

20 25 TRAIL SURVEY REPORT



TAHOE CITY PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT

Executive Summary

Tahoe City Public Utility District (the District) has conducted user intercept surveys (Trail Surveys) on its Multi-Use Trail System since 2005. After a pause from in-person surveys between 2020 and 2024, the District resumed in-person trail surveys in 2025.

These annual surveys help the District better understand who uses our regional trail system, how they use them, their experience of the trail system, and what improvements matter most to them.

The District collected survey responses using a combined approach of online surveys distributed via e-news, web, and social media, as well as four in-person trail survey days in July and September. A total of 194 online survey responses and 341 in-person survey responses were collected over the course of the 2025 survey season.

Key Findings

Survey results reaffirmed critical role the District's regional multi-use trail network plays in recreation, transportation, and quality of life in North Lake Tahoe for residents and visitors.

- **User Satisfaction:** 98% rated their trail experience as Good or Excellent.
- **Community Value:** 96% said the trail system influences their enjoyment of North Lake Tahoe Very Much or Extremely.
- **Who Uses the Trails:** 35% of users were TCPUD residents, 41% were visitors, and 24% were North Lake Tahoe/Truckee residents.
- **Purpose of Use:** 95% of all respondents use the trail system for recreation or leisure, while 28% also use it for transportation or commuting,
- **How the Trails Are Used:** 82% bike, 54% walk, and 20% jog, with multiple responses allowed. Notably, 55% of users now report using e-bikes at least sometimes while biking, up sharply from 11% in 2019.
- **Year-Round Use:** 40% of respondents report using the trail system in winter.

Overall, the 2025 survey confirms that TCPUD trails are a beloved and widely used recreation and transportation resource for residents and visitors alike. The findings will help guide trail planning, maintenance, safety efforts, and long-term investments to ensure a safe, accessible, and high-quality experience for all users.

Survey Methodology

Surveys were administered through two primary methods: online outreach and in-person intercept surveys conducted on the trail.

Online Survey Distribution

The online version of the survey was promoted through TCPUD communication channels, including social media, website, and District e-news. This approach allowed community members, seasonal residents, and frequent trail users to participate even if they were not encountered during in-person survey days.

In-Person Trail Intercept Surveys

Staff conducted in-person surveys over four total days, two in July and two in September. Survey stations were positioned at high-use trail locations to ensure a representative sample of trail user types, travel patterns, and recreational interests.

- ***July Surveys***– Conducted on July 24th from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM and July 25th from 7:00 AM to 12:00 PM at:
 - 64-Acres Trailhead
 - Truckee River Trail at Bells Landing
 - North Shore Trail near Safeway

- ***September Surveys*** – Conducted on September 11th from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM and September 12th from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM at:
 - 64-Acres Trailhead
 - West Shore Trail at Kaspian Day Use
 - Truckee River Trail at Bells Landing
 - North Shore Trail at UC Davis Field Station/Lake Forest

The combination of online outreach and in-person intercept surveys ensured that data reflected both the broader trail-using public and those actively on the trail system during peak summer and early fall use periods.

Results

We received a total of 535 survey responses, including 341 in-person surveys and 194 online surveys. The results below represent combined data from both in-person and online surveys.

Q: Are you a TCPUD Resident/customer, a North Lake Tahoe/Truckee Resident, or a Visitor? (530 responses)

Surveys represented a fairly even split between TCPUD customers/residents, North Lake Tahoe/Truckee residents, and Visitors, with a slightly higher percentage of Visitors represented in survey responses.

Residency	
North Lake Tahoe/Truckee Resident	24%
Visitor	41%
TCPUD Resident/Customer	35%

Q: How many people are in your group today?

This question only represents data from in-person surveys. There were no differences in group size on each trail. However, Visitors reported a higher average group size than North Lake Tahoe residents or TCPUD customers/residents.

