

SLT voters will decide if roads are tax worthy



A substantive pothole on Texas Avenue in May is indicative of the condition of South Lake Tahoe's roads. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe voters in November will be asked whether they want to raise the sales tax by one-half percent for the sole purpose of having the funds raised go to fixing city streets.

The City Council this month agreed to place the question on the ballot, create a roads management authority and put in place a community oversight committee.

It's expected about \$2.5 million will be raised annually through this tax.

South Lake Tahoe roads on average have a score of 49 on a 0-100 scale, with 65 percent below 35. In other words, they

are failing. A score of 60 to 65 is considered a good, drivable road.

The state sales tax rate today is 7.25 percent. It is 7.75 percent in South Lake Tahoe. Measure Q passed with 58 percent of the vote in November 2004 to increase the sales tax by one-half cent. Those dollars go to the General Fund. It would amount to 50 cents on every \$100 worth of goods purchased.

Upon the consultant's recommendation the council agreed to have the tax sunset after 15 years. The thinking is in that time the public will be able to see improvement – or not – and then be able to decide if the tax should be extended.

The roads authority is really just the council acting in a different capacity much like when the Redevelopment Agency existed.

The oversight committee is like what Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Lake Tahoe Community College have in place to monitor the spending of their multi-million dollar voter-approved bond initiatives. It will be comprised of seven to 11 community members.

The money collected will be a dedicated source for roads, something the city has not previously had. Still, the city manages to come up with money each year for limited road work. That General Fund money would essentially go toward other things and not be added to this pot of cash for roads.