

Nev. transparency site graded B for accessibility

By Ramona Giwargis, Las Vegas Review-Journal

When it comes to shedding light on state spending and making those details accessible to taxpayers, Nevada ranks near the top of the class.

A new study by the United States Public Interest Research Group Education Fund ranked transparency websites for all 50 states based on content and user-friendliness. Nevada was tied for 10th nationally and scored a B for making its open government site informative and easy to navigate.

Officials from the Nevada Policy Research Institute, the think tank that publishes public employee pay and benefits, said the B grade is not a reflection of overall government transparency in the state.

Read the whole story

Free talk about taking care of mental well-being

The next Barton wellness lecture is titled Taking Care of Your Mental Well-being.

The free talk will be May 10 starting at 6pm in the board room at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Marianna Randolph will talk about:

- What is mental health and how does it impact you?
 - What can you do to address mental health issues?
 - Explore common mental health conditions: depression, stress, anxiety and bipolar disorder.
 - Tips on how to prioritize your mental health.
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Non-traditional running event returning to Squaw

The Broken Arrow Skyrace, presented by Salomon, returns to Squaw Valley on June 15-17.

The three-day event consists of four distances for elite and recreational participants.

Designed in the vein of the classic European Skyraces, the Broken Arrow Skyrace represents a unique style of mountain running, characterized by off-trail scrambling on steep terrain with massive amounts of vertical gain and loss. Additionally, the event consists of exposure, bolted hand lines, an exposed alpine ladder and snow slopes.

The majority of each distance is run at 6,000-plus-feet and above treeline.

Skyrunning as a discipline represents a marked departure from traditional trail running. Along the various Broken Arrow courses, runners experience steep and technical off-trail talus, snow-covered slopes, exposed ridges and rock climbing-

esque exposure on the infamous “Stairway to Heaven” ladder. Skyrunning is commonly referred to as the intersection of mountaineering and trail running.

The Broken Arrow Skyrace features four distances: a 52k, 26k, 10k and vertical kilometer. The vertical kilometer is 3.1 miles with more than 3,000 feet of climbing while the 26k showcases over 6,000 feet of vertical gain.

New for 2018 is a kid’s fun race so that all family members can participate.

For more info, go **online**.

Summer driving going to be wallet drainer

By Alex Veiga, AP

Get ready for a little bit more pain at the pump this summer.

Crude oil prices are at the highest level in more than three years and expected to climb higher, pushing up gasoline prices along the way.

The U.S. daily national average for regular gasoline is now \$2.81 per gallon. That’s up from about \$2.39 per gallon a year ago, according to Oil Price Information Service. And across the U.S., 13 percent of gas stations are charging \$3 per gallon or more, AAA said last week.

Read the whole story

Caltrans resuming work on Hwy. 50 in SLT

Work will resume this week on a two-mile stretch of Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe from the Y to the Trout Creek Bridge.

The \$56.9 million Caltrans project includes building drainage systems to treat storm water runoff. The project also is widening the road to provide 6-foot shoulders for bike lanes in both directions, replacing traffic signals, rebuilding curbs, gutters and sidewalks, and improving the pavement cross slope.

The three-year project is scheduled to be completed in fall 2019.

Caltrans also is coordinating with the city to incorporate signal and operational improvements at Sierra Boulevard.

The second phase of the project this year will be from Winnemucca Avenue to Silver Dollar Avenue as well as repaving the Y intersection. Work is scheduled to begin today from Winnemucca Avenue working east. The work schedule through May will be from 6am-6pm.

The contractor is allowed to work around the clock Monday through Thursday and until 11am Friday before Memorial Day and after Labor Day and until 8am Friday between Memorial Day and Labor Day. At least one lane will be open to traffic in each direction at all times and two lanes of traffic will be open during the day from Memorial Day to Labor Day. No lane closures will be permitted on weekends or around major holidays.

Motorists may experience delays of up to 30 minutes traveling through construction zone during peak traffic when the highway is reduced to one lane in each direction.

DCSO adds underwater search vessel to tool box

By Ryan Canaday, KTVN-TV

Making a recovery underwater is a daunting task that often requires out of state expertise. That's going to change now that the Douglas County Sheriff's Office is geared up to do it all on their own with a brand new remote operated vehicle.

