Trade group updates how it addresses problem gambling

By Thomas Moore, Las Vegas Sun

One of the gaming industry's largest trade groups announced an updated approach to problem gambling during a roundtable discussion on the issue at UNLV's international Gaming Institute on Thursday.

Just before the discussion, the American Gaming Association's (AGA) released its updated Code of Conduct for Responsible Gaming, which guides how the organization's members — casinos, sports books, manufacturers and related businesses — deal with:

• Promoting responsible gaming

• Preventing underage gambling and unattended minors in casinos

• Serving alcohol responsibly

• Advertising gaming responsibly

• Training employees

• Raising awareness and promoting research into responsible gaming.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Sandwiches courtesy of the barbecue

By Kathryn Reed

Sometimes I get a hankering for a sandwich. They just aren’t something I eat very often. And warm ones – at least at home – are almost non-existent.

They might become a more regular thing with this recipe. For vegetarians and vegans, getting enough protein can be an issue. And while so many meat eaters have an aversion to tofu, this marinade might change your beliefs.

The mustard listed really adds a wonderful spiciness. Just use a good quality, even a Dijon would satisfy.

When it comes to grilling the squash and veggies the thickness of both will determine how long it takes to cook and ease of turning them. They can be cut into smaller pieces when it comes time to assemble the sandwich.

Any type of bread will do.

Grilled Veggie Sandwich (4 servings)

1 yellow squash

2 medium zucchini

14 ounces firm tofu

10 ounces spinach

8 ounces mushrooms

2 T cilantro-jalapeno mustard

½ tsp horseradish

1 T lemon juice

5 T-plus olive oil

2 T red wine vinegar

1 T chives

1 T mint

Garlic salt

Bread

Slice squash and zucchini length-wise into several pieces. Pat tofu dry and slice in half vertically. Place in glass dish.

Mix mustard, horseradish, lemon juice, olive oil, vinegar, chives and mint. Cover veggies with mixture and coat both sides.

Place spinach and sliced mushrooms in grill basket.

Over medium heat place the squash and tofu directly on the grill. Cook until there are char marks on both sides.

Place grill basket with spinach and mushroom on grill over medium heat. Coat lightly with olive oil and garlic salt. Stir. It’s done when spinach is wilted.

Warm bread on upper rack of grill.

Use any leftover marinade to spread on bread. Cut the tofu and squash into smaller pieces before layering veggies on bread.

Heavenly's chief easing into new role

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE — Arizona and skiing? You, bet. Just ask Mike Goar.

Goar is settling into his new job as chief operating office for Heavenly Mountain Resort. The job responsibilities also come with overseeing Kirkwood Mountain Resort and Northstar.

His office has pictures on the wall of those resorts that were left from his predecessor. Right now the personal touches are missing. Decorating is a distant priority to figuring out who's who at the resorts and in the community.

This 59-year-old grew up skiing at Sunrise Ski Resort in the White Mountains of Arizona. It has a base elevation of about 9,000 feet. Goar started out as a patroller and groomer at his home mountain while he was in his teens. It was those early years that gave him the skiing bug and desire to have a career in the industry.

The bulk of his career — 27 years — was spent at Solitude in Utah.

Mike Goar is eager to be part of the Lake Tahoe community now that he is COO of Heavenly ski resort. Photo/Kathryn Reed

His tenure with Vail Resort began in 2013 when the company bought Canyons in Utah. He had been general manager of that Utah resort for six years. (Canyons and Park City have since merged into one Vail-owned property.) Goar moved to Keystone in 2015 to be COO of that Colorado resort.

One main difference from his last job is that it was just one resort; in Tahoe he has the responsibility of three, even though Heavenly is his hub.

Goar is taking over for **Pete Sonntag**, who left earlier this summer to run Whistler Blackcomb. Vail Resorts bought that ski area in 2016.

No big changes are planned for any of the Tahoe area resorts – at least not for the 2017-18 season. Goar plans to meet with local leadership teams and confer with corporate on setting priorities for future capital improvements.

Whatever future changes are made, he told *Lake Tahoe News* there is no desire by anyone to alter the vibe of each resort.

"They are going to be different for the right reasons," Goar said. "We are mindful of what each resort stands for."

Addressing guest concerns about lift lines and what can be done during times of wind hold are being worked on before the start of next ski season.

Goar has skied at all three of Vail's Tahoe resorts. Other Tahoe area resorts he's been to include Squaw Valley, Alpine Meadows and Mount Rose.

