

# Echo Summit closure may be worse than '11

By Kathryn Reed

When Caltrans closed Highway 50 over Echo Summit in 2011 to replace the dilapidated rock wall that was put in just after World War II, the powers that be came unglued. There were countless meetings, a media blitz let people know the South Shore was still in business and that the best route was not through the North Shore, state lawmakers got involved, the Amgen bike race was affected and ultimately everything worked out.

Caltrans is again going to close the same span – but not until 2019. But this next time could be much longer than 10 days.

This time the state transportation agency will be replacing a bridge on top of Echo Summit that was built in 1939. The concrete is starting to crack and break off.



The Highway 50 bridge at Echo Summit is crumbling.  
Photos/Caltrans

“A lot of it is from the salt that is put down. It starts to corrode the surface and get inside the concrete,” Steve Nelson, spokesman for Caltrans, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Caltrans is in the notice of preparation phase, which will last until early March. The environmental phase is expected to be finished in summer 2016, with design and right-of-way issues (U.S. Forest Service land may be needed depending on the width), with construction starting in 2019.

The current bridge is 24-feet wide.

Four alternatives are being considered:

1. Working 126 days in one season with 66 of those days a full closure of Highway 50 and the other days would be one-way traffic control.
2. Two seasons with 31 days of full closure, 55 days of one-way traffic control.
3. Two seasons with one-way traffic control.
4. Two seasons with one-way traffic control with workers doing 10-hour shifts instead of eight.

Nelson said the bridge work was not part of the wall project because the funding sources are different and that the bridge was not ready to go at the time the wall was rebuilt four years ago.



Concrete is failing so the Highway 50 bridge needs replacing.

The entire project will cost \$9 million, with \$5 million for construction of the half-mile long bridge.

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**Notes:**

- For more info, go online.
- A meeting about the notice of preparation is on Feb. 26 from 6-8pm at Lake Tahoe Airport. An overview will be given and then it will be more like an open house format.
- Comments will be accepted until two weeks after the Feb. 26 meeting.