

Much focus turning to Highway 50

Major changes are in store for Highway 50 in the coming months from Echo Summit to the Stateline area.



Among them, the groundbreaking is scheduled for April 26 on the first phase of the long-awaited Highway 50 project that for over a decade has called for curbs, gutters, sidewalks, landscaping, street lighting and a 6-foot wide bike lane alongside the major thoroughfare from Trout Creek to Ski Run Boulevard. The first phase alone is estimated at more than \$48 million, with the city of South Lake Tahoe pledging \$1 million.

The groundbreaking will likely beat the start of the highly anticipated work on the retaining wall at Echo Summit that's considered so extensive it will shut down traffic through the major entry into Lake Tahoe for two weeks. The \$1.9 million project is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Weather permitting, the work is scheduled to begin the first week of May and may continue into the Amgen bike race, the California Department of Transportation announced this week. First, the contractor must make a "cast" of the existing, splintered wall. Echo Summit is not on the route, but tourism officials want to make it easy for thousands of visitors expected to arrive for one of the largest anticipated events going into peak season. The Amgen Tour is slated for May 15-22.

Despite other reports to the contrary, Caltrans contends it never provided a definitive date of the work start date, so it is "not delayed."

"There has never been a definitive date. The earliest start

was always the first week of May. It's all driven by the weather," Caltrans spokeswoman Carol Herman said.

To assist in navigating the multitude of state roadwork planned over late spring into summer, Caltrans has created a brochure and a website highlighting an alternative route to circumvent the Echo Summit closure. The route from South Lake Tahoe covers Highway 50, 89 over Luther Pass to Highway 88 to Jackson. North of there, a motorist may take Highway 49 north to Placerville or Highway 16 through the Gold Country.

As for work closer to the Nevada state line, the City Council unanimously approved this week to mount safety signs directing pedestrians to avoid walking alongside Highway 50 next to the defunct Chateau at Heavenly redevelopment site, also known for years as the convention center project. Caltrans has diverted liability of the property issue with the city.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*