With the finalization this week of the KSL-Aspen Skiing deal, Goar sees this as a good thing for the industry. He believes it will attract more people to skiing and snowboarding, which is good for all resorts.

While in many ways running a ski resort is the same no matter the location, Goar is cognizant each location has its own idiosyncrasies. He is looking forward to getting to understand the agencies that govern in the greater Lake Tahoe area, and the community members who call this place home.

Goar will be living here with his wife. They have three adult children and two grandchildren. He's already discovered housing is an issue.

Goar is well aware it's also an issue for his employees and others in the area. When he was in Keystone it was something he was involved in.

"While there is no project in the pipeline that we are talking about publicly, we are looking at partnerships on employee housing," Goar said.

Nothing is off the table. It could be new development, refurbishing an existing property or combining resources with other entities desirous of providing housing for workers.

Legalization of recreational marijuana was something he had to contend with in Colorado and will likely be an issue as California allows it starting in January. With the use being illegal on federal land, that makes it easy for the resort operator to just say no. Vail Resorts has a companywide policy banning marijuana use at all of its resorts. He anticipates it will take some education of riders to let them know the rules.

While Keystone has mountain biking in the summer, it does not have the Epic Discovery activities like Heavenly has at the top of the gondola. Goar has experienced a few of the amenities and expects to have tried all the ropes courses, zip lines and other attractions before summer is over.

Beyond work and skiing, Goar is passionate about baseball and is a devout Yankees fan. Hiking, mountain bike riding and golf are the sports he participates in when the snow is gone. He's looking forward to exploring the local trails.

Opinion: Building more freeways makes traffic worse

By Jerry Nickelsburg

In 1865, British economist William Stanley Jevons wrote an influential essay entitled "The Coal Question." Today his insights are interesting to me not as they relate to coal, but rather as they relate to me sitting in the legendary traffic of the 405 freeway in Los Angeles during my morning commute.

Jevons' observations on coal also have something to say about the Oshiya (train pushers) who squeeze every last person onto subway cars in Tokyo, and about Gov. Andrew Cuomo's recent declaration of a transit emergency for New York’s famed subway system.

Jevons wrote that an increase in the efficiency of coal production would stimulate increased demand for coal. Jevons’ reasoning was that more efficient coal production would lead to lower prices. And Economics 101 tells us that lower prices lead to more consumption—perhaps, in this case, creating so much more demand that it would outstrip the capacity to produce coal.

In such a scenario, the production of coal might be increased to meet the heightened demand, but that would require marginal mines to be brought into operation. Given that these mines would be less efficient; prices necessarily would rise to cover the additional cost. Prices would not initially increase back to their old levels, but as the population grew it would generate additional demand for coal and such a rebound in prices might well occur.

These same insights about coal are applicable to mass transportation systems—particularly freeways. Last February, the Dutch firm TomTom, which produces traffic, navigation and mapping products, drew on the brave new world of big data to release their 2016 index of traffic congestion. Our region, the Pacific Rim, was the clear “winner”—or, I should say, the clear loser. Seven of the top 10 congested cities are on the Pacific Rim and Los Angeles leads the list of American cities.

Anyone who travels the cities around the rim can attest to snarled traffic in Jakarta, Beijing, Seattle, and Los Angeles. The question “What are we going to do about traffic?” is a constant source of conversation, particularly here in LA, and it is pervasive enough to have given rise to the parody “The Californians” on Saturday Night Live.

There would seem to be two ways to ease traffic congestion: build more capacity, or reduce the number of people who use the existing capacity. Yet, just as with Jevons' coal demand, traffic seems to expand to meet whatever capacity exists. And this is not just a Los Angeles or Beijing problem. In 1990, British transportation analyst Martin Mogridge observed it as a more general characteristic of highways, and it is now enshrined in transportation planning circles as the "Lewis-Mogridge Position."

Why is it that cities cannot build enough capacity to solve the problem? The answer may lie in two factors: the price of housing, and the pricing of congestion.

Let's start with the price of housing. The purchase or rental price of a home reflects the sum value of many characteristics of that home. In this column I have often written about how proximity to natural amenities, such as beaches and mountains, makes housing more expensive. But proximity to work also is an important consideration. The closer to work, the shorter the commute time, and the more valuable will be the home.

But it is commuting time and not linear distance that matters most. Consequently, when you increase the capacity of transportation infrastructure, you get shorter commute times—at least initially. And that makes homes close to the new infrastructure initially more attractive.

