Opinion: Can roads designed for cars be safe for bikes?

By Tim Hauserman, High Country News

Pam Jahnke was riding her bike on a section of Highway 89 near Lake Tahoe in an area where Caltrans had just installed a new storm-drainage system.

“The minute my tire hit the drain, I was air-bound and smacked down on the pavement in the middle of the road.” she says. The crash broke her collarbone and left the rest of her body so terribly bruised that for a while her skin resembled a garish sunset.

Riders confront a series of challenges every time they get on their bikes. Many roads are built too narrow for bikes and cars, and bike lanes on the edge of roads tend to get covered in debris or overgrown by vegetation, or else get blocked by unexpected construction signs. On some roads, traffic lights only work when cars reach the intersection; then they don’t stay green long enough for riders to pass through before turning red. What’s worse, storm drains are designed for the width of car tires, not bike tires, and what might appear like a small imperfection in a road to a car driver can prove a deadly obstruction to someone on a bike.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets

in South Lake Tahoe



Baby

Baby is a beautiful 3 year old lynx point shorthair girl who has been at the shelter for almost a month. Due to a kind person’s donation, her adoption fee has been sponsored.

Such spectacular eyes! And she is a nice, friendly playful cat.

Baby is spayed, microchipped, tested for FIV, and vaccinated. She 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

Opinion: SLT – 50 golden years and counting

Publisher's note: ***This is the final article in the series of stories about South Lake Tahoe's 50th anniversary. The other stories may be accessed by going to the top of the page, select Special Projects, then SLT Turns 50.***

By Wendy David

Leftovers are in the refrigerator and the feelings of gratefulness for being alive, having snow, wonderful snow and living in South Lake Tahoe are keeping me warm in spite of the cold temperature outside. We are fortunate indeed.

Fifty years ago today, I imagine many of the feelings were the same, but with a bit more excitement as the city of South Lake Tahoe was born. Happy Birthday South Lake Tahoe. As the only incorporated city in the Lake Tahoe Basin even 50 years later, the achievements of our forefathers are even more momentous and appreciated by all of us whom have followed.

My family came for vacation in June 1973, spent a month enjoying all the outdoor fun that a young family of four could have. At the end of July, we decided to stay. Staying and making South Lake Tahoe our home meant a commitment to investing in the future of our community. As the years passed we helped as new businesses were started, youth sports were initiated and expanded, bonds were promoted and passed, amenities were added and South Lake Tahoe grew and matured.

Those that came to ski "just for the winter" bought homes,

became parents, perhaps started a business and became leaders. Some of those leaders retired and moved to the sunshine. Children grew up. Some stayed and many left. New leaders emerged, loving South Lake Tahoe too, having the same dreams for their children as those of the previous generation. Our past has been celebrated all year as we thank and remember the people, the projects, the accomplishments and the evolution of the last 50 years of our city.



Wendy David

We have learned much in the last 50 years. We have learned that we cannot depend on the gaming industry to sustain our local economy. We certainly know our winter weather, or should I say the absence of such, can be devastating to our economy. We learned we are a community that cares for each other through good and bad times, as evidenced by the way we leveraged our collective resources during the Great Recession and every other recession: through a landslide that closed Highway 50 for months; through the devastation and loss of the Angora Fire; and in the good times we've come together to celebrate.

The flight of our middle class as home prices soared and families cashed in on the windfall also changed our community. We lost 25 percent of our school age population and some of our schools closed. Our neighborhoods changed from local, full-time families dominating ownership to having 75 percent of our homes owned by second homeowners. Change is indeed the only constant.

The past is written and the future is yet to be. We are fortunate to be a part of the future for South Lake Tahoe today.

We are fortunate to be more collaborative than ever as we plan for the future. The TRPA adoption of a new Regional Plan that allows for a higher level of cooperation and partnership is leading the way. Douglas County, El Dorado County, the city of South Lake Tahoe and our public and private partners have been working on establishing a Legacy Action Plan together that will guide our future with shared goals.

