

South Shore highways to be a mess in 2011

By Kathryn Reed

Improvements to Highway 89 (aka Luther Pass) won't be done this building season as planned, and will instead require two months of work in 2011.

However, with Echo Summit slated to be closed part of the spring while the retaining wall is overhauled, officials aren't sure when the work on Highway 89 will be done because that is one of the alternate routes for Highway 50.



Improvements to Highway 89 in Meyers will be done in 2011.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Replacing the rock wall on Highway 50 coming into the Lake Tahoe Basin has been on the books for a while. With a coordinated effort under way to ensure traffic still flows into the South Shore, Caltrans officials don't want to impede that process with delays on another highway.

Echo Summit will be closed for 14 days. This will be in May 2011, unless work can start earlier. It will be followed by

20-30 days of controlled traffic except for Friday afternoons when it will be open in both directions. It will be wide-open Memorial Day weekend, too.

Click on Echo FAQ for some answers to the project provided by Caltrans.

The Highway 89 project is a water quality project – meaning shoring up erosion concerns, putting in curbs and gutters.

The 2.2 miles of roadway on 89 from the junction of 50 will have a 4-foot shoulder for cyclists. Beyond that road bike riders are still in for a bit of a harrowing experience being so close to vehicles.

Mike Cook, Caltrans project manager for the basin, said intentions are the asphalt will be smooth to the curb and gutter so the surface is safe for cyclists.

All the grates are designed to be bicycle proof, meaning a front wheel won't get lodged in it and send the rider flying over the handlebars.

At this point it's anyone's guess how all the roadwork is factoring into Amgen's decision to bring the Tour of California bike ride to Tahoe. That decision is expected any day.