Opinion: Craziness governs school financing in California

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

The state budget's 800-pound gorilla is the task of educating 6 million elementary and high school students.

It consumes between 35 and 40 percent of the general fund. The money is allocated by a bizarre combination of power politics and a constitutional provision so complex that only a few in and around the Capitol even profess to understand it – and rarely agree.

Since the budget usually can't meet its full constitutional obligation each year, even when the economy is healthy, politicians and education lobbyists hammer out some number. They include a proviso that any unpaid amount will go on what they call "the credit card" to be repaid at some point in the future.

To complicate matters even more, one of the factors determining the obligation is how much money hundreds of districts are receiving in local property taxes, which are also affected by the economy. A huge chunk of the money is allocated for specific purposes called "categorical aids."

Finally, the school aid numbers budget are subject to change at any moment if the state's revenue estimates are off the mark – which they usually are.

It's completely irrational, and effectively forces local school officials to operate on a month-to-month basis – even though they are also tied into labor contracts, especially with teachers, that assume longer-term financial stability.

The current situation is a classic example, and even more convoluted than usual. The 2011-12 state budget adopted in June assumed that the state would receive an extra $4 billion in revenues. But it also provided that should those dollars not appear, there would be up to $2.5 billion in automatic spending cuts, three-quarters of it school aid.

Read the whole story

Tourism officials rebranding South Shore into Tahoe South

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Tahoe South. It's a place. It's an attitude. It's a feeling. It's a people. It is the South Shore.

"We know who we are. Now everyone else will too." That was the tagline in a promotional video shown at Thursday's Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority board meeting.

The fast-moving segment touched on all things South Shore. Real people doing all the things people moved here to do. The same things tourists envy locals for being able to enjoy 365 days a year.



A new name for

the South Shore -- Tahoe South.

Gone are the mixed messages through various advertising and public relations campaigns through the multiple venues the word was delivered. In its place is a coordinated effort to deliver the same message, multiple ways, through an array of mediums. Bringing this promotional consistency means people will get used to seeing Tahoe South and hearing Tahoe South through online, television, radio, and social media outlets.

One cohesive brand is the outcome. While multiple components are involved to reflect the diversity of the region, it’s not dominated by gaming and it’s not some concept like “blue” that no one ever embraced.

When people say “Las Vegas” a variety of images emerge. That same idea, not the same images per se, are what marketing gurus are going after with “Tahoe South”. As time goes by when people say Tahoe South the idea is it will evoke an image, feelings – ideally, a desire to plan a trip.

Expect to see it on T-shirts, tote bags, bandanas, stickers and other merchandise.

As people explore what Tahoe South is all about more in depth via the website – that Tahoe South logo will be there, the imagery will be familiar, but the content deeper, more rich.

Keeping with people’s desire to be interactive online, the new website will allow people to blog about their experiences in Tahoe.

What started about 2.5 years ago will be complete on Monday when the tourism agency’s website goes live.

To see the difference, go to the LTVA website between now and Sunday, and then go back after Monday.

“The complete reinvention of this brand will be done,” Andy Berkenfield said of the website being finalized. With a glass of Champagne in his hand, he toasted the board for its tenacity to go forward, and his staff and others involved for what is being called a leading edge site.

Berkenfield is general manager of Duncan/Channon, LTVA’s ad firm. While Noble Studios built the website, the two companies worked in concert to make it a reality.

Distinct winter and summer ad campaigns are part of the mix, too. This is the first winter LTVA has done a campaign beyond its participation in Ski Lake Tahoe material. Usually it relies on the ski resorts to bring people to town.

“Come to the Wild Side” is the message geared toward ages 25-54 and families. The idea is Tahoe South is more hip, more fun, more energetic than the North Shore. A billboard in San Francisco and one on Interstate 80 eight miles west of the Highway 50 split will target drivers.

Buses along main routes in The City – including Market Street and the Financial District – will also be covered in advertising to lure people to Tahoe South.

“We want to bring the vibrant energy of the destination to life,” Jennifer Corrigan, account director with Duncan/Channon said.