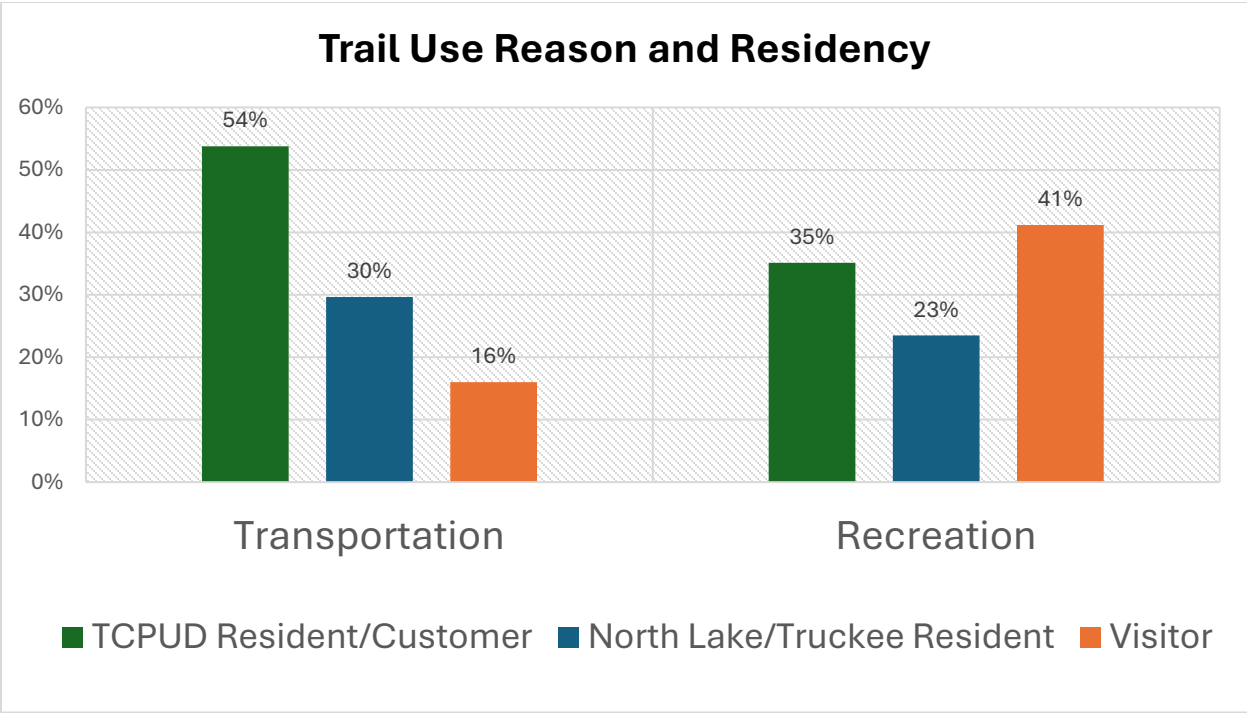
Average Group Size	2.7
64-Acres	2.6
Truckee River Trail	2.9
North Shore Trail	2.5
West Shore Trail	2.7
Group size by residency	
TCPUD Resident/Customer	1.5
North Lake Tahoe/Truckee Res.	2.4
Visitor	3.5

Q: Why do you use the trail system? Check all that apply. (525 responses)

Nearly all respondents (95%) use the trail system for **recreation or leisure**, while 28% use it for **transportation or commuting**, and 2% for other purposes. Participants were allowed to select multiple choices.

54% of participants who reported using the trail for **transportation/commuting** were TCPUD Residents/Customers, while 30% were North Lake Tahoe/Truckee Residents, and 16% were Visitors.

Trail Use Reason	
Transportation/Commuting	28%
Recreation/Leisure	95%
Other	2%



Q: How do you typically use the trail system? Check all that apply. (530 responses)

Most trail users reported biking (82%) and walking (54%) as their primary activities, with smaller portions using the trails for jogging (20%), rollerblading (3%), or other activities (2%).