Keith Cormican, a man who's behind some incredible discoveries in Lake Tahoe is teaching them how it's done.

Cormican is the founder of Bruce's Legacy, a nonprofit named in honor of his brother, which specializes in underwater search and recovery efforts. His company is responsible for recently finding two bodies in Fallen Leaf Lake. As well as the bodies of missing kayaker Dan Pham, and Nevada football player Marc Ma in Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

2 National Trails Day events in Tahoe basin

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is putting on two events for National Trails Day on June 2.

On the South Shore volunteers are needed to work at Van Sickle Bi-state Park to clean up the trail connection from the park to the TRT.

People will be asked to remove garbage and graffiti. Some of the large granite boulders have been defaced with paint.

TRT will also be hosting guided hikes on the trails that day.

On the North Shore volunteers will work on the entrance to the Tahoe City North Trailhead.

For details on both, email info@tahoerimtrail.org.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Tundra

Tundra is a large 2-year-old Husky/Malamute mix. He loves to play with other dogs. He has great manners, except when it comes to cats, chickens, and other small animals.

He spent part of this past Saturday at the Earth Day celebration, and enjoyed meeting lots of people and dogs, plus he posed for photos with Smokey Bear. Tundra likes treats and will eagerly sit, shake hands, lie down, and roll over for them.

Tundra is neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet. For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

STPUD budget includes sewer, water rate hikes

By Kathryn Reed

Water conservation comes with a double-edged sword – it saves the commodity and throws off budget projections.

For South Tahoe Public Utility District, conservation has led

to a \$900,000 shortfall over 10 years based on the 2014 rate study. Still, the district is doing better than many of its California counterparts because only 20 percent of metered water rates are based on consumption. For districts that reversed the 20-80 percentages, they are in a financial conundrum.

The district is preparing to adopt its 2018-19 budget, which takes effect July 1. In the budget are a water rate increase of 5 percent and sewer rate hike of 6 percent. Those, too, would become effective in two months. This will be an additional \$15.04 per quarter for residential customers.

Quarterly rates for STPUD (\$276) remain the lowest in the basin, with the average being \$367.

These increases were part of the five-year rate increase plans. This is the last year for the increases as approved in the Proposition 218 notice. It is possible for the board to approve lower increases; the electeds just can't make them higher.

General Manager Richard Solbrig told *Lake Tahoe News* he expects the board this fall to begin another Proposition 218 process in order to plan for future rate hikes.

The district relies on sewer and water payments for about 70 percent of its \$40 million budget, with property taxes accounting for just more than 20 percent. Investment, grants and capacity fees make up the bulk of the remainder of revenues.

One thing the board is looking at is to allow for sewer transfers in order to foster work force housing construction. Today, sewer units stick with a property and cannot be traded, so to speak.

The budget calls for a 22 percent increase in capital projects compared to the current fiscal year. Many of these are one-

time expenditures:

- Proposition 218 campaign – \$50,000
- Rate studies – \$60,000 (The last water one was five years ago, and about 15 years for sewer.)
- Sewer crossing assessment – \$100,000
- Groundwater management plan – \$150,000
- Well destructions – \$120,000
- South Y PCE analysis – \$310,000
- Wastewater treatment plant master plan – \$75,000.

The district has two years left to install water meters, with another 1,600 planned for this season.

A concern of the district's is that 10 percent of the water lines are still below capacity to fight a major fire.

"We need to have a conversation about price, water and fire," Solbrig said. "Until a few years ago fires were not the responsibility of water agencies. That has changed. Water companies are now named in lawsuits."

On the sewer side the district will be using cameras to better assess the system.

"If you wait until it collapses, the cost is 10 times more than if you rehabilitate it," Solbrig told *LTN*.

The goal with the new technology is to avoid surprises like the **Tahoe Keys sewer collapse** and the Al Tahoe manhole issues in the last year.

The employees have a four-year contract that expires in June 2021. Of the 115 positions, about 100 are represented by a union. A consultant has been hired to do a salary study.

