

Caltrans wants Hwy. 50 near Apple Hill to be safer

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

State highway officials are laying the groundwork for a \$50 million safety upgrade of Highway 50 east of Placerville, a continuation of decadeslong efforts to modernize one of the oldest mountain highways in the state.

The key element will be installation of two miles of concrete median divider to separate oncoming traffic in the winding and mountainous section between Placerville and the popular Apple Hill area.

Caltrans officials previously added safety features to Highway 50 west of Placerville and improved highway efficiency through the town, although there still are three traffic lights on the highway.

Read the whole story

Markleeville woman accused of DUI in rollover accident

A 23-year-old Markleeville sustained moderate injuries after being ejected from the vehicle she was driving.

Kaitlin Shanahan was driving north on Highway 89 north Markleeville at an unknown rate of speed on Dec. 11 at 2:10pm when she drifted off the road onto the dirt, rock embankment. The GMC Sierra struck a tree, overturned and ended up on the

west descending embankment.

Shanahan was airlifted to Renown Medical Center. She has since been arrested on driving under the influence charges.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

2017 may be bumpy ride for scooters in Nev.

By Glen Meek, Las Vegas Sun

There are no official numbers, but anecdotal reports suggest a new law could have serious consequences for some commuters on Nevada roads.

The law requires all mopeds (often called scooters) to be registered. While it won't take effect until Jan. 1, the Department of Motor Vehicles began the inspection and registration process Nov. 1 to give riders plenty of time to adjust. As of Dec. 4, 298 mopeds had been registered statewide, 281 of them in Clark County. But how many others will fail the DMV's new test for moped classification?

According to DMV spokesman Kevin Malone, several inspectors have reported that about half of the vehicles brought in so far haven't met the specs. He said the agency wasn't tracking rejections and called the apparent rate merely "noticeable," but if unofficial reports indicate a larger trend, a significant number of scooter riders may have to find a new

way to get around or else register their vehicles as motorcycles.

Read the whole story

SLT stacks evidence against recreational pot

By Kathryn Reed

A one-sided presentation was delivered to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday about how bad marijuana is, with most speakers advocating for the city to have as little to do with recreational aspects of the drug as possible.

What they said:

- Police Chief Brian Uhler: It will hurt the local tourism industry and not help the economy. He cited how the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority is promoting recreation of a different kind. However, the LTVA has not taken a position on recreational marijuana and no evidence was provided whether selling it in town would be economically good or bad. He wants the city to ban the sale of recreational marijuana.

- Barton pediatrician Rhonda Sneeringer: Presented statistics about how mothers who smoke during pregnancy and while breast feeding harm their children; worries about increased adolescent use. Believes in more education. Asked the council to not allow weed to be sold recreationally.

- Barton director of emergency services Lance

Orr: Wants to ensure medicinal and recreational marijuana are separate conversations. Presented stats from Colorado, a state that has allowed recreational pot for two years. Traffic fatalities linked to pot use have increased and visits to the emergency room are greater.

- Hannah Greenstreet representing Lake Tahoe Unified School District: Worries even more students will use, stating the numbers are already on the rise. At South Tahoe Middle School in 2015-16 24 students were caught with marijuana, while this school there have been 25 incidents; at South Tahoe High School the numbers are 30 for 2015-16 and 23 this school year. Edibles and vaping pens are rampant now. Doesn't want it sold here.

- Kelsey Magoon with Drug Free Coalition: Believes marijuana is addictive, that ads will be seen by youth, and that the potency is more harmful today than years' past. Against commercial sales in the city.

What the speakers shared was how bad marijuana is. But that isn't the point because California voters already said yes to recreational weed – and it will be legal Jan. 1. In 2018, storefronts will be allowed. All of the negatives can happen even if pot is not sold here.

The major components missing from the Dec. 13 talk were why selling it in South Lake Tahoe would be bad or good. But that didn't stop the council from agreeing to have the topic on a future agenda to take action. The electeds specifically asked for the language to be voted on to be what the police chief wants – to not allow the sale of recreational marijuana in the city limits.

California voters last month approved Proposition 64, the

legalization of marijuana for recreational use. Statewide it passed with 57.1 percent of the vote. In El Dorado County the initiative barely failed with 50.07 percent saying no. However, 65.26 percent of the voters in South Lake Tahoe said yes to recreational marijuana. In district five of El Dorado County, which encompasses the entire South Shore west to parts of Pollock Pines, 62.4 percent approved the measure.

Some of those people might like a place to purchase the weed.

The initiative allows for cities and counties to decide if it would be sold in their jurisdictions. What they can't ban is the use (except in/at public facilities), growing of plants (though there are limits) or transportation (quantities are regulated).

So, even if South Lake Tahoe won't allow a business to sell pot, it can't stop people from lighting up.

