75-minute bus ride home possible for LTUSD students

By Kathryn Reed

School has been out for more than an hour. Do you know where your child is?

The answer next school year might be: “on the school bus”.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of education members on Tuesday heard two proposals of what the bus schedule could be for the 2012-13 school year. They didn’t like either and asked staff to come up with something else.



LTUSD buses may be in the barn more than on the streets in the fall. Photo/LTN file

One scenario had some students riding a bus home for 75 minutes. The longest route now is about 45 minutes. Considering it’s 12 miles from Meyers to Stateline, that’s one long trip to get from school to a bus stop.

Students in the Tahoe Keys could be faced with a longer walk because buses for students in grades 6-12 might be eliminated. They would have to walk to Eloise or Washington to find a

school bus.

Board members were adamant that having students arrive at South Tahoe Middle School 20 minutes before classes start is a horrible idea.

The district has been subsidizing the bus program for years. It costs $1.2 million to bus about 1,900 students a day. The state reimburses LTUSD $830,000.

The district has an ongoing deficit of $1.2 million to deal with what could grow to $2.5 million if voters say no to a measure on the November ballot that would fund education in California.

So, the cuts to LTUSD transportation are for two reasons – to deal with the current shortfall, and plan for a possible take-away by the state.

Because the district accepts state transportation dollars it must provide busing for K-8.

Twelve of the 16 bus drivers the district employs were at the May 1 meeting.

“It looks like six may be cut,” Steve Morales, facilities director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Parents who have the means already pay a fee for their child that starts at $150 a year. About $60,000 is collected each year in bus fees, according to Morales.

“I think parents would be open to a sliding scale or paying more,” parent Karen Fink told the board.

Asked by *Lake Tahoe News* about using BlueGo as a means to transport students, Morales said there is “no appetite” to do that. He added that school buses are designed differently than municipal buses and that drivers having different training.

“A lot of students ride the bus who wouldn’t have another way to get to school,” parent Alice Jones told the board. “Not only do they make it to school, but they are there early enough to get the free or reduced breakfast.”

Jones also brought up the adverse environmental impacts of having more vehicles on the road if fewer buses are rolling.

The district runs 12 full size buses that can seat 84 and four smaller buses with a capacity of 20. The smaller buses are used for special education students. Federal law mandates public schools accommodate these students, often not having them co-mingle with the larger student population. The district cannot save money with spec ed even if it wanted to. Districts must provide for spec ed students even at the expense of the majority.

Missing skier found dead in Mono County backcountry

By John Counts, AnnArbor.com

Authorities are confirming the death of Boris Avdeev, 31, the U-M doctoral graduate who went missing during a backcountry ski trip in California.

On Thursday at about 3:30pm, Avdeev was found by search and rescue teams in Cocaine Chute, a popular backcountry skiing location, according to the Mono County Sheriff’s Department.

He had been missing since April 19.

As of Friday afternoon, search and rescue teams, aided by a helicopter, are continuing to try to recover Adeev's body from the chute.

On May 1, police found a note left under the windshield wiper of Adeev's Honda Civic stating he was heading up Mount Dana Couloir for the day to ski down Cocaine Chute.

Search and rescue teams from surrounding counties scoured the mountains for days before locating him.

Read the whole story

Brighter, closer moon than usual fills the night sky



A Super Moon lights up the Lake Tahoe Basin on May 4. Photo/LTN

Expect some loud howling for a couple nights. And it won't have anything to do with Cinco de Mayo celebrations.

Look up – that's a Super Moon lighting up the sky.

On May 5 at 8:34pm the moon will be 14 percent larger than normal and 30 percent brighter.

NASA has a video about the special moon.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Fire cadets completely total vehicles in the name of training

Cadets in the Lake Tahoe Basin Fire Academy this week went through auto extrication training.

The academy is a collaborative effort between Lake Tahoe Community College and Lake Valley Fire Protection District, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, and Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District.

Cadets must spend a certain number of hours learning about and performing various drills.

With the assistance of Emerald Bay Towing and our agency partners, the academy was able to provide the cadets with hands-on auto extrication training.

– Leona Allen, Lake Valley fire





Lake Tahoe Fire Academy cadets learn to use tools of the trade needed to get people out of a vehicle.

Photos/Leona Allen



TAP fundraiser

Bert’s Cafe in South Lake Tahoe is having a spaghetti fundraiser for Tahoe Arts Project on May 17 from 5:30-7:30pm.

