



January 2, 2018

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
Attention: Ashley Sibr, Landscape Architect
35 College Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

Re: Tahoe Rim Trail Association comments regarding the Proposed Action for the Incline Management Plan Project

Dear Ms. Sibr:

I am writing on behalf of the 2,300 member Tahoe Rim Trail Association (TRTA). The TRTA is the United States Forest Service's primary private partner in the management, maintenance and protection of the Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT) system. I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action for the Incline Management Plan.

The TRTA would like to thank the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) for recognizing the need for additional planning efforts in the Mt. Rose Highway/Tahoe Meadows area and express support for the Proposed Action, particularly the goal of providing appropriate and sustainable access for dispersed recreation activities. The Proposed Action would create loop options for hikers and mountain bikers on the west side of the highway, and would connect trails on both sides of the highway either directly or indirectly to the Incline Flume Trail. These connections are valuable additions to the trail system in the region.

While the TRT does not pass through the defined project area, trails within the project area on both sides of the highway connect to the TRT. In addition, proposed actions within the project area affect the experience of accessing and recreating on the TRT. Specifically, the TRTA is concerned that the Proposed Action will spur additional trail use in the area without providing additional infrastructure to support those users and ensure they do not degrade nearby resources and the experience of travelling on the TRT system. There is also a lack of clarity in the Proposed Action regarding trails that connect to the TRT.

Additional attractions, such as the proposed new trail in the former bed of Incline Lake, will attract additional use to an area that is already extremely popular. Data from trail counters on nearby sections of the TRT confirm that the TRT both east and west of Highway 431 are two of the most popular segments of the entire TRT system, seeing nearly 1000 trips a day during busy summer weekends. The trail access points in the immediate area already lack amenities such as formal parking, garbage receptacles and restrooms. A continuing lack of such facilities in the face of increased use may lead to additional litter and human waste being deposited in the area. Further, parking will become scarcer, particularly at the popular Ophir Creek access trail to the TRT on the east side of Highway 431, and more pedestrian traffic will occur along and across the highway.

The TRTA would like the LTBMU to consider revising the Proposed Action to include amenities for trail users beyond the interpretive and wayfinding signs already under consideration. Such amenities could include off-road paved parking, restrooms and garbage receptacles. It may be that a partnership with IVGID and/or NDoT to provide such facilities on their parcels along Highway 431 would be possible. Further, the TRTA would like the LTBMU to consider incorporating a plan for public transportation to the area. This would reduce road congestion and limit the number of vehicles needing to park.

In addition, the TRTA would like to request that the LTBMU clarify the plan for adopting and upgrading trails in the area. Specifically, the TRTA would like the LTBMU to consider trail 18E17 west of its intersection with the trail labelled 'A' as a Wilderness Access Trail that would be closed to bikes. Shortly after 18E17 enters the proposed backcountry area it leads only into Mount Rose Wilderness where bikes are prohibited. Closing the lower portion of the trail to bikes as well would prevent riders from facing a dead-end at the wilderness boundary. In addition, the document does not discuss the existing Tyrolian Connector trail, a popular connection between the TRT near Chickadee Ridge and the Tyrolian Downhill along the east side of Highway 431.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action for the Incline Management Plan Project. Please reach out to me if there are any questions or concerns regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Morgan Steel". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large 'M' and a long, sweeping 'S'.

Morgan Steel
Executive Director
Tahoe Rim Trail Association

CC:
Dan Morris, Recreation Officer, Carson Ranger District