

Opinion: The brainiest train in California

By Joe Mathews

My train line is smarter than your train line.

I ride The Brain Train, officially the L.A. Metro system's Gold Line, running from the San Gabriel Valley into downtown L.A. and back out again to East L.A. Along the way, it connects enough smart institutions to explode stereotypes about public transportation and Southern California itself.



Joe Mathews

Yes, other parts of California may claim brainier trains: The Caltrain commuter rail connects San Francisco to Stanford; San Diego is extending its trolley to UCSD; and Sonoma and Marin counties are about to inaugurate the SMART train (although that's an acronym, not an intelligence claim).

But for L.A. County—where we're known for our good looks but not for our brains or public transportation—the Gold Line is a revelation, linking a startling diversity of intellectual institutions.

The Brain Train's eastern terminus on Atlantic Avenue is within walking distance of East Los Angeles College. From there, take the line downtown, where you pass the Japanese American National Museum, and SCI-Arc, one of the world's

leading architectural schools. North of downtown, one stop drops you at the Southwest Museum, a vital archive of Native American history, and another, Highland Park, is a bike ride away from Occidental College, one of President Barack Obama's alma maters.

When the train enters Pasadena, it goes right through the south campus of ArtCenter College of Design, a globally distinguished school, and later stops at Memorial Park, a block from Parsons, the leading engineering firm. Then the Gold Line turns east, with stops that are a walk to Pasadena City College (among the best in the state at transferring students to four-year institutions) and a short bike ride to Caltech, where planets are discovered and Nobels are won. Further east, one of the nation's top cancer centers, City of Hope, has its own stop on the Brain Train in Duarte.

For now, the Gold Line ends at two higher education institutions: Citrus College, which the Brookings Institution has called one of America's best community colleges, and Azusa Pacific, a top Christian university. But plans are already underway to take the Gold Line further east, eventually serving the University of LaVerne and the Claremont Colleges, the seven-school consortium.

The Brain Train's educational resume runs beyond universities. The line runs right through two of the state's top school districts—Arcadia and South Pasadena. The Gold Line also offers thought-provoking views of the majestic San Gabriel Mountains and of Mt. Wilson Observatory, once essential to the study of astronomy.

Do all these local nerds ride the train? No, but many cost-conscious ones do. The 31-mile-long Brain Train costs just \$1.75 per boarding, and transfers to other lines are free. With public transportation ridership flat, the Brain Train is a bright spot, registering an all-time high for weekday boardings (more than 53,000) in June.

On board, I'm often struck by the nerdiness of my fellow passengers. The Brain Train offers a smooth, quiet and comfortable ride, making it a rare public space where you'll see people reading actual books. On recent rides, I encountered people reading Benjamin Madley's "An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe 1846-1873," volumes of Richard Feynman's lectures on physics, Siddhartha Mukherjee's Pulitzer-winning "The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer," and Salvador Dali's cookbook, "Les diners de Gala."

The Brain Train is likely to get brainier, particularly if the transit connection inspires more collaboration between Gold Line-adjacent institutions. At a public event last year, a Citrus College administrator argued that the Gold Line is making it easier for students to reach the campus and complete their degrees, and the CEO of the Claremont Colleges said it would encourage field research by students and faculty.

There also are efforts by educational institutions to enhance the Gold Line corridor. Most notably, ArtCenter, in Pasadena, is preparing a 15-year master plan that would launch a new bikeway near the Gold Line and build new student housing with green public spaces, or quads, that would be directly over the rail line, linking buildings on either side.

The Gold Line is "our extended classroom," said Art Center's Associate Vice President Rollin Homer at the 2016 public event. "We're embracing it—we're going to live and create alongside it."

The Brain Train is still an urban rail line with typical problems. (I encountered a pile of human excrement on a seat one morning, and recently assisted a half-dozen fellow passengers in subduing an intoxicated rider.) But as someone who grew up in Pasadena before the line arrived in 2003, and now lives four blocks from a stop, I love the way the Gold Line connects me to familiar places in new ways.

The Brain Train, in other words, can really make you think.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

How summer vacations took hold in the U.S.

By Stephen Mihm, Bloomberg

Planning a trip to the beach, a lake, or some other spot in the great outdoors in the next month or so? Please take a few moments to thank a small but influential group of reformers, idealists, and busybodies who created an enduring American institution: the summer vacation.

Prior to the late 19th century, few Americans took breaks from work. The ethic of hard work and deferred gratification popular among the Puritans – never mind the simple fact that few people could afford to get away from tending farms – limited leisure.

Well into the 19th century, summer vacations remained restricted to elites: wealthy slave-owners who fled to cooler climes in the summer, or elite merchants who could afford to leave their businesses in the hands of trusted subordinates. But most adult Americans, by choice or by necessity, simply toiled away during the summer months. As always.

Read the whole story

Skate the Lake event on Saturday

The 13th annual Skate the Lake fundraiser returns to the North Shore on Saturday.

This Boarding for Breast Cancer event raises money for cancer prevention and survivor programs.