For $10 people get pasta, Caesar salad, garlic bread, soda and coffee.

Call TAP for a ticket – (530) 542.3632.

Workshop about creating business plans

The North Lake Tahoe Chamber/CVB/Resort Association and Plumas Bank in partnership with the Small Business Development Center of Greater Sacramento/Sierra are offering Business Plan Components on May 8 from 9am-noon at the Tahoe City Public Utility District Board Room, 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City.

The workshop is geared for existing and emerging business owners. Attendees will learn how to determine if their business plan is coming together. The event will also discuss legal structure and business operations and management.

This workshop is free of charge for North Lake Tahoe Chamber/CVB/Resort Association members, $25/person for business association members and $50/person for the general public.

For more information or to register for the workshop, call

Deanna Frumenti at (530) 581.8764 or deanna@puretahoenorth.com.

Lawsuit filed to stop feds' wildlife damage control program

By Tom Knudson, Sacramento Bee

The federal government's wildlife damage control program is based on outdated science and indiscriminate tools that kill many non-target animals, including protected species, according to a lawsuit filed Monday by WildEarth Guardians, a Colorado-based environmental group.

The focus of the lawsuit is a little-known arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture called Wildlife Services that has long specialized in killing animals that are deemed to pose a threat to agriculture, the public and – more recently – the environment.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas, asks that the agency's activities be halted until it prepares a new, more comprehensive environmental impact statement. The suit also calls for a halt to its aerial gunning of predators in federally designated wilderness areas.

"It's high time for the federal court to take a hard look at Wildlife Services' slaughter of the nation's wildlife on public and private land with our tax dollars," said Wendy Keefover, director of carnivore protection for the group.

Read the whole story

Mountain bike trail work begins this weekend

Mountain bike trail work begins May 6 in South Lake Tahoe.

Work will be from 9am to 4pm, although helpers do not need to stay all day.

Meet at the first gate off Oneidas (which is off Pioneer Trail) to ride bikes to the trail. Work will be on the Sidewinder Trail, including rebuilding berms, buffing out the trail, fixing log rides, and general maintenance. Free lunch and a post work barbecue will be provided for all volunteers.

Weather, killing of problem bears cited for drop in conflicts

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Problems with nuisance bears dropped dramatically in 2011, a fact attributed by a state biologist to favorable climatic conditions and the fact a record number of problem-causing bears were killed the year before.

Only 130 bear complaints were received by the Nevada Department of Wildlife last year, down from 440 in 2010 for a 70 percent decrease, according to an annual report prepared by bear biologist Carl Lackey.

The primary reason for the decline, Lackey said, was an epic winter in 2010-2011 that produced a bountiful snowpack, with a significant amount of snowfall coming during the spring. Resulting moisture nourished healthy crops of vegetation that serve as natural food for black bears, including berries, pine nuts, forbs and grasses. Insects and mammals bears sometimes eat are also present in greater numbers during wet years.

“Conditions were just really good,” Lackey said. “Bears didn’t have to come down into urban areas.”

During drought years, things can be profoundly different. During the record year for bear problems of 2007 when natural foods in the backcountry were all but non-existent, bears wandered into neighborhoods in search of food in huge numbers, raiding trash bins and breaking into homes. The Nevada Department of Wildlife received a record 1,500 complaints over nuisance bears.

Read the whole story

O’Rourke days from having signed contract with Yakima

The Yakima City Council is having a special meeting May 8 at 11am to discuss the contract with Tony O’Rourke to take over the helm of that city.

O’Rourke has said he plans to buy a house in that Washington city – something he never did in his brief tenure in South Lake Tahoe. O’Rourke started his job in Tahoe in August 2010. His contract was for three years.



Tony O'Rourke

Until O’Rourke gives his official notice to the South Lake Tahoe City Council, a formal process cannot be put in place as for who takes over next. However, normal protocol is for the No. 2 person at the city to be interim city manager. That would be Nancy Kerry.

The council will have to decide if it wants to hire a headhunter to look for a permanent city manager. The same person has done so for the last three city manager hirings. Last go-round Bob Murray and Associates came up with nearly 80 applicants, though the council only interviewed two.

An internal candidate can still apply, as was the case last go around when Gene Palazzo, then redevelopment manager, applied to be city manager.

It can cost between $15,000 and $30,000 for a headhunter to come up with a list of candidates.

The city could also post the job opening in various trade publications for a fraction of the cost.

– Kathryn Reed