

Trails and Open Space Committee Statement of Interest

Dear TOS Committee,

My fondest memories as a child are of backpacking in the White Mountains in New Hampshire, finding hidden messages and occasionally candy that adults would stash behind trees and beneath rocks as a small inducement to keep going. Now a few decades later, I consider myself a lifelong trail runner, nordic skier, mountain biker, and bicycle commuter. And, naturally I am using the same tricks to get my daughters, Clara (6) and Charlotte (4) out in nature.

None of this would be possible without trails — including the substantial effort that goes into use planning, design, construction, and maintenance. A good trail system does not just happen. It is forged by a community. About 15 years ago and prior to my relocation to Tahoe-Donner, a neighboring family and mine collaborated to design, build, and operate a groomed 5km cross country ski trail, which we opened to local residents (via word of mouth) free of charge. We did it all from GIS mapping to tree flagging, tree cutting, excavating, selling the lumber, grooming the trail, and repairing it after storms. That experience has caused me to develop respect for those who administer trail systems on a larger scale.

Tahoe Donner already has a top-notch trail system. Future improvements would amount to adding a cherry atop the icing which is already on the cake. This said, it would be prudent to anticipate and proactively address the following emerging decision-points:

1. Should Tahoe Donner separate trail use by discipline (pedestrian vs. bike vs. equestrian) or continue with a multi-use strategy and focus on design elements that would enhance the safety of vulnerable users?
2. Should there be walkable trails in the winter?
3. Recognizing that parking lot capacity is the Achilles Heel for most Tahoe Donner amenities, should there be trails that provide a simple A-to-B transportation alternative via bicycle or on foot to driving among the various TD neighborhoods and amenities?

It would be my pleasure to join you and assist in grappling with these and other decision-points.

Best Wishes,

David Cahill
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