Transportation bill allocates $26 billion to Calif.

By Carolyn Lochhead, San Francisco Chronicle

WASHINGTON – Congress has agreed for the first time since 2005 on a long-term transportation bill that will raise federal spending on highways by 5 percent and transit by 8 percent in its first year. Over the bill's five-year life, California will get $26 billion in federal funds for a variety of transportation projects, a 14.5 percent increase.

Retiring Sen. Barbara Boxer, a California Democrat who joined hands with conservative Sen. James Inhofe, R-Oklahoma, in a monthslong drive to break through conservative antipathy in the House to increasing government spending on domestic programs, counted the legislation as a major achievement when it was announced late Tuesday.

The bill lacks a sustainable funding source, all but ensuring that when it expires in five years, the funding deficit that has allowed roads, bridges and transit systems to deteriorate for years will be even worse. Instead of securing a stable source of dedicated revenue, congressional negotiators scoured the budget for obscure alternatives, from raiding the Federal Reserve's cushion against bank losses to revoking the passports of citizens behind on their taxes by $50,000 or more in an effort to get them to pay up.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



· The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Complex will be closing at noon on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31. It will be closed all day Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

· U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Conservation Education Program Specialist Joy Barney recently received the Gifford Pinchot Pacific Southwest Region Interpreter and Conservation Educator of the Year award. It is a national honor given to Forest Service employees for achievement in environmental interpretation and conservation education. Barney created the South Tahoe Environmental Education.

· The California Tahoe Conservancy and the Lake Tahoe Community College will host an open house Jan. 7 from 6-8pm in the college board room to offer the public an opportunity to discuss the next phase of the South Lake Tahoe Greenway Shared Use Trail between Glenwood Way and Sierra Boulevard.

· Vail Resorts is forming the EpicPromise Foundation, a public charity designed to support employees in times of need and offer educational scholarships to employees and their families. Vail Resorts intends to contribute $500,000 per year and Vail Resorts CEO Rob Katz will make a one-time $1.5 million contribution to the foundation. Employees and guests of Vail Resorts will be given an opportunity to contribute.

· **Applications** for superintendent of El Dorado County Office of Education are due Dec. 21 at 5pm. The board will select and interview the top candidates during public meetings on Jan. 4-5. The term ends Jan. 7, 2019.

Vail Resorts earnings not as bad as forecasted

By Ben Miller, Denver Business Journal

Vail Resorts Inc. said its season pass sales were up 13 percent in unit sales volume and up 19 percent in dollar sales volume, and the summer season was a success, but the company still reported a loss for its most recent quarter.

The Broomfield, Colo.-based company Monday posted results for the three months that ended Oct. 31, which it regards as its fiscal first quarter.

It reported a loss of $59.6 million, or a loss of $1.63 per share, which is less than the loss a year earlier of $64.3 million, or a loss of $1.77. Analysts polled by Thomson Reuters First Call expected a quarterly loss of $1.75 per share.

Read the whole story

Bones from Pearl Harbor tomb ship may be identified

By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. — Inside an old aircraft factory here, behind the glass windows of a pristine laboratory, the

lost crew of the USS Oklahoma rests on special tables covered in black foam.

Their bones are brown with age after 50 years in the ground and, before that, months entombed in their sunken battleship beneath the oily waters of Pearl Harbor.

Legs, arms, ribs, vertebrae. Some have blue tags tied with string, identifying the type of bone. Some have beige tags, indicating that experts also want samples for DNA testing.

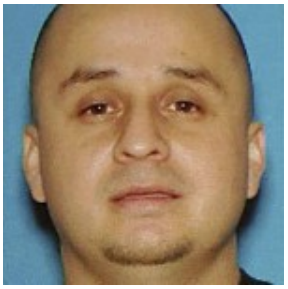
They are the unidentified remains of hundreds of sailors and Marines who perished 74 years ago Monday, when Japan launched a surprise air attack on Hawaii and plunged the United States into World War II.

Now, seven decades later, the government is trying to put names to the old salts and teenage sailors who died when their ship was sunk by enemy torpedoes Sunday morning, Dec. 7, 1941.