Cyclists and skaters will start at Sugar Pine Point State Park and finish at Squaw Valley – a 28-mile trek. The July 29 event is from 8:30am-2pm. Participants will be shuttled to the starting point.

Participants must raise at least \$50. For more info, go [online](#).

Sporting goods store opening at Y in SLT



By the end of summer BlueZone Sports will have four stores in the greater Lake Tahoe area.

The South Lake Tahoe store is slated to open in August. It is located right next to TJ Maxx at the Y.

The Carson City store near Trader Joe's opened this month.

The Minden-based company first opened a store in Truckee. Shortly thereafter in June 2014 the shop inside MontBleu at Stateline was up and running.

Retail sales and rentals of bikes and kayaks will be available at the South Tahoe store. It will also have apparel, along with ski equipment.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Sandoval wants to protect transgender soldiers

By Mike Higdon, Reno Gazette-Journal

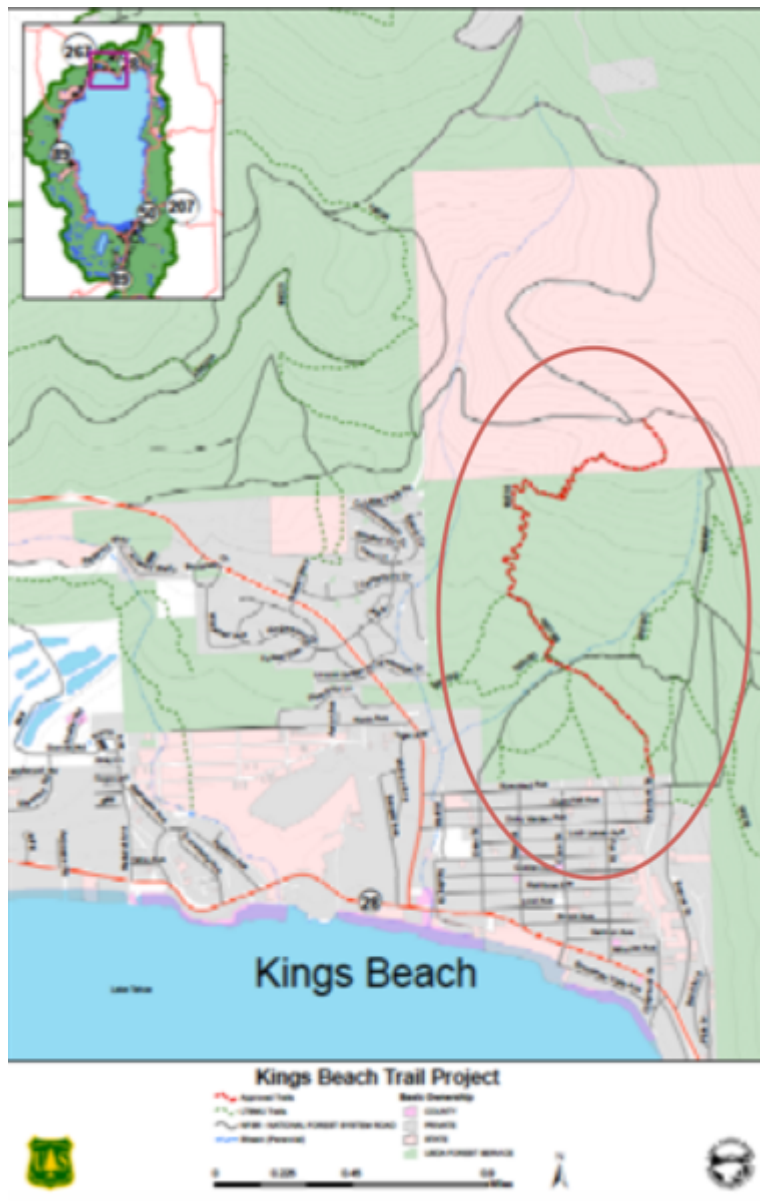
Gov. Brian Sandoval said as commander-in-chief of the Nevada National Guard, he will do what he can to protect transgender service members even though President Trump proposed banning their service in the U.S. military.

“I support Guardsman (Sam) Hunt and am thankful for his longstanding service to our state and country,” according to a prepared statement from the governor's office referring to the Guard's first openly transgender service member.

After learning of the three-part tweet from Trump that said the Department of Defense wants to reinstate a ban on transgender soldiers, Sandoval said he “immediately requested information on what protections the state could put into place.”

Read the whole story

OHV road to become bike trail in Kings Beach



The Truckee Tahoe Airport board on July 26 board approved \$85,000 to build a multi-feature trail in Kings Beach.

The project will transform a current OHV trail with major erosion issues into a multi-feature trail for use by mountain bikes, motorbikes, hikers and equestrians.

The U.S. Forest Service with volunteers from the Tahoe Area Mountain Bike Association will build the trail. The North

Tahoe Public Utility District and the Tahoe Fund are also partners in the project.

There will be a trail design workshop in September. Final alignments and engineering work will be completed later this summer. The majority of trail work is slated for the 2018 season.

