

Tour de California more than a 1-day event for Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It's not just a bike ride. It's not just a one-day gig for the South Shore.



Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, last week made this extremely evident about the Amgen Tour de California during her presentation to the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association.

The plan is to have a week's worth of events leading up to the start of the race on May 15. Chaplin and others are starting to make the rounds this month to service clubs in the area to see how they would want to participate and if they would be responsible for a day of fun.

Events on the books include a Gala on May 13 for all involved, and what's being called the Lake Tahoe Legends Participation Ride on May 14. The latter will be for anyone.

LTVA is talking with an unnamed property about having a party for the community.

As the host area, 1,848 rooms must be provided – for free, along with 3,844 meals for staff and teams. MontBleu and Harvey's will be providing the rooms for the teams.

The eight-day race through California – and this year part of Nevada – is touted as having a \$400 million economic impact each year. Chaplin said communities have reaped \$3 million to \$10 million from being a host city for the tour.

"I hope each one of you can take advantage of those wallets

out there," she told the meeting attendees.

Law enforcement and transportation representatives met last week for the second time to begin coordinating efforts. The highways around Lake Tahoe (50, 89, 28) will be closed in stages as the 200 riders pedal through the area.

The start will be near Stateline, with the cyclists going the 72 miles around the lake in about two hours and then doing much of it again before finishing at Northstar-at-Tahoe. The exact route – which may include city streets – will be released in February by tour officials.

The second stage starts at Squaw Valley and ends in Sacramento.

There will be 100 support vehicles, with more than two dozen California Highway patrolmen with them.

Chaplin was asked how the Highway 50 closure over Echo Summit will affect the cycling event. Weather permitting, it is possible Caltrans could start on the rock wall replacement project the Tuesday after Easter – April 26. This would start the two-week closure of the main road into the South Shore.

If all goes according to plan, it would open two days before the international teams arrive in Tahoe.

What hasn't been addressed publicly is what happens if there is snow or ice on the road during the race. Lake Tahoe is notorious for long winters. One only need look at the snowfall for May and June 2010.

About 300 volunteers are going to be needed on the South Shore to handle various jobs. Sean Sweeney, an avid cyclist and director of skier services at Sierra-at-Tahoe, is heading the volunteer team.

Chaplin said she hopes this is the first of many years Tahoe will be involved with the bike race.

More information about the May 15-22 cycling race is on the Amgen Tour de California website.