Trail Use Method	
Biking	82%
Walking	54%
Jogging	20%
Rollerblading	3%
Other	2%

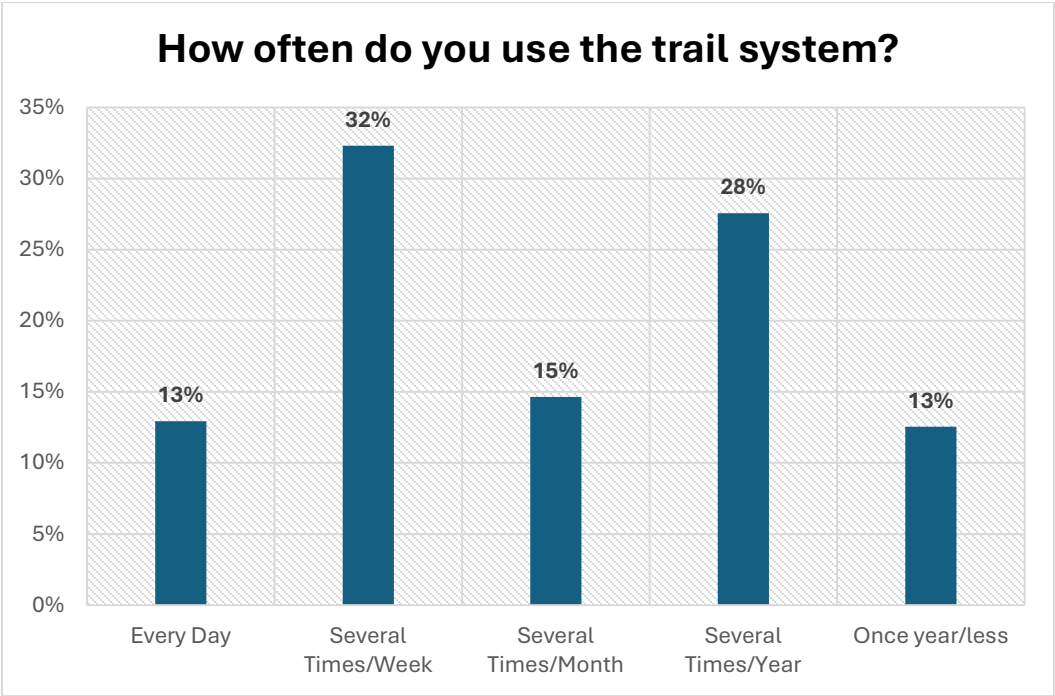
Q: If biking, do you use an electric bicycle (including ones with pedal assist)? (429 responses)

Among trail users who bike, 39% use an electric bicycle, 16% use one occasionally, and 45% do not use an e-bike. This is a significant increase from the 2019 survey, when only 11% of bike users reported using an e-bike.

E-Bike Use	
Yes	39%
Sometimes	16%
No	45%

Q: How often do you use the trail system? (527 responses)

Nearly half of survey participants use the trail system every day or several times a week (45%). Another 15% use it several times a month, while 41% report using it only a few times per year or less.



Q: Do you use the trail system in winter? (523 responses)