While the ads will be up soon, they are not finalized so they can’t be shown on *Lake Tahoe News* yet. It’s abstract artistry of elements that when examined closely are crystal clear. They look more like murals than a traditional billboard.

At the Dec. 8 meeting it was also decided what direction to go with the $1 million 2012 summer ad campaign. This is the same amount that was spent this year.

The goal is to increase awareness of Tahoe South and support

key summer events.

Gone will be the television spots except on Comcast during Giants and A’s games and what is contractually required with NBC for the celebrity golf tournament.

“Online is the most cost-efficient (advertising) out there,” Laura Davis, associate communications planning director with Duncan/Channon said. “People are spending more time online.”

Comments sought on Rubicon Trail EIS

A draft environmental impact statement that analyzes Rubicon Trail resource improvements and issuing an easement to El Dorado County for the operation and maintenance of the road is available for public review and comment.

Copies of the draft EIS are available on the Eldorado National Forest website and by contacting the Eldorado National Forest Supervisor’s Office in Placerville.

The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in spring 2012.

The Rubicon Trail is a historic road that passes through the Eldorado National Forest. The DEIS analyzes the environmental effects of granting an easement to El Dorado County for segments that cross National Forest system lands.

The preferred alternative allows the county to construct a

bridge at Ellis Creek, replace a bridge constructed by the Friends of the Rubicon Trail and construct erosion control features. The preferred alternative also authorizes the construction of six toilets at various locations along the trail, construction of a low water crossing at Buck Island Lake outlet, rehabilitation and closing of specified two miles of unauthorized routes, designation of access areas for dispersed recreation and the addition of one half mile of new routes to provide dispersed recreation opportunities.

Open houses will be hosted by the Forest Service regarding the draft EIS in Placerville at the Forest Supervisor's Office on Dec. 14 and Jan. 11 from 5-8pm.

South Shore artists, crafters sponsor Holiday Home Show

Ann Thennes is hosting the 8th annual Holiday Home Show Dec. 10 from 10am-4pm.

This festive gathering featuring sales of gift items from local artists and crafters. Everyone is welcome.

Artists include Ann Thennes (gourd creations), Don Hodgkin (fine wood furniture), RearView Miracles (crystal hangings and healing jewelry), Rex Perschnik (carved wooden ornaments), and Tahoe Mountain Soap.

Ten percent of all sales will be donated to community organizations.

Follow signs to 940 Sunset Drive, on the river, near the old

amusement park off Lodi Street in South Lake Tahoe.

For more info, call (530) 542.9553.

Oragami class at South Tahoe library

Learn to fold your own origami figures using traditional paper folding techniques on Jan. 5 at 2pm at the South Lake Tahoe branch of the El Dorado County Library.

Friends of the Library will supply the materials.

The library is at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

For more information, call (530) 573.3185.

South Tahoe firefighters to make holiday rounds

The South Lake Tahoe Fire Department holiday truck leaves Station 2 at 5pm to make its rounds.



Here is the schedule:

Dec. 10 – Tahoe Keys-Venice

Dec. 11 – Glenwood

Dec. 12 – Tahoe Keys-State Streets

Dec. 13 – Barton-Tahoe Island

Dec. 14 – South Y-Tata

Dec. 15 – Al Tahoe Boulevard

Dec. 16 – Springwood-Tahoe Pines

Dec. 17 – Main areas-Highway 50

Dec. 18 – Ski Run area

Dec. 19 – Heavenly Valley

Dec. 20 – Stateline-Pioneer Trail

Dec. 21 – Gardner Mountain

Dec. 22 – Stateline-hotels

Dec. 23 – Sierra Boulevard.

Douglas County deputy in fatal shooting ID’d

Officers believe the call they received Dec. 7 about a body near a truck in the Gardnerville Cemetery came from the man who was eventually fatally shot by a Douglas County sheriff’s deputy.

“Suspect David Pendleton’s cell phone, which was later recovered at the scene, revealed that a call was made to the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office dispatch center just minutes before the shooting incident occurred. Detectives believe it was this call that was received by the dispatcher, with the caller reporting a dead body lying in the open in the cemetery,” sheriff’s Sgt. Jim Halsey said in a statement.

It is believed Pendleton was visiting his family’s plot. His wife had recently been buried in the cemetery.

Pendleton reportedly aimed a fully loaded gun at deputies. When he wouldn’t put the weapon down he was shot.

Deputy Richard Koontz Jr., 29, has been with the department for six years. He is on administrative leave as is routine in an officer involved shooting.

DCSO was familiar with Pendleton because of his history of threatening to use weapons against civilians and law enforcement officers.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Scanio slapped with 6-month sentence for probation violations

By Kathryn Reed

Joseph Scanio, the South Lake Tahoe man who served more than three years in federal prison on child pornography charges, will be spending another six months behind bars.

U.S. District Court Judge Morrison England Jr. today in Sacramento sentenced Scanio for eight probation violations. Where he will serve his time has not been determined. He has been incarcerated in Sacramento County Superior Court since his last hearing on Nov. 17.



Joseph Scanio

While Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Rodriguez told *Lake Tahoe News* she believes justice has been served, she is not convinced Scanio understands the severity of his actions.

“I do have my lingering doubts about Mr. Scanio, that he does not accept the basic conditions under which he is a sex offender – that he is allowed liberty,” Rodriguez said. “There are myriad additional conditions and further procedures that everyone involved with his supervision will be taking and that Mr. Scanio has agreed to to assure the community is protected.”

Specific conditions of his supervised release that will begin next spring have not been disclosed.

But on Dec. 8 the judge said a broad interpretation of the conditions must be followed.

Timothy Zindel, the federal defender representing Scanio, said he was happy the judge did not accept the prosecutor's recommendation that his client serve nine months.

"People need to understand child pornographers are not child molesters. It's an irrational fear," Zindel said.

Scanio, 63, pleaded guilty to charges of child pornography in October 2006. He was released from prison in February 2010. He was arrested in May 2011 on a federal warrant for violating terms of his supervised released.

Some of the probation charges he was found guilty of violating include: use of a computer without permission from his probation officer, not presenting truthful monthly reports to the probation officer, associating with a felon without permission, and contact with children under 18 without approval.

While Scanio must register as a sex offender under, based on when he was first convicted, his registry does not have to be made public.

Lake Tahoe Restoration Act moves out of committee

By KRNV-TV

WASHINGTON – Sen. Harry Reid today hailed passage of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2011 out of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

The act, which Reid sponsored in 2009, would restore and protect the ecological integrity of Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Basin. This year, the Nevada Democrat is co-sponsoring the bill with California Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. The LTRA will protect Lake Tahoe's exceptional natural resources and ensure that the area remains a premier tourist destination.



The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act would bring millions of dollars to the basin. Photo/LTN file

"We must take every step possible to protect the international treasure that is Lake Tahoe," Reid said. "Over the past decade, we've made progress by reversing the declining water clarity of Lake Tahoe, but we cannot let up. This legislation will protect Lake Tahoe's unique ecosystem and ensure that it

remains a top-notch tourist destination for years to come. I look forward to taking the next step that will boost our economy and improve our environment."

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act builds on successful restoration work already happening in the Tahoe Basin by authorizing $415 million over ten years to improve water clarity, reduce the threat of wildfire, and restore the natural landscape. The LTRA would specifically fund high-priority projects focused on aquatic invasive species prevention, storm water management, watershed restoration, Lahontan cutthroat trout reintroduction, and hazardous fuels reduction.

Read the whole story

Splash of Hollywood used to sell high-end Tahoe property

Award-winning director Christian Calderon has launched a new concept in real estate videos – the industry's first short film featuring a Hollywood actress.

And according to Calderon, the whole concept of producing shorts for real estate using an actress with a platform, rather than a real estate agent, also increases the chance of the piece going viral and gaining more exposure.

In this case, actress Melissa Biggs, formerly of "Baywatch", was chosen for her international appeal to expand the Incline Village property's exposure to places like Australia where according to reports, Australians are the largest foreign tourists traveling to California and making real estate

purchases.

In the video, Biggs makes a cameo appearance and stays the weekend at an exclusive home that happens to be on the market and gives the audience a personal guided tour.