

LTVA: Road closure won't dampen enthusiasm for bike race

By Kathryn Reed

While the good of the Amgen Tour de California bike race was touted, that's not all South Lake Tahoe City Council members wanted to hear from the South Shore's tourism agency.

Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, gave a brief update Tuesday about the multi-day bike race through the state that starts at the state line.



"This really has long-term benefits," Chaplin said of the event. Much like the annual celebrity golf tournament, exposure for the area via the media pays dividends down the road with increased travel by people who see the race or read about it.

Mayor Hal Cole asked if people are canceling room reservations now that Highway 50 will be closed over Echo Summit that weekend. Chaplin didn't know, but said she'd get back to the city with that information.

Councilman Tom Davis' concern is if jobs are going to be lost with the main artery to the South Shore off-limits for 10-14 days starting May 11.

To this, Chaplin pointed out May is the shoulder season and to have an event like Amgen will be a boon for the area – despite the roadwork. Plus, the route to town is being billed as a scenic 35-mile detour from the Bay Area or Sacramento.

Chaplin's big concern locally is realizing many in the area don't even know about the bike race and how it could affect

them. In fact, 10 days of events start Thursday.

The race starts at 10:30am May 15, with cyclist going around the lake 1.5 times before finishing at Northstar. Rolling road closures lasting up to 30 minutes will occur as the riders go by.

This means most businesses along the route will be impacted. People going to church late that morning should think about attending the early service.

Highway 50 is being designed to be one big party with kiosks from the Y to Stateline.

Chaplin said a special guest is in town. "You may see him riding," she told the council May 3. She smiled, and wouldn't give any hints.

Lance Armstrong isn't competing, but he knows his way to Tahoe – having played in the celebrity golf tournament. And Greg Lemond's last known address was Reno – and he's very familiar with the roads here. But with everyone in lycra and bike helmet looking similar, the mystery rider might be able to stay incognito for a while.