

# Overhaul of Kingsbury Grade likely to create traffic nightmare throughout the summer

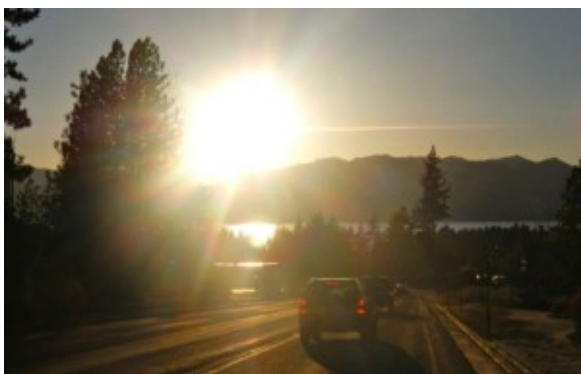
By Kathryn Reed

Construction this summer on Kingsbury Grade is going to require patience from drivers, businesses and residents. Expect the roadway to be torn up until just before July 4, 2015.

If the weather holds, the work could begin before May 1.

This stretch of road that connects Lake Tahoe to the Carson Valley has been worked on since 2009. That was a water quality project, while this is more about the road surface and making other improvements.

“Ultimately, the contractor did not complete all of the contracted work. The current project will construct improvements to realize the final goals and objectives of the earlier project as well as reconstruct the roadway pavement and make safety improvements,” Meg Ragonese, with the Nevada Department of Transportation, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



The sun is setting on

Kingsbury Grade being an easy commute. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Last year NDOT told *LTN* this project would cost \$7.5 million. Now the price tag is \$14,877,619. Bonds, state funds and federal dollars are financing it. Q&D Construction out of Reno is the contractor.

“The goal is to take the opportunity to incorporate as many needed road enhancements as possible into this project. The project team conducted detailed analysis of the pavement design and constructability and identified issues that were not anticipated in the initial scope of this project,” Ragonese said.

**Additions from the original plans include:**

- Subsurface water mitigation of natural springs located directly beneath the pavement at three locations along Kingsbury Grade.
- Improving poor sight distance at Tramway Drive. A left turn lane and advance warning flashing lights will be placed at Tramway alerting drivers that there is vehicle movement at this intersection.
- Luminaries will be placed at the existing crosswalks to enhance pedestrian visibility.
- Sidewalk and ramps will be improved to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

At the end drivers will be left with what will essentially be a brand new road that will be constructed to a depth of 13 inches. This should last 20 years. However, it's possible that repaving could be needed in 10 to 15 years. That is largely dependent on the weather. The freeze-thaw cycle at Tahoe is extremely detrimental to roads.

## **Here is the current work schedule:**

- May: Roadway reconstruction from Pine Ridge to Katherine and drainage improvements from Pine Ridge to Buchanan.

Work will be around the clock Monday-Saturday.

Kingsbury Grade will be closed to through traffic near the summit, just east of Tramway Drive. Residences and businesses located on Kingsbury Grade between the closure and Highway 50 will only be accessible by Highway 50 at Tahoe.

- June-August: Roadway reconstruction from Highway 50 to Pine Ridge and drainage improvements from Buchanan to the summit.

Work will be nights only Monday-Friday.

One lane will be closed from Pine Ridge Drive to Highway 50 every day, every hour. This will still leave one lane of traffic open in each direction with no flagger controls.

Flagger controls with one-way alternating traffic only during night shifts.

Road will be open with one lane in each direction for days, weekends, and holidays.

- September-October: Roadway reconstruction from Katherine to Buchanan and drainage improvements from Pine Ridge to Buchanan.

Work will be 24 hours per day, Monday-Saturday.

- Following the Labor Day holiday: Kingsbury Grade will be closed to through traffic near the summit, just east of Tramway Drive. Residences and businesses located on Kingsbury Grade between the closure and Highway 50 will only be accessible by Highway 50.

- May 2015: Roadway reconstruction from Buchanan to the Summit. Work will be 24 hours per day Monday-Saturday. One

lane will be closed with flagger controls during this period.

“The amount of traffic will dictate how long the delays will be. The anticipated maximum delays before Memorial Day and after Labor Day are 30 minutes,” Ragonese said. “The anticipated delays during the nighttime work between Memorial Day and Labor Day are 30 minutes. During the day between Memorial Day and Labor Day, there will be one lane of traffic open in each direction with no flagger controls.”

NDOT says between 9,000 and 14,000 vehicles a day on average pass through the intersection of Highway 50 and Kingsbury Grade. This compares to the 4,300 vehicles on the Grade at Foothill Road. At Daggett Summit the average is 10,000 vehicles a day.

People will have access to businesses and residences the entire time. It just might take a while to get anywhere, though.

Ridge Tahoe officials did not return multiple calls, so it's not known what they plan to do for their guests. The Ridge is at the very top of Kingsbury Grade. South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County officials said they are working with NDOT and others to help alleviate problems.

“The intersection of U.S. 50 and Kingsbury Grade will be monitored and flaggers will be utilized throughout the project to better handle and direct traffic. If backups on U.S. 50 persist, the group will reconvene and work together until a solution is found,” Ragonese said.

NDOT is recommending people use Highway 50 – Spooner Summit – as an alternative to Kingsbury Grade.

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#### **Notes:**

- Go online to sign up for email updates on the project.

- March 19 is the first Kingsbury Grade Pavement Reconstruction Project public information meeting. It's at the Ridge Tahoe, 400 Ridge Club Drive, Stateline. March 20 there is a meeting at Douglas High School, 1670 Highway 88, Minden. Both meetings will provide the same information and will be in an open format from 4-7pm. A project presentation will be given at 5:30pm.

- Comments may be made until April 4 to [info@dot.state.nv.us](mailto:info@dot.state.nv.us).

- Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce is taking a survey to collect information on how many people would utilize a commuter bus if available.