.
- Never approach or harass wildlife or domestic animals you may meet along the way.
- Keep pets on leashes and under control.
- Staying on the marked trail is an enormous help to the environment. Do not cut switchbacks or use other shortcuts.
- Leave the flowers and plants for others to enjoy.
- PLEASE HELP PRESERVE THESE TRAILS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.
(2016 Washoe County Trail Guide)

Relevant Agencies:

- Truckee Meadows Trails
- Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation
- Biggest Little Trails Coalition
- US Forest Service
- BLM
- Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space
- City of Reno Parks and Recreation
- City of Sparks Parks and Recreation
- US Forest Service Carson Ranger District
- Great Basin Institute
- Biggest Little Trail Stewards
- Sierra Trail Works
- Sierra Club
- REI
- Nevada Land Trust
- College Cyclery
- Nevada Land Trust
- Tahoe Pyramid Trail
- One Truckee River
- Eastern Sierra Trails Coalition (ESTC)

Relevant Data: