

**VAN SICKLE BI-STATE PARK SAFETY AND EQUITABLE ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS  
PROJECT AND DENNIS T. MACHIDA MEMORIAL GREENWAY – VAN SICKLE  
CONNECTOR**

**Recommended Actions:** Adopt Resolutions 26-06-03 (Attachment 1) and 26-06-04 (Attachment 2) authorizing several actions related to approval and implementation of the Van Sickle Bi-State Park Safety and Equitable Access Improvements Project (Van Sickle Project) and the Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway – Van Sickle Connector (Greenway Connector), respectively. Resolutions 26-06-03 and 26-06-04 make the appropriate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determinations for each project and authorize California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) staff to accept and expend up to \$10 million, enter into all necessary agreements, and take all other steps necessary to implement the projects.

**Executive Summary:** Conservancy staff requests authorization to take several actions necessary to finish planning and construct the Van Sickle Project and the Greenway Connector. The Conservancy intends to implement these two CEQA projects concurrently due to their proximity and the connection between the shared-use trails. The recommended actions would allow staff to expend available Conservancy funding, accept additional grant funds, enter into agreements, and take all other necessary steps to advance the two projects.

The projects, which are both located within Van Sickle Bi-State Park (Park), will enhance the Park's entrance, trails, and facilities and will result in a safer, more accessible, and enjoyable experience for all Park visitors. The Van Sickle Project includes a new 0.4-mile, paved, shared-use trail, a Park entrance plaza, two picnic areas, a state line monument, stormwater improvements, hiking trail, and other accessibility improvements. The Greenway Connector, which is the northernmost section of the Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway (Greenway), is a new 0.35-mile shared-use trail that will connect the Van Sickle Project's shared-use trail to a nearby neighborhood and includes paved sections and a boardwalk across a meadow.

The recommended actions advance the Conservancy's Strategic Plan goals to Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All; Safeguard the Lake Tahoe Basin's (Basin) Environmental, Tribal, Cultural, and Recreational Attributes for Future Generations; and Care for the Basin's Natural, Tribal, and Cultural Resources.

The recommended actions also support the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) and the California Outdoors for All Strategy, which prioritizes projects that improve access to the outdoors for all Californians.

**Location:** The planned improvements are located within the Park. The Park is in the City of South Lake Tahoe (City) near U.S. Highway 50 and Stateline, Nevada (Attachment 3).

**Fiscal Summary:** The staff requests authority to accept and expend up to \$10 million of state (including Conservancy and other sources), federal, and other funding to support implementation of the planned improvements.

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## Overview

### History

Managing and improving the Park and building the Greenway are two of the Conservancy's signature efforts, both with rich histories. The Conservancy is planning and intends to construct the projects together because of proximity and the shared-use trails will connect near the Park's entrance. A brief history of the Park and the Greenway is described below.

### Park History

The states of Nevada and California acquired land for the Park in stages, and the Park opened to visitors in 2011. Achieving this milestone required the Conservancy and State of Nevada to complete several key steps. In 1988, Jack Van Sickle donated 542 acres to the Nevada Division of State Parks (NDSP). The Conservancy subsequently acquired approximately 185 acres of adjacent land in California to improve access and enlarge the Park. The Conservancy's part of the Park includes approximately 23 acres acquired from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in 2000, 160 acres acquired from the Van Sickle family in 2002, and 2.5 acres acquired from a private owner in 2025.

In 2005, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), NDSP, and Conservancy signed a three-way, interagency agreement to coordinate planning and management of the Park. Through this planning process, the agencies aligned around a common purpose for the Park, developed Park objectives, and identified improvements necessary to open the Park to the public. The 2005 master plan states: "The purpose of Van Sickle Bi-State Park is to provide recreation facilities for local residents and visitors to the Lake Tahoe Basin while protecting and showcasing the unique scenic, natural, cultural, and historic features of the site."

In 2009, the NDSP constructed the Park's access road and utilities, as well as restrooms, picnic sites, trails, and trailhead parking on the Nevada side. In the same year, Conservancy staff entered into an agreement with the NDSP to jointly manage the Park.

In 2011, the Conservancy constructed the California day use area in the vicinity of the historic barn with a small gravel parking lot, paved accessible parking, a picnic area, an unpaved entrance trail, restrooms, gates, and the existing state line marker.

In 2019, the NDSP and Conservancy developed a Vision Plan to update the 2005 master plan. The Vision Plan proposes several Park improvements that the states have not yet completed, including:

- a new state line monument;
- paved shared-use trail connections throughout the Park and to the South Lake Tahoe tourist core area;
- expanded day-use amenities such as shaded picnic areas and interpretive exhibits;
- improved hiking trails; and
- on the Nevada side, a visitor center, campground, maintenance facilities, and employee housing.

Importantly, the Vision Plan also describes improvements necessary to keep the Park open to the public during the winter, including stormwater basins and snow-storage areas.

Total average annual Park visitation between 2019 and 2022 was 61,115 people (41,292 in summer and 19,823 in winter). Total average annual projected visitation by 2048, after full Park build-out, is estimated to be 136,492 (109,285 in summer and 27,207 in winter), according to a study commissioned by the NDSP.

### Greenway 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 Basin and public agencies envisioned alternative uses for these parcels. Conservancy staff worked with Caltrans to transfer these properties to the Conservancy in 2000 to protect open space and natural habitat and to eventually develop what would become the Greenway.

Conservancy staff began planning for the Greenway in 2002. In 2011, the Conservancy completed environmental review for the first 3.86-mile Greenway section between Sierra Boulevard and the Park, including the Greenway Connector section. Since then, the Conservancy and its partners have constructed approximately half of the 3.86-mile section. The constructed segments, which cost approximately \$6.8 million, meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, cross environmentally sensitive lands and streams with elevated boardwalks and bridges, connect users to a variety of recreational and community destinations, and tie into the broader shared-use trail network in the south shore.

### **Detailed Description of Recommended Actions**

#### 1. Major Elements and/or Steps of the Recommended Actions

The planned improvements include approximately 0.75 miles of paved shared-use trails connecting the Park entrance to the California day use area, the state line, and the nearby neighborhood at Chonokis Road (Attachment 4); a new Park entrance plaza; two new picnic areas; wayfinding and interpretive signage and exhibits; stormwater basins; retaining walls; a new hiking trail; and other accessibility and stormwater improvements (Attachment 5). A section of shared-use trail will be an elevated boardwalk to protect a meadow near the entrance to the Park.

The staff has completed conceptual and preliminary plans. Following Board approval, the staff will continue to work with the Department of General Services (DGS) and a consultant team to complete engineering plans, obtain permits, coordinate with the NDSP on the state line monument, and construct the improvements. The NDSP has expressed interest in building part of the state line monument in California if funding allows and California bidding, liability, and DGS oversight requirements are achieved.

A major element of the planned improvements requires continued coordination with local agencies, the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (Washoe Tribe), and the community. The staff is coordinating with the City on improvements that the Conservancy will construct on City right-of-way to connect to existing pedestrian infrastructure on Chonokis and Montreal Roads, and will enter into agreements or secure permits as needed for that work. The staff will continue to engage with the Washoe Tribe and partners while advancing the projects. The Conservancy will also continue to inform the public about the projects and provide opportunities for community members to engage directly with the staff. The staff anticipates completing the improvements in 2029.

## 2. Overall Context and Benefits

Guided by the 2019 Vision Plan, the Conservancy and NDSP are planning major improvements in the Park. The Park's unique location, within walking distance of the largest urban area and "tourism bed base" in the Basin, makes it one of the Basin's most accessible parks. The Park offers access to trails, views of the Lake, and picnicking opportunities within walking distance of casinos, hotels, and neighborhoods. Improvements in both states present a great opportunity to enhance safety and visitor experience at one of the few bi-state parks in the country.

The proposed improvements will enhance public safety on the California side of the Park. Currently, pedestrians enter the Park either by walking along the entrance road alongside vehicle traffic or by using a dirt path adjacent to the road. Because the dirt path ends at the California day use area, the most direct way to walk to the Nevada day use area is on the road. Many visitors also stop in the middle of the road to take photos at the state line marker embedded in the pavement, creating additional safety hazards. The new shared-use trails and state line monument will be separated from the roadway, which will reduce these pedestrian and vehicle conflicts. The NDSP is building a paved shared-use trail that will meet at the state line and continue to the Nevada day use area.