The city of South Lake Tahoe is an integral leader declaring we are a premier recreation destination foremost. We are committing our efforts and investments in this priority. This goal includes the exciting expansion of our bike trail system and our new community play consortium in partnership with Lake Tahoe Community College. The consortium will add up to three additional fields at the college and renovate the existing soccer field, creating a central sports complex. In addition, we are continuing our progress on the master plan for the renovation of Regan Beach and will be inviting our community to help us envision a new city of South Lake Tahoe Recreation Complex on Rufus Allen Boulevard.

We continue our strong focus of economic development that improves our city. A citywide area plan will provide economic opportunities, and provide incentives toward improving the built and the natural environment. We will revitalize our hotel districts, implement our Tahoe Valley Area Plan, continue to invest in private and public partnerships while also continuing to restore and protect our neighborhoods and watersheds. We will encourage and incentivize partnerships and projects that will remove development from and restore environmentally sensitive areas.

I am often asked these two questions about being on the City Council. First question: Why did you run? The answer is

simple. I have lived in and loved my community for more than four decades and want it to shine as it should. Second question: Are you crazy? Answer: I guess you need to be a little crazy to believe that you can make a positive difference. I extend the invitation out to join in being a little crazy with the rest of us in creating a bright future for our city as we begin our second 50 years.

This city is yours and at 50 years young, even with some of its age showing, and ours too, we have a very bright future together. Here's to you on your 50th, South Lake Tahoe. Cheers!

Wendy David is mayor pro tem of South Lake Tahoe.

Earth is a wilder, warmer place since last climate deal made

By Seth Borenstein, AP

PARIS — This time, it's a hotter, waterier, wilder Earth that world leaders are trying to save.

The last time that the nations of the world struck a binding agreement to fight global warming was 1997, in Kyoto, Japan. As leaders gather for a conference in Paris on Monday to try to do more, it's clear things have changed dramatically over the past 18 years.

Some differences can be measured: degrees on a thermometer, trillions of tons of melting ice, a rise in sea level of a couple of inches. Epic weather disasters, including punishing

droughts, killer heat waves and monster storms, have plagued Earth.

As a result, climate change is seen as a more urgent and concrete problem than it was last time.

“At the time of Kyoto, if someone talked about climate change, they were talking about something that was abstract in the future,” said Marcia McNutt, the former U.S. Geological Survey director who was picked to run the National Academies of Sciences. “Now, we’re talking about changing climate, something that’s happening now. You can point to event after event that is happening in the here and now that is a direct result of changing climate.”

Other, nonphysical changes since 1997 make many experts more optimistic than in previous climate negotiations.

For one, improved technology is pointing to the possibility of a world weaned from fossil fuels, which emit heat-trapping gases. Businesses and countries are more serious about doing something, in the face of evidence that some of science’s worst-case scenarios are coming to pass.

“I am quite stunned by how much the Earth has changed since 1997,” Princeton University’s Bill Anderegg said in an email. “In many cases (e.g. Arctic sea ice loss, forest die-off due to drought), the speed of climate change is proceeding even faster than we thought it would two decades ago.”

Some of the cold numbers on global warming since 1997:

- The West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets have lost 5.5 trillion tons of ice, or 5 trillion metric tons, according to Andrew Shepherd at the University of Leeds, who used NASA and European satellite data.
- The five-year average surface global temperature for January to October has risen by nearly two-thirds of a degree Fahrenheit, or 0.36 degrees Celsius, between

1993-97 and 2011-15, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In 1997, Earth set a record for the hottest year, but it didn't last. Records were set in 1998, 2005, 2010 and 2014, and it is sure to happen again in 2015 when the results are in from the year, according to NOAA.

- The average glacier has lost about 39 feet, or 12 meters, of ice thickness since 1997, according to Samuel Nussbaumer at the World Glacier Monitoring Service in Switzerland.
- With 1.2 billion more people in the world, carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels climbed nearly 50 percent between 1997 and 2013, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The world is spewing more than 100 million tons of carbon dioxide a day now.
- The seas have risen nearly 2 1/2 inches, or 6.2 centimeters, on average since 1997, according to calculations by the University of Colorado.
- At its low point during the summer, the Arctic sea ice is on average 820,000 square miles smaller than it was 18 years ago, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center. That's a loss equal in area to Texas, California, Montana, New Mexico and Arizona combined.
- The five deadliest heat waves of the past century – in Europe in 2003, Russia in 2010, India and Pakistan this year, Western Europe in 2006 and southern Asia in 1998 – have come in the past 18 years, according to the International Disaster Database run by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disaster in Belgium.
- The number of weather and climate disasters worldwide has increased 42 percent, though deaths are down 58 percent. From 1993 to 1997, the world averaged 221 weather disasters that killed 3,248 people a year. From 2010 to 2014, the yearly average of weather disasters was up to 313, while deaths dropped to 1,364, according to the disaster database.

Eighteen years ago, the discussion was far more about average temperatures, not the freakish extremes. Now, scientists and others realize it is in the more frequent extremes that people are truly experiencing climate change.

Witness the “large downpours, floods, mudslides, the deeper and longer droughts, rising sea levels from the melting ice, forest fires,” former Vice President Al Gore, who helped negotiate the 1997 agreement, told The Associated Press. “There’s a long list of events that people can see and feel viscerally right now. Every night on the television news is like a nature hike through the Book of Revelation.”

Studies have shown that man-made climate change contributed in a number of recent weather disasters. Among those that climate scientists highlight as most significant: the 2003 European heat wave that killed 70,000 people in the deadliest such disaster in a century; Hurricane Sandy, worsened by sea level rise, which caused more than $67 billion in damage and claimed 159 lives; the 2010 Russian heat wave that left more than 55,000 dead; the drought still gripping California; and Typhoon Haiyan, which killed more than 6,000 in the Philippines in 2013.

Still, “while the Earth is a lot more dangerous on one side, the technologies are a lot better than they were,” said Jeffrey Sachs, director of Columbia University’s Earth Institute. Solar and wind have come down tremendously in price, so much so that a Texas utility gives away wind-generated electricity at night.

Another big change is China.

In Kyoto, China and developing countries weren’t required to cut emissions. Global warming was seen as a problem for the U.S. and other rich nations to solve. But now China – by far the world’s No. 1 carbon polluter – has reached agreement with the U.S. to slow emissions and has become a leader in solar

power.

“The negotiations are no longer defined by rich and poor,” Gore said. “There’s a range of countries in the middle, emerging economies, and thankfully some of them have stepped up to shoulder some of the responsibility.”

U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres said there’s far less foot-dragging in negotiations: “There is not a single country that tells me they don’t want a good Paris agreement.”

Figueres said that while the Kyoto agreement dictated to individual nations how much they must cut, what comes out of Paris will be based on what the more than 150 countries say they can do. That tends to work better, she said.

It has to, Figueres said. “The urgency is much clearer now than it used to be.”

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



· To see where plows are throughout Truckee, **click here**.

· League to Save Lake Tahoe is having an open house (2608 Lake Tahoe Blvd.) on Dec. 10 from 5:30-8:30pm. Bring an old T-shirt and turn it into a Keep Tahoe Blue gift.

· The 12th annual Nevada Chamber Music Festival is Dec. 26-31 at Nightingale Concert Hall and South Reno United Methodist Church. For tickets and more info, go **online**.

· The Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe had its best month ever in October, finding homes for 52 pets.

· Kimberly and Patrick Wilkes recently published “Eastern Sierra And Death Valley Camping With Privacy: Your Guide To The Most Private Campsites Near Mammoth Lakes, Tuolumne Meadows, Death Valley, And Beyond”. Between now and Dec. 12 they are donating $2 from the sale of each paperback and 40 percent of the royalties from each Kindle book to support the work of Eastern Sierra Land Trust.

Santa photos with pets benefits ACT

Santa will be at Pet Station in South Lake Tahoe ready to have pictures taken with people and their dogs.

This is a fundraiser of Animal Coalition of Tahoe. All proceeds will support ACT’s spay-neuter program and the animal shelter in Meyers.

For a donation of one’s choice, the best photos will be emailed to people for them to use as they choose.

The photo session will be upstairs at Pet Station, 2205 Lake Tahoe Blvd., on Dec. 12 from 11am-2pm.

Ganong barely misses podium in super G

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta – Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) barely missed another podium on Sunday in Lake Louise, but took his best-ever super G finish in fourth place. The King of Lake Louise, Aksel Lund Svindal of Norway, took the win, trailed by Matthias Mayer of Austria and Peter Fill of Italy.

The day felt similar to Saturday's downhill race in more ways than one. Pleasant temperatures, a nearly cloudless sky, and Fill laying down a fast time within the top of the order contributed to a sense that the magic of Bill Murray's "Groundhog Day" could be in the air. Then Ganong, whose previous best super G result was sixth in Kitzbuehel in 2014, cracked in right behind Fill at 0.06 seconds slower. When Svindal made a costly error once again but still managed to come down in the lead, almost a half-second ahead of Fill, the potential podium looked nearly identical to Saturday's with the addition of Austrian Max Franz tying Ganong for the final spot. But, Svindal took the win again, his ninth podium and eighth victory at the Canadian speed venue.

Ganong was still stoked on the day, even though his was just 0.06 seconds off the podium. "It was good skiing today and solid, no big mistakes. I'm really happy," said Ganong. "I think I lost like two-tenths in the first eight seconds, so that cost me the podium. I have bad shoulders and my thumb's hurt so I can't really push that hard. That's kind of frustrating, but the skiing after that was good."

The Truckee native, who had surgery on his thumb last week, leaves Lake Louise with a podium and a career-best super G result, indicating that he could be a serious threat in two

disciplines on the tour this winter.

“I’ve always been really fast in training in super G, I just haven’t had a breakthrough like this yet in my super G career. So it’s really awesome to start chipping away at super G as well,” said Ganong. “In training I do it all the time with Svindal and these guys, we train with them and are right in there with them. It’s good to get one on race day.”

Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah), finishing 21, and Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) in 26 were the only other scoring athletes from the U.S. Ski Team. Weibrecht was lucky to emerge unscathed from the race after he launched off the final air on course and his tips drifted toward the sky.

“I thought I was not going to pull that together, actually, and I just did. So I’m happy about that. That’s my one takeaway from the day,” admitted Weibrecht.

Wrapping up the Americans, Tim Jitloff (Reno) was 40. Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley), Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) and Wiley Maple (Aspen, Colo.) were 46, 47 and 48, respectively. Drew Duffy (Warren, Vt.) had a wild ride, but finished his first World Cup in 55th.

Maine resort focuses on lift safety after accidents

By David Sharp, AP

CARRABASSETT VALLEY, Maine – A Maine ski resort that’s responsible two of three chairlift mechanical failures that led to injuries in the past five years is working to make sure

it doesn’t happen again.

Sugarloaf is spending $1.5 million to make improvements after a chairlift malfunction allowed it to move in reverse last March, injuring seven skiers.

Workers are replacing the drivetrain on the King Pine chairlift that malfunctioned and have replaced the gear box on a sister lift of a similar design, Timberline. They’ve also upgraded the brakes on seven other lifts to ensure no rollbacks. Another aging lift was removed altogether.

“We’re making these lifts as safe as possible with the most modern standards and components,” said Rich “Crusher” Wilkinson, vice president of mountain operations. “We don’t want to have any more lift incidents here.”

Nationwide, such incidents are rare. Skiers are far more likely to be hurt driving to the resort or skiing down the slopes than riding on lifts, according to the National Ski Areas Association.

There have been only six mechanical failures resulting in injuries in the past 15 years in the U.S., and the last fatality linked to a mechanical problem was in 1993 in California, officials say.

At Sugarloaf, investigators determined the mechanical failure on the 27-year-old King Pine quad was caused by a broken drive shaft in a gearbox that allowed the lift to begin moving backward. A faulty switch prevented an anti-rollback system from locking the lift in place, and then the emergency braking system failed to automatically activate.

The Borvig-manufactured lift traveled about 400 feet in reverse, prompting some skiers to bail out, before it stopped three to five seconds later. Three of the seven injured skiers were taken to a hospital.

Five years earlier, high wind contributed to another lift accident in which some chairs on Sugarloaf's Spillway East plummeted 25 to 30 feet onto the snowy surface below, injuring eight skiers and trapping others in the air for more than an hour. That 35-year-old lift was replaced entirely with a new model.

