California taking the lead with self-driving cars

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

California is quietly positioning itself at the leading edge of what could be the biggest revolution in daily travel since the day the buggy was unhitched from the horse.

The self-driving, or autonomous, car, seen by many as a "Jetsons"-like futuristic dream, may be less than a decade from commercial reality, some researchers now say, pushed forward in good part by an unlikely California company – Web giant Google.

"We may be at a historic cusp where driverless cars share the road," said Carroll Lachnit, an editor at the car information site Edmunds.com. "The (technological) pieces are all there."

The concept excites many who say the technology will lead to fewer crashes and less wasted commute time. There will be less stop-and-go traffic, they say. Self-driving vehicles won't slow down to gawk at things beside the road, a major cause of congestion.

Intrigued by the idea of eliminating human error from driving, a California legislator has introduced a bill to clarify that driverless cars are street legal.

Researchers, notably Google, more known for Web search engines than car components, already are producing test cars that drive on their own in traffic on city streets and freeways.

But the push is generating concerns about the reliability of the technology and questions about whether Californians, known for their love of driving, will turn over control of their cars to computers and sensors.

To highlight the technology, Google recently produced a video that follows a seeing-impaired man as he heads out on a taco run in Google's fully autonomous Toyota Prius. He sits in the driver's seat, but only as a passenger, as the car takes him to a Taco Bell drive-through lane.

Read the whole story

Hight lends her name to clothing line

Olympic snowboarder Elena Hight of South Lake Tahoe has entered the world of fashion.

Her collection with Volcom is all about comfortable chic to fit her traveling lifestyle. Hight's pieces are designed to take the active girl from a day on the mountain to dinner with friends, without sacrificing style.

The clothing line is available starting this month.

Bitter cold temps don't keep farmers from Tahoe



Fresh produce at the June 5 farmers market in South Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Despite the cold temps and needing to be bundled up, farmers braved the cold drive up to Tahoe and patrons made their way to the American Legion for the first farmers' market of the season in South Lake Tahoe.

As more produce ripens, more vendors will be at the Tuesday market. The market is open form 8am-1pm each Tuesday through early October.

Peaches, cherries, blueberries, lettuce, herbs, squash, onions, asparagus, garlic and other produce were all available June 5.

For those needing lunch on the go, different food vendors were also on hand and will be back each week.

– Kathryn Reed

Summer basketball camp for ages 6-18

Coach Gil Llewellyn and some of his top staff of world-renowned Advantage Basketball Camps is returning to the Kahle Community Center in Stateline.

Summer ball handling and shooting camp is June 25-28, Monday-Thursday, 9am to 4pm. Camp is available in two- and four-day sessions. Tuition is $145 to $225.

The camp is open to boys and girls ages 6-18 of all ability levels.

To register or for more information, call (310) 903.6473 or (425) 670.8877 or email CoachGil@advantagebasketball.com.

Mixed ratings for Nevada by small business owners

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A national survey of 6,000 small businesses has generated mixed ratings for Nevada, with high marks for its regulations and tax code but also showing one of the least healthy climates overall among the states.

The survey, conducted by Thumbtack.com in partnership with the Kauffman Foundation, found Nevada's businesses are healthier only than those of Maine and Connecticut.

Some of the key findings for Nevada include:

– Nevada soared above its rivals in one category where it excelled – the state achieved an A+ grade for having the third friendliest business tax code nationwide.

– The survey also found that male-owned small businesses in Nevada felt significantly more supported by the state than their female counterparts. Male entrepreneurs were 13 percent more likely than female entrepreneurs to rate Nevada as supportive or very supportive of small business.

– Although Nevada ranked reasonably well overall, it struggled in two very important categories. Of all small businesses in the West, Nevada's small businesses ranked first for least healthy and second for slowest-growing.

– Conservative small business owners felt significantly more supported by the Nevada state government than did liberal small business owners. Conservative entrepreneurs were 71 percent more likely than liberal small business owners to rate their state as "supportive" or "very supportive" of small business.