Opinion: A Trump economy could make Singapore great again

By Jerry Nickelsburg

The Trump victory may well spell the end of America's previous Pacific Rim aspirations.

We will quite possibly see a significant shift of innovation and entrepreneurship westward in the Pacific Rim—indeed, so far West that the center of economic gravity ends up firmly in the Far East.

There are two big reasons for the shift. First, new trade policy is likely to diminish the competitive environment for domestic manufacturers. Second changes in immigration policy will make the U.S. less friendly to talented foreigners.

In particular, innovators and tech entrepreneurs from China (vilified in the campaign), Indonesia (the world's largest Islamic country), Malaysia (another Islamic country) and India (with a Muslim population of 175 million) will feel less welcome. Instead those smart, entrepreneurial innovators will be more inclined to migrate to another hub of technological innovation, perhaps Singapore, Bangalore, Toronto, Tokyo or Shanghai. Singapore, with centrality, two large universities and several small technical colleges and the new Singapore Technology Development Center, is especially ready to take advantage.

In 2015, Shanghai eased restrictions for foreign science and technology professionals willing to participate in the Chinese Communist Party's innovation initiatives at its new technology hub. When I was in Shanghai with a UCLA class last March, we learned that even though China ranked low on IP protection, innovation in the new hub was starting to explode. Silicon Valley Bank, whose original mission was funding new ventures in California, is in a joint venture to fund to new Shanghai start-ups.

The U.S. election will push not only people but also the products they produce in a "westward to the East" direction. New innovative products coming out of expanding Asian tech centers will be traded among Asian countries and not as much with the U.S. This is because American trade policy will be less friendly toward imports that compete with U.S. manufacturing.

The rejection of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal and the consequent ascendancy of the Chinese-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) will reinforce this

trend. Meanwhile, as our innovation edge erodes over time, the U.S. will likely lag in producing, and exporting, cutting-edge goods. Instead U.S. firms may come to copy what the foreign firms are doing much in the way that the Chinese now try to copy what quality U.S. firms are doing.

One might argue that the U.S. is a very large economy and therefore restrictive trade measures are not liable to have much impact. Domestic competition and the ability to sell in a very wealthy market should be attraction enough for entrepreneurs.

While that might be true, protectionist policies—what economists call import-substitution policies that include high tariffs on imports, like those suggested by Trump during the campaign—have been pursued by many countries and studied extensively. The consensus is that, by protecting domestic firms from more efficient international competitors, they hurt economic growth and manufacturing efficiency.

A desired move toward a more protectionist economy was one of the key takeaways of the Nov. 8 vote. The electorate may have deliberately chosen international withdrawal, opting for stable but less efficient domestic industries over dynamic and nimble leading industries.

It is rare—and very valuable—for a place to achieve critical mass in a certain industry. Critical mass in entertainment occurred in Los Angeles because it was possible to film in a variety of nearby locations all year. Many states and countries have tried to counter it with subsidies, but Atlanta, Toronto and others have transferred wealth into Hollywood moguls' bank accounts in Beverly Hills, and not into a self-sustaining critical mass. The same is true with technology and Silicon Valley. The Silicon Corn Field in Iowa and Silicon Bayou in Louisiana are only shells of what the planners dreamed of for them.

We don't know right now which places are going to be most competitive and achieve critical mass in innovative industries as the Pacific Rim center shifts west. My money would be on Singapore, with its English common law, low taxes, affluent and well trained work force, major universities and central location. If Singapore (or insert your top candidate here) in fact hits critical mass, it will be very hard to dislodge. So even if the U.S decides to reverse course on immigration and trade policy in the future, we will have to live with the consequences of this shift.

In 2011, Joshua Kerlantzik in an article in Current History argued that the 21st Century was "not quite yet" the Asian Century. A shift to the west of innovation and technology may well change that.

Jerry Nickelsburg, an economist at UCLA Anderson School of Management, writes the Pacific Economist column.

Decade's best Chardonnays come from Canada

By Elin McCoy, Bloomberg

The Kingston, Ontario, town crier, in fur-trimmed tricorne hat and bright red coat, rang a brass bell and shouted "Hear ye, hear ye" as the lead-in to my most surprising tasting this year: "The Judgement of Kingston."

The blind competition last month pitted such top California Chardonnays as Chateau Montelena against those from Prince Edward County, a little-known, newly exciting wine region on the north shore of Lake Ontario.

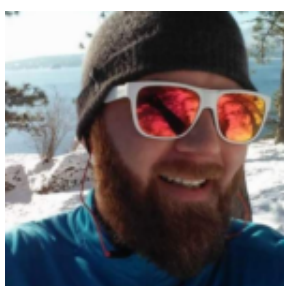
I was the lone American on the judging panel, but like the Canadian judges, I ranked Ontario chardonnays as No. 1 and No. 2, ahead of the oakier Napa examples. They were brilliant: light and crisp, with spiky acidity, succulent layers of lemon-lime and stony flavors, and a flinty elegance missing from the California wines.