All claims from the 2010 accident have been settled, and there have been no new claims from the March incident, said Noelle Tuttle, a Sugarloaf spokeswoman.

Both of Sugarloaf's accidents involved older lifts that are part of an aging infrastructure at many resorts. Nationwide, most lifts were installed during the 1970s, '80s and '90s, and hundreds of old lifts remain in service, industry officials say.

Skier Ron Jacques said he has confidence in Sugarloaf to make needed repairs, but he acknowledged the resort's track record hasn't been good in recent years.

"Their number has come up too often in the past few years," said Jacques, owner of the Ski Depot store in Jay. But, he added, no machinery is 100 percent foolproof.

After the March accident, Partek Ski Lifts, which provides technical support for Borvig lifts like the one that failed, warned operators of about 170 similar Borvig and Partek lifts to replace switches. Sugarloaf also shut down a similar lift, Timberline, which served the mountain's summit.

Over the summer, workers undertook additional work to provide confidence to skiers.

In addition to regular maintenance, workers drained the oil from the gear boxes on all of the lifts and used a scope to examine components for excessive wear. That led to the overhaul of the gearbox on one lift, Wilkinson said.

“We’re trying to be proactive here, to get out in front of it,” Wilkinson said. “We’ve done all we can. We’ve been very aggressive at upgrading these lifts and we have the utmost confidence in them.”

Each state regulates the maintenance and safety aspects of ski lift operations.

The Maine Board of Elevator and Tramway Safety has not released its final report on its investigation, but it issued a series of recommendations over the summer to ski resorts with similar lifts, said spokesman Doug Dunbar.

Maine ski resorts have a good track record, and there’s never been a chairlift fatality caused by a mechanical problem in Maine. “While any accident is too many, chairlift travel remains very safe in Maine and throughout the U.S.,” he said.

Holiday fair benefits locals, Kenyans

Zawadisha’s annual Holiday Bazaar is back, but at new location.

It will be Dec. 5 from 10am-3pm at the Blue Angel Cafe on Ski Run Boulevard, South Lake Tahoe. It is free to attend.

The local artisans, craftspeople, and entrepreneurs include: Abazart, BellaDrops, Cat Makes Things, Coalition Snow, Dharma Love, Intrepid Jewelry, Knits & Knots Tahoe, LoveStock Skincare, Lovin’ Lake Tahoe, Mountain Mudd, Rear View Miracles, Range of Light Designs, Refuge Coffee, Revive Tahoe, Spunky Punker, Tahoe Mountain Soap Co., Wellness Arts by Erin,

Wildwood DIY Boutique, and Zawadisha.

A portion of proceeds from this event benefit Zawadisha. Zawadisha is a nonprofit social enterprise whose eco-loans to rural Kenyan women help finance their livelihoods.

Climate change warnings go beyond weather shifts

By Chris Mooney, Washington Post

ELEUTHERA, Bahamas – Standing atop a 60-foot cliff overlooking the Atlantic, James Hansen – the retired NASA scientist sometimes dubbed the "father of global warming" – examines two small rocks through a magnifying glass. Towering above him is the source of one of the shards: a huge boulder from a pair locals call "the Cow and the Bull," the largest of which is estimated to weigh more than 1,000 tons.

The two giants have long been tourist attractions along this rocky coast. Perched not far from the edge of a steep cliff that plunges down into blue water, they raise an obvious question: How did they get up here?

Compounding the mystery, these two are among a series of giant boulders arranged in an almost perfect line across a narrow part of this 110-mile-long, wishbone-shaped island.

Hansen and Paul Hearty – a wiry, hammer-slinging geologist from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington who has joined him here as a guide – have a theory about these rocks. It's so provocative – and, frankly, terrifying – that some critics wonder whether the man who helped spawn the whole

debate about the dangers of climate change has finally gone too far.

The idea is that Earth’s climate went through a warming period just over 100,000 years ago that was similar in many ways to the warming now attributed to the actions of man. And the changes during that period were so catastrophic, they spawned massively powerful superstorms, causing violent ocean waves that simply lifted the boulders from below and deposited them atop this cliff.

If this is true, the effort kicking off in Paris this week to hold the world’s nations to strict climate targets may be even more urgent than most people realize.

Read the whole story