Calif. looks at dumping gas tax for per-mile fee

By Tony Bizjaz, Sacramento Bee

Weeks into a new gas tax hike, California transportation officials said Thursday they are studying ways to charge drivers based on how many miles they drove since their last fill-up rather than the amount of fuel they use.

The problem? California drivers are choosing such fuel-efficient cars that the state fears it will be deprived of enough road construction revenues in the long run.

The Caltrans study – the California Road Charge Pilot Program report – is billed as a way for the state to move from its longstanding but outmoded pump tax to a system where drivers pay based on their odometer readings.

Read the whole story

Douglas County replacing voting machines

Douglas County's voting machines, which showed their age in the last election, are going to be replaced.

After 13 years, the machines need to go, according to Clerk-Treasurer Kathy Lewis.

The county has allocated $500,000 for the machines. The Legislature has set aside $1.8 million to help all the

counties purchase voting machines; Douglas will receive $249,527.

Commissioners last week agreed to buy 139 electronic machines from Dominion Voting Systems. They will be in place for the 2018 elections.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Greenway Bike Trail to be expanded in 2021

By Kathryn Reed

The next phase of the Greenway Bike Trail in South Lake Tahoe is about to go forward.

Trustees of Lake Tahoe Community College on Tuesday are expected to approve three items related to the project. The college, city of South Lake Tahoe and California Tahoe Conservancy are involved in a three-way land swap and cash transaction to build more sections of the path.

There was a hiccup in the process when two global easements were uncovered. They go back decades; one involving the Globin family and the other the Hartoonians.

To overcome these easements Placer Title got involved to provide an insurance policy of sorts.

“After much discussion, the district and the CTC worked with the title company to request a title assurance for site 3. This assurance would insure over two easements, allowing the district to construct on the property based on a proposed

development area map and survey provided by the district," the LTCC staff report for Dec. 12 reads.

Site 3 is west of South Tahoe Public Utility District and south of LTCC.

College President Jeff DeFranco told *Lake Tahoe News* the easements are so old they lack clarity of what the original owners intended.

While the college is still providing $700,000 to the bike project, the money is being redefined.

"What is proposed now is the district contributing $650,000 to hard costs of construction, then $50,000 for these soft costs," DeFranco said. The soft costs being surveys, legal expenses and the like.

CTC, which is the lead on this trail project, completed the first phase in 2015. Construction of the next two phases have been pushed back a year to 2021.

Chris Mertens with CTC at that agency's board meeting last week called these phases the most important because of their "recreation and community resources." The trail will cross Trout Creek and Bijou Meadows, connecting Lake Tahoe Community College, Bijou Community Park, El Dorado County offices and South Tahoe Middle School.

Of concern, though, is the cost of the project is increasing by $600,000 to $1.3 million based on bids coming in higher. The booming economy and natural disasters are contributing to construction costs escalating. Still, the CTC believes it can get the money together to keep building.

State money coming to EDC for road work

Two El Dorado County projects have been awarded from Caltrans.

The planning grants are funded through the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (SB1) to support efforts to plan more sustainable communities, reduce transportation-related greenhouse gases and adapt for the effects of climate change.

Nearly $32 million in grants were awarded.

Among projects awarded funding are:

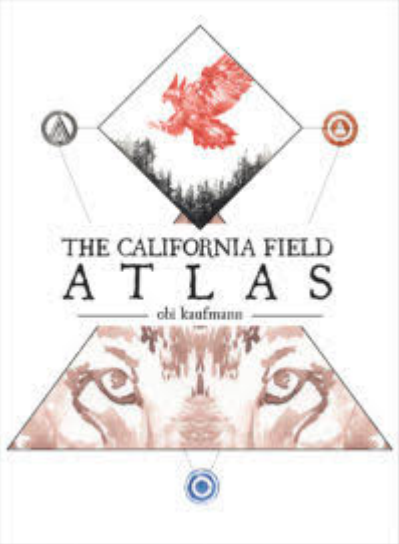
- El Dorado County Transportation Commission El Dorado County and city of Placerville Active Transportation Plans, $100,003;
- El Dorado County Transportation Commission Coloma Sustainable Community Mobility Plan, $130,000.

Additionally, $7 million in Adaptation Planning grants were awarded to 21 projects throughout California. These grants will help local and regional agencies conduct adaptation planning in a way to ensure transportation assets are resilient in the face of climate change and extreme weather events. SB1 will provide a total of $20 million over three years for this grant program. Among projects awarded funding are:

· California Tahoe Conservancy Climate Adaptation Strategy for the Lake Tahoe Basin, $359,756.

