Massive excavation project necessary before Carson City I-580 connector can be paved



Crews work five days a week hauling 3,000 yards of dirt for what will be an extension of Interstate 580 in Carson City. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

CARSON CITY – The pile of dirt at the end of Spooner Summit in Carson City never seems to change. Grown men in what look like life-size Tonka trucks move it around, and yet, it still seems to stay the same.

For 16 hours a day, six days a week, dirt moves under the highway via a 2,600-foot conveyor belt to the other side of the street, where another pile is being created. On the

Spooner side it is a 1,500-foot-long continuous belt.

While it may seem like not much is happening, behind the 40-foot dirt wall that faces drivers as they descend into the capital city is a trove of workers excavating dirt for what in 2017 will be the extension of Interstate 580 from Fairview Drive to Spooner Summit.

A feeder – which looks like a grain feeder – separates out the larger rocks before it goes onto the conveyor belt.

The reason to move the dirt under South Carson Street is to keep trucks off the road, thus reducing traffic jams.



In 2017 the connector to Fairview Drive will be complete. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Road and Highway Builders based in Sparks this spring was awarded the $42 million contract to complete the final section of Interstate 580. Work began in June on what will be two lanes each going north and south.

Behind the wall is a dozer pushing a scraper as it picks up

dirt with its belly. Backhoes are filling semi-trailers.

It's a methodical process to dig down about 30 feet. Six thousand yards of dirt are being moved each day. By the time the project is done it's estimated 600,000 yards will have been removed. The excavation work should be done in February.



Project manager Will Hellickson, left, and Mark Cooper with NDOT are the leaders on the project. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

"We are scraping to get down to the design elevation. We are close to the final grade," Mark Cooper, an engineer with the Nevada Department of Transportation, said as he and Will Hellickson with Road and Highway Builders gave *Lake Tahoe News* a tour of the project site.

Part of the reason to dig so deep is to help reduce the noise to the neighboring residential area. Plus, the interstate will go under Clearview Drive and Koontz Lane. Those overpasses were built with the anticipation I-580 would one day be a reality. Before work began the dirt was as high as the concrete on the overpasses.

As the excavation work is being done, so is some of the electrical. Crews are putting in the footings for the 14,000

feet of sounds walls. The decorative barriers will be 8- to 13-feet high. In some locations the houses will be as close as 50 feet from the interstate.



Footings for the retaining wall near neighborhoods are being put in. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

At various locations some of the 20,000 feet of storm drainpipe is at the ready to be installed.

As the highway gets closer to Fairway Drive it is level with the side streets. NDOT has secured a 300-foot right-of-way.

This section from Fairview to Spooner will be 3.2 miles. It is actually 1.8 miles longer than going from Spooner via South Carson Street to Fairview. Still, NDOT estimates the time saved will be five minutes on the interstate.

“Within the next two decades, an estimated 43,000 vehicles are anticipated to travel on the south end of the freeway daily,

meaning this time savings will really add up when considering all vehicles projected to drive the freeway every day," Meg Ragonese with NDOT told *Lake Tahoe News*.



The large pile of dirt will end up on the conveyor that goes under South Carson Street. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Until the Carson City Freeway project came into being Nevada was one of the few states where the capital did not connect to the federal interstate system.

There are no plans to continue Interstate 580 farther south.

What is in the future is an overpass at the bottom of Spooner. That is why the dirt is being stored – with the idea it will be used for that project. However, that may not break ground for another 20 years. It's dependent on funding. When the newest section of the interstate opens there will still be a light at the bottom of Spooner.



Excavated dirt is being piled near the bottom of Spooner Summit. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

“By constructing the southern end of the freeway as a signalized intersection instead of the previously-planned overpass, the department deferred approximately $20 million to $24 million of construction costs in today’s dollars,” Ragonese said. “With limited funding available, not constructing the freeway overpass over South Carson Street was the only way we were able to secure enough funding to open the last leg of the freeway to traffic in 2017.”

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Notes:

· Here is a **YouTube video** of the dirt conveyor system.

Opinion: We need to stop drinking bottled water

By Annie Leonard, EcoWatch

Thursday was Use Less Stuff Day. It was created to inspire us to rethink the stuff we use. All our stuff—cell phones, clothes, cars, disposable chopsticks, and on and on—comes from somewhere and has to go somewhere when we throw it out. That takes a big toll on the planet, so thinking about how to use less is an excellent idea.

