

TRANSPORTATION 1980-89

✓ Highway 17 will open Wednesday

By KEITH MURAOKA

Sentinel staff writer

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SANTA CRUZ — Highway 17 is expected to reopen to normal, unrestricted traffic Wednesday, one day ahead of the Thanksgiving date given last week. And it may reopen even sooner.

Repairs have been helped by ideal weather, and because less damage was found than originally was feared, said California Department of Transportation engineer Dan Kimberly, in charge of the massive landslide-removal project.

Projections were for a Dec. 15 reopening, at a cost of \$20 million. Costs since have been lowered to \$5 million, much of that involving removal of a landslide at Laurel Curve that is 150 yards long and 20 feet deep.

In the meantime, travel over the winding 11-mile portion of Highway

17 between Scotts Valley and Los Gatos will continue to be restricted to car pools of two or more between 5 and 9 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m. weekdays. For the second weekend in a row, morning hours will be extended to 11 a.m. to give visitors a better chance to get here and boost the county's sagging tourism trade.

An estimated 23,000 Santa Cruz County motorists normally commute to Silicon Valley daily over Highway 17, according to the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments.

Kimberly said Thursday that the critical paving work involving about four miles of roadway near the summit will be done Saturday.

Other work involves patching, cleaning and seeding of bare hillsides. Some of that work will be done after the highway is reopened, Kimberly said.