Book review: An inspired gift for Calif. nature lovers

By Kim Wyatt



“The California Field Atlas “

By Obi Kaufmann

Heyday, 552 pages, $45

One-line review: Get lost in this singular, enchanting atlas of our golden state.

“This is a love story,” begins “The California Field Atlas,” and the instant I opened this enchanting book I was under its spell.

What is the purpose of an atlas? To help us find our way? In “The California Field Atlas,” painter, poet and philosopher Obi Kaufmann invites us to find our way around California by getting blissfully, beautifully lost in its pages. Once the book is in your hands, you’ll be hard-pressed to put it down.

Heyday Books makes exceptional books, and this is a

showstopper. More than 300 full-color maps and illustrations are detailed in the compact atlas, the result of California-born Kaufman's wide-ranging travels. Ten chapters are organized thematically and by ecosystem rather than north to south or any usual method. "Of Earth and Mountains," "Of Water and Rivers," and "Of Fire and Forests" are a few of the compelling sections. Attention is given to trail systems and natural features in more detail than roads. Included are maps of energy grids, snow levels and watersheds alongside watercolors of flora and fauna from golden eagle to gray whale. A large chapter deals entirely with each of the state's 58 counties, and I was surprised to find out something new about the place I was born. (For the readers of *Lake Tahoe News*, the features on the Sierra alone are worth the price of admission.)

Its unique key and map legends put you in the mind of the author, and encourage you to look at California in new ways. Without an index, you'll have to think about the state in broader terms, which begins to reveal a whole, California as "a single, integrative being composed of living patterns and ancient processes," as does Kaufmann. In the last chapter, "A Rewilded Future," Kaufmann lays out his conservation ethic in a way that will resonate with and inspire many.

Breathtaking and informative and one of a kind, this book will lead to fresh insights about the Golden State, promoting geographic literacy, historical understanding and perhaps, in turn, stewardship of this amazing place we call home.

The "California Field Atlas" would make an excellent gift. But buy two—you won't want to let it go.

Find out more about the author and the book at **here.** Order from Heydey Books **here**.

*Kim Wyatt is the owner of **Bona Fide Books** in Meyers.*

Trademark lawsuit over name ‘Apple Hill’

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Apple Hill has been an autumn destination for decades for Northern California families in search of fresh fruits, Halloween pumpkins, Christmas trees and wine tasting.

Now, it is at the center of a legal fight over who can use the name “Apple Hill” to hawk their farm goods.

The dispute is between the Apple Hill Growers Association, which adopted the name “Apple Hill” in 1964, and the family that runs Boa Vista Orchards, one of the largest farm stand operations in the area just east of Placerville along Highway 50.

Read the whole story

Suspected DUI driver causes 3-car Hwy. 50 crash



Wreckage of one vehicle in the middle of Highway 50 between Harrah’s and Harveys on Dec. 9. Photo/Bill Kingman

Updated 9pm:

Cars were scattered about the Stateline casino corridor Saturday afternoon in what ended up being a three-car accident.



Ryan Land’s vehicle ended up near McP’s in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/SLTFD

Several people were injured, but none with life-threatening injuries.

Ryan Land, 33, of Fallbrook was arrested on felony driving under the influence charges.

He was reportedly going 60 mph in the 25 mph zone. He started in Gardnerville and ended his day in South Lake Tahoe. Land’s vehicle swerved into on coming traffic in front of the casinos, striking two vehicles, before he crashed into the traffic light near McP’s.

South Lake Tahoe police did not provide names and home towns of others involved.

Wrecked cars were on both sides of the state line. Traffic was diverted for a few hours on Dec. 9 for the mess to be cleaned up.

It gave those in the area something to look at as people were

lined up in front of the casinos gaping at the wreckage.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· Dharma Love in the Swiss Chalet Village in South Lake Tahoe now sells books published by Meyers' Bona Fide Books.

· South Shore author Jennifer Quashnick will be launching her third book in her Mountaingirl Mysteries series, "Sierra Nevada Dangerous Developments," on Dec. 16, 4-5:30pm at the American Legion in South Lake Tahoe.

· Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules for the coming week.

· The El Dorado Trail on the West Slope will be closed for maintenance on Dec. 13 from 8am-5pm from Forni Road to Weber Creek Bridge and on Dec. 14 from 8am-5pm from Weber Creek Bridge to Missouri Flat Road.

· Diamond Peak plans to open Dec. 14.

· Brooke Laine is now chair of the California Tahoe Conservancy board and Lynn Suter is vice chair.

Boys and Girls Club – not

enough space for kids



Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club needs more room and a permanent space. Photo/Susan Wood

By Susan Wood

For over a decade, the Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club has represented a home away from home for hundreds of South Lake Tahoe youngsters.

Now it needs a home itself.