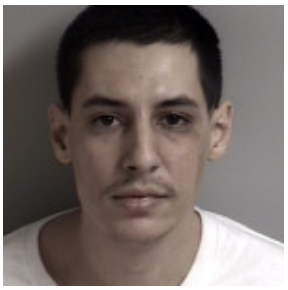
I've written a bunch about the real need to re-think our approach to the holidays and the mad shopping frenzy that comes with them.

When it comes to how we do spend our dollars, the product that jumps immediately to mind as obscenely wasteful, expensive and easily preventable is bottled water.

Let's dig a bit deeper into this. It's true that in some parts of the world the water quality is so poor that it's unsafe for people to drink. There are definitely some places in the U.S. where fracking or petrochemical plants have ruined the local water supply, but even then there are better solutions than forcing the community to buy bottled water. For the most part, tap water in the U.S. is clean, readily available and thousands of times cheaper than the bottled stuff.

Read the whole story

Police: South Tahoe man pulls knife on grandma



Jesse Shane Gage

A South Lake Tahoe man is accused of threatening to kill his grandmother with a knife.

Jesse Shane Gage, 30, was arrested on charges of terrorizing and trying to harm an elderly person, and exhibiting a deadly weapon. He was taken into custody Nov. 20 about 11:35pm.

The two live together. The 73-year-old woman was able to escape and call 911 from a neighbor's.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

EDC ed board eager to appoint superintendent

The El Dorado County board of education is formulating an application process in order to fill the superintendent vacancy.

The electeds met Nov. 23 to talk about the procedure. They expect to finalize the process at the Dec. 1 meeting. It's possible someone could be appointed in January.

The board members said they want to receive public input throughout the process.

The vacancy was created when **Jeremy Meyers** resigned earlier this month following two DUI arrests in a five-month span.

The term ends in 2018.

For now Robbie Montalbano and Ed Manansala, deputy superintendents, are running the office.

CalPERS defends investment plan

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

CalPERS pushed back against Gov. Jerry Brown on Friday, defending an investment strategy the governor had labeled "irresponsible."

Rob Feckner, CalPERS' board president, issued a statement saying Brown's alternative plan "would have caused financial strain on many of California's local municipalities who are still recovering from the financial crisis."

After more than a year of studying the issue, the board of the California Public Employees' Retirement System approved a plan this week that's designed to gradually reduce its investment risk – and its expected returns as well. The plan is expected to reduce the CalPERS "discount rate," a forecast of annual

returns, to 6.5 percent in 21 years. The rate is currently 7.5 percent.

Read the whole story

Experts urge statewide water metering, conservation to fight Nevada drought

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – A state panel Friday finalized short-term and long-range recommendations for dealing with drought, from requiring meters on all water outlets in Nevada to stepping up drought monitoring and conservation efforts.

The recommendations to be delivered to Gov. Brian Sandoval from the Nevada Drought Forum are a starting point. Much of the heavy lifting, if the governor pursues the findings, will come during the 2017 Legislature.

Sandoval created the forum in April following four years of drought and looming uncertainties over how long it will last. While forecasts call this year for a strong El Nino year – a weather phenomenon associated with wetter than usual winters, especially in the Southwest – its effect on Northern Nevada is not assured.

Read the whole story

Money available from USFS for local projects

The El Dorado County Resource Advisory Committee is accepting proposals for projects that benefit National Forest lands in El Dorado County. These projects will be funded under Title II of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

The deadline is Jan. 22, 2016. Applications, instructions, project evaluation considerations, and other information may be found **online**.

El Dorado County is expected to have approximately $297,000 for eligible projects. After reviewing the proposals, the committee will recommend projects to the Eldorado National Forest and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Forest supervisors for implementation on their respective units.

Projects should have broad based support with objectives that may include, but are not limited to: road, trail, and infrastructure maintenance or obliteration; soil productivity improvement; improvements in ecosystem health; watershed restoration and maintenance; restoration, maintenance and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat; control of noxious and exotic weeds; and reestablishment of native grasses.

Analysis: DraftKings, FanDuel wrong for now, but on right side

By Paul Newberry, AP

Say goodbye to all those annoying commercials.

Forget about the promise of winning millions of dollars.

The courts are sure to find what the rest of us already know.

Daily fantasy games are no different than putting down a bet at the horse track or handing over a few bucks to your neighborhood bookie.

Once we get past the obvious – yep, FanDuel and DraftKings are indeed sports gambling, which is against the law in most places – we can move on to the more important issue: should this sort of wagering be legalized?

Frankly, it's long overdue.

People love to bet. Always have, always will. Might as well let them head down to their local gaming parlor or simply place a wager on their smartphones.