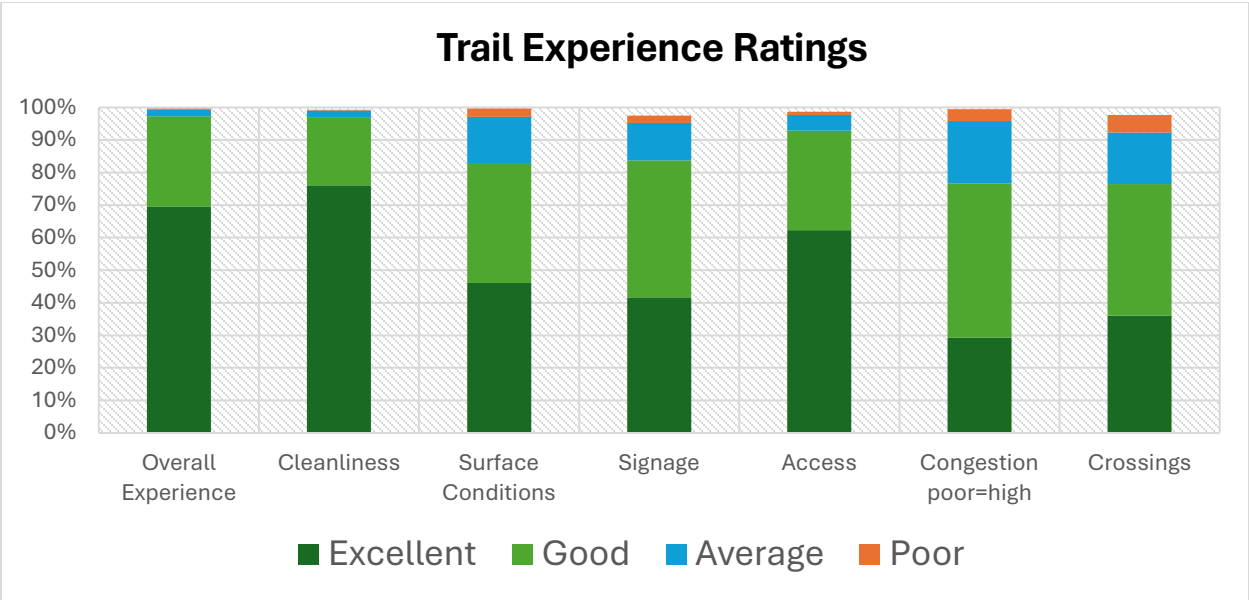
Winter trail use is moderate, with 40% of respondents using the trail system during winter months, 53% not using it, and 7% unaware that the trails remain open in winter.

Winter Use	
Yes	40%
No	53%
Didn't know it was open in the winter	7%

Q: Please rate the trail based on the following factors: (527 responses)

Trail users rated their overall trail experience highly, with 98% of participants rating the trail experience either Excellent or Good. Trail cleanliness also earned high ratings with 97% reporting Excellent or Good. Ratings were slightly lower for surface conditions, trail signage, congestion, and road crossings, but still received strong positive feedback.

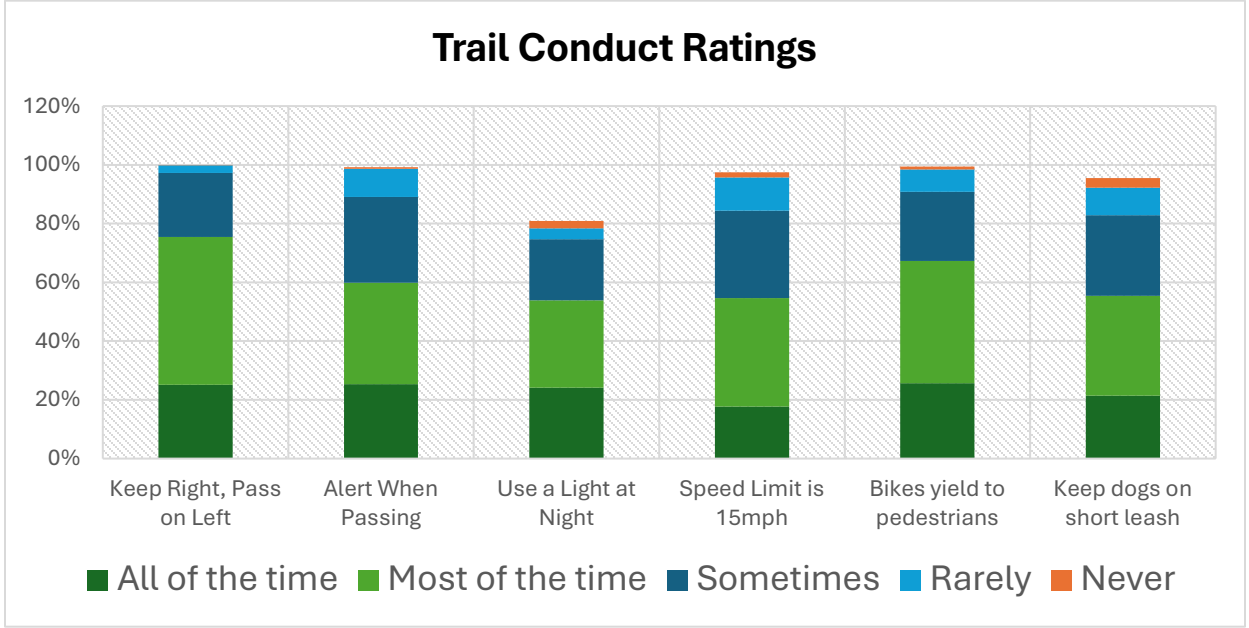
Trail ratings on the West Shore Trail were slightly lower compared to other trails on trail experience, surface conditions, and crossings. These differences may be partially due to active construction as part of the West Shore Trail Reconstruction Project between Sunnyside and Idlewild Way in 2025.