The proposed improvements will also enhance the visitor experience throughout the Park. A new entrance plaza, adjacent to the new shared-use trail, will create a welcoming environment where visitors can plan their visit by viewing Park wayfinding and safety information. Two new picnic areas, one along the shared-use trail and another at the California day use area, will provide visitors with opportunities to gather, learn about the Washoe Tribe and the Park’s history, and enjoy the natural setting. All of the improvements, including the shared-use trail, will meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards and protect the Park environment. These improvements, including features such as an elevated boardwalk, will create a welcoming and enjoyable experience for all visitors.

Additionally, the new shared-use trails will create a new route into the Park from nearby economically disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged neighborhoods. The new connection provides a significantly safer route to the Park that avoids busy roadways and will enable nearby residents to enjoy the health and community benefits of spending time outdoors.

The improvements are designed to facilitate year-round Park operations in the future by accommodating snow removal and stormwater runoff. Winter operations may include plowing roads and trails and opening restrooms. Doing so will enable even more people to experience the Park annually.

The NDSP is also planning several improvements on the Nevada side of the Park and is scheduled to begin construction in 2026. The NDSP plans to construct a new state line monument on the Nevada side of the state line. The NDSP also plans to construct a paved shared-use trail from the state line monument to the Nevada day use area, employee housing, and a maintenance shop. The employee housing will make it possible for employees to live where they work and respond quickly to park management needs. In the future, the NDSP also plans to construct a visitor center and a campground near the existing Nevada day use area.

Conservancy staff is in close coordination with NDSP staff to ensure that improvements on both sides of the state line are complementary and provide the greatest public benefit.

### 3. Schedule for the Recommended Actions

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Date</b>
Final Engineering	2026 – 2027
Secure Necessary Agreements and Permits	2026 – 2027
Construction	Fall 2027 – Fall 2029

## Financing

Conservancy staff requests authorization to accept and expend up to \$10 million from various sources to finish planning and implement the improvements. The Conservancy has already expended approximately \$550,000 to develop conceptual and preliminary plans and complete environmental analysis under previous Board authorizations. This new authorization includes \$4 million in Conservancy funds, including Bond and special revenue sources, and authorization to accept and expend \$6 million in external grant funding.

This funding authorization positions the Conservancy to apply for and accept grant funding to close the current \$6 million funding gap.

The staff anticipates the budget and funding sources as shown below.

<b>Planning expenditures (previously authorized by the Board)</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Conservancy funding	\$550,000
<b>Previously Authorized Planning Total</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>

<b>Estimated funding needed to complete improvements (current Board funding authorization request)</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Conservancy (existing)	\$4,000,000
Additional external grant funding (to be determined)	\$6,000,000
<b>Recommended Funding Authorization Total</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>

## Authority

### Consistency with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation

The recommended actions are consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66906.8 authorizes the Conservancy to select and hire consultants or contractors to provide services necessary to achieve the purposes of the Conservancy, including preserving recreational opportunities at Lake Tahoe. Government Code section 66907 authorizes the Conservancy to "select and acquire real property or interests therein in the name of and on behalf of the state, for the purposes of protecting the natural environment, providing public access or public recreational facilities, preserving wildlife habitat areas, or providing access to or management of acquired lands." Under Government Code section 66907.9, the Conservancy is authorized to initiate, negotiate, and participate in agreements for the management of land under its ownership and control with local public agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, individuals, corporate entities, or partnerships. Government Code section 66907.10 authorizes the Conservancy to improve and develop acquired lands for a variety of purposes, including protection of the natural environment. Government Code

section 66908 authorizes the Conservancy to receive reimbursements and other funds from public agencies.

### **Consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan**

The recommended actions advance the Conservancy's Strategic Plan goals to Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All; and Safeguard the Basin's Environmental, Tribal, Cultural, and Recreational Attributes for Future Generations; and Care for the Basin's Natural, Tribal, and Cultural Resources.

### **Consistency with the Conservancy's Program Guidelines**

The recommended actions are consistent with the Conservancy's Recreation and Public Access Program Guidelines, which have four primary objectives:

- To increase and enhance significant regional public access and public recreational opportunities consistent with natural resource preservation.
- To provide a range of public access opportunities to locations with regionally significant lakefront, riverfront, cultural/historical, and natural characteristics.
- To increase regional waterborne and non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities.
- To support environmental education, interpretation, and wayfinding efforts that promote stewardship, provide information, and lessen confusion for recreationists.

