

DENNIS T. MACHIDA MEMORIAL GREENWAY GRANT

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolution 23-12-06 (Attachment 1) authorizing a grant up to \$800,000 to the City of South Lake Tahoe (City) for feasibility analysis, planning, and environmental review of the next section of the Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway (Greenway) Class 1 paved shared-use trail from its current terminus at Herbert Avenue towards Ski Run Boulevard and Van Sickle Bi-State Park.

Executive Summary: The recommended action authorizes an \$800,000 grant to the City to continue feasibility analysis, planning, and environmental review for the next phase of the Greenway (Project). When constructed, the section of trail planned using this grant will extend the Greenway from its current terminus at Herbert Avenue to Ski Run Boulevard and possibly beyond. This section of trail will fill a gap in South Lake Tahoe's active transportation system by connecting the Greenway to existing and planned Class 1, 2, and 3 paved trails, enabling users to safely travel to many recreational and community destinations without a vehicle (Attachment 2). The recommended action is consistent with Goals 2, 3, and 4 in the California Tahoe Conservancy's (Conservancy) Strategic Plan, which aim to restore watershed resilience, provide public access for all, and foster sustainable communities. Extending the Greenway also supports the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) and the Lake Tahoe Active Transportation Plan. Upon Board authorization, staff will execute an agreement with the City.

Location: This grant will plan a section of shared-use trail located in the City from Herbert Avenue to at least Ski Run Boulevard and possibly beyond towards Van Sickle Bi-State Park.

Fiscal Summary: The Conservancy will award up to \$800,000 of General Fund for the Project.

Overview

History

In the early 1960s, the State of California purchased property for a by-pass freeway intended to address traffic congestion along U.S. Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe. By

the 1970s, changing environmental values precluded new major auto routes in the Lake Tahoe Basin and public agencies envisioned alternative uses for these parcels. Conservancy staff worked with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to transfer these properties to the Conservancy in 2000 to protect open space and natural habitat and to eventually develop the Greenway.

Conservancy staff began planning for the Greenway in 2002. In 2011, the Conservancy Board adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the first 3.86-mile Greenway section between Sierra Boulevard and Van Sickle Bi-State Park. Since then, the Conservancy and its partners have constructed approximately half of that 3.86-mile Greenway section. The constructed segments from Sierra Boulevard to Herbert Avenue cross sensitive lands and streams, connect users to a variety of recreational and community destinations, and tie into the broader shared-use trail network in the south shore (Attachment 3).

The 2011 MND included the section of trail that the City will plan using this grant. The Conservancy and its partners did not include this section in recent Greenway construction efforts because of challenges related to topography and acquiring trail right-of-way near Pioneer Trail. As a result, the Conservancy and its partners focused on implementing other sections.

With nearby Greenway sections now complete, local cycling organizations, the Conservancy, and the City are eager to find solutions to extend the Greenway from Herbert Avenue to Ski Run Boulevard and beyond, as this section is now a critical missing link in South Lake Tahoe's shared-use trail network.

The City is leading the Project and initiated a feasibility study in 2022. The City's feasibility study examined the alignment approved in 2011 and several alternatives. However, the Project Technical Advisory Committee determined that additional feasibility analyses, public outreach, and planning is necessary to develop an optimal route.

Detailed Description of Recommended Action

Using the grant, the City will identify a feasible route to extend the Greenway from Herbert Avenue to Ski Run Boulevard and possibly beyond, depending on the feasibility of doing so. The section of trail planned under this grant will be between 0.5 and 1.5 miles in length. The City will develop and evaluate multiple Class 1 trail alignments. The alignment evaluations will consider multi-benefit opportunities such as wildlife habitat connectivity, water quality improvements, road alignments, and school and neighborhood connections. The City will seek public input and, through the Project Technical Advisory Committee, select a preferred alignment. The City will also use the grant funding to complete environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency requirements.

1. Overall Context and Benefits

The Greenway is the backbone of the South Lake Tahoe active transportation system. The constructed trail sections connect neighborhoods to destinations such as Lake Tahoe Community College, Bijou Park, stores, restaurants, and recreational areas. Additional sections, such as the one to be planned using this grant, will continue amplifying the Greenway's value as both a recreational and active transportation amenity.

Extending the Greenway will connect users to Ski Run Boulevard, which is a major commercial and community hub, with existing Class 1 trails connecting U.S. Highway 50 and Pioneer Trail. In addition, the City anticipates completing the Pioneer Trail Pedestrian Improvement Project in 2025, which will construct Class 2 bike lanes and sidewalks along Pioneer Trail between Ski Run Boulevard and the tourist core area at Stateline. Together, these projects will provide essential connections for people walking and biking in the most densely developed portion of the City.

This grant may also provide opportunities for the City and its partners to look holistically at this area to address not only recreation and active transportation needs, but also wildlife habitat connectivity. Bijou Park Creek flows under roads in the project area, posing collision risks to wildlife traveling a known wildlife corridor and wildlife-impact and icing risks to drivers. The City and Conservancy will work together to identify potential trail design techniques and funding opportunities to address the multiple issues in this area.

Some benefits of shared-use trails include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by providing an alternative to driving, reducing traffic congestion, improving water quality by reducing roadway-generated fine sediment, enhancing public health by providing outdoor space for people to recreate, and enhancing accessibility for all users.

2. Schedule for the Recommended Action

Task	Completion Date
Planning and feasibility analysis	2025
Environmental review	2026

Financing

The Conservancy will award up to \$800,000 of General Fund to the City for feasibility analysis, planning, and environmental review. The City is contributing an additional \$250,000 to the Project.

Grant Tasks	Amount
Planning and feasibility analysis	\$500,000
Environmental review	\$300,000
Grant Total	\$800,000

Authority

Consistency with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation

The recommended action is consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66907.7 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to local public agencies for purposes consistent with its mission.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan

Extending the Greenway supports the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Goals 2, 3, and 4 (restore watershed resilience, provide public access for all, and foster sustainable communities).

Consistency with the Conservancy's Program Guidelines

The recommended action is consistent with the Conservancy's Grant Guidelines because staff has evaluated and will manage the grant pursuant to those guidelines. The recommended action is also consistent with the Conservancy's Public Access and Recreation Program Guidelines (2009) because the Project increases and enhances significant regional public access and public recreational opportunities, consistent with natural resource preservation, and increases non-motorized transportation and recreational opportunities.

Consistency with External Authorities

The recommended action is consistent with the EIP because it supports projects 03.02.02.0076 and 03.02.02.0095. The recommended action also advances several important state mandates, such as the Sustainable Communities Act, Climate Adaptation Strategy, and Outdoors for All Strategy. The recommended grant is also consistent with General Fund requirements.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.), certain classes of activities are statutorily exempt from CEQA or are exempt because they have been determined by the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency to have no significant effect on the environment. Staff has evaluated the recommended action and has found it to be exempt under CEQA. The recommended action qualifies for a statutory exemption under CEQA Guidelines section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies, because it involves a grant for feasibility and planning studies to inform a possible future action which has not yet been approved, adopted, or funded. The recommended action includes funding to complete environmental review once more planning work is done. Staff has prepared a notice of exemption (NOE) (Attachment 4). If the Board approves the recommended action, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, section 15062.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 – Resolution 12-12-06

Attachment 2 – Project Map

Attachment 3 – Existing and Planned South Shore Shared-Use Trail Network

Attachment 4 – Notice of Exemption (NOE)

Conservancy Staff Contact

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