Intensifying congestion, however, will affect a home's price. At 3am, the opportunity cost of traveling the freeway to a destination is practically zero. It takes a little time, and that is a cost, but not much. But in rush hour when freeway speeds slow, the opportunity cost increases with the additional time spent sitting in your car listening to the Grateful Dead on the radio. The more cars there are (higher demand), the more time is required to crawl through rush hour (the higher cost).

Here is where Jevons' idea comes in. When there is not much congestion, one can live farther away from work where home prices are lower, and still arrive at work on time without spending too much more time commuting. Consequently, building another lane on the freeway opens up more residential options.

So adding capacity makes two big things happen. First, there is an increased demand for the housing that is now within driving distance to work; and second, more people will use the freeways to get to work. This leads to more freeway congestion and ultimately longer commute times for everyone. Empirically we see this happening quite fast, and eventually the new lane has done nothing to ease congestion.

There are a number of solutions to this. One is to build mass transit and induce people to use it. This is the favored solution of urban planners today because mass transit is a more efficient means of transportation. It can carry many more people per dollar spent on building, maintaining and operating the transit than the highways can.

But with mass transit, as with highways, the same principles of capacity and demand apply. When Japan began building the Tokaido Shinkansen (high-speed rail) in 1959, it was, in part, intended to ease the burden of commuting in densely packed Tokyo. Today, anyone who rides the rail line, especially in rush hour, knows what a sardine feels like when packed into a flat tin can. In this case the cost is not time, but the discomfort of cheek-to-jowl train ridership.

Another solution to the problem of increased capacity driving demand is to convert lanes on the freeways to toll lanes. This is a favorite of economists because people who value time more will pay a premium to avoid the costs of congestion. Consequently, the scarce resource—road space—will be rationed according to its relative value to consumers. Of course, it is not only the value of time that matters in the decision; income—the ability to pay tolls—does as well. Adding a toll lane allows rich people to drive fast and reduces the capacity on the freeway for everyone else. And that raises issues of equity for infrastructure built with tax dollars.

The other problem with toll lanes is that there is an alternative to either paying for the less congested toll lane, or driving in the now more congested free lanes: driving on surface streets. With navigation apps such as Waze, drivers can take the nearest off-ramp and motor through residential neighborhoods. When they do that, they expose residential neighborhoods to the congestion, noise and pollution that the freeways were originally built to eliminate.

Moreover, a 2001 article by Ingo Hansen of Delft University of Technology suggests that transportation analysis of toll roads gets it all wrong. His research indicates that when fed-up freeway commuters start taking app-directed shortcuts through residential areas, the local roads quickly become clogged, hampering residents' ability to make short trips or run errands. These residents are now competing with longer-distance drivers, and so they, too, pay a cost in congestion, safety and pollution. Indeed, this Waze phenomenon induced L.A. Supervisor Paul Krekorian in 2015 to suggest new government regulations for local street usage.

So, toll roads don't seem to be a complete answer either. Recognizing this, Mexico City, Beijing and other cities have followed the example of Julius Caesar, who in 1st Century BCE Rome banned chariots from the center city during the day, except for two hours in the morning and two hours in the late afternoon. Romans responded by moving their trips to the allowable four hours each day—thereby creating epic chariot jams.

Today Singapore uses a combination of policies to limit the number of cars on the roads. First there is a quota system that limits the number of cars on the island. Second, those who have cars are charged for driving them through a sophisticated system that measures where they are and when they are driving. This system will be improved shortly with the installation of GPS monitors in each car.

These are useful alternatives. But let’s remember our friend Jevons. Policies to limit traffic might not do much, even with the best of planning, so long as the city we live in is attractive to a lot of people. An oft-heard refrain about my hometown is: “I would love to live in LA but couldn’t stand the traffic.” If you make traffic better, more people would move here, and traffic would get worse. Congestion costs ration limited space and this reduces the number of people moving in.

All we can do for now is stay ahead of the game in the best way possible. Provide incentives for people to use the least-used modes of transportation and plan for the increases in population that will invariably happen to cities that are attractive to people from far-flung lands. Perhaps the advent of self-driving autos will provide the bandwidth to break the traffic jam for good, but perhaps not. What will be required is to engage transportation planning with housing planning in a way that recognizes the close tie between the cost of congestion and the price of housing.

On the bright side, if you are late for something in one of the Pacific Rim’s notoriously congested cities, simply saying “Sorry, traffic!” is sufficient to get you by.

Jerry Nickelsburg, an economist at UCLA Anderson School of Management, writes the Pacific Economist column. He wrote this for Zócalo Public Square.

