

Caltrans changes date of Echo Summit work for bike event

By Kathryn Reed

With South Lake Tahoe being the host city for Amgen's 2011 Tour of California cycling event, Caltrans is scrambling to change its time line for construction on Echo Summit.

Tom Brannon with the transportation agency said if the weather and TRPA cooperate, the plan is to start work on the retaining wall April 20. Normally, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency does not allow grading in the Lake Tahoe Basin to begin until May 1.



Caltrans will replace the Echo Summit wall in spring 2011.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

The race starts May 15 near the state line, with cyclists doing 1½ laps around the lake to end at Northstar. The second stage will leave from Squaw Valley.

However, tour officials are expected to bring in necessary infrastructure for the event starting May 9. Teams should arrive May 12. A gala event is planned for May 13.

Caltrans still intends to have Highway 50 over Echo Summit closed for two weeks. Then it will be reduced to one lane controlled traffic until the 32-inch wall is in place. This wall replaces the deteriorating wall that was erected in the 1930s.

The job will be advertised starting Oct. 18, with the bid scheduled to be awarded in mid-December. Built into the documents are bonuses for coming in ahead of schedule.

While Echo Summit is off-limits, the routes being touted for people coming from the Bay Area are taking Highway 16 to 49 to 88 to 89 to 50. From Sacramento, the route is Highway 50 to Missouri Flat Road, highways 49-88-89-50. Taking Highway 580 to Highway 4 through Jackson to Highway 88 is another choice. Interstate 80 is another option, then dropping down either the East or West shores.