Everyone will be receiving a 2.5 percent cost of living allowance, with a 5 percent step increase for many of the newer employees. CalPERS will cost the district an additional \$116,000 in the next year.

Notes:

- STPUD public hearing on the budget is May 3 from 6-7:30pm.
 - Board expected to vote on 2018-19 budget on May 17 at 2pm.
 - Meetings are at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.
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Opinion: Cities reluctant to host big events

By Mark Wilson, The Conversation

Getting ready to welcome millions of visitors – as Russia is now doing in Moscow, Sochi and other cities in advance of the 2018 World Cup soccer tournament – takes years of planning and lots of construction. It's also expensive: Building 12 stadiums in 11 cities cost Russia an estimated \$11 billion.

When these big events are under way, they always seem worth the money and the trouble. Having worked at three World Expos, attended the Olympics twice and gone to a Tour de France and an Australian Open, I have personally experienced the palpable excitement they offer. But I have also done enough research to

see that international extravaganzas don't always benefit the locals in the long run.

I'm on a team at Michigan State University's mega-event planning research group that identifies what works and what may prove disastrous.

Here's what we've learned.

Local priorities

An overarching challenge we always see is that the organizations running big events and the public have different priorities. One side mainly cares about boosting its brand through the one-time spectacle's success. The other wants to raise its profile and acquire new buildings, roads and other infrastructure that will improve the local quality of life in the long run – without breaking the bank.

In my view, both FIFA, the global governing body for soccer, and the International Olympic Committee, which organizes the Winter and Summer Games, need to reconsider their business models and start doing more to meet the needs of host cities. Metropolitan areas that successfully host these big events make them a means to an end: becoming better places to live.

Sometimes building what it takes to host a World Cup or other big events dovetails with a city's ambitions. More often, the extensive preparations distort local priorities. Since the World Cup soccer tournament requires world-class stadiums that some host countries lack when they win the honor of hosting it, a construction frenzy ensues when a metropolitan area has the honor of hosting one.

That was certainly the case with Brazil's 2014 and South Africa's 2010 World Cups, when the host countries built several stadiums that soon proved unnecessary.

Likewise, the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro

looked great on TV, but left behind many venues that quickly became a shambles following a process riddled with corruption that displaced thousands of people.

Pushback

Despite promises by event organizers and local bid committees, and expectations by the public that the event will solve some of their daily urban problems, host cities often end up with unwanted or unused facilities and saddled with debts that will take decades to repay.

The Olympics, which tend to be concentrated in a single metropolitan area, also often require oddball venues like baseball and beach volleyball stadiums in Athens or Rio's Whitewater Stadium for canoeing and kayaking that may never be used again because the facilities are not maintained or no one plays that sport in the area.

There is growing public ambivalence to mega events because of debacles like the Athens, Sochi and Rio Olympics, and the South Africa and Brazil World Cups. Of the six finalists for the 2022 Winter Games, four withdrew: Stockholm, Sweden; Krakow, Poland; Lviv, Ukraine; and Oslo, Norway due to public backlash and cost concerns. That only left Almaty, Kazakhstan, and the eventual winner, Beijing.

Boston and the German city of Hamburg withdrew their 2024 Olympic bids because of the public's objections. Similarly, Vancouver backed out of the running to host the 2026 World Cup. When local leaders simply express an interest in holding one of these big events these days, a rapid and vocal questioning of the benefits of a bid usually ensues.

Four years before Qatar gets to host the 2022 World Cup, it already promises to serve as another example of what not to do. Hundreds of workers have died from doing dangerous construction related to the event, according to Human Rights Watch, in a process reportedly marked by corruption.

Better options

But to be sure, there are some success stories.

When countries largely have had all the venues they needed, such as the World Cups held in France in 1998 and Germany in 2006, the investments required are more reasonable and practical, since the new venues are sure to be used.

And Los Angeles led the way in 1984 toward finding more efficient ways to host the Olympics by using existing venues and donations for facilities. As that same city plans for the 2028 Olympics, it may once again get a chance to illustrate how cities can up their Olympic game by insisting on construction and other public works that will benefit their communities in the long run.

Mark Wilson is professor and program director of urban and regional planning at the school of planning, design and construction at Michigan State University.