

SLT crews set to build bike park for summer use

By Kathryn Reed

By August cyclists may be cruising around Bijou Bike Park.

Bids are out for a professional park designer to be hired. The South Lake Tahoe City Council will likely award the contract in May to the person who will essentially be the construction manager.

It will be city crews doing most of the heavy lifting, with assistance from Bijou Bike Park Association volunteers and local contractors chipping in. It will take the better part of July to complete the park.

This is a change for the city. For the last 10 years most projects have been contracted out. Assistant Public Works Director Jim Marino is helping implement a new philosophy.

"We are trying to phase the street crews into doing more projects," Marino told *Lake Tahoe News*. "There are talented operators with unique skills."

Doing projects in house also saves money. The park, with two pump tracks and a BMX track in the center, will cost a little more than a half million dollars. The money is a mix of funds collected from the nonprofit cycling group, the city and in-kind work.

It will be built near the play area, down from the skate park and bordering the meadow. The future Greenway Bike Path will provide easy access to the park.

It will not impact the disc golf course. However, the par course will be eliminated at least temporarily. In future years the city is looking at replacing it with better, newer

equipment around the perimeter of the bike park.

Because the city has access to dirt this has helped keep costs down. Marino said if soil had to be purchased, it would have made the bike park cost prohibitive.

About 800-cubic-yards are sitting at the park ready to be used as the base layer. This came from the Harrison Avenue project. El Dorado County will be able to supply about another 800-cubic-yards from a project it is doing this season. And the city will have access to dirt from this summer's Sierra Tract work.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency requires a permit to move dirt, though there are fewer hurdles when it is moved within the basin.

Bike parks are a growing attraction throughout the United States.

"It's the perfect avenue to teach kids how to mountain bike," Marino said.

Youngsters – and others – usually don't like pedaling uphill. That leaves driving or taking a lift as the other options to get to the top in order to ride down. Bike parks eliminate the need to pedal uphill, but still provide the mountain bike experience.

All that dirt is needed to create the paths that have features on which to learn so riders can take those skills onto trails.

It's not just newbies who use these parks. Parks like this are a way to practice, unwind and for friends to gather. So many mountain biking destinations – which Lake Tahoe is trying to become – have these parks.