Read the whole story

Name released in SLT pedestrian fatality

By Ryan Collingwood, Hagadone News Network

Robert Parks toed the California-Mexico border in May, the beginning of his 2,600-mile hiking excursion on the Pacific Crest Trail.



Robert Parks

The 32-year-old Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, man trained for weeks in north Idaho forests for the beautiful and equally arduous journey set to conclude in Canada.

When Parks reached Lake Tahoe, however, he temporarily shelved the trip after falling in love with the outdoor haven.

Tragically, he won't get to finish his endeavor.

Parks was killed this past weekend while crossing a South Lake Tahoe street, the result of a pedestrian-vehicle accident late Saturday night.

Read the whole story

SLT tells medical marijuana shop it must close



Cody Bass, right, with his attorney Henry Wykowski listen Dec. 13 to the South Lake Tahoe City Council deliberate. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

"I'm not going to shut down. I will fight to the Supreme

Court.”

That is what Cody Bass, founder and executive director of Tahoe Wellness Cooperative, told *Lake Tahoe News* after the South Lake Tahoe City Council today unanimously denied his appeal. Bass was appealing City Manager Nancy Kerry’s ruling that he failed to submit a completed application to renew his permit to operate a medical marijuana collective.

This in essence means TWC is supposed to be out of business as of Dec. 14. His collective is the only place to get medical marijuana on the South Shore.

Once the decision was made by the council on Tuesday afternoon, the packed house erupted in angry shouts that necessitated the police chief to usher them out of the room. TWC supporters were never allowed to speak on the record.

“I disagree with a lot of things that occurred today,” Henry Wykowski, Bass’ attorney, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I’m quite surprised by the outcome today.”

Taking the city to court is the next likely action by Bass and his attorneys.

If Bass were to continue operating without a valid city permit, he could face a \$1,000/day fine. (Bass has 29 employees who receive a livable wage and health benefits. Their future is unknown.)

While the council took the black and white route Dec. 13 in following the medical marijuana ordinance, Bass’ attorneys brought up several extenuating circumstances. City staff also added to a bit of the confusion by initiating the granting of various extensions to Bass to file his application.

The ordinance stipulates that dispensary operators must have the permission of the landlord. Bass obtained that signature in 2012 and 2014. He has not been able to secure that

permission this time around.

Bass and the Olsons, who own the property, are now in litigation. Patty Olson has owned that commercial strip at the Bijou Center for years. Her son, Patrick, off and on has been given power of attorney. That has contributed to some of the issues – the Olsons don't always have a united voice.

Neither of the Olsons nor their attorney Bruce Grego was at the Dec. 13 council meeting even though City Attorney Tom Watson asked Grego to attend.

The lease between the Olsons and Bass goes through December 2017. In it there is the wording that the business to be operated at the site by Bass is a dispensary.

Wykowski and James Anthony, the second attorney representing Bass, argued the lease itself was sufficient permission from the property owners.

Wykowski said the Olsons are being "malicious" by not signing the city required paperwork. This is because Bass has taken the landlords to court for breach of contract in regards to his desire to purchase the property. A trial has been set for February to resolve that issue. Who owns the property will be the outcome of that legal dispute.

On a side note, Bass had also wanted to buy the Olson family home that is in the neighborhood. However, Bob Hassett, who runs the nearby Timber Cove Marina and owns an apartment complex in that area, has entered escrow on the house.

Hassett's involvement with the Olsons is relevant because he wants to buy the commercial area, but not have TWC as a tenant.

Sass becomes mayor of South Lake Tahoe



Austin Sass

The leadership of the South Lake Tahoe City Council is essentially remaining the same for the next year.

Austin Sass and Wendy David swapped chairs on Dec. 13; so now Sass is mayor and David is mayor pro tem.

The five electeds have the responsibility to decide among themselves who the mayor and mayor pro tem are. Each term is for one year.

Councilmembers Tom Davis and Brooke Laine also expressed interest in being mayor pro tem.

Laine and Jason Collin were sworn in as councilmembers for the next four years.

At a future meeting the five will decide who will be the city's representative on the various boards and committees.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Skier who died at Mt. Rose identified

The skier who died last weekend in an avalanche at Mt. Rose has been identified as Thomas Barker of Aptos.

The 64-year-old had hiked up to the chutes area of the Reno area resort on Dec. 10. As he skied into the area, going under the ropes in the closed area, he triggered the avalanche. His friend called 911.

The victim's body was recovered the following day.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*