The thinking is eventually the Lake Tahoe Unified School District may want to reopen the **Al Tahoe Elementary School**, so shared use should be defined. The club took over part of those grounds in a year-to-year lease after the grade school closed in 2004 because of declining enrollment and through a reorganization of South Tahoe Middle School.

In that timeframe, the demand has mushroomed for the club on Lyons Avenue. The organization serving ages 5-18 busts from the seams in satisfying the needs of children finding a window

of opportunity to play and study between school and home.

The Boys and Girls Club of South Lake Tahoe has grown from 423 members to 731 between 2014 and 2017 – with at least 20 families on the waiting list, Executive Director Jude Wood told *Lake Tahoe News.*

“I think it’s a reflection of an economy improving,” Wood said.



Jude Wood is leading the South Shore Boys and Girls Club to greater independence. Photo/Susan Wood

If both parents are working, the club serves as an ideal alternative to latchkey children or babysitters.

Even as the best alternative, the kids are outgrowing the facility. During playtime, the recreation room is crammed with people. Backpacks line the hallway.

“We’ve outgrown it anyway,” Wood said.

The director and her staff have improvised nicely, but the dream is to cut a deal with the school district to build a new clubhouse next door where the portables are located.

Unlike club membership, school district enrollment is steady, but not surging.

The school district discussed the options with the club during a board meeting this fall. The trustees agreed to bring on an architect to survey suggested construction of a two-story, 10,000-square-foot structure adjacent to the gym and close to the ballfield.

The club is seeking a joint-use agreement with the district and expressed an openness to fund the design of a new place. The cost to build may be absorbed through donations, grants and other capital investment. Currently, the club renews its annual lease with the district every summer.

In exchange for a 50-year lease of the land, the club has offered to renovate Al Tahoe’s gym and kitchen, the latter being a vital resource serving more than 60 meals a day. Plus, the district would like to make the gym more multi-purpose.

“It’s a yearlong process. We’re doing our due diligence to see what’s best for the club,” Wood said.

Therein lies some advantages with the Al Tahoe location. It’s close to the middle school, library and the city recreation center and within steps from major bus and walking routes.

“It’s pretty realistic, but we have to get the architect involved,” trustee Barbara Bannar told *LTN.* “Absolutely we want to help them move forward. It’s their decision ultimately. Whatever choice they make – we’ll all be happy.”



Backpacks cluttering the halls is an indication of lack of space. Photo/Susan Wood

Certainly, Bannar said the school district has also seen the portable units outlive their useful state.

They would come out with the preferred plan, much to the liking of LTUSD Superintendent Jim Tarwater, who told *LTN* he'd push for seeing them go.

Tarwater has much faith in LPA architects from Roseville to build an ideal facility to meet state specifications. The firm designed the remodeled South Tahoe high and middle schools.

"The positive thing is (the club) having all that acreage and a playground with swings," the superintendent said. "The hardest thing for (the club) is buying land. There isn't any."

Other options exist, but perhaps not as attractive as rebuilding next door.

The city of South Lake Tahoe can relate to the plight. After wrestling with its own leaky, rundown recreation center on

nearby Rufus Allen Boulevard, it plans to rebuild. With plans through Measure P for the city to build a new recreation center, the Boys and Girls Club toyed with the idea of being roommates. But who's to say the club won't outgrow that location – especially since the youth organization seeks autonomy.

Besides talk of going into the Unity church site, El Dorado County may also have an option if it moves out of its vector control building on the same street. However, that relocation would require an environmental cleanup.

The county has conducted soil samples and found the land contaminated by pest-control chemicals. Another soil sample is slated to occur.

"We're interested in helping them any way we can – whatever works out for them," said Tahoe's county Supervisor Sue Novasel, a past-president of the Boys and Girls Club. "But we need to do some mitigation out there."

Novasel believes there's "no perfect option," but the drawn-out process is "just what you have to deal with when dealing with land use."

Redwood grove no longer so elusive, trees suffering

By Lizzie Johnson, San Francisco Chronicle

For years, the Grove of Titans was barely more than a myth. Incredibly old. Incredibly large. And incredibly hard to find.

It used to be that the grouping of eight old-growth redwood

trees deep within Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park near Crescent City could be reached only by following clues in a book about tree hunters. There were no direct hiking trails, and the nearest road was miles away.

Then, in 2011, someone uploaded a geotag marking the trees' location online. As many as 50 people a day began finding their way to the grove and loving it to death.

The onslaught of tourists bushwhacking through the rain forest is slowly killing the giant trees, park officials say. The damage can be reversed by building elevated walkways and viewing platforms, similar to the ones used at Muir Woods, they say. But it's going to cost more than $1.4 million.

Read the whole story