Read the whole story

Arrest made in South Tahoe drive-by shooting

An ex-felon with a violent criminal past was arrested Dec. 4 in connection with the **Oct. 14 drive-by shooting** in South Lake Tahoe.



Sam Tovar

South Tahoe police officers and drug task force agents arrested 43-year-old Samuel Tovar, who also goes by David Angels and other names, at 10pm Friday at a residence on San Francisco Avenue. Bail was set at $1 million.

Inside the apartment investigators said they found a .40-caliber Glock handgun that is believed to be the weapon used in the drive-by shooting. Also located was a 5.56 x 45mm-caliber SKS semiautomatic assault rifle. As an ex-felon Angels is prohibited from possessing firearms or ammunition.

Officers said it’s possible this was a gang-related incident.

The investigation began almost two months ago, after a 19-year-old South Lake Tahoe man was shot in the leg during a drive-by shooting on Spruce Avenue in the area of Ski Run Boulevard.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Letter: SLT needs to keep

banning plastic bags

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to South Lake Tahoe City Council and is reprinted with permission. The council meets Dec. 7 at 9am with the plastic bag ban on the agenda.***

Dear City of South Lake Tahoe Council Members,

I am strongly opposed to the possible repeal on single use plastic bags for small businesses in South Lake Tahoe. It is a bad solution in search of a problem that does not exist.



Rosie and John Friedrich

The Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly communicated to the council that the 70 percent or more of its small business members support the plastic bag ban. People in the community have largely embraced the ban, which has helped our community reduce waste and demonstrate our environmental awareness and commitment. Rarely are businesses, environmental organizations and the community so aligned on any issue.

So it's puzzling to understand on what basis the council is proposing to move backward on this issue. Before voting in favor of such a regressive move, the council needs to demonstrate the data that justifies such a decision. Have businesses been systematically surveyed to assess the impact of the program? Is there any other data that has been gathered to justify the proposed repeal? If not, it would appear to be motivated by the personal opinions of certain council members,

and not on a measured assessment of the desires, or best interests, of our community. Which constituents would be served by voting to flood Tahoe with more plastic waste?

Finally, I can’t imagine worse timing for considering a vote to degrade our environment. Right now, a large California delegation is in Paris, helping lead the push for a strong climate agreement by highlighting California’s example that environmental protection and economic growth go hand in hand. It’s unfathomable that the governing body of one of the treasures of California, and the world, could meanwhile vote to undo protection of our fragile environment. What kind of message would that send to our visitors who expect Tahoe to be on the cutting edge, not tail, of solutions.

Please keep the plastic bag ban in place, and instead, join the hundreds of cities across California and the U.S. that are moving forward with strong commitments to help protect our planet.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Friedrich, South Lake Tahoe

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Cyrus

Cyrus is a sweet, happy, mellow 9-year-old pit bull. At his age, he’s a bit confused about being at the shelter, but he is adapting well.

He walks nicely on the leash, and is even a bit playful with some encouragement. We would expect that he will be more playful when he’s settled into his new home. He has been fine with the dogs of all sizes and cats at the shelter.

Cyrus is neutered, microchipped, heart worm negative, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter’s Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

Vacuum exists among top ranks of EDC

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County is lacking leadership. There is no permanent chief administrative officer, no permanent assistant chief administrative officer, no IT director, no risk manager, and no chief deputy county counsel.

The county for more than a year has had an interim CAO – which is the top position.

It won't be until January at the earliest that supervisors Sue Novasel and Brian Veerkamp present to their colleagues the names of firms that could be hired to find a CAO. Impeding the process today are the holidays and the fact papers have been filed to recall all five supervisors. The latter could make the pool of candidates small.

Novasel said she hopes three to five CAO candidates would be interviewed in March or April.

There has been no explanation as to why the board has been so slow to take any action until now.

Pamela Knorr, current human resources chief, had been appointed interim CAO in November 2014 after the board essentially fired Terri Daly. Knorr had the position until June, at which time the board appointed Larry Combs acting chief administrative officer.

Combs makes $92,000 a year to work 20 hours a week. In addition to this he collects $185,167.92 a year from Sutter County and a $13,689.60 from Merced County. The latter two figures are his respective pensions from having been CAO in those counties. The Sutter allocation will soon top $190,000

with cost of living adjustments.

