

# LimeBikes expanding program in S. Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

**LimeBikes** are coming back to South Lake Tahoe – and for a longer period.

They are expected to start showing up in mid-May to be ready for the Memorial Day surge and will be scattered about until mid-October.

These bikes were introduced here last summer on a pilot basis backed by the League to Save Lake Tahoe. The goals were to give cyclists an inexpensive way to get on a bike, get people out of their cars and reduce pollutants.

What hasn't been disclosed is how much driving is done by the company to redistribute the bikes, or pick ones up that need servicing.

From the get-go these bikes were a bit controversial. People complained they were garish, looked like trash as they were left in random locations, and competed with established bike shops. (Sensors have been added to the bikes to monitor when they've been tipped over.)

As for the company, they believed last year was a success. Thus the reason to bring the bikes back for a longer duration, and the possibility of adding motorized scooters and bikes. The scooters would cost \$1 to unlock and then 15 cents per minute. In cities where scooters have been introduced they are used eight times more often than bikes, officials said.

Sam Dreiman, director of strategic development for LimeBikes, told the South Lake Tahoe City Council last week that tourists and locals were on the bikes. He said a substantial number of

casino workers used them as their main mode of transportation to get to and from work.

The state line area is where ridership was the heaviest. Participation grew through the summer, with spikes on the weekends.

The bikes have GPS in them, allowing for the company to track the whereabouts of the bikes, but also know the locations people visited.

Expanding business partnerships is a goal as a way to encourage taking bikes to LimeBike-friendly establishments. That concept is still in the works.

As for competing with brick and mortar bike outlets, Dreiman said, "In other cities they don't see this as competition. It is a different use."

In part this conclusion is based on the duration people tend to use a Lime Bike – 10 minutes on average in South Lake Tahoe. Tourists renting a bike want it for an hour or all day.

With there being no docking locations for the bikes, they can be left almost anywhere.

While the South Shore likes to consider itself one community, each jurisdiction has its own laws and rules.

LimeBikes wound up in Douglas County, Camp Richardson and on U.S. Forest Service property. The Bay Area-based company does not have agreements with those entities.

"We have discussed the LimeBikes program and feel that a bike share program does add value to the community. However, greater engagement with local bike rental and bike shop businesses would be desired. We believe there is room for improvement," Melissa Blosser with Douglas County told *Lake Tahoe News*. However, she added, "We are not in a position to regulate or ban them."

The USFS has strict rules about making money on federal lands. If someone were to pick up a LimeBike on USFS land could be construed as making money, compared to if someone were to ride to a Forest Service beach, stay a bit and then leave with the bike.

“We have not issued a competitive permit for the commercial use of LimeBikes as of yet, as we are working with the community to explore the idea of their utilization, a test program. There were some issues last year as to where the bikes were left, however it did not cause any substantial problems,” Heather Noel with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit told *Lake Tahoe News*. “LimeBikes could be confiscated if found abandoned on National Forest System lands and impounded five days after a notice has been mailed.”