As is often the case with issues of social relevance, the NBA is leading the way. Specifically, Commissioner Adam Silver, who one year ago wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* calling for a new approach to the illicit world of gambling.

"Despite legal restrictions, sports betting is widespread," Silver said then. "It is a thriving underground business that operates free from regulation or oversight. Because there are few legal options available, those who wish to bet resort to illicit bookmaking operations and shady offshore websites."

FanDuel and DraftKings brought it out into the open, allowing gamblers – call them what they are – to wager each day on a group of specific athletes, using the fantasy sports model that exploded in popularity over the past few decades.

When those two Web sites began raking in millions, and began pouring that money back into an onslaught of television commercials during the NFL season, it was only a matter of time before someone noticed.

That someone was Eric Schneiderman, who happens to be New York's attorney general. This week, he'll be in court arguing that FanDuel and DraftKings are running an illegal gambling operation.

It doesn't take a law degree to know he's right.

"My job is to enforce the law," Schneiderman wrote Friday in his own op-ed in the *New York Daily News*. "For more than a century, New York laws have banned gambling. The few narrow exceptions that exist – which do not include sports betting – all come with strong regulation and oversight to ensure fairness and protect New Yorkers from fraud."

Rightfully, he scoffed at the companies' argument that they're not bound by gambling regulations because they are games of "skill." There is no question the most skillful players probably have the best chance of winning, but that applies to any form of wagering.

Information always improves the odds, whether it's reading the countless books on the best ways to play blackjack, to having an inside tip on a horse's injury before the Kentucky Derby, to coming up with a complex set of algorithms that gives a fantasy player the best chance.

But nothing (except perhaps fixing a sporting event) guarantees a winner.

That’s when it becomes gambling.

“FanDuel and DraftKings have made the argument, over and over … that they run ‘games of skill’ and are therefore legal,” Schneiderman went on. “This is nonsense. New York law prohibits sports wagering – betting money on a future event outside of the gambler’s control – regardless of the skill involved.”

OK, so that’s a slam dunk for the attorney general.

But let’s get back to Silver.

Like Schneiderman, the NBA commish is right, too.

He notes that times have changed dramatically since 1992 when all the major leagues, the NBA included, pushed for Congress to approve the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, which generally prohibits states from legalizing sports betting (Nevada and a handful of states with licensed sports pools were exempted).

“Gambling has increasingly become a popular and accepted form of entertainment in the United States,” Silver said. “Most states offer lotteries. Over half of them have legal casinos.”

He correctly notes that plenty of countries around the world allow betting on professional sports, most notably England, without any major issues. For years, one of the major arguments against legalized gambling was that athletes might be swayed to throw games in exchange for a big payout. Multi-million-dollar contracts have largely removed that risk.

Besides, as Silver points out, a legal but tightly regulated betting system would provide even more assurance that everything is on the up and up.

There are still issues to sort out, from verifying that players are old enough to wager to coming up with mechanisms to identify and help those who have a gambling addiction.

But that’s for down the road.

In the short term, before the courts deliver a devastating blow, let’s give thanks to FanDuel and DraftKings for being on the right side of this issue.

Even if they’re on the wrong side for now.

Nevada nightclubs under stricter scrutiny

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada gaming officials put in place sweeping new regulations for nightclubs last week, increasing their oversight of a crucial but sometimes risky component of business at casino-resorts.

Under the set of rules adopted by the Nevada Gaming Commission on Thursday, casino operators must make at least one employee in charge of monitoring their nightclubs and a broad set of club employees need to register in the same way as casino workers, among other requirements. The regulations were hashed out in previous workshops that included the Gaming Control Board members and industry representatives.

The registration requirement applies to “all supervisors, managers, security and surveillance personnel, servers, server assistants, bussers, restroom attendants” and anyone employed or contracted to offer hosting or VIP services, according to a draft of the regulations.

Read the whole story

2 men sought in EDC home invasion

Two men are wanted in connection with a home invasion robbery on the West Slope.

El Dorado County sheriff’s deputies say they have positively identified Jeremy Ross and Deshawn Stone, both 21, as the suspects in the case. They are considered armed and dangerous.

The duo is accused of entering a home in Greenwood in the late morning of Nov. 19. They allegedly used zip-ties and duct-tape at gunpoint to restrain the occupants. A large quantity of processed marijuana and other miscellaneous property was taken in the robbery, deputies said.

The sheriff’s office did not release the information until four days after the incident.

Ross and Stone fled the area in a white or silver smaller SUV. Felony warrants have been issued for them.

Any information on their whereabouts should be forwarded 530.642.4710 or payneb@edso.org.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report