– Small businesses run by liberals seem to be doing significantly better than small businesses run by conservatives. Liberal entrepreneurs in Nevada were 75 percent more likely than the state's conservative entrepreneurs to rate their business's financial situation as "good" or "very good".

"There are a lot of business climate rankings but there aren't any that draw upon considerable data from small business owners themselves, said Sander Daniels, co-founder of Thumbtack.com. "The Thumbtack.com Small Business Survey is the only survey to draw data from an extensive, nationwide universe of job creators and entrepreneurs themselves in order to investigate the best places in the country to do business."

Thumbtack.com surveyed 6,022 small businesses across the United States. The survey asked questions about the friendliness of states towards small business and about small business finances, such as:

– “In general, how would you rate your state’s support of small business owners?”

– “Would you discourage or encourage someone from starting a new business in your state?” and

– “How would you rate your company’s financial situation today?”

Thumbtack.com and Kauffman then ranked states and cities against one another along 15 metrics.

One small business owner surveyed, a Las Vegas massage therapist, said: “Nevada is very tax friendly to small business, but it’s extremely difficult to obtain a small business loan to grow your small business or create jobs.”

A Sparks home inspector said: “With the economy here, it is very difficult to get people to spend money. Some businesses cut costs. Some also cut quality and ethics.”

“After a two-month survey of over 6,000 small business owners nationwide, it’s clear that Nevada’s small businesses are struggling in the down economy,” Daniels said. “Nevada’s entrepreneurs want to get back on their feet, and it appears that they believe Nevada is a setting where they can do just that.”

Lake Tahoe drowning victim identified

Asish Janardhan has been identified as the man who drowned June 2 near Camp Richardson.

The 29-year-old man from Antioch was attempting to swim from his kayak near the Valhalla pier, but was unable to make it to shore.

This is the second drowning of the season in Lake Tahoe.

Robert Ranieri, 29, of South Lake Tahoe died May 22 when on a parachute jump he landed in the lake instead of on shore. Autopsy results show he drowned and drugs were not a factor in the accident, according to El Dorado County sheriff's officials.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Rattlesnake season puts pets at risk

By Andrea Gallo, Sacramento Bee

Less than a day after a baby rattlesnake struck him, Bowser – a mixed Labrador and heeler puppy – pranced to his car, waited for his swelling to go down and relished tummy rubs from his owner, Nick Delgado.

Bowser is one of the luckier animals bitten by rattlesnakes in Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Amador counties recently.

Some didn’t survive their bites.

Delgado and Jessica Cobian said they were walking Tuesday near the American River in Rancho Cordova when Bowser, who was on a leash in front of them, lunged forward and sniffed the ground. When the nearly 1-year-old dog perked his head up, a 10-inch-long baby rattlesnake bit his snout.

“He was a step ahead of me,” Delgado said Wednesday. “If he didn’t get bitten, I would have or she would have.”

Animal advocates and veterinarians have issued warnings to pet owners to take extra precautions because of the number of dogs being bitten.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Lakeview Commons’ dedication ceremony is June 20 at 2pm.

• Granlibakken in Tahoe City will launch its treetop adventure park this month. It consists of platforms installed in trees that are connected by various configurations of cable, wood, rope and ziplines to form bridges.

• Truckee Police Department has promoted Robert Leftwich to captain, Danny Renfrow to sergeant and named Ryan Moreau officer of the year.

• Here are Caltrans' weekly roadwork schedules for the Sierra and El Dorado-Tahoe.

• Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care's annual open house is Aug. 5 from 10am-4pm. This is the once a year opportunity for people to visit the South Shore animal rehab center.

More to Sandoval than being a polished politician

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Brian Sandoval peered down into a spawning run at Pyramid Lake and turned to Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki.

"Hey Brian," Sandoval said. "I see your dinner."

He turned to a reporter and, with a chuckle, said: "There's a dead fish down there."

When he's traveling, Sandoval walks around with a couple of honorary gubernatorial coins in his pocket in case he meets some children. He likes to go to museums but has to go by himself because, as a history buff, he likes to read all the information, and that's a drag for the rest of his family.