Best way to increase housing supply? Build more

By Patrick Clark, Bloomberg

It’s widely agreed that housing markets across the U.S. are hurting for new inventory, driving up prices and postponing homeownership for young Americans. What’s driving the inventory shortage is a murkier matter.

A new report from Trulia tests some popular explanations and comes to this conclusion: We’re going to have to build our way out of it.

The report looked at five possible causes for the inventory shortage, including the sluggish pace of new home construction, the growing role of single-family-rental landlords and the share of older homeowners in a given market. Also: price appreciation and the gaps among entry-level, step-up and luxury homes.

Read the whole story

Nevada lowers bar for state legal exam

By Natalie Bruzda, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Nevada bar exam is notoriously one of the most difficult tests in the nation for aspiring lawyers, but that reputation could soon be dismissed as state officials tinker with the test to make it easier.

The first changes occurred about a month ago, when the Nevada Supreme Court lowered the score required to pass. The court, which has the final say in matters related to the state bar exam, also recently approved a recommendation to remove an essay topic that it deemed no longer relevant.

The moves comes as fewer law school graduates – in Nevada and across the country – are passing the bar exam.

Read the whole story

Law changed to allow electeds on CTC board

By Kathryn Reed

State law has been changed to allow elected officials to serve on the California Tahoe Conservancy board.

Late last year it was brought to light that Government Code pertaining to just this state conservancy prevented elected officials from being on the board. The CTC, though, since its inception in 1985 had allowed elected officials on the board.

When the board started questioning Executive Director Patrick Wright's decisions and leadership, CTC staff suddenly brought this rule to light. Issues with Wright are still not fully resolved. He had a review this spring after years of not having one. All that was said publicly is that the board this fall would discuss his performance further.

Former Councilman Hal Cole this year has been representing the city, while Senior Deputy County Counsel Paula Frantz has been serving on the CTC board since January for El Dorado County.

Larry Sevinson has been Placer County's non-elected representative for long before the conflict was brought to light.

At the Aug. 15 meetings of the South Lake Tahoe City Council and El Dorado County Board of Supervisors the bodies are expected reappoint one of their own to the board. Tom Davis had been representing the city prior to the brouhaha. Sue Novasel was representing the county.

Cole has said he would continue to serve if that's the council's choice, but believes it should be one of the five councilmembers. County staff is recommending Supervisor Sue Novasel return to the CTC board. Historically the District 5 supervisor has been the rep.

Assemblyman Frank Bigelow, R-Fresno, who represents the South Shore, introduced the change in the law.

Legal scholars dispute permanence of monuments

By Elizabeth Shogren, High Country News

No president has ever abolished a national monument, and it has been more than 50 years since a president shrank one. Nor has Congress revoked any significant monuments. The high regard given these special places is part of what makes President Donald Trump's order to review all large monuments designated since 1996 so extraordinary.

Courts have never decided whether a president has the legal authority to change or undo a designated monument, and now this uncertainty has sparked a clash of legal titans.

A multitude of legal experts — including 121 law professors — argue that presidents lack the power to alter or revoke monuments. Meanwhile, a much smaller but no less adamant group asserts the opposite. These opponents are waging a tug of war in opinion pieces, blog posts, law journals, comment letters and at scholarly conferences. Both sides cite the 1906 Antiquities Act and decades of legal opinions and obscure congressional documents.

Read the whole story

Caesars quarterly loss narrows

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Add unlucky play to the list of financial struggles Caesars Entertainment is undergoing.

The Las Vegas-based company, operators of nine Las Vegas properties and in the midst of emerging from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, reported huge losses — but not as bad as in the second quarter of 2016 — on weak revenue performance.

Caesars Entertainment Operating Co., which includes two subsidiaries, but not Caesars Entertainment Resort Properties, the owner of six casinos, on Thursday reported a loss of $1.4 million, $9.68 a share, on $1 billion revenue. A year earlier, the company had a loss of $2 million, $13.25 a share, on revenue of $992 million for the quarter that ended June 30.

Cash flow remained unchanged at $289 million for the quarter.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

Read the whole story

Tahoe's first recreational marijuana shop to open

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Nevada side of Lake Tahoe is finally diving into recreational marijuana sales this week while the California side waits patiently on the opposite shore.

NuLeaf, a medical marijuana dispensary that opened its Incline Village location in July last year, will be the first Tahoe-area dispensary to sell recreational marijuana products starting at 11am Aug. 5.

The 2,500 square-foot dispensary, located at 877 Tahoe Blvd., is just outside the California boundary. It sits at the center of Incline Village.

Read the whole story