Q: The Trail Code of Conduct includes the following rules. For each, do you feel people general follow them on this trail system? (515 responses)

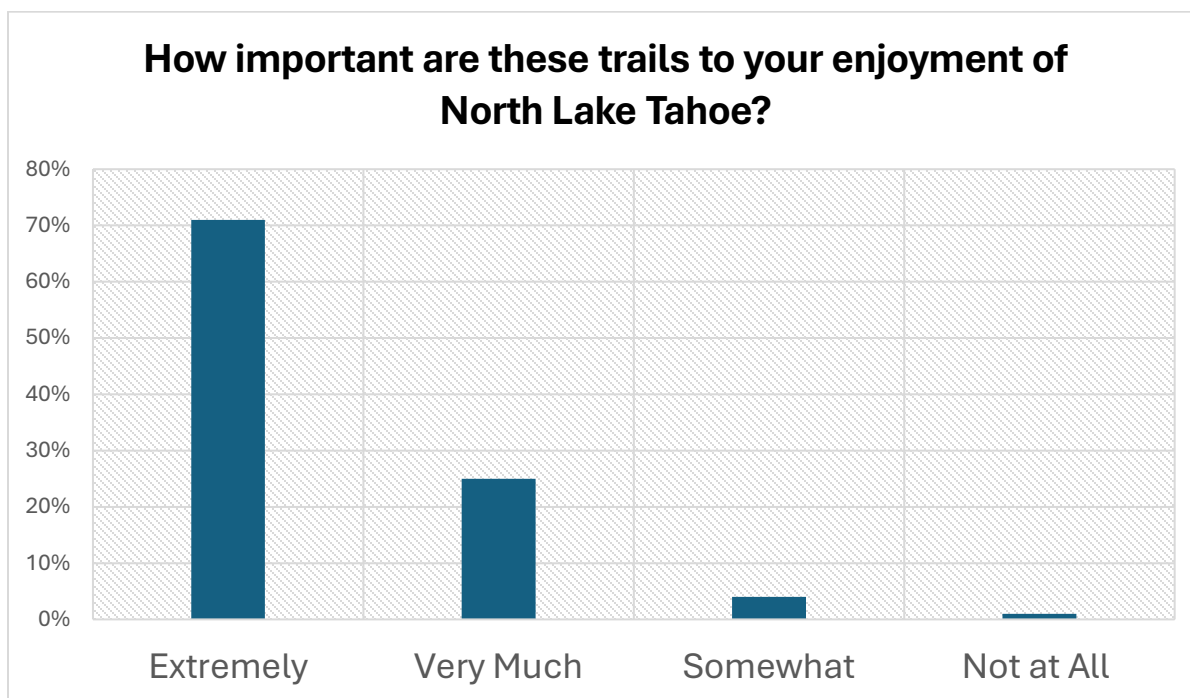
75% of respondents feel that “Keep Right, Pass on Left” is followed most of the time or always, while rules such as “Alert When Passing” and “Speed Limit is 15 mph” see lower perceived adherence, with about half saying they’re followed most or all of the time.