After the day at Pyramid Lake, 37 miles north of Reno, meeting members of the Paiute Tribe and watching workers squeeze trout for eggs and semen at the hatchery, he declared it one of his favorite days as a governor.

There might be no other way to say it: Sandoval is a dork.

Or, at the very least, he has a nerdy side that goes with the ambition that has led him to the state's highest elected office.

Since becoming governor, Sandoval has become the most popular politician in the state. He has done this by weaving himself as a fiscal conservative, but not extreme, with a moderate tact on potentially explosive issues like gay rights and immigration.

Read the whole story

Barton Community Clinic's $1.5 mil. remodel under way

By Kathryn Reed

While the medical care is the same as any Barton facility, the environment has the feeling of being second class.

Walking into the Barton Community Clinic it seems a bit dingy – not dirty – just old and tired. Next summer that statement won't be able to be made.

Orange construction fencing is in place, the entrance is on the reverse side, trees are down, sod is gone, parking will be a bit chaotic. On June 4 dignitaries from Barton Health had a groundbreaking ceremony for the facility even though the preliminary work had begun in May. In a year the facility will practically be new.



Sharon Bishop is overseeing the renovation of the Barton Community Clinic. Photo/Kathryn Reed

When the renovation is finished, 3,000 square feet will have been added to the existing 4,400-square-foot building that sits across from Barton Memorial Hospital on the corner of South and Third streets. Here is a before and after rendering of the facility.

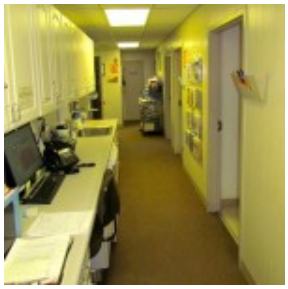
“The facility is old and not well designed,” Brooks Martin, who runs the clinic, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He is looking forward to the space being used in a more efficient manner.

Offices with doors instead of curtains being drawn will give the medical professionals privacy as they do dictation and paperwork.

The nurses’ station will no longer be in the middle of the hall.

Four exam rooms will be added to the existing 12. Gone from one room will be the IT equipment that hums in a corner and can make for an incredibly hot and uncomfortable setting for patient and practitioner.



Nurses must work in the hallway of the clinic. Photo/Rebecca Wass

An expanded waiting room means in the cold of winter people on crutches won’t be waiting outdoors on a busy day.

As the economy remains stagnant in South Lake Tahoe, where the unemployment rate is at 15 percent, more people are going to the community clinic. On average, about 1,500 patients are treated each month, peaking at about 1,700.

Sharon Bishop, clinic manager, doesn’t envision patient counts to go down even when the local economy rebounds. This is because health insurance is not likely to return to what it was – with 90 percent coverage and low deductibles.

More than 60 percent of the clinic’s patients are women and children. Nearly 60 percent of all patients use English as their primary language.

Patients are often undocumented migrant workers not eligible for Medi-Cal or are insured low-income patients with very high deductibles, according to Barton officials. Patients are charged on a sliding scale. The clinic is operating at a loss of more than $800,000 a year.



The waiting room will be part of the $1.5 million overhaul. Photo/Rebecca Wass

“The cost of the expansion and renovation of Barton’s Community Clinic’s architectural design, interior design, permitting fees, construction, special inspection, equipment, furnishings, way-finding, moving and relocation of departments during phasing, the cost of the clinic will cost nearly $1.5 million,” Rich Belli, Barton’s director of facilities administration, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Barton Memorial Hospital’s Auxiliary came up with the bulk of the money for improvements – mostly through operating The Attic thrift shop. Other funding sources are the Barton Foundation – in large part through the Festival of Trees and Lights, and Barton Health.

It was in 1989 that doctors Paul Rork, Greg Bergner and Martin started the clinic. Barton took over in 1995. Martin is the only one still directly involved with the clinic.

During construction Bishop said there should be no interruption in care – just some changes to parking. The entrance is already on the reverse side from where it had been.