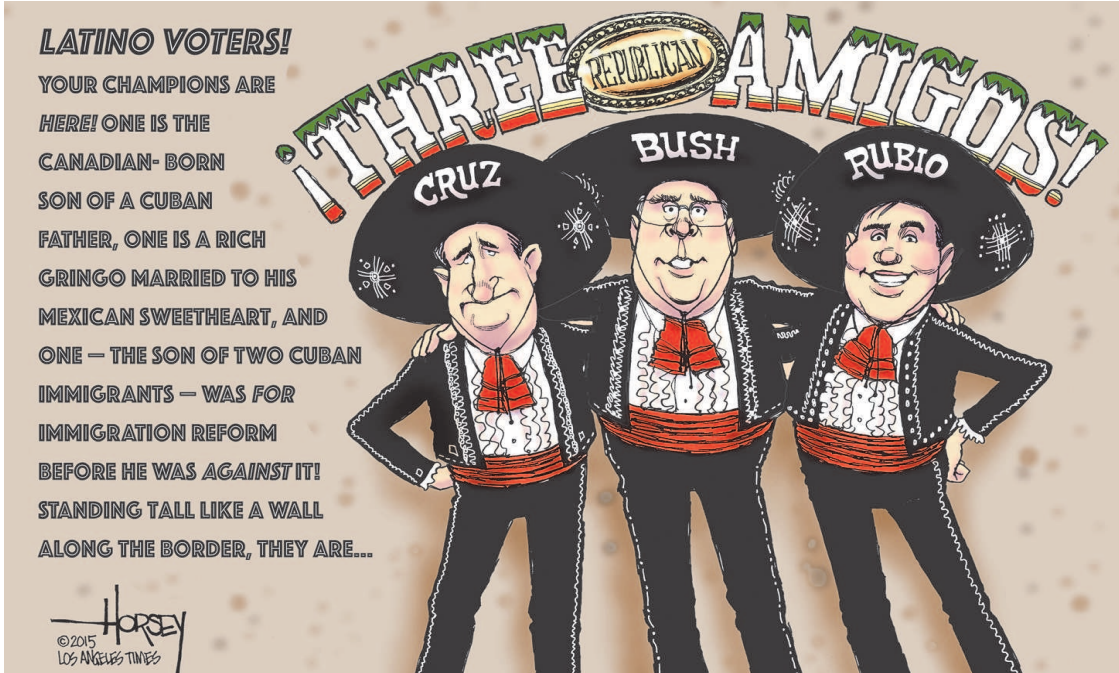


# O P I N I O N



## Paved trail would connect communities

By Bjarne Holm  
Guest Columnist

With the continued discussion regarding a paved trail connecting Black Butte Ranch and Sisters, it is instructive to look at how such trails have affected other communities in the U.S.

Headwaters Economics, an independent, nonpartisan research organization, maintains a trail library that contains 90 professional studies on the impact of trails, especially in small or medium-sized towns like Sisters: <http://headwaterseconomics.org/trail>. These studies overwhelmingly find that trails connecting communities bring many benefits to those who live in these developments — including health and economic benefits.

According to the residents living closest to the trails in an Omaha, Nebraska, study, the trail system has had an overwhelmingly positive effect on neighborhoods' quality of life.

A Vermont study has shown trails benefit residents by reducing their own transportation costs, by reducing the costs of public road maintenance, and by increasing real estate values near trails. Ten of the studies specifically document the positive impact of paved trails on property values. For example, in Delaware, Ohio, homes within 50 meters of paved bike paths sold for 4 percent more than similar homes without any paved bike paths nearby. Additionally, the trails helped develop a sense of community — and lowered crime.

Along a 70-mile paved trail in southwest Ohio, homes sell on average for an additional \$7 for every foot closer they are to the trail, and the effect persists for up to about a mile away. For example, a house adjacent to the trail would sell, on average, for almost \$20,000 more than an identical house a half-mile away.

One of the main findings shows that a paved trail network attracts more visitors to communities, by increasing an area's appeal to those who would not otherwise have come to an area or would not stay there as long. An Outer Banks,

North Carolina study found the majority of visitors were likely to extend their stay and return to the area because of the availability of paved bicycle facilities.

A Wisconsin study calculated that half of 13 million annual cycling days are by non-residents, who contributed over \$300 million to the state's economy. A separate study of cycling events in Oregon estimated that participants spend about \$100 a day, and that about of third of that goes to wages for local employees. For economies like Sisters that rely heavily on tourism dollars, a paved trail connecting our communities is an undeniable economic asset.

The Outer Banks study found that the annual economic impact from cycling far exceeds the public funds used to build paved pathway facilities.

Evidence suggests that a paved trail will encourage local residents to exercise more, reducing both public and private healthcare costs. In Michigan the total avoided cost for strokes and heart disease due to bicycling is estimated to \$256 million yearly.

In Iowa the physical activity from cycling is associated with an estimated median savings of \$354 million in lower annual health care costs due to fewer cases of heart and lung disease, and other diseases associated with less physical activity.

A paved pathway linking communities in the Sisters area will open up recreational and commuting opportunities to a much more diverse user group than those who are able to use a dirt or gravel trail. The pathway is truly "equal access," and a perfect complement to the miles of dirt trails that already exist in our region. Paved trails make sense from a cost-benefit point of view. Real estate values will increase, as will business opportunities, we will end up with a better sense of community, and it will provide health and other quality-of-life benefits.

Isn't it time for the majority of residents in developments in the Sisters area who have said they favor such trails to come together and make the paved trail a reality?

## Letters to the Editor...

*The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.*

To the Editor:

In connection with Jim Anderson's column and the article about Deschutes Land Trust's recent acquisition of Aspen Hollow Preserve along Whychus Creek, I would like to remind readers about the live camera feed at [www.goldeneaglecam.com](http://www.goldeneaglecam.com).

The telescope and camera observe the nest activity from about a quarter-mile away across the canyon. The chicks are getting quite active now and are great fun to watch (see photo page 29).

The female is Petra, and the two chicks have been named Fluffy and Goldy by the children in SPRD preschool.

Jim Hammond

Having experienced a signal at this intersection during the Cascade Street [sic] facelift, I implore the City Council to ask the citizens within the Sisters School District to vote on whether they want a roundabout or a signal.

Judy Bull

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

I just read that ODOT is going to install the first traffic light on Highway 97 in La Pine. The primary stated reason was to improve safety. I believe the same solution should be used in Sisters.

I noted in a previous letter to *The Nugget* that the incidence of close calls at the Highway 20 and Barclay Road intersection seemed to me to be less with the temporary traffic lights in place.

I believe that traffic lights are the best solution at this intersection rather than a traffic circle. Lights are used successfully on Highway 97 north of Bend in more complex

See **LETTERS** on page 14

### Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Partly sunny 57/26	Mostly sunny 59/31	Slt. chance showers 55/30	Chance showers 57/34	Chance rain 59/34	Chance rain 61/na

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