

Luther Pass improvements a boon for cyclists

By Kathryn Reed



Four-foot wide shoulders “at a minimum” is what will be installed along Highway 89 starting at the intersection of Highway 50 in El Dorado County and extending to the Alpine County line.

“It will provide safety for cyclists. It will give them more room. Part of this project is to encourage cycling,” said Rochelle Jenkins, Caltrans spokeswoman.

The \$25 million undertaking is the only Caltrans project in the Lake Tahoe Basin to receive federal stimulus money.

Preliminary work started this month. The bulk of the construction will be between April 2010 and fall 2011.

It is considered an environmental improvement project – meaning reducing the amount of sediment and runoff from the highway that reaches tributaries of Lake Tahoe. Caltrans did not have projections for how much sediment is likely to be contained.

Curb and gutter systems will be installed throughout the roadway to help divert the runoff.

“We are going to rehabilitate and construct a new drainage facility. We are going to put in traps and drains. Those are cleaned every year,” Jenkins explained.

Rock energy dissipaters, which help to prevent ruts in the road from developing, are part of the equation, too.

The other project in El Dorado County to garner federal dollars is Highway 49 improvements. The \$7.5 million project that is under way should be completed next fall. It goes from Highway 50 in Placerville toward Amador County.