

Slew of water quality projects to improve Hwy. 50 in S. Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Expect traffic delays through much of the South Shore for the next several summers. This is because Caltrans has significant projects on the books.



Michael Cook with Caltrans was at the Feb. 21 South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting to give an update on what his agency is doing. The Trout Creek to Ski Run Boulevard project that started last summer is expected to wrap up in October.

While Southwest Gas is not expected to add to the congestion this summer like it did in 2011 with work on Pioneer Trail, significant delays will be unavoidable before July 4 and after Labor Day.

Nancy Kerry, who was acting city manager while Tony O'Rourke was out Tuesday, suggested Caltrans reach out to the chambers of commerce much like the transportation department did before Echo Summit was closed last year. This would be so businesses would know what to expect in terms of work in front of their business, limitations to driveways and other impacts.

Last summer many businesses on Harrison Avenue experienced a significant drop in business because people could not conveniently get to their location.

Caltrans also has a 72-hour obligation to let businesses know of road closures affecting their business.

Councilman Tom Davis asked what happens to parking near Tep's restaurant and the neighboring businesses.

Cook said what is there will go away to accommodate the curb, gutters and sidewalk.

“There’s not room for both,” Cook said in reference to parking and improvements.

In 2013, Caltrans will widen Highway 50 in the area of Lake Tahoe Airport.

In 2014, Caltrans expects to begin work on the water quality project from the Y to Cascade Road on Highway 89. Also starting that summer are upgrades from Trout Creek to the Y. That is likely to be a three-year project.

All of these are considered water quality projects, with the emphasis of reducing sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe. At the same time some bike paths, sidewalks and lighting will be added.

What doesn’t have a timetable is the adaptive traffic signal project. Funding is the problem – there isn’t any.

Councilwoman Angela Swanson brought up the possibility of getting local transportation dollars to help with it – specifically Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds.

Some of the technology will be put in while Caltrans is working on the highway. The idea is one day traffic lights on the South Shore will be synchronized.