Compliance with “Bikes Yield to Pedestrians” (68%) and “Keep Dogs on Short Leash” (55%) is moderate, suggesting opportunities for improved education and signage around shared-use behavior.



Q: In general, how important are these trails to your enjoyment of North Lake Tahoe? (515 responses)

96% of respondents said the trails are important to their enjoyment of North Lake Tahoe, with 71% rating them extremely important and 25% very important.



Q: How likely is it that you would recommend these trails to a friend, family member, or colleague? 0 being not at all likely, 10 being extremely likely. Circle one. (471 responses*)

***An issue with iPad software during in-person surveys limited responses to this question.**

This question uses the **Net Promoter Score (NPS)** to gauge how likely people are to recommend a service or experience to others. Respondents rate their likelihood on a scale from 0 to 10, where:

- **Promoters (scores 9–10)** are enthusiastic supporters likely to recommend the experience.
- **Passives (scores 7–8)** are satisfied but less likely to actively promote it.
- **Detractors (scores 0–6)** are unlikely to recommend and may even discourage others.

The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters. The NPS is reported on a scale of -100% to 100%

In this survey, 82.9% of respondents were promoters, 13% were passives, and only 3.6% were detractors, resulting in a Net Promote Score of 79.3%, which is considered excellent. This indicates that trail users are highly satisfied and enthusiastic about recommending the trail system to others.

Open-Ended Responses – Sentiment Analysis

266 respondents provided an answer in the open-ended response section.

Sentiment analysis was conducted to group responses into Positive, Constructive/Neutral, and Negative feedback as follows:

- **Positive:** 50% - Words like “love,” “beautiful,” “grateful,” and “thank you” dominate.
- **Constructive/Neutral:** 35% - Focused on e-bikes, signage, crossings, and maintenance.
- **Negative / Frustrated:** ~15% - Concerns about danger from e-bikes, unsafe crossings, or poor trail surfaces.

Overall, sentiment is strongly positive, but concerns exist around trail safety, shared use, and e-bikes.

Major themes of the open-ended responses included:

1. Strong Appreciation & Positive Sentiment

- Many respondents expressed love and gratitude for the trail system, noting it as a “community asset,” “beautiful,” and “one of the best ways to enjoy Tahoe.”
- Frequent thanks: *“Thank you so much!!”, “Love the trails!”, “Tahoe wouldn’t be the same without the trails!!”*
- Visitors and residents alike highlight maintenance quality, winter plowing, and the ability to commute safely.

2. E-Bike Concerns

- Strong concerns about **speed, safety, and enforcement:**
 - *“E-bikes are a hazard. Too fast and seldom ring bell or alert on left.”*
 - *“Please do not allow e-bikes over 15 mph.”*
 - *“Enforcement is truly necessary.”*

3. Trail Etiquette & User Conflicts

- Confusion over who yields: bikes vs pedestrians.
- Desire for consistent signage: “Stay right,” “Walk left, ride right,” bell use, leash rules.
- Complaints about pedestrians walking 2–3 wide, dogs off leash, or bikers not calling out.

4. Crossings & Safety Infrastructure

- High concern at Highway 89 crossings, especially Sugar Pine, Sunnyside, Timberland, and Chambers.
- Requests for flashing lights, better signage, stop lights, or tunnels/underpasses.
- Comments noting blind corners and fast vehicle speeds making crossings dangerous.

5. Maintenance & Surface Quality

- Trail quality issues:

- Cracks, bumps from roots, uneven pavement.
- Some resurfacing viewed as poorly done.
- Requests for better contractor accountability.

7. Amenities & Comfort

- Desired additions:
 - Water fountains
 - More porta-potties/restrooms (especially off-season)
 - Benches
 - Trash & dog waste stations
 - Bike repair stations
- Some requests for photo sites and maps of restroom availability.

8. Winter Use

- Praise for snow clearing/grooming and requests to expand it.
- Some complaints about slippery icy conditions after clearing.