### **Consistency with External Authorities**

The recommended actions are consistent with the EIP because they complete the implementation of EIP project #03.01.02.0030 (Van Sickle Bi-State Park – CA Phase III Improvements) and a portion of EIP project #03.02.02.0106 (Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway (Phase 3)). They also support the Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan and the California Outdoors for All Strategy.

### **Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act**

Van Sickle Project

The Conservancy, acting as the lead agency under CEQA, completed an Initial Study (IS)/Negative Declaration (ND)/Initial Environmental Checklist (IEC) and an Addendum for the Park in 2009. For the Van Sickle Project, the Conservancy prepared a Supplemental IS/Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)/IEC. The original IS/ND, Addendum, and Supplemental IS/MND are available for public review at the Conservancy office and on the Conservancy's website (Attachment 6).

The Conservancy posted the Draft Supplemental IS/MND on its website on March 26, 2026, and submitted it to the State Clearinghouse (SCH #2009042033). The staff also posted notice at the Park entrances and broadly announced it to the public and partners. During the public comment period from March 26 to April 27, 2026, the Conservancy received a comment from the League to Save Lake Tahoe supporting the project and seeking elaboration on its furtherance of regional goals. The Conservancy responded to the comment in the Final Supplemental IS/MND. After the Final Supplemental IS/MND was

completed, the Conservancy received a public comment about tree removal, which has been provided to the Board. The staff responded to the commenter and provided additional information.

Based on the analysis in the Supplemental IS/MND, Conservancy staff has determined that the Van Sickle Project, as mitigated, would not cause a significant effect on the environment. The mitigation measures for the Van Sickle Project can be found in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP).

The staff recommends that the Board review the Supplemental IS/MND/IEC together with the comments received during the public review process; make the findings as set forth in Resolution 26-06-03; and adopt the Supplemental IS/MND and MMRP. If the Board adopts the Supplemental IS/MND/IEC and authorizes the Van Sickle Project, the staff will file a Notice of Determination (NOD) with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, section 15075 (Attachment 7).

#### Greenway Connector

The Conservancy prepared an IS/MND/IEC for the Greenway in 2011 (SCH #2006112070), analyzing the 3.86-mile Greenway section from Sierra Boulevard to the Park. In 2016, the Conservancy prepared a Supplement to the IS/MND to examine changes to earlier phases of the Greenway between Sierra Boulevard and Glenwood Way.

As planning progressed on the Greenway Connector, the staff proposed modifications to the trail as analyzed in the 2011 IS/MND, including refinements to the trail alignment and minor design changes to the boardwalk. These modifications are the result of experience gained through construction of prior Greenway phases and other shared-use trails in the Tahoe region and additional consultation with partners and the public.

Conservancy staff prepared an Addendum to analyze the minor project modifications. The Addendum also modifies mitigation measures for cultural resources and tribal cultural resources to align with the Conservancy's commitment to coordinating with the Washoe Tribe throughout implementation of both the Greenway Connector and the Van Sickle Project. The Addendum and IS/MND are available for public review at the Conservancy office and on the Conservancy's website (Attachment 8).

The staff recommends the Board review and consider the Addendum with the IS/MND; make the findings set forth in Resolution 26-06-04; and adopt the MMRP. If the Board authorizes the Greenway Connector, staff will file an NOD with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA guidelines, section 15096 (Attachment 9).

## **List of Attachments**

Attachment 1 – Resolution 26-06-03

- Exhibit A – Van Sickle Project MMRP

Attachment 2 – Resolution 26-06-04

- Exhibit A – Greenway Connector MMRP

Attachment 3 – Projects Location Map

Attachment 4 – Proposed Trails Map

Attachment 5 – Proposed Improvements Map

Attachment 6 – Van Sickle Project CEQA Documents

Attachment 7 – Van Sickle Project Notice of Determination

- Exhibit A - Van Sickle Project Location Map

Attachment 8 - Greenway Connector CEQA Documents

Attachment 9 – Greenway Connector Notice of Determination

- Exhibit A – Greenway Connector Location Map

## **Conservancy Staff Contact**

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