Brazil may be next frontier for gaming companies

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

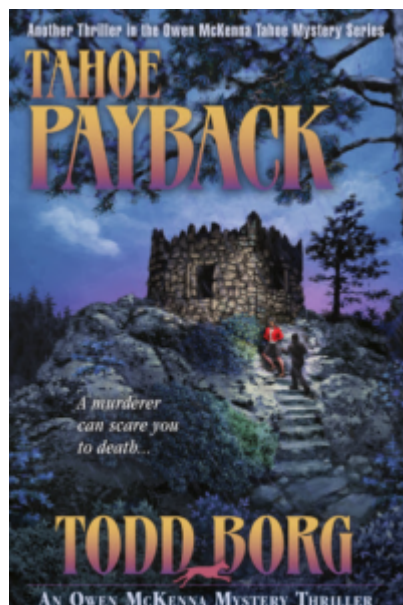
Some Las Vegas-based companies, including the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys, are looking to Brazil even as the gaming industry considers Japan as possibly the next big international casino market.

Las Vegas Sands Corp. and Caesars Entertainment are among the companies keeping an eye on Brazil as a potential gaming market.

"Our company, like all of the companies actively looking at Brazil right now, is going through an exercise in process," said Jan Jones Blackhurst, executive vice president of public policy and corporate responsibility for Caesars.

Read the whole story

Borg releases next Owen McKenna murder-mystery



Owen McKenna is back, this time investigating a murder on Fannette Island.

The fictional detective is the star to the series of books written by local author Todd Borg. Borg just released his latest mystery thriller “Tahoe Payback.”

It is available **online**.

Borg will be scattered about Northern California and Northern Nevada giving talks, signing his book as well as selling them.

Signings and talks:

Carson City/Carson Valley

Aug. 4, 6pm: Shelby’s Bookshoppe, 1663 Lucerne St. in Minden Village, Minden.

Aug. 5, 8:30am: Red Hut Cafe, 4385 S. Carson St., Carson City.

Sept. 19, 4:30-6pm: Minden Library Author’s Day, Minden.

Sept. 23-24: Candy Dance Festival in Genoa.

Foothills

Oct. 18, 1pm: Murphys Library.

Oct. 18, 5:30pm: JacksonLibrary.

Kings Beach

Aug. 11, 6pm: Kings Beach Library in The Garden.

Mountain View

Sept. 9-10: Mountain View Art & Wine Festival.

Reno

July 29, 11am: Sundance Bookstore, 21 California Ave., Reno.

Aug. 12, 8:30am: Red Hut Cafe, 3480 Lakeside, No. 1, Reno.

Sept. 16, 3-8pm: Nevada Humanities Literary Crawl in Reno (details to be announced).

Oct. 21, 10am-2pm: Writing workshop called "How To Map A Murder" at the Truckee Meadows Community College, Meadowood Center S315 in Reno.

Sacramento

Nov. 3-5: Sacramento Fine Arts Show, Sacramento Convention Center, Sacramento.

Nov. 17-19: Sacramento Harvest Festival, CalExpo, Sacramento.

San Jose

Nov. 24-26: San Jose Harvest Festival, San Jose Convention Center, San Jose.

San Mateo

Nov. 10-12: San Mateo Harvest Festival, San Mateo.

South Lake Tahoe

July 28, 4-7pm: Artifacts, 4000 Lake Tahoe Blvd. (in the Raleys Village Center)

Aug. 6, 8:30am: Red Hut Cafe at Ski Run Boulevard, South Lake Tahoe.

Aug. 15, 6:30pm: South Lake Tahoe Library.

Tahoe City

July 29, 3pm: Geared for Games, Boatworks Mall, Tahoe City.

Aug. 14, noon: Tahoe League for Charity, Tahoe City (details to be announced).

Truckee

Aug. 8, 6pm: Word After Word Books, 10118 Donner Pass Road, Truckee.

Study reveals how wildfires create their own weather

By Linda Lam, Weather Channel

Wildfires can create their own weather and a new study gives more insight to understanding what actually takes place.

This deeper insight is beneficial to firefighters and the communities at risk for wildfires.

A recent study published by Neil Lareau and Craig Clements from San Jose State University explains how they were able to gather data from inside wildfire plumes, and it was determined that wildfires can create their own weather, which influences the behavior of the fire.

This is the first time information was obtained from inside wildfires. Previous data was obtained from computer simulations, according to the National Science Foundation, which funded this research.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Ben Grasseschi has been hired as executive director of Tahoe Cross Country.
- Zephyr Cove Tennis Club pro Dave Nostrant will lead a kids' clinic on Aug. 1-3 and Aug. 8-10. For more info and to sign up, go **online**.
- Mammoth is closing for the season on Aug. 6.
- Which positions received the highest salaries at state government agencies, California State Universities, and county courts last year? The answers are on state Controller Betty Yee's Government Compensation in California **website**.
- An original video series that examines the lives and passions of North Lake Tahoe locals was launched this week. Check it out **online**.