Combs' decisions as CAO of Sutter County have the state now asking for $3.1 million because of MediCal overcharges and other unauthorized expenses, the *Appeal Democrat* newspaper reported in November. Sutter is a tiny county and that kind of hit to its budget would be similar to El Dorado County having to come up with $6 million.

Combs is also chair of the California Statewide Communities Development Authority. This group oversees the California PACE Program or Property Assessed Clean Energy. In September the supervisors agreed to implement this program. It is free except for administrative costs, which were not disclosed in the staff report. He is not paid for his work on CSCDA, so it is it not legally a conflict of interest for Combs to have recommended the county work with this group.

Instead of waiting for the Board of Supervisors to hire a CAO, Combs is looking for an assistant. Most head honchos like to pick their subordinates. This likely won't be the case in El Dorado County.

"We were hoping to be able to hire the assistant CAO when we hire a permanent CAO, but that process is just beginning," Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We feel it is better to go out for an assistant CAO now rather than wait."

Michael Ciccozzi has been on loan from the County Counsels Office to be acting CAO. That office wants him back.

"He didn't want to apply for CAO so we thought it best to get another assistant, so Larry is out looking for a good assistant," Novasel said.

Combs did not return multiple phone calls so it is not known what he is looking for in an assistant, when he hopes to have that person on board or what type of background check might be done on this future employee.

When it came to doing the background check on Combs, Novasel said the county's Human Resources Department conducted it. There was never any background check done on Knorr, though, who heads the HR Department and was fired as CAO in Alpine County.

Lack of background checks or ones without any substance are the norm in El Dorado County.

It's possible this may change. Novasel said the firm that is hired for the permanent CAO search would do the background check on people the county might hire for that position.

Opinion: The younger you are, the less you support free speech

By Michael McGough, Los Angeles Times

Some interesting news from the Pew Research Center about the attitude of American millennials (ages 18-34) toward free speech.

As part of a global survey of attitudes toward freedom of expression, Pew asked respondents if government should be able to prevent people from making offensive statements about minorities.

In general, as befits residents of a country with a First Amendment, American respondents were more willing than residents of other countries to say that "offensive" statements about minorities (not otherwise defined) should be legally protected. Two-thirds said people should be allowed to

make such statements in public, compared with a median of 35% among the 38 nations included in the poll.

Read the whole story

Jitloff scores points in GS at Beaver Creek

By USSA

BEAVER CREEK, Colo. – It was a heartbreaker for the American fans at Beaver Creek on Sunday, as expected winner Ted Ligety (Park City) fell on his first run and did not finish. However, Tim Jitloff (Reno) took a solid top-15 finish in 14th place and David Chodounsky (Crested Butte, Colo.) skied from bib 51 to 16th place.

In a first run that had its fair share of crashes, Ligety—who had won the Beaver Creek GS five times in the previous five years—was skiing strong, leading at each interval until he uncharacteristically pinched off the line over Harrier Jump, booted out and slid out on his side, crashing through a gate and ending his day prematurely.

With Ligety and French aces Alexis Pinturault and Thomas Fanara out in the first run, it left room for Austrian Marcel Hirscher to redeem his World Championships GS second place to Ligety's gold at the same venue.

Hirscher crossed the line 0.98 seconds ahead of Frenchman Victor Muffat-Jeandet, with Norwegian wunderkind Henrik Kristoffersen rounding out the podium in third, 1.31 seconds behind.

It was the 15th time Hirscher stood atop a World Cup GS podium, surpassing Herman Maier and Benjamin Raich for the all-time GS win record for Austrian men. Hirscher now sits one victory shy of tying Annemarie Moser-Proell's all-time Austrian record of 16 career GS wins.

"It's nice to always be in the points, but I'm looking for a little more than 14th place," Jitloff admitted. "I skied really good today, solid first run. I think I just could have cleaned it up a little on that first run. In the second run I felt like I skied really well … I was pushing it toward the bottom, had a mistake there on the final pitch. The snow was super, super aggressive. I'm a guy that likes to push hard on the ski, so that's not necessarily my forte. I'll do better at places like Alta Badia where it's a little bit icy."