



C I T Y O F
RENO
Memorandum

DATE: August 14, 2026

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Jackie Bryant, City Manager 

FROM: Khalil Wilson, Interim Director of Public Works & City Engineer

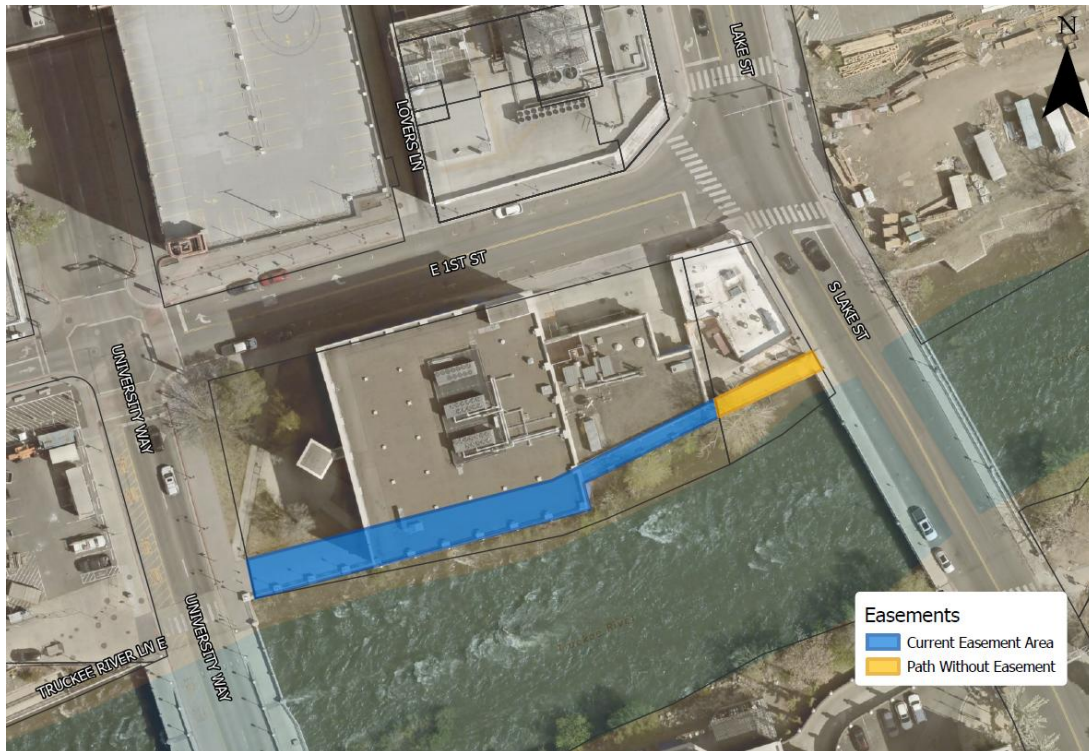
DEPT: Public Works

SUBJECT: Riverwalk Path Between University Way and Lake Street

This memo gives Council a chronological history of the public walkway along the north bank of the Truckee River between University Way (formerly Center Street) and the Lake Street Bridge and explains why this section remains closed currently.

Summary

The City holds an express public-access easement across the AT&T property on the University Way end of the walkway. No comparable easement exists on the Lake Street end. A 1972 agreement under which the extension was built allowed the City to construct a public concrete retaining wall and walkway along the river at no cost to the property owners, it did not grant the public an express easement to use the walkway. According to the City Attorney's Office, although the public has long used the walkway and wishes to continue using it, without an express easement, the City has no recognized legal right to require the owner to remove the fence and no legal basis to remove the fence itself. It should be noted the original path includes a stairway at the Lake Street end, so it does not provide a step-free route. Below is an exhibit of the area with the AT&T easement shown alongside the section of path without current easement.



History

The walkway was built in two phases. Nevada Bell (AT&T) built the first phase between 1970 and 1971 as part of its new telephone-equipment building at First and Center Streets; the path ran along the river from Center Street to the eastern edge of the Bell property. The City completed the second phase in 1972, extending the walkway east to the Lake Street Bridge. Architect Graham Erskine designed that extension at no cost to the City, and the City funded and managed the construction. In 2000, the City secured an express public-access easement across the AT&T portion of the path. The City never secured a comparable easement across the adjoining private property on the Lake Street end, and that gap is the reason the Lake Street closure cannot be resolved today.

Timeline

Date	Event
July 1970	Council approves Nevada Bell's new building at First and Center Streets (now 10 University Way). A riverside walkway is included.
1970–1971	Phase one of the walkway is built along the river to the eastern edge of the Bell property.

Date	Event
Early 1972	The walkway ends short of Lake Street. The Citizens' Advisory Committee urges the City Council to complete it, and Graham Erskine offers to design the extension at no cost.
March 13, 1972	Council accepts Erskine's design offer for the extension.
June 12, 1972	The City and the Cavallo family execute an agreement allowing construction of the extension across Cavallo property.
July 24, 1972	Council awards construction to Roberts and Shaver Construction (\$35,941); the extension is completed shortly after.
1999–2000	AT&T permits building updates at 10 University Way. The City secures an express public-access easement across AT&T's property.
2022	AT&T and the Downtown Reno Partnership install gates to secure the walkway after hours.
2024–2025	The adjoining Lake Street property owner permits and builds a fence across the stairs at the Lake Street Bridge entrance, on property with no public-access easement.
2026	Both ends of the block are closed to the public. The City develops a detour.

Planned Detour and Next Steps

Staff is preparing to install signage to route pedestrians and cyclists around the closure via First Street, rejoining the path near City Plaza and the National Automobile Museum. This work is anticipated to be completed by the end of August. Because the route runs cyclists against one-way traffic on University Way, the City plans to add a two-way bike facility along that block. The Tahoe-Pyramid Trail organization, which promotes the multi-use path connecting Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake through Reno and Sparks, has offered to assist the City in restoring full access.

