

Caltrans to work on South Shore highways for years

By Kathryn Reed

Peering at a Caltrans work map, the highways on the South Shore look like they will be under construction for several years.

Eight of the 10 projects are for water quality; the other two are labeled intersection projects.



Construction on Luther Pass will be completed in 2011.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mike Cook, who oversees the projects for this area, gave an update to the incoming South Lake Tahoe City Council on Dec. 14 about what to expect on highways 50 and 89.

Project 1: Originally known as the Ski Run to Stateline project, this will begin in 2011 and continue into the next building season. However, the project now goes 1,200 feet west of Ski Run to Wildwood and doesn't go all the way to the state line. "This is a better use of money," Cook said. This is because much of the state line area already has had water

quality treatments. Discussions are still ongoing to widen the street, with Caltrans having met with stakeholders on Dec. 2.

Project 2: Trout Creek to Ski Run will also begin in May. Construction is estimated to take three years. It will include class 2 bike trails and shoulders being widened to 6 feet, sidewalks and landscaping. No traffic delays will be in affect during the time Tour de California cycling events are going on in May, Cook pledged.

Project 3: Trout Creek to the Y will be overhauled in May 2013. Lanes will be wider, a class 2 bike trail put in and sidewalks. Cook said it would not be as extensively landscaped as other sections of Highway 50 because Caltrans is the exclusive payee on this portion.

Project 4: A left turn lane at Sierra Boulevard. This could be part of Project 3.

Project 5: The improvements at the Y, the intersection of highways 89 and 50, were finished last year.

Project 6: Y to Cascade Road will begin in 2014. Caltrans is working with the U.S. Forest Service as the federal agency looks to reconfigure bike trails in the Camp Richardson area. Caltrans plans to replace culverts, add sidewalks, and make the shoulder 4-foot wide in part of the area.

Project 7: Y to Airport Road will have 4-foot shoulders put in starting in 2013. Cook warns this may not be possible for the entire stretch.

Project 8: Another 2013 project is to widen the shoulder from Meyers Road to Incline Road in El Dorado County.

Project 9: Highway 89 from Meyers to the Alpine County line will be finished next year. With Luther Pass being the detour route while Echo Summit is closed, the plan is to not have delays on this section at that time.

Project 10: Replacing seven rock walls on Echo Summit beginning spring 2011 as soon as weather permits could be the most disruptive of the projects. Highway 50 will be closed for two weeks. From Sacramento/Bay Area, the main alternate route being promoted is using highways 49, 88 and 89 to the South Shore. This will add about an hour to the drive – though it is scenic. After the closure, the highway will have controlled traffic for four weeks. Marketing gurus, who were in attendance at the meeting, are not calling it a closure despite the fact the road will be closed. Originally, the outreach to let people know about the closure was about \$50,000. Caltrans has added another \$150,000 – especially with people coming to town for the Amgen bike race.

Projects slated to begin beyond 2011 do not have secure funding, so the start dates may change.